

**PRISON A/R/TOGRAPHY:  
THE AESTHETIC OF 'CAPTIVE' MASCULINITIES**

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## Statement of Originality.

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works of any other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## Abstract

Contemporary artists have been successful in breaking into prisons and persuading the prison institutions, the general public and prison educators to legitimize artistic activity. However, the discourses on prison theatre have been largely dominated by therapeutic and rehabilitative agendas, possibly at the expense of theatre practice – its aesthetic strategies, and aural and visual qualities. This research comes against such a background. The research project was developed in response to the debates and concerns about artistic work in applied prison theatre. It was located at the borders of what can be articulated about aesthetic intervention ‘without purpose’ in a prison setting; – without purpose in the sense of eschewing big claims of social and psychological efficacy. Through the practice of *a/r/tography*, which is a means of inquiry through a method of art making, the research examined what is possible about the work. Of particular interest was the potential to explore possibilities for aesthetic intervention understandings and nuances in prison theatre. Be that as it may, although there was a conscious moving away from the applied umbrella as overtly instrumentalist, it can be argued from the findings that there is a possible tension of falling under the umbrella.

## **Dedications**

I dedicate this research to the Chinhanu men in my life – my father, Edward and my three brothers, Edlight, Noble and Kingsley.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Journey

Research begins with an unfulfilled feeling in ones' life; an unfinished business which is directed mainly to others. It is a quest for answers that is empowered by a personal interest, a problem or difficulty. (Fleishman, personal communication 2015, March).

The impetus for this research not an unfinished business or an unfulfilled feeling, but it was a quest for answers that was empowered by my interest in men as I viewed them to be constantly blamed for injustices, but seldom given the space to become empowered. My argument was that many initiatives towards gender equality have focused on women, making patriarchy visible as the problem. Richard Collier (1998) has argued that this has reproduced gender inequality both materially and ideologically, whereas achieving gender equality can only be possible with changes in men's lives as well as women's. The prison setting was most ideal for me in that it was offering exclusivity to the study of men and masculinities, and since criminology echoes this aim of taking masculinity seriously (see Carlen and Jefferson, 1996, Messerschmidt, 1993; Newburn and Stanko, 1994; Collier, 1998). In that sense, examining gendered attitudes through prison theatre was, in every sense of the word, 'applied' prison theatre.

Be that as it may, during my first year of Masters in studio practice, I began to experience a shift in my thinking about applied theatre and my research interest. Mark Fleishman (personal communication, 2015, March) clarified that although research starts from a search for answers to unfinished business or unfulfilled feeling that could be directed towards others, having a theatre background means that one firstly assumes an artistic practice and identity and not necessarily starting from theories of community. Therefore, although my prison theatre research was drawing from the field of criminology and theories of masculinities, it came from a desire to contribute to research in drama, theatre and performance studies.

### 1.2 Rationale

#### 1.2.1 Applied theatre

Applied theatre is an umbrella term for a range of practices that gained currency during the 1990's (Nicholson, 2005). It describes a 'belief in the power of theatre to address something beyond the form itself' (Ackroyd, 2000: 1). Helen Nicholson (2005: 16) describes it as a 'discursive practice

motivated by the desire to make a difference to the lives of others', and Phillip Taylor (2003: xxi) says it is theatre that can 'be harnessed to build stronger communities and where new possibilities for mankind can be imagined'. Its many practices include theatre for development, community theatre, dramatherapy, drama education, theatre in health education, heritage theatre, reminiscence theatre, psychodrama, prison theatre and so forth (see Nicholson, 2005). Nicholson (2005) says that each of these theatre forms has its own theories, debates and specialized practices, but as noted by Ackroyd (2000), the common feature in these various groups is intentionality; however, the intentions also vary. Nicholson (2005) further highlights that these practices draw on research in different branches of philosophy and the social sciences while contributing to research in drama, theatre and performance studies. As highlighted before, I drew on research from the field of criminology and theory of masculinities.

Nicholson (2005) contends that it is the interest in the professionalization of the field that signalled the emergence of the term. For example, in the UK, the UK New Labor's agenda for social regeneration, social inclusion, and participation and rehabilitation has created a market for applied theatre artists (Neelands, 2007). Be that as it may, this has raised some concerns and debates about artistic work. Robert Landy (cited in White, 2015) is concerned about the instrumentality of applied theatre that is very explicit in the term itself. The problem is that the field is understood as being too operational. Tony Jackson (2005) contends that there are inconsistencies towards the status of the work as art. Bjorn Rasmussen (2000) views the term to be downgrading in that it implies that the applied material is second best and not quite as genuine as the essence. In the field of art, applied theatre is treated as the second cousin of real knowledge because it has concerned itself more readily with issues of social utility (Haseman and Winston, 2010) and neglects accounts of theatre practice – their aesthetic strategies, dramaturgies, their aural and visual qualities and sense of emotional engagement (Nicholson, 2013: 1). Gareth White (2015: 3) further contends that applied theatre exists within and adheres to dramatic form, embodies a theory of art, yet it 'explicitly rejects the values of beauty, creative genius and artistic autonomy that are associated with it'. The utilitarianism of applied theatre risks compromising its artistic and aesthetic qualities, which in fact are the power of artistic engagement (Rasmussen, 2000; Jackson, 2005; Haseman and Winston, 2010; White, 2015; Freebody and Finneran, 2016). The argument has been that the quality of the work in applied theatre be much higher. However, this raises the question of by whose standard and measure applied theatre's quality should be higher. The type of theatre that is

considered as aesthetic is measured by western production values. What is also problematic is the fact that the argument for aesthetic consideration in applied theatre is originating from first world countries, whereas it is politics that matter for third world communities (see arguments in White, 2015).

### **1.2.2 The Struggle facing Prison Theatre**

The way that prison theatre has manifested globally in form and intention has been largely influenced by context. Rob Pensalfini (2016) argues that the discourses on prison theatre have been dominated by the therapeutic and rehabilitative agendas of both corrections and dramatherapy. This is particularly true in the UK and Europe where the focus has been on psychodrama. Brazil and South Africa have tended towards socio-drama. This shaping around other professions like psychology and therapy for validation indicates the practice's search for an identity of its own (see Sally Stamp in Thompson, 1998). Paul Heritage (2011 cited in Pensalfini, 2016) argues that the psychodramatic and drama-therapeutic focus of theatre in prison was as a result of attacks by dramatherapists who questioned artists' work in prison system without any therapeutic qualifications. Many prison theatre practitioners felt obliged to justify their work in terms of therapeutic outcomes and there was a narrowing of the frame within which arts work in prison was seen to take place. Also, part of the reason for aligning with correctional, therapeutic and rehabilitative concerns has to do with the setting. It is difficult to almost impossible for one to put forward a proposal that seeks to offer recreation and be accepted by prison authorities to work in the prison. Prison theatre programmes are therefore obliged to turn to justifications and analyses of their work that support and acknowledge the stated goals of the prison system in which they are housed (Pensalfini, 2016: 5; Davey, Day and Balfour, 2014). This has led to an instrumental focus within the prison theatre programmes. The prison theatre artists have, therefore, looked to achieve their interventionists' goals such that they have missed out on other things that happen in the process. Jenny Hughes (2005: 58) suggests that there should be an 'explicit move away from cognitive behavioural approaches toward engaging with offenders on a more affective or imaginative level'. She argues that this is because the aesthetic can re-energize, re-humanize, and re-moralize the prison theatre practice. While it is interesting that there seem to be a global shift towards the idea of aesthetics in applied prison theatre, it appears very few researchers working in African prisons have yet asked how prison theatre affects our understanding of what drama is or what art does in prisons. In this dissertation, I argue that that there should be a look towards

aesthetic – what it is that it is doing. This re-articulation might then begin to counter the reductive effects of technicist thinking in the therapeutic and rehabilitation discourses.

In my practice, I subscribed to Michael Balfour's 'theatre of little changes' (See Balfour, 2009). I resisted the 'bait of social change, rehabilitation, behavioural objectives and outcomes' (Balfour, 2009: 357). I went into the research with the belief that there is the potential to explore possibilities for aesthetic intervention understandings and nuances. Aesthetic describes the participants' fusion of their thoughts, senses and emotions with the diversity of their personal, social and imagined experiences which comprises their response to art works (Anderson, 2012: 53). The term aesthetics was first used by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in 1744 to mean 'the science of the beautiful'. Today, aesthetics is conceived somewhat more broadly and tends not to concentrate exclusively on the concept of beauty, although that idea is still explored. My interest in aesthetic was to its social responsibility, to touch people with beauty. It involved the critical reflection on the participants' experience and evaluation of art. I located my practice at the borders of what could be articulated about aesthetic intervention in a prison setting. Hughes, Kidd and McNamara (in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011: 194) say it is through this process of artistry and improvisation that we know 'the most useful knowledge about the value of theatre'. This research should, therefore, be read and understood not from a hypothesis or research question's point of view, because imposing a problem solving and solution finding approach on myself as practitioner researcher was going to risk damaging both the practice as art and the culture to the work and understanding (see Candy, 2011). Therefore, I 'dived in' and started practicing to see what would emerge. This kind of practical approach organically raised questions that were investigated through research which in turn impacted on practice and participants. McDonald (2005 cited in Balfour, 2009: 355) argues that 'sustained social efficacy has occurred not through the work of facilitated theatre, but 'organic' theatre, which is rooted in the same social and cultural context of the audience'. The focus in my practice as research was on 'habitus, embodiment, experience, practice and feeling' (Conroy, 2010: 8). Embodiment is a term that appears a lot throughout this dissertation. In the context of my practice, it implies an emphasis on the role of the body in shaping the mind. I argue in chapter 2 that the prison functions to discipline and punish the incarcerated through the control of the body in space through time, therefore, the idea of embodiment was to explore how theatre releases the body. I asked the question, 'What if?' - What if we did this? What

are the implications for this? Parker-Starbuck and Mock (in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011) say these questions do not come out of nowhere but have a history in practice. This approach to working in prison was not something new. Since 2010, Alexandra Sutherland has been running a prison theatre programme in a medium security male prison in South Africa that teaches drama skills and devises theatre together with the participants. The programme is ‘based on a belief that creating an embodied, collaborative, creative space has several individual and group benefits’ (Sutherland, 2013: 122). Although my practice was different from Sutherland’s in its methodological approach, it sought to further the same understanding of doing theatre ‘without purpose’ in prison.

I understood that my approach was going to raise some ethical concerns in the prison setting considering that prisoners are a need-focused marginalized community. I also considered the possibility of being subjected to pressure and control by the Department of Correctional Service (DCS) to produce measurable results aligned with its agenda of correction and rehabilitation. Therefore, it was of great importance that I find a methodology that would suitably speak to three stakeholders – the prisoners, the prison authorities and me, as an artist. That methodology was a/r/tography. The practice of a/r/tography is a means of inquiry through an ongoing process of art making and embodiment (Irwin, Joubert and Berman, 2013). This a/r/tographical prison theatre research was about how the body, the mind and the soul are affected from a dramaturgical perspective and not a therapeutic one. In this respect, a/r/tography in the prison context had its own motivations, influences, justifications, processes and arguably results which are to be understood within the broader framework of prison theatre, but not sitting comfortably under that umbrella. The practice was supported by some processing techniques which I borrowed from the Geese Theatre Company. These include ‘opening up discussion’, ‘inner voice from the audience’, ‘interview/ hotseating’ and ‘re-working the scene’. (See Baim Brookes and Mountford, 2002). The techniques were meant to provide a constructive challenge for the participants by forcing them to think creatively and outside the box, and the same time releasing the body through space in time. I discuss the practice and the techniques in chapter three.

### **1.3 Case study**

Goodwood Centre of Excellence situated in Peninsula Drive, Monte Vista, Cape Town in the Western Cape Region, is primarily classified as a medium correctional facility for the incarceration

of male offenders only. It was named after the municipal area, Goodwood, and was officially opened by the Minister of Correctional Services at the time, Dr. S.E. Mzimela, in 1997. The main purpose was to accommodate awaiting trial detainees (ATD's), but due to overcrowding challenges of other correctional centres situated within the Western Cape, inter alia Pollsmoor, Drakenstein, Helderstroom, the department conclusively decided to transform Goodwood to being one of the Centres of Excellence. There is a daily average offender population of approximately 990 sentenced and 1165 un-sentenced offenders. These totals are influenced by variables such as bail, admission, release, parole, and transfer. The centre has the capacity to house 2115 inmates but it is currently overcrowded with approximately 4600 both sentenced and un-sentenced inmates. Mrs Shabangu (personal communication 2016, April) the Head of Education, Sports and Recreational Department said the prison is mostly populated by Afrikaans speaking, 'Coloured' South Africans mainly because it is located in a 'Coloured' dominated area. In the South African context, the term 'Coloured' is a name given to a heterogeneous group of people who are of mixed race. The term was constructed by the Apartheid government as a racial label enforced on people of mixed race to separate them from 'White' and 'Black' South Africans.

The table 1 below shows the programmes and courses offered by the correctional facility.

**Table 1**

Programme	Courses / Categories
Correctional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross Roads. Focuses on the causes and consequences of the abuse of alcohol and drugs and of criminal behaviour. It seeks to provide offenders with information concerning alternatives to criminal behaviour and sources for treatment of alcoholism and drug dependence (Department of Correctional Services, 2005: 10).</li> <li>• Anger Management. Aimed at raising offenders' awareness of the causes and symptoms of anger and teaching them how to manage their anger (Department of Correctional Services, 2005: 8).</li> <li>• Restorative Justice. Objective of this programme is to orientate offenders in respect of restorative justice and to prepare them for further intervention</li> </ul>

	through restorative justice programmes (Department of Correctional Services, 2005: 16).
Social Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substance Abuse</li> <li>• Sexual Offence</li> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Basic life skills</li> </ul>
Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christianity</li> <li>• Islam</li> <li>• Rastafarian</li> </ul>
Sports and Recreational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rugby</li> <li>• Soccer</li> <li>• Musical Band</li> </ul>
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 6 – 12 Subjects</li> </ul>

The ideal social work service level standard is 240 prisoners per social worker, yet the centre only has 3 social workers, which makes it impossible to engage all offenders. Since the prisoners are categorized by Groups A, B and C which is an offender privilege system, only those in Group A have the opportunity to participate in sports and recreational activities. Those in groups B and C can only participate in religious programmes offered by outside religious groups. Religious programmes are commonplace in Goodwood Prison since the Department of Correctional Service believes in the influence of religion in instilling good behaviour. The school inside the prison is located at the heart of gangsterism and therefore is subject to control by gang members which makes it inaccessible to most offenders. Given these challenges, the prison tries to mitigate them by welcoming service providers who can assist in the rehabilitation of offenders. The last drama/theatre programme in Goodwood prison was in 2012. This project which I call ‘Prison A/r/tography’ brought the South African National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) and Help! I’m Free (HIAF) inside Goodwood prison for the first time. I started off the 4 weeks of the programme with 80 inmates and then selected 20 who continued for 9 weeks. Three dropped out because they were involved in other programmes. The 17 constituted of 5 ‘Black’ South Africans, 1 ‘Black’ Nigerian and 11 ‘Coloured’ South Africans

aged between 24 and 47. Only 3 of them were first time offenders, some of them had been sentenced and released up to four times. The crimes committed ranged from rape, armed robbery, murder, burglary and attempted murder.

#### **1.4 Research project affiliates and researcher's involvement**

The research project was in partnership with NICRO and HIAF. NICRO is a national nongovernmental organization (NGO) which was established to provide comprehensive crime prevention services across South Africa. It has two offices in Cape Town and Mitchell's Plain which are currently being managed by Betzi Pierce. NICRO runs 5 programmes which are The Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Pre-trial Community Service (PTCS), Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM), Family Group Conferences, which are similar to VOM, The Journey, aimed at high risk children, and Tough Enough. Only the Tough Enough programme uses creative arts to challenge prisoners to live a constructive life. It offers them the opportunity to unleash their creativity and express themselves for 9 – 12 months. NICRO receives funding from the Norwegian Peace Corps through a Norwegian theatre company called Vardeteatret. The company runs a project called Help! I'm Free (HIAF) which uses theatre as a tool to enable inmates cope with life after prison. Until 2016, NICRO and HIAF had only worked in Pollsmoor prison. The prisoners' performances have been shown at Artscape Theatre Centre in Cape Town to challenge the mindsets of the audience about imprisonment.

NICRO and HIAF have had a partnership with the UCT Drama Department since 2014. Towards the end of 2015, the HIAF team agreed to have me on board in the 2016 project as the forerunner to the bigger production that performed at Artscape in September 2016. My job was to lay the foundation for the team by teaching theatre skills for 13 weeks and select participants for the final production. NICRO also had two psychology interns from the Netherlands who came to Goodwood prison with me. White (2015), Balfour (2009) and Jackson (2005) argue that it is partnerships that also contributes to compromising the aesthetic in the work, in that the partners only view theatre as an entertaining medium that helps them achieve their goals in a more palatable way. Organizations from the fields such as psychology and therapy are the members that sustain the prison theatre field; therefore, they push for their agendas and expect measurable results. Fortunately for me, the only condition for selection from NICRO and HIAF was that the participants be serving their final year. Partnering with HIAF did not complicate the work because

they claim the artistic and aesthetic as the core experience for intervention experiences, thus, artistry was not undermined and under-emphasized

## 1.5 Chapter summaries

Chapter one has been set out to provide a backdrop for this research.

Chapter two is divided into two sections. Section A broadly explores the theories of masculinities and then narrows down to the South African context. It discusses what the theories offer in developing criminological understanding and how they inform my prison theatre research with offending male participants in Goodwood Prison. Section B goes on to review prison theatre practice, examining its contributions to the criminal justice system and examines my approach in relation to a few prominent prison theatre organizations.

Chapter three frames my practice and research by engaging with the methodology and methods employed in gathering information. It also discusses the ethics considered in the research process.

Chapter four leads the reader through the aesthetic journey, exploring and analyzing significant happenings as the participants interacted with each other and with the aesthetic of theatre.

Chapter five explores and analyses the main theme of manhood which surfaced in the performance making process. It leads the reader into the participants' ideas and experiences of being a man and the opportunity offered by the performance making process to negotiate an alternative manhood.

Chapter six provides limitations of study and offers some concluding thoughts.

Let me conclude this chapter by putting forward a disclaimer that this research was limited by time, resources and space. Also, in as much as the study relates to South African prison, it should not be read and understood as all-encompassing for other contexts.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section A explores theories of masculinities; broadly and then narrows down to the South African context. It discusses what the theories offer in developing criminological understanding and how they informed my prison theatre research with offending male participants in Goodwood prison. In order to examine the nature of any activity that operates within the prison system, the system itself must be examined; therefore section B briefly outlines the history, role and development of the prison system. It further introduces the literature about prison theatre, examining my approach in relation to a few prominent prison theatre organizations and projects abroad and South Africa.

### Section A: Masculinities

#### 2.1 Introduction

South Africa is often equated with crime; and yes, it is indisputable that there is a lot of crime. Lucskay Zsuzsanna (2007) argues that the high level of crime in the country is not a result of some deviant personalities but something much deeper. Blame for the crimes have been put on many things, but as Zsuzsanna (2007) says, we will never run out of things to blame. In post-1994 South Africa, it has been observed that there was a broad shift from political violence to criminal violence. Robert Morrell (2001: xiv) explains that, ‘violence in the liberation struggle was noble and necessary. In the new South Africa, it is criminal and destructive.’

Crime statistics reveal that roughly 2.5 million people have been victims of different types of crime in the past 6 years (South African Police Crime Statistics, 2010). The Department of Correctional Service Annual Report (2014) also reveals that many of these crimes are committed by males. The proposition that men commit more crime than women is ‘one of the few undisputed “facts” of criminology’ (Lauritsen et al, 2009: 362; see also Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Steffensmeier, Schwartz and Roche (2013) argue that gender is an important consideration in the study of crime because offending is a gendered concept. Therefore, recent work has suggested that masculinity is an important characteristic for understanding crime and violence (see Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997, 2000; Bowker, 1998; Kimmel and Messner, 2001). Researchers have also begun to explore why young boys and men dominate crime statistics (see, for example, Cooper, 2009; Dissel, 1999; Gear

and Ngubeni, 2002; Salo, 2007; Steinberg, 2004). I highlight in the sections which follow on what makes crime a masculine activity which I hope sheds a different light on how we can begin to see and understand men.

## **2.2 Perspectives on the criminality of men**

The issue of masculinity and its link to criminal behaviour in men has been identified in both past and present discussions of criminological thought (Krienert, 2003). The first attempt to link masculinity with crime came from Parsons 1964 (Krienert, 2003). However, since then, criminology has been marked by a long history of masculine bias (Messerschmidt, 1997; Collier, 1998).

Joe Yates (2004) contends that the early theorists from the positivist school, such as Lombroso and Ferrero (1895), employed a crude biogenic determinist model, which noted the role of biology in criminality and the biological sex of many male criminals. He further argues that although Lombroso (1895) discussed biological sex and male features such as mesomorphic body shape and body hair which he claimed are indicators of criminal propensity; he ignored the social construction of gender in shaping the behaviour of criminality of males. Be that as it may, the classical Marxist school moved away from the biogenic focus of early positivist criminology towards developing a structuralist socio-genic approach which argued that crime must be understood in relation to the political economy and in relation to the effects of structural disadvantage, class inequality, alienation and exploitation, common in industrial capitalist society. However, the Marxist school overlooked race and also failed to offer an analysis as to why there are more male offenders than females even when females occupied the same structural, class-based position.

James Messerschmidt (1997) argues that the traditional criminological approaches of early Positivism and Marxism took for granted that crime is a 'male' activity. It failed to recognize men and boys as gendered subjects (Messerschmidt 1997: 14-15). In an effort to understand meanings behind criminality of males, Messerschmidt (1997), Collier (1998), John MacInnes (1998), Jason L. Powell (2006) and Tony Jefferson (2007), who work within the sociological and criminological traditions, looked towards critical theories of masculinities, drawing upon the work of authors such as R.W Connell (1995). These scholars acknowledged the highly gendered nature of criminality, which was a break away from the gender-blind nature of traditional criminology (Jefferson, 2007).

Critical theories of masculinities raised questions regarding how men construct masculinities (Messerschmidt, 1994) and the role that criminal acts play in the construction and accomplishment of gender roles. Thus, rather than taking male criminality for granted, these theorists focused on how men achieve masculinity and how gender is socially constructed in such a way that men are inclined towards crime. They also asked the role played by society in constructing a model of masculinity which lends itself to criminal activity and the relationship that exists between age, class, gender, race and crime. This move provided a useful analytical tool which helps in understanding how individual men construct masculinity in a way which employs specific delinquent solutions to 'protest' and 'oppose' their subordination (Messerschmidt, 1994).

### **2.3 South African masculinities: A historical background**

Robert Morrell (2011) has suggested that regime change can provide fertile conditions for gender changes. As societal changes take place, new forms of masculinity may also emerge (Morrell, 2011). The above fact is illustrated by the discussion of masculinity in South Africa, which therefore, suggests that in order to understand masculinities' present state and status; one has to understand them within the different historical contexts. In his writings, Morrell (2011) links the current high levels of violence in post-apartheid South Africa to the historical constructions of masculinity. In doing so, Morrell (2001) suggests that apartheid appears to have provided fertile ground for constructions of masculinity that approved and legitimized the use of violence in a variety of public and private spaces.

South Africa under apartheid influenced the formation of a militarized masculinity amongst youth in the townships (Langa, 2012). Malose Langa (2012) goes on to suggest that as part of the 1976 Soweto uprising, boys and girls as young as 10 to 11 were actively involved in school boycotts against the Bantu Education system. These young people, popularly known as the young lions, were also involved in burning and destroying public institutions associated with apartheid capitalism. He says that it was from 1976 that violence became more visible and intense, with mass-based political protests occurring in many places around the country. It was the active participation of township youth in struggle politics that gave many young boys the opportunity to develop what Langa (2012) calls a *militarized masculinity* and Thokozani Xaba (2001) calls a *struggle masculinity*. Township boys were expected to be strong, brave, tough, fearless, aggressive and violent which was all a part of constructing this militarized masculinity. Langa (2012) notes

another form of masculinity during the fight against apartheid rule called the comrade masculinity. It viewed men as strong, aggressive and violent and these masculine virtues were described to be more suited to soldiering. In contrast to comrade masculinity another apartheid township expression of masculinity was that known as *tsotsi* masculinity (Langa, 2012). As a result of political struggles against apartheid, youth gangs rose and so did the level of criminal violence (Mokwena, 1991; Pinnock, 1981). According to Mokwena (1991) the *tsotsi* form of masculinity mainly hinged around participation in criminal activities such as housebreaking, armed robbery, and abduction, rape and kidnapping of young girls.

Post 1994, the comrade youth were required to develop a new identity that differed from the comrade masculinity of the past decades. They were expected to redefine their militarized masculine identities to be in line with the new social norms and values which was now the prevalent thing in the new South Africa (Marks & McKenzie, 1995; Stevens & Lockhart, 1997; Marks, 2002 cited in Langa, 2012). They were to become entrepreneurs and job seekers, capable of taking advantage of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) opportunities (Marks, 2002; Stevens & Lockhart, 1997 cited in Langa, 2012). According to Langa (2012) this left many of these young men feeling confused about their current social identities. The former combatants could not secure employment in the current and very competitive labour market mainly because they had dropped out of school to fight the liberation struggle in exile. Langa (2012) notes that today, these men feel they have no role to play in the politics of the new era since their militarized masculine identity is not valued anymore. They feel politically marginalized and betrayed by the ANC-led government. Also contributing to this, is the transition in gender relations embodied in the new constitutional government which has committed itself to creating job opportunities for women. Gear (2002) says that all these factors have led some of these men become involved in organized crime; which has pointed to a crisis in masculinity (Reid & Walker, 2005).

The 'Coloured' community, on the other hand, was affected by the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Adhikari, 2005). They were displaced from their homes and uprooted from their businesses. This hindered a sense of community and social growth which led to the gang problem that the country is experiencing today. When the low-cost housing was introduced, the 'Coloured' family was not considered because a 'Coloured' was considered as neither White nor Black nor Indian, in other words, a no person (Adhikari, 2005). It can be argued that the gangs in Cape Town were created

to fight poor living conditions faced by individuals in 'Coloured' communities. There was a need to protect the few resources available and even claim the resources of others to survive. Criminal youth became unemployed adults. With a rise in unemployment in the 1970's, it became survival of the fittest among the 'Coloured' community. Gang activities encouraged a sort of domestic economy, with drugs being a sought-after commodity. According to Adam Cooper (2009: 3) 'there are approximately 80-100 thousand gangsters and 130 gangs which contribute to 40% of murder, 42% of the robberies and 70% of the crime generally in the Western Cape'.

### **2.3.1 South African masculinities in crisis**

In recent years, scholars working in the fields of gender, sexuality and health studies have pointed to a crisis in masculinity which involves crises in terms of men's roles, tasks and identity. Tim Edwards (2006) has suggested that actually masculinity IS crisis. The understanding is that men are not only perceived to be in trouble collectively (Dowsett, 2002) but are also trouble. Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix and Rob Pattman (2003: 1) say the crisis is characterized by instability and uncertainty 'over social role and identity, sexuality, work and personal relationships'. This idea of 'crisis' has emerged as a hope for understanding the pressures, reactions and responses to the changing nature of power relations between men and women, embedded in the vagaries of economic power and precipitated by changes in the social structure of sexuality and emotions (Reid and Walker, 2005: 10).

It is mainly the unresolved residue from the past that has brought into sharp focus a crisis of masculinity in contemporary South Africa. Graeme Reid and Liz Walker (2005) argue that being a man in post-apartheid South Africa is of necessity different, yet the present does not represent a complete break with the past. Since 1994, government policies have been aimed at reducing some of the inequalities that previously separated women and men (Morrell, 2001), based on the ideal of shifting from a male-dominated patriarchal society to a new social order of equality between men and women. Nhlanhla Mkhize (2006: 184) argues that the increased employment of women at the expense of many unemployed men in South Africa has challenged the male breadwinner status. Culturally, men have generally been ascribed the roles of head of households, protectors and providers, thus failure to assume this social responsibility which is associated with fatherhood, mounts great pressure on them, making them extremely vulnerable (Hunt, 1980). Men see women as usurping roles previously allocated to them which create uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety

(Reid and Walker, 2005). With nothing else to fall back, it is difficult for them to achieve complete masculinity (Hunter, 2005; Niehaus, 2005). Mamphela Ramphele (2000) argues that some men have responded to this by deserting their families because of the inability to provide as fathers.

Connell (1995) and Reid and Walker (2005) agree that masculinity is complicated by racial politics. Connell (1995) says in a white-supremacist context, black masculinity is the most marginalized form of masculinity. Robert Staples (1982) discussed the effects of class and race in terms of the expression of masculinity. His main argument is that black men in general have not been able to achieve highly valued masculine status due to race politics and racism in South Africa, often because of their inferior educational opportunities, and growing up in impoverished communities. Morrell (1998) highlights how white Afrikaner masculinity became hegemonic in relation to black masculinity under the apartheid regime. As a result, it has been argued that a black man often despised himself and in turn often averted his hatred and anger in the wrong direction – his family through domestic violence (Fanon, 1968; Segal, 1990) and fellow black men (Langa, 2012). Thus, the black man has ‘lost’ his manhood.

Women have also been responsible for mounting pressure on men to ‘perform’ their masculine identity. Zdun (2008) asserts that women desire to have a male defender, by which he means a patriarchal companion in life. By desiring this, women are subconsciously accepting their subordinate position, by accepting that they need a male with power, in order to have power themselves. Therefore, women unintentionally continue gender hierarchies. Pursuing this kind of masculine identity desired by women in a not so favourable environment becomes intense for the men.

Interestingly, it has been proposed that men, unlike women do not have positive role models, which makes masculinity very confusing for some men (Ramphele, 2002). Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) note how the prominent male leaders in post-apartheid South Africa have created a further confusion for men. Unterhalter (2002 cited in Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger 2012) says after the 1994 democratic elections, President Mandela represented a new masculinity, which Unterhalter described as ‘heroic’. He says Mandela’s public representation challenged much of the violent and authoritarian behaviours and attitudes associated with apartheid and the patriarchal, traditional African masculinities of Bantustan leaders. Unterhalter (2000 cited in Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger, 2012) gives an example of Mandela after his installation as President when he

returned to his home village, and in his public address said that the time had come for men to do cooking and look after children. This masculinity projected by Mandela lacked sustainability and support from his successors. Although President Thabo Mbeki carried forward part of Mandela's gender equality program, he was viewed as aloof, dictatorial, and bullying and this, together with a resistance to the program of gender equality itself, eroded support not only for him as president but also for the new masculinity that Mandela had attempted to develop (Gevisser, 2007; Pucherova, 2009 cited in Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger 2012). This paved the way for a further dramatic shift of masculinities when Jacob Zuma came into power. Because Zuma's origins were not educated or elite, he exemplified a 'rejection of more thoughtful, egalitarian masculinities, rather asserting in the name of "tradition," a masculinity that was heterosexist, patriarchal, implicitly violent and that glorified ideas of male sexual entitlement, notably polygamy, and conspicuous sexual success with women' (Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger, 2012: 15). In tandem with Zuma, new youth masculinity has been promoted by the former ANC Youth League's President, Julius Malema. His public persona can be said to have promoted assertions of power and wealth, with acquisition predicated on entitlement, use of violence and brute strength, rather than personal achievement or respect for the legitimate use of power. When viewed with a masculine lens, this political struggle since 1994 reflects a multiplicity of South African masculinities in crisis.

The men I worked with in Goodwood prison spoke of the psychological, social and political disorder which is dominating their lives: of being overwhelmed and overtaken by life events, of wanting to make something of themselves in this period of 'new opportunities', and of the tremendous difficulties this entails. The question has been how men can define and redefine themselves in response to these realities. Presently, South African men's ways of adapting and responding to the transitions has been evidenced in their crime and violent 'performances'. My research has engaged with this through theatre making and performance, which will be examined in chapter five.

### **2.3.2 Men just doing gender**

Messerschmidt (1993) hypothesizes a justification for the men's responses when he focuses on the use of criminal behaviour as an acceptable, alternative, way to accomplish or project masculinity. Messerschmidt (1993) built on West & Zimmerman's idea of "doing gender" introduced in 1987.

West and Zimmerman (1987 cited in Messerschmidt 1993) conceptualize gender as a routine accomplishment that is created and maintained through everyday interaction. Instead of seeing masculinity as something that just happens to men or is done to men, masculinity is seen as something that men do at all times (Coleman, 1990: 191). Therefore, according to Messerschmidt (1993: 81-84), it is when traditional or other masculine resources are unavailable, non-existent or stifled that violent behaviour or particular types of crime can provide an alternative resource for accomplishing gender. Kenneth Polk (1997) argues that violence becomes an alternative also when a man's masculinity is called into question or threatened in any way. Doing crime becomes doing masculinity. Messerschmidt (1993) argues that this occurs only on certain occasion and in certain contexts. If a man does poorly at school or at his job, or in his family life, he must seek out other, alternative, 'masculine-validating resources' (Messerschmidt, 1993: 83) to demonstrate that he is manly. The DA Leader Mmusi Maimane speaking at the DA Student's Organization highlighted that the unemployment among 'Black' South Africans stands at 28.6 % and at 24.1 % among the 'Coloured' South Africans compared to 7.3% among 'Whites'. This situation makes violent behaviour an acceptable way to convey the toughness that is linked with masculine traits (Krienert, 2003). For men, performing well in violent situations enhances masculinity regardless of whether it is a traditional or alternative display (Messerschmidt, 1993; Cavender, 1999: 159). As Kimmel (2004: xiii) says '[m]ale violence is a way to prove successful masculinity'. It is a way of separating themselves from all that is feminine (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Be that as it may, although Messerschmidt (1993) is applauded for proposing the need to consider gender in criminological theory, his hypothesis has been viewed as flawed in that it does not explain why women do not require crime as a resource as much as men do, and why crime is invoked as a practice for men to separate themselves from all that is feminine (Daly, 1994). Matt Ridley (1999) has attempted to provide a response to Kathleen Daly's questions when he discusses the relationship between crime and genes. He suggests that genes influence behaviour. He emphasizes the biological variables as a useful toolkit with which to conceptualize masculinities in the context of violence and crime. As Tim Owen (2006a, 2006b) has suggested in his genetic-social approach, it is very important to recognize and acknowledge the elegant mutuality between genes and environment, to understand that genes 'take their cue' from nature and can be 'switched on' by environmental and genetic stimuli. However, environmental influences are more important.

Having said this, it is noteworthy that not all men produce masculinity through crime and violence and not all men have responded defensively or violently to changing gender relations in the new South Africa. It is the most socially disadvantaged males that are likely to utilize the violent characteristics of masculinity, for power gaining purposes and these are what populate the South African prisons (Connell, 1995; Holter, 2005). There are some men who are trying to accommodate changes in gender relations, for example, Kopano Ratele's (2004) study demonstrates how a group of young, educated men in South Africa today are exploring new avenues for the expression of their masculinity that are not aggressive towards and/or rejecting of women's empowerment. Morrell (2001) describes progressive men as South African men who are committed to gender justice and equality. The ideal South African man is one who is non-violent, a good father and husband, and able to contribute to family support both financially and emotionally (Richter and Morrell, 2006).

Tony Jefferson (2009) offered a psychoanalytic approach to crime in understanding why it is some and not all men who react violently. Jefferson (2002) criticized the idea that masculine gender identities can be straightforwardly read off from social locations. He sees Messerschmidt's thinking on masculinities in criminology as over socialized. He believes greater importance should be given to how men interpret and react to their own psychic considerations and life history. Jefferson's (2002) psychoanalytic analysis in the study of Mike Tyson's rape proves the importance of attending to the irreducible character of the psyche. It is probable in explaining Oscar Pistorius' murder case. The argument is that in so far as masculinity is a kind of identity it must refer us to a study of the interior life of the person. Psychoanalysis is not, of course sociological.

The men who pose as a threat to the social fabric are isolated in the hope that they can construct alternative masculine identities that suit the prevailing circumstances. Unfortunately, the place from which they are expected to learn newer identities is unfavourable. The prison is a breeding ground for criminals (Giffard, Flander-Thomas and Nair, 2004:163 in Balfour, 2004) and the creation of violent masculinities, particularly through prison gangs (Niehaus, 2005, Gear, 2001). Pensalfini (2016: 178) argues that 'if drama is conflict, then prison is a place ripe for theatrical exploration'. Inside the prison, all other means to achieve a masculine identity are taken away so the men are increasingly likely to use violence (Sabo, 2001). Therefore, if the institution created

to resolve an unacceptable level of violence in masculinity, actually perpetuates it, there could be some serious ramifications for the individuals who must use violence, for victims of it and for society; as the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system is therefore problematic for all.

## **Section B: Applied Prison Theatre**

In order to examine the nature of any activity that operates within the prison system, the system itself must be examined.

### **2.4 History of prisons**

The history and nature of prisons worldwide is extensively dealt with in literature in law, politics, psychology, sociology and economics (see Michael Welch, 1999; Stanley Williams, 1999; Hans Toch, 1967; Lori Girshick, 1999; Angela Davis, 2003; Pieter Spierenburg, 2007; Greg Wellman, 2008). Michael Balfour (2004) says that societies have developed systems of justice designed to protect that which is valuable since ancient Greece. He juxtaposes the neo-classical and the social-democratic responses to crime. According to Balfour (2004) the neo-classical response to crime was to impose increasingly stiff prison sentences and harsher settings. Prisons were militaristic in style, physically and psychologically gruelling. The motivation behind imprisonment was the technology of discipline and the ontology of man as machine (Foucault, 1977 cited in Pensalfini, 2016: 109). On the other hand, the social-democratic response holds that it is cheaper, more efficient and more humane to help offenders (re-)establish themselves in society, yet this is not what happened in Europe after World War II when affluence rose (Balfour, 2004 cited in Pensalfini, 2016).

It was around the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the reforming potentials of prisons were seen as places to provide inmates with the opportunities to change their attitudes and behaviours (Khutan, 2014 see also Balfour, 2004). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the role of prison is considered to be a state strategy from crime control and also to serve rehabilitative purposes, preparing inmates to be reintegrated into society with the hope that they will not reoffend (Balfour, 2004). However, the continued existence and expansion of the prison system suggests that it neither controls crime nor rehabilitates (Balfour, 2004). The opening of Goodwood prison into a Centre of Excellence because of the overcrowding in surrounding prisons is proof that the prison system perpetuates rather than control crime. Therefore, 'to say prisons work solely because prisoners are prevented from committing further crimes whilst in custody is a wholly negative statement and one which effectively abandons

any credence towards the notion of changes' (Heritage in Balfour, 2004: 194). Rather than rehabilitate, imprisonment erodes confidences and the ability to emotionally communicate, which results in the release of extremely disturbed individuals whose chances of positive reintegration into society are considerably less than when they entered the penal system (Giffard, Flander-Thomas and Nair, 2004 in Balfour, 2004).

#### **2.4.1 South African prison gangs**

Nelson Mandela in *The Long Walk to Freedom* said 'No one can truly know a nation until one has been inside its prisons'. It is argued that South Africa has one of the most inhumane prison systems in the world. South African prisons are a breeding ground for criminals because of the inhumane conditions and rife violence (Giffard, Flander-Thomas and Nair, 2004:163 in Balfour, 2004). The prison functions just like it did before, to discipline and punish the incarcerated through the control of the body in space through time (Davis in de Waal, 2008: 7 in Young, 2005: 8). One of the characteristics of the South African prison system which has remained constant and has had a profound influence on the operations of correctional facilities is that of the prison gangs (Young, 2005).

Gangs, also known as the Number's gangs are national in South Africa's prisons (Young, 2005). Steinberg (2004: xiv cited in Young, 2005) says they began on the mines by a mythical figure known as *Nongoloza*. They are highly organized, hierarchical, ritualized, 'operate along quasi-military lines that mimic colonial, militarized institutions' (Gear and Ngubeni, 2002: 4) and revolve around the modes of currency which are sex, drugs, valuables and money. The different gangs perform different functions and all respect 'the number'. Once one is initiated into the gang, he bears its mark which is literally tattooed onto him for life. Joining is voluntary and this is inevitable for the need for benefits such as security, acquisition of goods, a sense of belonging, identity and power (Young, 2005). The '28s' are the original 'number' and are the most powerful and prolific. Gear and Ngubeni (2002: 5) say 'the objective of the '28s' is to pamper, protect, and organize catamites or 'wyfies' [wives] for sex'. These men do not identify themselves as homosexual. The 'wyfie' must submit to the will of 'her' husband in exchange for consumables such as food, marijuana, and cigarettes (Gear and Ngubeni, 2002). Second after the '28s' are the '26s'. Their area is physical goods such as drugs and cigarettes and money. The '27s' are a small gang known for physical violence (Gear and Ngubeni, 2002). They are aligned with the '26s' in

that they offer protection in exchange for goods. Miranda Young (2005) identifies three other gang numbers – the ‘25s’ or Big Fives who collaborate with the Correctional Centre Staff and authorities and Airforce 3 and 4 (also known as ‘23s’ and ‘24s’) whose aim is to escape from prison.

South African prisons reflect the three broad explanations suggested by Fraden (2001: 129 cited in Pensalfini, 2016: 117) that account for the current formulation of crime –

- Prisons are a profitable business;
- They reflect a racist culture and
- They create and reinforce modern ways of organizing life.

Amidst of this, I am inclined to Augusto Boal’s statement:

‘The cell cannot and should not – for it would be a crime – become a suspension of life, a life in limbo. A bear hibernates; that’s why when it wakes up in spring it is the same bear as the one that fell asleep in autumn. When the prisoner becomes free, it is expected that he/she become different, after the cure, and does not continue the same as when he/she first entered, after the crime. But how can he/ she be different only by hibernating?’ (Boal nd: 22-23 cited in Pensalfini, 2016: 109).

## 2.5 Prison Theatre

‘The worlds of theatre and prison appear immiscible. One at very basic level, prisons are places associated with punishment and pain, and theatre are places associated with entertainment and pleasure’ (McAvinchey, 2001: 60). Thompson (1998) provokes prison theatre practitioners to critically think about their work when he asks how they can create a celebration with people who have robbed others of joy. McAvinchey (2001: 3) argues for theatre in prison saying that it provokes an inquiry into the relationship between the individual and the state. She further argues that it forces us to consider how prisons perform within the economy of punishment, and compels us to question narratives of crime, punishment and the justice.

Balfour (2004) traces the history of theatre in prisons to the beginnings of incarceration itself. He says there is evidence of drawings by plains Indians imprisoned in the US and art work of performances in camps, ghettos and communist Gulags during Second World War. One of the earliest recorded examples of theatre with prisoners is the 1789 staging of George Farquhar’s Restoration comedy *The Recruiting Officers* by convicts transported to find the British colony

South of Wales (Balfour, 2004). The performance questioned the value of punishment and the redemptive possibilities of theatre.

In the early 1990s there was an expansion of the number of prison theatre projects (Pensalfini, 2016) but it became rarer towards the end of the decade especially in the USA and prison population increased (Thompson, 1998). Thompson (1998: 17-18) says this was largely due to a policy move towards 'no frills' in corrections. However, in the UK, there were over 30 theatre companies providing training and productions for inmates with a variety of artistic, therapeutic and vocational goals (Pensalfini, 2016: 11). Theatre in Brazilian prisons goes back to Ruth Escobar in the late 1970s and 1980 (Heritage, 1998). After she completed a 7 month theatre program, there was a violent uprising which caused a prohibition of prison theatre in Sao Paulo for a period of time (Pensalfini, 2016). Years later, the country's Ministry of Justice and the Prison Administration staff engaged in conversation about using theatre as a means to catalyze penal reform across Brazil (McAvinchey, 2001). Paul Heritage initiated Staging Human Rights performance in the adult prison system in Brazil. It was meant to engage those who lived and worked in prisons in a conversation about human rights. What Heritage drew out of this was the potential of theatre to facilitate dialogue that could never happen in other circumstances (Heritage, 1998: 38). Now contemporary artists have been successful in persuading the prison institute to legitimize artistic activity inside prisons (Balfour, 2004). McAvinchey (2001) says this has been mainly because prisoners, governors, the general public and prison educators are developing the understanding that the arts can provide something to institutions and the people who work and live in them.

There has been numerous prison theatre work around the world ever since. McAvinchey (2001) notes how there are prison theatre programs in more than half of Italy's prisons. Pensalfini (2016) records a number of theatre companies that practice Shakespeare theatre in prisons. There are numerous prison theatre organizations in the UK, the most prominent ones include Clean Break, Geese Theatre Company, Theatre in Prison and Probation and Safe Ground. Clean Break runs theatre-based education and training with women with the aim to reduce risk factors related to drugs, alcohol and mental health needs which contribute to the likelihood of re-offending. The company also produces ground-breaking and award winning plays which dramatize women's experience of and relationship to crime and punishment ([www.cleanbreak.org.uk](http://www.cleanbreak.org.uk)). Geese Theatre

Company is one of UK's leading theatre companies working with offenders. It has a focus of psychotherapy. The dramatic forms are designed by the Geese facilitators but shaped and experienced by the participants in the workshops (Mountford and Farrall, 1998: 110). TiPP founded by Paul Heritage and James Thompson has a lot in common with the offence-based approach of Geese. It uses Forum Theatre as its main methodology. Safe Ground runs courses like Family Man and Fathers Inside to support parents in prison to engage with their children.

McAvinchey (2001) notes that around year 2000, there was notable educational theatre work with puppets in South Africa, and since then there has been significant work inside the country's prison. Organizations include Bonfire Theatre Company and Young in Prison (YIPSA). Bonfire is a diverse group of performers including music therapists, dramatherapists, actors and musicians who use a range of theatrical forms such as Psychodrama, Theatre of the Oppressed, traditional storytelling, Dramatherapy and Playback Theatre. The company's underlying goal is therapy in prisons through story telling. YIPSA works to support young people in conflict with the law through 3 intervention areas: rehabilitation (use art therapy to facilitate behaviour modification and psychosocial development of incarcerated youth offenders), reintegration and advocacy (involves engagement with communities and policy makers in SA on issues that affect the fair, humane and inclusive treatment of youth and children in conflict with the law).

Besides organizations, there has been work inside prison by artists. Christopher Hurst and Miranda Young have developed theatre in prison programmes in Durban which engage with complex socio-political landscape of apartheid South Africa. Young has worked independently with female offenders in Westville prison in Kwazulu Natal (see Young's PhD thesis, 2005). Zolisa Twani has explored the role of music as a tool for rehabilitation and empowerment of offenders at Mthatha Medium Prison (see Twani's PhD thesis, 2011). Alexandra Sutherland has also done some prison theatre work with male prisoners, analysing the performative notions of gender and sexuality. The Independent Theatre Movement of South Africa directed by Tauriq Jenkins does prison theatre work and also trains 'Black' and 'Coloured' actors from disadvantaged backgrounds with a focus on classical work. What these organizations and programmes seem to have is a spelt out intention. Most of them are process oriented making the aesthetic less important. An exception is Alexandra Sutherland's work with male prisoners which teaches drama skills and devises theatre for no purpose with participants.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the criminological perspectives on the criminality of men. I have highlighted the shift from traditional criminology, which failed to recognize men as gendered subjects, to understanding crime as a gendered concept. This shift was offered by theorists such as Messerschmidt, (1993), Collier, (1998), MacInnes, (1998), Powell, (2006), and Jefferson, (2007) who work within the sociological and criminological traditions. These theorists have focused on how men achieve masculinity and how gender is socially constructed in such a way that men are inclined towards crime. As such, I have discussed the role played by South African history, politics and socio-economic factors in constructing the masculinity which lends itself to criminal activity. The motivation behind my work in Goodwood prison was on understanding how men perceive themselves in response to these realities through performance making. The chapter that follows draws on this foundation and then methodologically frames my practice. It also provides analytic justification for my choices.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Research inquiry through /A/r/tography

#### 3.1 Introduction

The chapter frames my practice and research by engaging the methodology and methods employed in this research. It also discusses the ethics considered in the research process.

I begin here with a brief discussion about research and knowledge in relation to performance or creative practice and how it can be understood in the light of research for the generation of knowledge. Research in its different manifestations is expected to achieve two things – provide better information, and lead to new knowledge that challenge existing theories and assumptions (Candy, 2011: 56). For many years, the desirable kind of research has been one that seeks to verify hypotheses or prove that existing theories are wrong. In the Humanities; theory, criticism and historical investigation have been heavily prioritized over arts practice (Smith and Dean, 2009). Over the years, creative practice was proposed as a new ‘spirit of research and pedagogic innovation’ that leads to more ‘ethically committed, culturally, socially and environmentally innovation’ (Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011: 11). The genealogy of practice as research can be traced back to at least the 1960’s with UK practitioner researchers identified as the pioneers in theatre performance (Kershaw, et al in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011). Since then, the field has remarkably grown in a range of countries around the world and the generic terms it has adopted – practice-as-research, performance as research, practice-led-research suggest the attention and recognition the methodology has acquired. Creative practice is now considered not as simply a tool utilized within another approach, but as a complete research methodology (Anderson and O’Connor, 2013). Creative practice has particular characteristics that do not necessarily conform to traditional norms about the nature of knowledge and how it is generated. Landy Candy (2011) says research within creative practice is concerned with the nature of artefacts which is seen as the important part of the research methodology. The artefact can be an experimental apparatus or object of study. The knowledge that arises from practice based research is embedded in a range of outcomes for example understanding about audience experience, strategies for designing engaging art systems, taxonomies of emergent behaviour and models of collaboration (Candy, 2011: 54).

### 3.2 Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR) Versus A/r/tography

Michael Anderson and Peter O'Connor (2013) have motivated the potential for applied theatre as research methodology. They argue that it breaks the silence and challenges the marginalization of disenfranchised communities, makes possible different modes of communication, conduct and embodiment; 'honours and respects local knowledge, customs and practices and incorporates those values and beliefs into participatory performance action inquiry' (Denzin, 2006:334 cited in Anderson and O'Connor, 2013: 195) and 'by working through creativity and imagination, ATAR can offer features of a decolonizing methodology' (Anderson and O'Connor, 2013: 197).

What Anderson and O'Connor (2013) seem to suggest is an instrumental intent in practice (see Chamberlain et al, 2006; Thompson, 2003; and Nicholson, 2005), although protecting the ongoing research, study and practice of theatre inside academic contexts (Hughes, Kidd and McNamara in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011). ATAR also settles in an ambivalent position when it comes to conceptualizing its research methods. Hughes, Kidd and McNamara (in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011) argue that the methods of research in applied theatre practice are subject to multiple pressures because of the ways in which applied theatre practice constructs relationships across professional contexts and also because of its commitment to mobilizing an emancipatory politics. They further argue that the methods by which applied theatre practices are researched construct particular claims for the value of theatre that reflect the uncertain position of the wider field of practice. Owing to its diverse contexts and intentions, multiple methods are drawn upon in applied theatre research, for example, social science methods, participatory and action research, discursive and non-discursive forms of reflective practice as well as modes of theoretically informed scholarly research and creative practice as research (Hughes, Kidd and McNamara in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011). Hughes, Kidd and McNamara (in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011) further contend that the economic overbearing attaching to the wider field has led to engagement with the discourses of evidence based practice, impact of theatre for policy, personal behaviour and attitudinal changes which are difficult to measure and which may have little relevance for understanding the complexities of creative practice. They argue that although qualitative social science and associated methods can yield rich and complex understandings of practice in context, they lack rigorous analysis. The trio further argue that in the reflective and interpretative method, findings are generalized thus lacking credibility, experimental and survey research struggles to

establish reliable measures for sensate, also, practitioner researchers can divert time from artistic exploration if their research has relevance across professional and disciplinary contexts.

Dwight Conquergood (2002: 149) argues for a research methodology that includes ‘experiential, participatory epistemology, ethnography of the ears and heart, a hermeneutics of experience, relocation, copresence, humility, and vulnerable: listening to and being touched by’. This kind of methodology goes beyond cognitive and discursive control. *A/r/tography* underpinned the conceptual framework of my research practice. The practice of *a/r/tography* is a means of inquiry through an ongoing process of art making and writing. It is a methodology of embodiment (Springgay, Irwin and Kind 2005), that is inherently about self as artist, researcher and teacher. Thus, my engagement in the practice of *a/r/tography* was an inquiry in the world through a process of art making and writing to create additional meanings (Springgay, Irwin and Kind 2005). In *a/r/tography*, groups or communities come together to engage in shared inquiry, act as critical friends, and present their collective evocation or provocative work to others. Both the participants and I acted as a community of *a/r/tographers*. The participants worked together as a team of creative collaborators, shared responsibility for the outcome and documented the critical moments of significant changes both in the performance creation process and in their lives.

There are six renderings of *a/r/tography* and Irwin and Springgay (2008: xxvii cited in Stevenson, 2013) give clear descriptions:

contiguity (giving attention to the spaces in-between art, education and research) ; living inquiry (giving attention to the complexity and contradictions of relations between people, things and understandings of life experiences); openings (giving attention to dialogue and discourse); metaphor and metonymy (giving attention to new connection and intertwined relationship); reverberations (giving attention to shifts in meaning, new awareness and new discoveries) and Excess (giving attention to what lies outside the acceptable).

These were not methods, but ‘theoretical spaces through which we explored artistic ways of knowing and being researched’ (Springgay, Irwin and Kind 2005: 889). The renderings guided the participants and the researcher in identifying potential critical moments in performance making practice.

Fundamental to the choice of a/r/tography as methodology was my role in the research and the aspects of my identity I enacted in that role. The methodology invited me to actively, subjectively and wholly engage with my work from within. A/r/tography celebrates and invites interconnectivity among three areas of one's identity which are artist, researcher and teacher (Leavy, 2012). I deliberately chose the methodology to engage these three areas of my identity which according to Stevenson (2013) integrate knowing, doing and making. Some practice led researchers have adopted the a/r/tography approach for self-study and in these instances a/r/tography is somewhat akin to autoethnography (Irwin & Springgay 2008a) which is 'a reflective self-examination by an individual set within his or her cultural context' (Creswell, 2005: 438). In the case of my research, the 'graphy' referred to biographies of the participants. The participants presented close reading to experiences of their everyday living with embodiment, participation observation and interrogation of critical perspectives. This was open to inter-subjective and validation through the observation of others as third person.

Stevenson (2013) says that a/r/tography explores the inter-relationship between the acts of art making, research and teaching. I employed a/r/tography also because central to it is the importance of art, aesthetic inquiry and education. The conceptual frameworks through which I designed my project are aesthetic practice, research and education. A/r/tography as living inquiry incorporates the transformative practice of action research. However, the reflection that lay in my practice was not on a process of planned action to solve a problem as in the case in action research (Creswell, 2005: 550; Candy, 2011). Being in the process rather than examining the process was more important. Meaning was alive, always moving, always growing and it was processed through an experience of constant aesthetic reflection by both participants and researcher.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

Methods are the 'ways in which researches encounter bodies to collect evidence and information and to gain deeper understanding about performance' (Parker-Starbuck and Mock in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011: 211). These two argue that bodies are the materials through which theatre researchers most often discuss performance as means for understanding how performance operates and makes meaning which was the research interest in my practice. The interstitial spaces between aesthetic, inquiry and education were explored through the reflective process.

### 3.2.1 Reflective practice

The role of reflection in action was first proposed by Donald Schon 1983. However, the underlying concept goes further back to John Dewey and his exploration of reflection and thinking through experience (Dewey, 1933). Reflective practice involves a process of reflecting on one's actions and learning how to act differently as a result (Candy, 2011: 38). Schon (1992 cited in Candy, 2011) describes the design process as 'seeing->drawing->seeing'. The affirmation exercise was a useful tool for this process. In the exercise, the men went round saying the positive things they observed about each other at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the performance making process. This exercise presented them the opportunity to self-study; re-work their biographies, to change the scripts of their lives in light of the positive affirmations which they had never considered prior to this experience. I observed how they felt motivated and encouraged. The exercise also created a trusting bond among the men which had a significant impact on the performance making process.

Reflective practice also principles gathering and analysing observation so that the process becomes ones of 'creating->reflecting->creating again->investigating->creating again' (Candy 2011: 41). This was at the centre and heart of the performance making. I borrowed Geese Theatre Company's processing techniques such as 'opening up discussion', 'inner voice from the audience', 'interview'/'hotseating' and 're-working the scene' (see Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002). 'Re-working the scene' was less of a technique which we used to shape the drama by evoking useful material. For instance, every scene would first be performed as if acting to the deaf and dumb that is, action only for a couple of times (see Boal, 2008). The 'deaf and dumb' audience, the men in this case, would then feedback to the actors what it is they had understood from the scene. This tool provided a constructive challenge for the participants. They were forced to think creatively and outside the box, and the same time learn to communicate with their bodies.

### 3.2.2 Focus group discussions

Focus groups discussions around the themes they picked up during the scene would follow after the showing. In the early stages of the performance making, we took a lot of time working through a series of games and exercises which enabled the group to enjoy working together and developing skills. Each game was opened up to discussion, first at one step removed (which allowed for general exploration) and then personal level. The participants were invited to make links with real

life. Games like ‘1 Fear, 1 protector’, ‘slow motion race’ and ‘anyone who’ (see Augusto Boal’s *Games for Actors and Non Actors* for description of the games), gave the participants the opportunity to describe their thoughts, feelings and behaviours within the safety of drama. The aforementioned were then deepened through the ‘inner voice from the audience’ technique during role playing and character construction. The technique allowed them to go into the psychological perspective of the characters. Often times, the inner voices suggested by the participants were drawn from their own personal lives. In the end, the characters of the final play were based on their own personal life experiences.

### **3.2.3 Participant Observations**

The ‘affirmation’ technique meant that participant observation was a part of the process of data collection. The participants closely observed each other. On the onset of the programme, I was worried about the ethics around observation; the potential effect that it might have in shaping the environment of the sessions and the resultant effect on my relationship with the men. However, the men made it clear to me, not in words, that they were accustomed to constant observation within the prison and so they did not seem to mind. They especially appreciated the fact that I asked questions and sought for their contribution, knowledge and skills. Since I was also a participant, there were times when I would miss out on certain moments, but the psychology students from the Netherlands shared their observations of the participants’ body languages and attitudes of those moments.

### **3.2.4 Journal writing**

In a/r/tography, writing is embodied in the name of the research methodology itself (Stevenson, 2013), that is, ‘graphy’. Writing was a fundamental key element in developing the research methods and the performance making. The participants kept reflective journals, in which they were at liberty to write or draw anything that they wished, some basic introduction to theatre notes and writing exercises which I assigned them to do in rehearsals and as homework. Since I was not allowed any video or audio recording devices, journaling proved a most suitable alternative method of visual recording. I requested the journals from the participants in the middle and end of the performance making process as part of my data gathering method. I had received consent from the participants at the beginning of the project. However, in the second time that I asked for the participants’ journals, some of the journals had torn out pages and rubbed off information. I had

also clarified that they had the right to speak out if they felt uncomfortable or threatened in any way during the process. What was powerful about journaling was the fact that it gave them a form of expression which the prison does not give. Although, some would tear out pages, the journals gave them the opportunity to be witnesses to their past behaviours which may have paved the way to refine thoughts and emotions and give them fresh perceptives without judgement. It was a great companion inside prison. Like meditation, it helped them clear the mind and manage prison stress through writing down their feelings, insights, dreams and fantasies.

In the performance making itself, the journals provided what Deleuze and Guattari (1987 cited in Springgay, Irwin and Kind, 2005) call a rhizome; an assemblage of ideas, objects and structure that create new understanding. They collected each other's poems, drawings, short stories which they individually wrote in their cells and used in the performance making. In this way, the participants were empowered to be producers rather than receivers of knowledge, thus making the research ethical.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

I found ethics very important because of the nature of my research approach in the prison context. Amanda S Fisher (2005: 246) argues that 'the ethical positioning of the applied theatre practitioner is crucial to the planning and implementation of all applied theatre projects' and this is because the 'practitioner generally comes to the project as an outsider'. Therefore, my intervention had to be informed by an ethics of practice that was responsible and responsive to the prison context in which I was working. I adopted an attitude of criticality towards the research setting, that is, my responsibilities to the men and the prison system. I was determined to make the men my first priority even if that was going to be at the cost of my research. I asked myself the imperative question, how do I become ethical with a community that is more vulnerable to coercion regarding its consent to participate in prison programmes? I therefore, held a pre-workshop session for 4 weeks with 80 men that were selected by the wardens. I divided the group in half and met each group twice a week. The pre-workshop was closed by two performances to an audience of about 40 prisoners inside Goodwood. The first group performed a forum theatre about an ex-offender who was at risk of reoffending and the other group did image theatre on the problems faced by prisoners as a community. Both performances created opportunity for dialogue between the inmates and the wardens which would probably have changed the relationships between the two

parties. The underlying principle behind the pre-workshop was to give the men a taste of what the theatre project was about and have them make the choice to either participate or not. However, I ended up disappointing more than half the men because they all wanted to continue in the programme.

The first rule I followed in my approach was 'Do no harm' (Graue and Walshe, 1998:70). The 'being-with' notion found in a/r/tography created a relationship with embodiment and ethics which meant that participating in a network of relations would lead itself to gestures of non-violence (Jevic and Springgay, 2008:67). Being viewed as an attractive young woman coming from the university was something I feared would affect my relationship with the men. I moved from understanding ethics as epistemology (what do I need to know about the other) to relationality. This, according to Jevic and Springgay (2008) was ethical in nature in that I engaged with the participants as genuine others, versions of the same, rather than inferior, out-casted law breakers. My sensitivity gave them a sense of respect toward me, to an extent that they saw me as their 'young sister', 'friend' and some likened me to a mother because of the way I showed no partiality, judgment and condemnation. This is something they do not experience inside prison. Also, in the same spirit of doing no harm, the participants' names have been changed in the writing of this research.

Ethics in this research also had to do with my decisions about right and wrong actions (Zeni, 2001: xv). I tried to move away from the temptation of turning towards a search for a universal goodness or definition of truth. Instead, I sought to identify truths that were relative to each of the participants engaged in the process. All the bodies in the research inquiry were treated as active participants whose meaning making contribution was of equal importance. The practice had a communitarian model in which all participants had a say about how the research should be conducted and actually have a hand in conducting it.

The rules that exist in the prison setting are in most cases intended to protect or safeguard the principles of the criminal justice sector more than the prisoners. Anyone who wishes to work in the prison setting must therefore comply with the rules and expectations. For programmes to be accepted in prisons, they should situate their work within the correctional frame (Hughes, 2005). My approach did not sit comfortably within this frame. I presume the prison was content with the fact that the HIAF team that carried over after me was taking the production to Artscape.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the details of the project and engaged the methodological approach to the research project. By engaging the methodology and methods employed in gathering data, this chapter has managed to frame my practice and research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE AESTHETIC JOURNEY

### 4.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I discussed applied theatre's dilemma between utilitarianism and artistry and I argued for a look towards aesthetic – what it is that it is doing, both in practice and theory. Consequently, in my practice, I evaded the impact – effect focus by locating my practice at the borders of what it is that could be articulated about aesthetic intervention in a prison setting. In other words, I did not start out with a set of questions, problems or hypothesis. I 'dived in' with the perception that just the inmates' experiences of art was worthy of serious inquiry. Therefore, I determined to privilege my artistic identity through the employment of the practice of a/r/tography. This approach organically raised some questions which in turn impacted on the practice and the shaping of the final performance. Be that as it may, my approach had challenges and implications for practice which will be discussed in chapter six. In this chapter, I discuss the knowledge about the value of art that emerged in the process of doing, undoing and redoing performances of personal experiences.

### 4.2 Embodying the 't' and 'a' in a/r/tography

What follows is a discussion of the snapshot of artist's and teacher's practices, in other words the knowledge that came out as I embodied the 'a' and 't' in a/r/tography. The teacher identity came out as I alternated between the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator and director. Within teaching, I also simultaneously embodied my artist identity. What was apparent was the fact that these two identities could not be separated. Theatre directing is the name often used in conventional theatre, while facilitator is the name given to an artist using theatre techniques and strategies to serve the needs of the community they will be working with. I facilitated the process mainly because I was working with a group of amateurs and also because I wanted to make sure there was space and readiness to respond to and engage with what the participants were bringing to the performance making process. I directed to support the men in their roles as actors and to push for sounder theatricality and artistry. In the sections which follow, I lead the reader through the performance making process, highlighting and analysing the happenings.

### 4.3 Creating a Safe Space

The cultivation of safe space is an important precursor to any collaborative activity (Hunter, 2008). A safe space is a place where participants can relax and be able to fully express themselves without fear of being judged based on their sex, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, age, physical or mental ability, cultural background or ethnicity. Hunter (2008: 41) gives four meanings of the term in relation to artistic process:

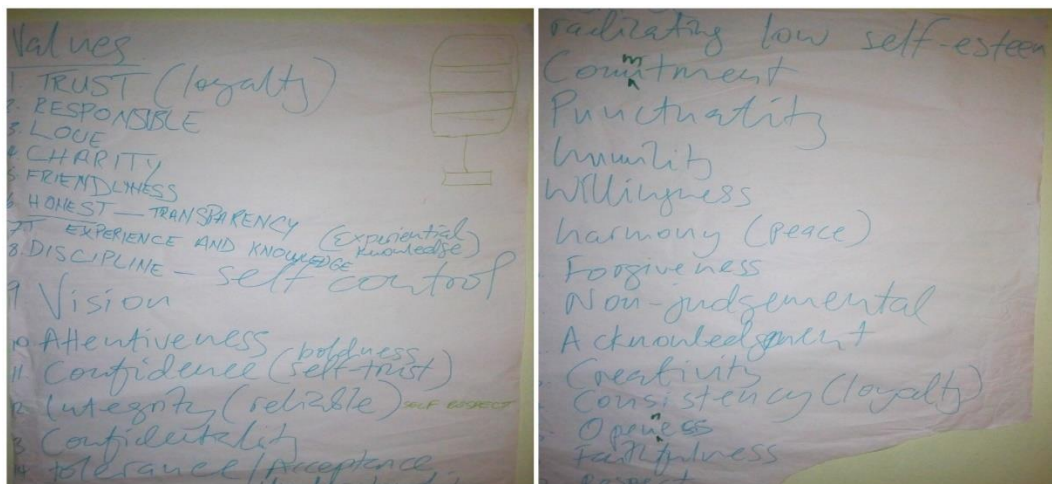
1. Physical qualities of a particular place
2. Metaphorical space – space bordered by temporal dimensions (such as workshops, rehearsal, time/space) in which discriminatory activities, expression of intolerance or policies of inequity are barred
3. Familiarity – safe in the sense that participants are comfortable and familiar. Space becomes safe as it becomes known.
4. Experimentation and artistic risk

What weaves together these categories of safe space is the concept of risk. I found the concept of a safe space in my research of important consideration putting into account the research site. The idea behind prisons is to secure a safe place for society. The first day we went inside Goodwood prison, the head of the unit guaranteed that we were going to be safe and secure because of the prison's tight security. I was left to wonder about the safety of the prisoners. The male participants stressed that incarceration positions their images and masculine identities in unsafe and risky states both inside and outside. I thought about how my practice was going to cultivate a safe space for participants, safe not in the sense that they could choose whether to reveal personal stories in a safe and comfortable environment. I considered how theatre could secure or guarantee safety even beyond the dramatic experience.

To establish safety, the first thing I did was to outline in writing and in word the consent document which described the research, risks of participation, benefits and confidentiality (see Appendix A). It was important that they know what they were signing up for and know that unlike many programmes they attended inside which were obligatory as part of their sentences, this programme was voluntary and they could always withdraw if they felt unsafe. I gave them the opportunity to ask questions and to speak out their expectations. As they spoke out their expectations, I observed how the group was already identifying a commonality among them. This was important since the

participants were strangers prior to the programme and came from a wide range of differences. The ensemble began to be known as a theatre company. As a result, we discussed the values and vision of the company which we summarized in a coat of arms. The actors' attitudes and behaviours towards each other were bound by the values in Fig 1. As a result they became equals. For example, Mark had difficulties expressing himself and so whenever he spoke, some would giggle, but the company banned such behaviour as bound by the values of the company. Fig 2 shows the coat of arms. The dolphin stood for the spirit of playfulness, intelligence and care for another's feelings and thoughts. The eagle resembled the participants' strength, determination and vision during the performance making and even beyond. The beyond was connoted by the beacon which represented their families and friends outside. The last symbol, the chess board, symbolized their life creativity and strategic engagement. The participants spoke about how it also served to mirror their inner self and relationships with each other as they worked in the performance making process; and the outer world as they work around achieving their successes. The participants employed a deep and serious level of engagement into this task. They were absorbed in it for more than an hour; interrogating every suggestion and meaning, whether or not it came close to defining the spirit of the group. The investment was worth it because it resulted in the establishment of a peaceful, cooperative, non-threatening and non-judgmental environment to work in. This structure facilitated expression of different thoughts and feelings which led to experiencing self and others. At the end of the program, Mark talked about how he gained confidence in speaking his thoughts which the company complemented as 'profound' and 'deep'.

**Fig 1**



**Fig 2**



One of the most important parts of the everyday session was the warm-up activities which the actors saw as fun and opportunity to be physical and move freely. Warm-up activities established the tone of the session. We began each session with a bonfire ritual which I adapted from The Bonfire Theatre Company. The ritual entails the actors saying out loud the positive thoughts, feelings, skills and attitudes they were bringing into the rehearsal workshop. These were ‘wood’ for the fire which we lit up by rubbing our hands together chanting ‘*koue hande, warm hart*’ which is Afrikaans for ‘cold hands, warm heart’. The fire was meant to warm up the body, mind and voice. In the first couple of weeks into the process, the actors said abstract things like ‘drama’ and some said out skills they did not possess and others feelings they really did not mean; but as we went on, they began to be true to themselves, each one individually searching inside to see what

they could bring to the process. Here, the participants were invited every day to discover self. In a group interview, the actors also spoke about how it energized them and ignited skills, dead dreams, passions and strength to face the day. They felt encouraged and motivated to contribute something towards the process.

During the four week workshop, in an exercise ‘2 truths-1 lie’, the men spoke about how the prison is referred to as ‘the house of lies and suspicions’ because lies are the order of the day for survival. They lie about being sick so that they get a few minutes to breathe fresh air on the way to the hospital. They lie to their families about being off drugs and having found God; they lie to their children that they are out of the city for work. These lies are meant to get their way in prison and to create an image about themselves to their families and friends who are outside. The men revealed that all the lying leads to a point where telling the truth becomes hard. This revelation made me wonder if, during the interviews and discussions, they were saying things that I needed to hear so that they could create a perfect picture of themselves to me, or if it was really the truth. Be that as it may, we resolved to make our sessions a truth-telling safe space, so that they would attempt at redeeming their honest quality. This was a challenging thing for the participants since we always had a warder closely watching us in every workshop. The participants avoided saying things that they felt would be used against them.

To build trust, I introduced an exercise in which each one told the story of how he got his name or nickname. One participant said he got his nickname from the relations he had outside with multiple women. He mentioned that he liked the title because it gave him status in the neighbourhood. Another had the nickname ‘Shadow’ because of his secretive drug dealings. Another’s name meant ‘we hope’. He said being the only boy child, he was his family’s hope to carry the family name and to take care of his family, but the pressure that it came with led him to becoming a disappointment. The actors revealed that they had been living up to the meanings of their names and nicknames. One of the things that stood out was how the exercise set those who did not know on a quest. They were curious to know how they got their name and for those who already knew, they wanted to discover if they were living up to the meanings of their names.

Since the beginning of the programme, I observed how one of the actors, Spike was suspicious of me. When he returned from the water break to find us in this exercise, he stopped it and challenged me saying I had not followed the prison ritual, which is to identify myself, since I was an ‘alien’,

otherwise he was not going to open up. Frank offered to retell my story but still Spike was reluctant to share his. The following day, I introduced another exercise called the circle of trust. In this exercise, participants stood closely together in a circle, one person stepped into the middle, closed his eyes and fell over, but the group caught him before he actually fell. Spike refused to do this exercise and this time around he physically challenged me. He stepped right into my face and demanded four times that I look at him straight in the eyes; he asked me ‘do you trust me?’ I looked away to which he reacted, ‘I said look at me, here. Do you trust me?’ I told him no and he replied ‘thank you’ and withdrew. This opened up a discussion about different degrees and forms of trust, but still Spike would not budge. It was only at the end of the session when he walked to me again and asked me to go read Psalm 91 from the Bible. As I began to recite the whole Psalm to him, his face immediately transformed and we finished reciting it together. He shouted ‘oh, you’re my sister’ and he ‘fist bumped’ me. Through this incident, I realized two things – first is that trust is an expensive commodity inside prison, which means that much emphasis and time should be on cultivating a safe and trustworthy atmosphere. Secondly, I understood how games and exercises act as stimuli in facilitating dialogue that creates a common ground to build trust. However, I also question the suitability of western games in an African context. My argument is that games should suit context or else there is the potential of doing more harm than good. For Spike, Christian faith was that safe mutual ground. However, I wondered whether the revelation of my faith was such a good idea considering other participants, who were not Christian, for instance, Paul who is Muslim. To my surprise, when we introduced the idea of best-friends, Paul wanted to be my best-friend. He had found something other than religion as mutual ground.

The idea of best-friends was that two people would be friends for the duration of the programme for accountability purposes. This idea transcended beyond the rehearsal space as they shared secrets and taught each other Afrikaans and IsiXhosa in their cells. One striking incident was between Odwa and Michael. During a storytelling exercise, the warder came in and grabbed Michael out of the room calling him a ‘dog’ because he had misconducted himself the previous night and so he was to be locked in. This displeased Odwa who reacted in such a way that the warder locked him up too. What was striking about this incident was how the actors were looking out for and supporting each other. The process was creating friendships. In an interview, the men revealed to me that they have a deep longing for bonding with their counterparts thus affiliation

into gangsterism, but the idea of best-friends was an alternative option for them to form relationships that are based on other common interests besides gangsterism.

The trust circle exercise grew very popular. After doing it so many times, one day the actors invited the warder to participate to which he declined saying, 'these people are my enemies'. The men really wanted him to participate and had expressed genuine promise to catch him. The actors saw in the exercise the opportunity to regain the warders' trust but the warder could not because he is trained against trusting inmates. The actors said the only people who seem to trust them are the pastors and religious leaders. Interestingly, in an interview, the section warders acknowledged that the theatre workshop was contributing to security and safety in their sections. The theatre programme motivated the inmates to keep prison rules because they wanted to continue in it which served as an incentive. The programme reduced disruptive behaviour; it was a distraction from acting out, thus assisting in maintaining order.

As space became more and more familiar, the men spoke about how the theatre had become a distraction from prison gang life. As highlighted in chapter two, gangs are a space for men to perform violent masculinities. The theatre programme became an alternative supportive and informal structure for them to explore their identities, skills and abilities. I observed how they felt more confident and comfortable sharing their sensitive experiences. Talking was preferred to writing, particularly by Owen, Mthatha and Nkululeko. The second time I asked for their journals, some pages were torn out. They did not feel safe sharing written personal narratives and yet could share them during an exercise or game comfortably. I wondered if it was the performance aspect that served as a safe container, or illiteracy. However, one cannot say especially considering how the same space threatened one's manhood outside the rehearsal space. In one of the play's scenes, the lead character was supposed to dance a Zimbabwean dance, *Mbende*, (which is characterized by sexual connotations) to depict his sexual relations with multiple women. Since Drew danced this with men, the prison gang which he belonged to heard about it and started bringing his sexuality to question and his allegiance to what his 'number' represented. Drew was forced to drop the character for fear of his life.

## 4.4 The Actors Prepare

My sole goal and responsibility was to teach and train the actors whose characters were to be based on themselves for a good performance. From here on, I follow the production process chronologically, reflecting on what I have come to understand about the value of theatre through the participants' fusion of their thoughts, senses and emotions in response to art work.

### The Amateur Actors

Most of the participants had never been involved in theatre or drama acting. Michael, Odwa and Themba had been in a drama club in primary school. Some had never watched a theatre production, only movies and TV shows, and so their knowledge of acting was limited to watching acting on the screen. They were weak in their imagination but not in their intelligence. They were strong and rich in their knowledge with emotion, but weak in understanding and experience because, as they acknowledged, expression and feeling have been frowned upon by society and laughed at by members of their sex. They had had experiences of anger, violence but little experience of the emotions of love, fear and empathy. They possessed bodies that were physically fit from lifting weights and engagement in athletic games, but did not know how to manipulate their bodies to use them to create characters. They had no skill in rhythm of movement and strength. Their voices were harsh and unpleasant and they spoke incoherently. They had no technique of acting, but were conscious that it was necessary for them to learn about acting. With such a background, I accepted that teaching was part of my work.

### Acting with the body

The actors' body was the fundamental element for the theatrical presentation, thus it had to be trained. I made a list of warm up exercises from Boal's (2002) *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* techniques to liberate the actors' bodies. These included Colombian hypnosis, walking group, slow motion race, minimum contact with surface of the floor, the writing body. These were to remove obstacles that hinder the actors, stimulate muscles, to allow the actors to be more conscious of their bodies, to develop group awareness of space, each other and their own bodies, cooperation and self-control. Most of them displayed impatience, low concentration ability and edgy exteriors because of the mental and physical tensions caused by the prison environment. The exercises focused their minds and doing them as a group sparked energy and created socialization. Because they do not get time to exercise, the physical warm-up exercises were a good workout for them.

Another exercise they enjoyed doing was one in which we imagined that there was a big garbage bag in which they threw in their negative feelings and thoughts. On days when they would have random searches, the actors came angry and frustrated by how the warders ripped apart their pillows and duvets which they had to sew again. This exercise had a catharsis effect in that it gave them the opportunity to release their bodies, minds and suppressed emotions caused by the prison environment.

After one or two of such high energized exercises, it was important that they get focused into the theatre making process. The next series of exercises were to train the body to show emotion, character, and context and to tell a story. I introduced the theme of communicating with the body starting with a simple walk and freeze exercise. I asked the men to walk around the space at different speed levels and freeze at my word and then to look at the opposite person and discuss what they thought their bodies communicated. From their experiences with prison gang hand gestures, the actors knew that the body communicated, they were unaware of body language in theatre performance. The rounds that followed, I noticed how they were increasing their capacity to use their bodies to describe emotions which led to increased emotional awareness. When we moved to 'image of the word' they were attempting at making even their faces communicative. The actors mostly acted emotions of violence and anger which they had adapted from their prison experiences. By the time we got to 'image of the place', they were better at bodily expressions. I tasked them to sculpt images of the prison and drawing on life situations and personal experiences, they sculpted images of the challenges and problems that they were facing inside which included poor sanitation, overcrowding, lack of exercise and library time, and poor health care. The image theatre task gave them the opportunity to invest themselves in the creative process, to be reflective thinkers and to develop their perceptual abilities.

They also started realizing how acting for the stage relied on their physical discipline and endurance. The images of the prison were performed at the end of the four week pre-workshop audition to other inmates. The point of this showcase was to work towards developing expressivity, creativity, imagination, critical thinking and solidarity within the group. The group's showcase left ambiguities that allowed the audience to create their own responses and understanding of life inside prison, thus creating a sense of communality for the inmates. This would have probably been compromised if the warders had attended the showcase. However, the actors were

disappointed that the warders did not attend since the discussion facilitated by the image theatre had the potential to challenge the warders' perceptions of what a prisoner is, which would have improved their relationship. I learnt that their disappointment and frustration came from their feeling that they were communicating their grievances through the image theatre.

The next stage was to incorporate movement into the images. I introduced a number of exercises that required them to act only using their bodies with no dialogue. The 'walk, stop, justify' exercise in which they walked in the most ridiculous way, stopped and justified why they were walking in a particular way, caused them to practice moving about the room in different variables, thus triggering their imagination. They began to create interesting characters which were developed by the exercise 'what are you doing', in which an actor mimed an action and when asked what he was doing he would answer something he was not doing and the next person mimed the action said. The actors began to demonstrate commitment to these characters and improved in their improvisation and imaginative skills. We advanced to character development. I asked them to imagine a character, come up with a name, age and a job and introduce themselves to the group. The characters they introduced were mostly the changed and transformed ones which they perceived in their futures. Some of the choices they made included fruit and vegetable shop owner, policeman, taxi business owner, poet, professional football player. These were not far from who they were before incarceration. However, there were others who performed characters such as doctor, president and TV presenter. In a sense, the aesthetic space provided an opportunity for them to practice and rehearse new identities, lifestyles, and to improve self-image. They started going further to develop the vocal characterization which led to vocal exercises. In work-shopping the scenes, I would first ask them to act as if they were 'playing to the deaf' (see Boal, 2008). We would reflect on a scene at one step removed, asking about whether the story was clear, the characters, emotions and the environment, relationships and tensions. This reflective technique allowed for further theme exploration using examples from their own personal lives which became material for the theatre piece. They also enjoyed the exercise – 'acting my day'. It was an opportunity to mirror their day-to-day interaction and communication leading to a greater impression about self and others. They were able to see acknowledge each other's feelings and thoughts of life in prison, thereby creating a sense of empathy. The exercise was also an opportunity for some to express pent up feelings.

Preparing the voices was mostly done through breathing exercises, singing songs and ‘rhythm of the group’ exercise. Rhythm of the group entails the actors creating a rhythm or melody using sound only. There was a shared language within the group which revolved around hip hop and rap. The ‘rhythm of the group’ presented opportunities to be creative through the expression of ‘free styling’ – rap. The men explored feelings associated with their own identities and experiences. This was evident in one of the following piece adapted from Freddie Mercury and Queen’s ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’.

*Mama, I just killed a man  
I put my gun against his head  
I pulled my trigger now he’s dead  
Mama, life had just begun  
But now I have gone and thrown it all away  
Mama, ooh I didn’t mean to make you cry  
I’ll be back again sometime tomorrow  
Please hold on  
Tell me I’m still worth it  
It’s never too late to change my life  
Send some guidance from above  
Lord your blessings and your love  
Mama, ooh I don’t wanna die  
Sometimes I wish I’d never done wrong at all  
Please hold on  
Tell me I’m still worth it*

Through this piece, they acknowledged their mistakes and expressed their desire to be accepted back by their families and friends. Rhythm, sound and songs impacted on their mood, concentration and relaxation, which supported the role of emotion in cognitive function. Andrew aka ‘Music man’ loved to sing such that during the affirmations, he would dedicate a song instead of speaking. He said it allowed him to say things he could not say and to express himself fully.

#### 4.5 Rehearsals and Final performance

Sessions were followed by storytelling and writing exercises either in pairs or as a group. Storytelling was facilitated by pictures, newspaper stories and objects. These provoked much discussion of personal issues and relationships and many topics were explored which ultimately led to focusing on the creation of the play around the theme of fatherhood.

##### Playtext – A Change in Your Life

The title of the performance was inspired by Brian who during the performance making process would close his statements by saying ‘you can make a change in your life’. *A change in your life*, the play, was an intergenerational story about three brothers who lived wretched lives as a result of their childhood and upbringing. The story is told in real time with the plot driven by a *sangoma* (traditional spiritualist) who leads the audience into the life experiences of the brothers through flashbacks.

The first scene opens at Tata Ndlovu’s household. He is lying on a sick bed surrounded by his three sons, Jimmy, Alex and Thomas, his wife, his three brothers and their wives, the *sangoma* and his right-hand man. The Ndlovu family members have been summoned for what seems to be a family cleansing ceremony. The atmosphere of the scene is intense and filled with ritualistic elements. The scene is characterized by the rhythm of the drum and acrobatic movements done by the *sangoma* and his right-hand man. They sing and chant in IsiXhosa which is interpreted to English by his right-hand man. It is revealed that Tata Ndlovu has been sick because of the avenging spirit of his first wife whom he mistreated to the point of death, and now her spirit is on a mission to kill every family member. The way out for the family is deep cleansing and purification which is to be done through confession and forgiveness. One by one, the three sons are called by the *sangoma* to confess their ‘sins’.

In the second scene, the audience is invited into Jimmy’s life through a flashback. The scene is characterized by a Zimbabwean dance called *Mbende / Jerusarema* which portrays Jimmy’s sexual relations with multiple women and how that led to children born to him out of wedlock. The men, who are cast as women, dance sexily around Jimmy, to the rhythm of the drum. After much discussion, the actors suggested to have one woman refuse having sex with Jimmy. The same woman then rounds up others and together they put an end to sexual abuse.

The third scene is back to present. It opens with Uncle Pax on his feet. He spits to the ground with disgust at Jimmy's treatment of women. Jimmy is quick to shift the blame to his father whom he says witnessed jumping from one woman to another. By having Uncle Pax, a man of the same generation as Tata Ndlovu condemn Jimmy's behaviour, the actors put forward the argument that they do not always have to agree with their traditions because within the same traditions, there are some men who have responded positively and so they argue that at the end of the day, it rests on an individual's character. This led them to a writing exercise – what manhood means to me.

The fourth scene is a flashback to the second born son's life, Alex. He is in the hospital, in a coma. In what seems like a nightmare, five women masked in terrifying faces, come to haunt him. These are his ex-wives whom he physically abused. The nightmare sends him into a cardiac arrest. The doctor and the nurse rush into the room. Towards the end of the scene, everyone steps out of character except Alex and the whole cast stands like a choir around Alex and sings a chant titled '*You can make a change in your life*'.

In the final scene, the *sangoma* addresses Thomas, the last born. Through the scene, the audience discovers that Thomas impregnated one of his elder brother's daughters. It sets the two brothers fighting through a dance. The fight is broken by Alex who points everyone to the fact that their father, Tata Ndlovu is the root cause of everything. All blame is placed on him. He sits up and apologizes for his wrongs and the family reunites. The decision to have spirituality as a catalyst for reunion was reached upon after much discussion on the men's experiences of religion both outside and inside prison. The men argued that religion plays a significant part in shaping their attitudes and behaviours. They argued that it keeps them out of trouble and makes better men inside and outside.

In scene one, the confession and forgiveness was a metaphor for the actors' admitting to their crime. This was transferred into an exercise in which the actors listed down the names of people who they thought had been affected by their crime and spoke in the character of the affected. It was interesting that most of them had only viewed themselves as victims and had never really considered the actual victims. This gave them the opportunity to own up to their wrongs, which is what they argued is the first step towards rehabilitation.

Scene two interrogated the actors' opinions and views of women in present day South Africa. They revealed that they resent women because of how the constitution has empowered them to the extent that the men feel they have lost a grip over their homes. The men said they therefore, look for every opportunity to re-assert their manhood in the home. It was interesting that although the men agreed that treating women as sexual objects was an old-fashioned view of women, it is still a traditional masculinity that they hold on to. The men argued that this is because they feel that the available opportunities such as better employment are beyond their reach because of their lack of education. They blamed the apartheid regime, racism and poor governance for their inability to get employment and enough salary to provide for their families.

### Rehearsals

According to our schedule, we had planned to run through the entire play for 18 hours until final performance date, but we only had less than 10 hours because of the unavailability of some actors on some days. Be that as it may, our limited time demanded a level of focus and discipline from the actors. The actors who had owned the production piece because they played bigger roles, encouraged others to be more disciplined. These actors subconsciously took the responsibilities of keeping time, changing scenes, prompting actors, and carrying props. Frank said he felt a sense of responsibility to the company because the company depended on him to play the drum which was needed for every scene. The actors who played the bigger roles talked about how the rehearsal process made them feel recognized, wanted and valued for the first time since their incarceration.

However, because there was no substantial incentive to participating in the project, some actors like Mthatha were not as committed and invested in the process. In all the times I asked for the actors' journals, he submitted his knowing that it was empty. His reason was he is not much of a writer but a reader. He played no role in the play because he did not agree with how every character should be played, but would still come to the workshop to share his opinions. Although the other actors felt that he was pushing back the company's progress by asking too many questions and being too opinionated, they were forced to think critically and explore issues they would not have confronted otherwise. In the end, his contrary opinions strengthened the company's team spirit.

The dance demanded high level of concentration and focus, therefore, the actors were required to rehearse more, which ultimately made them more committed and disciplined. It also offered the opportunity to practice self-control and to test new forms of expression. The medium also allowed

for their experiences with women to be challenged. The Zimbabwean dance and Xhosa ritual developed a multicultural awareness. This experience of a different culture helped the ‘Coloured’ actors to shift perception about Xhosa culture. Other valuable experiences identified by actors included building friendships and establishing respect from others, finding out about creative arts, increased ability to be less judgmental, expression of feelings, self-improved image, confidence, communication skills (including listening), understanding cultural differences, memory of positive experience, and a break in prison routine.

### **Final Performance**

Initially, the play had been set to be performed at the prison hall on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, in front of an audience of about 70 inmates; but because the main character had a doctor’s appointment which was approved for the 14<sup>th</sup> only a week before, we had to settle for the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2016. Since we could not secure the hall for the 13<sup>th</sup> because of the short notice, we settled for a small carpeted conference room inside Goodwood prison. The warder gathered a small audience of about 26 inmates and two warders who came to watch the performance. We moved the office furniture to the walls of the room and performed on the ground close to the door for exits and entrances while the audience sat on chairs. It was an intimate space. The acoustic of the room was better than our rehearsal space. Because there was no stage and no curtains, the actors froze 5 seconds before starting the acting and after finishing the scene. Although, the actors were disappointed by the turnout, they said it made them feel like it was another rehearsal which made them relax and have fun. They spoke about achieving a sense of accomplishment especially since most of them had never finished anything in their lives.

### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to lead the reader into the performance making process, highlighting significant happenings as the participants interacted with each other and with the aesthetic of theatre. I have selected only a few that spoke to the final destination of the creation journey because of lack of space. The discussions and writing tasks that accompanied the games and exercise provided a throughline which led to the final performance centred on fatherhood. The chapter which follows examines the theme of manhood as the broader concept under which fatherhood was explored.

## CHAPTER FIVE: 'CAPTIVE' MANHOOD

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter builds upon chapter four in the interrogation of the research inquiry – what can be articulated about aesthetic intervention without purpose in a prison setting. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the games and exercises led into discussions which led into a theatre piece that centred on the theme of fatherhood under the super main theme of manhood. Therefore, the intention of this chapter is to explore and analyse manhood, by discussing the participants' ideas and experiences of 'being a man' pre-prison and in prison as facilitated by the artistry of theatre. Lahoucine and Morrell (2005: 85) have argued that not all men have the 'same amount or type of power, the same opportunities, and consequently, the same life trajectories'. Therefore, the participants' ideas and experiences of manhood are explored in light of differential markers of race, class, culture and religious affiliation. Even in the aforementioned markers, every man may experience and express his manhood differently (Kimmel and Messner, 1992). The chapter, therefore, closely examines manhood through the unpacking of the 17 male participants' stories, poetry, role playing, writing exercises, rehearsal discussions and final performance. At the same time, the chapter invites the reader to ponder the processes' influence on the men as they negotiated an alternative manhood to the one they occupied before and in prison. I paraphrased the participants' words because of limited space.

### 5.2 Boys to men: Transitional Stage

During the choreography of the *Mbende* dance and making of scene two, which explored Jimmy's sexual relations with multiple women; the men raised a topic about transitioning from boyhood into manhood. The question was whether or not manhood is more explicit in sexuality. Themba, a Xhosa young man highlighted that in the Xhosa culture, the transition from boyhood to manhood is facilitated by a circumcision ritual. Speaking from experience, Nkululeko and Sihle concurred that when they reached 18, they went 'up the mountain' for 6 weeks. There, they were circumcised and educated about traditional expectations of manhood. Mager (1998: 660) says that in the Xhosa tradition, this process signifies a 'rite of passage that placed young men on the path to marriage, homestead, headship and fatherhood'. To the few 'Black' and all 'Coloured' men who did not go through this ritual, I asked when it was that they individually knew or realised that they were a man. Below are some of the responses:

**Odwa:** *My father left us when I was very young, and so growing up, my mother would always say you are the man of this house.*

**Themba:** *I knew I was a man when my girlfriend told me she was pregnant*

**Michael:** *It was when I reached 21*

**Andrew:** *For us 'Coloured' men, our ritual is prison, when you go to prison and come out with a 'number', tough and not gay, then you are a man. You would have survived the worst there is and that's what qualifies you*

**Paul:** *yah, Andy is right, and then when you go outside, because you now have a 'number', and have become a member of a gang, you gain some respect, and people start to fear you. No one can mess with you or anyone close to you.*

**Drew:** *I don't believe that nonsense, there's so much to being a man than going to prison. I'm here because of my crime, period!*

**Christopher:** *I agree with Drew, real man are out there, taking care of their families. What manhood do we have to prove here in prison?*

The diverse responses made me aware of the ambiguity about exactly when and how manhood is signalled. Like Odwa, men who grew up in households parented only by the mother, attributed their teaching on manhood to their mothers. Brooks and Silverstein (1995) problematize this by highlighting that, because of lack of strong emotional ties to their fathers, some men may sometimes resort to dysfunctional behaviours like violence. While Andrew and Paul spoke about imprisonment as a rite of passage, the other 'Coloured' men spoke about gangs as a legitimate institution that calls out a man in a boy. They highlighted that gang membership is preceded with ritualistic initiation of rules and regulations. However, the different responses about cultural rite of passage into manhood among the 'Coloured' men in the group made me realize that transitioning from boyhood into manhood amongst the 'Coloured' men is not as culturally distinct as among the Xhosa men. The absence of one unified ritual has led to 'Coloured' men drawing on available understandings influenced by the socio-economic and political circumstances. Maree (2002) argues that crime has become a new form of initiation into manhood for many young men in South Africa, both 'Coloured' and Black men. For the 'Black' man, 'the age-old institutions

and traditional rituals that once governed young boys' entry into adult life have been replaced by rites of passage that are often brutal and deadly' (Maree, 2002: 61). This justifies Morrell's (2011) assertion that societal changes results in new forms of masculinity emerging.

### 5.3 Salient trademarks of manhood

Christopher and Drew's objection to imprisonment as a rite of passage to manhood, developed into the creation of Tata Ndlovu's character, a patriarchal figure that represented a traditional masculinity. The actors presented him as a man with an insatiable sexual appetite, physically present in his children's lives but emotionally disengaged and ruling his household with fear. During the making of this character, the men were invited into their own ideas about manhood. To summarize what the men wrote and shared, the prominent markers of manhood were fatherhood which entails marriage, providing and protecting one's family at all costs, heterosexual prowess, toughness and optimum emotional strength. These will be discussed in the subheadings that follow.

#### 5.3.1 Fatherhood

The consensus in fatherhood as one of the trademarks of manhood was reached from the fact that all the men in the group were fathers. Nkululeko's opinions below demonstrate how being a father is one of the most longstanding traditional symbols of attaining a high manhood status,

*A man becomes a man after he gets married and has a family, but still that does not mean that those who are not married are not man enough. They are men, but cannot speak in the Imbizo meeting. If they do, whatever they say is not given much attention. To be a complete and total man is to have a wife and children, and so when I speak at Imbizo, what I say holds water unlike those who are unmarried.*

Popular among the Xhosa speaking men in the group was the notion that manhood is associated with being married, having children and establishing an independent homestead. Here, their meaning of fatherhood was limited to the state of having one or many children and not the qualities of being a father. Owen and Frank challenged Nkululeko's idea of manhood as traditional and no longer applicable to the present day context. Owen argued that one has to actually assume responsibility of the children.

Owen and Frank are 'Coloured' South African; so speaking in Nkululeko's defence, Odwa clarified that this is part of their Xhosa culture. Here, culture is presented as one of the contributing

factors to the pressure felt by men to perform their masculinity; men are torn between tradition and modernity. Also, according to Nkululeko's quote above, he seemed to suggest that fatherhood goes hand in glove with marriage. However, getting married is dependent on the man's ability to pay *lobola* (African dowry) to the woman's family. If he cannot pay the steep *lobola* then he is prohibited from taking a wife but not from having children in the meantime. The ability to marry is dependent on a man's economic stability; failure to secure financial stability which is dependent on employment cuts the man's marital prospects and, therefore, the successful attainment of manhood (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). The unmarried are positioned as boys by some members of the community, therefore, chieving manhood becomes problematic. Speaking to this, Themba and Michael who are both small in stature said they resented how some members of their communities saw them only as boys even though they were already above 21 years. Themba said he thought that it is probably why he felt the pressure to have a girlfriend so that he would be looked at differently. This kind of pressure felt by both men led them to father children out of wedlock, who are presently fatherless because of their imprisonment. This perpetuates a cycle of fatherlessness which creates many other societal problems.

### **Participants' own experiences of being fathered**

Jimmy's character had a number of children born out of wedlock from his multiple sexual relations, one of whom was impregnated by his little brother. The men spent a great amount of time discussing the problems associated with child abandonment. I facilitated this discussion using a narrated scene below:

*Your father left when you were a little boy, after watching your big success on TV, he returns and wants to start a relationship with you. As the son, Bobby, what will you say to him?*

The men took turns to play the scene in theatre in the round. I directed the scene using 'inner voice from the audience' technique. It was interesting that the thoughts and feelings of the participants were from their own lives. What came from this exercise were the men's experiences of being fathered and circumstances of fathering which I discuss here and the section which follows respectively.

I pointed out in chapter four that storytelling exercises was one of the tools used to build trust and develop dramatic scenarios for the play, pictures being one of the methods used to facilitate the exercise. There were many other pictures used, but the selected one below stirred the men into a discussion about their experiences of being fathered.

**Fig 3**



Holding the picture in his hand, Drew narrated his story about his best friend's girlfriend who came to confide in him about the abuse she was facing from her boyfriend. He said he took advantage of her vulnerability by sleeping with her and the result of that was the birth of his son who is now 15 years old and ignorant about who his father is. Drew said that he was a child of rape and the shame of that has lived with him his whole life.

*Drew: What I did to my friend is shameful. And being in prison is shameful. I have experienced what shame can do. It's best if my son doesn't know who I am and where I am.*

I noted how Drew referred to the boy as 'my son'. To me, this suggested a desire for a relationship with the boy although the circumstances are not ideal for him. Some of the men agreed with Drew while others expressed the danger this has for the son's life.

*Paul: I only go to know my father when I was 16 years old. I wish I had a father; maybe I wouldn't have ended up in gangsterism and in prison. See, I'm inside because 3 years after I finally met my father I shot him dead. But now I think about my two sons, I hope they don't become like me.*

Paul's views highlight a sense of incompleteness, lack and emptiness that young men feel in the absence of their fathers and the extremes they go in search of that completeness. Paul's concern and worry for his children reflected his consciousness of how the absence of his father caused an absence in his own sons' lives. For these men, the experience of being parented or lack thereof led them into the pattern of offending which now caused their separation from their own children.

For the men whose fathers were around, they spoke about how disengaged and uninvolved they were in their lives. They told stories of domestic violence and alcohol abuse by their fathers

***Frank:** My father was good to us, I think he was a good father. He worked hard to provide for all our needs, but he just never had time for us. He died 3 years ago.*

***Mthatha:** My father used to beat up my mum when drunk. I remember I used to stand in front of my mother to protect her from my father's violence, but he would beat me up too.*

***Nkululeko:** Seeing my father beat up my mother made me an abuser too but I didn't realise then that I was being abusive. The environment you grow up in influences you. When you get older, you start to think that maybe that is the way to treat a woman and children because you have never been exposed to anything else. And watching my children and wife fear me when I got home, I used to think that's being a big man.*

***Mark:** I ran away from home because the domestic violence in my home was too much.*

Ratele et al (2012) speaks to the importance of fatherhood as 'being there', which relates to a quality of time and relationship between child and father rather than physical time together. The three men who reported that they were abused and witnessed their mothers being abused by their fathers, admitted to have been perpetrators of woman and child abuse in their homes. O'Neill (1998: 464) notes that violent behaviour is like a 'hereditary disease' inherited from generation to generation. Abrahams et al. (2009: 261) further suggests that in witnessing violence, men learn 'that violence is an appropriate tactic' to ensure men's superiority in the home.

### **Participants' own circumstances of fathering**

In the final performance, the behaviours of the three brothers' characters, Jimmy, Alex and Thomas were derived from the characters' own experiences of manhood in their father's household, Tata

Ndlovu. In this section, I discuss the participants' models of parenthood as derived from their experiences which they adopted into the play.

On Fathers' Day, I tasked the men to write in their journals on a topic: *A Piece of My Advice to You Fathers on Fathers' Day*. This task was to facilitate in the development of the dialogue between the father and his three sons in the last scene. Through this writing task, the men were provoked to shape the scripts of their lives in light of fatherhood. The discussion that emanated from the task in light of the writing of the final scene about parenting was interesting. Two 'Coloured' participants suggested that there is need for an 'acceptable measure of violence' as a means to achieve order in the home.

***Christopher:** The bible says train up a child in the way he should go, so that when he gets old he will not depart from it. Giving hiding is necessary. It instils discipline in a child.*

***Frank:** My father gave me a hiding and because of that we feared him. Just like my father, I want my kids to know that I'm the father of the house and will not tolerate nonsense.*

Christopher and Frank acknowledged the type of fathering they received from their fathers as positive fathering, one that they carried into their homes. Surprisingly, Mthatha, Mark and Nkululeko who grew up in violent homes also agreed to establish fear in the home to create order. The men presented a household as a space which allowed them to exercise their manhood but in a non-violent way. However, their imprisonment state posed a threat and challenge to their identities as fathers. They mentioned that being in jail makes it difficult to act the responsibilities associated with fathering, such as providing financial support. In a game – 'slow motion race', in which the participants stood in a line and ran in slow motion, the last person to the finishing line being the winner – the participants talked about how the prison is like the slow motion race where time seems still, but once outside there is a lot of pressure to catch up with the outside world. These were the sentiments of all the 14 men who were released before. They metaphorically called themselves 'slow runners' with whom the world does not empathize. The pressure weighs down on fathers as they cannot form healthy relationships with their families and they end up losing everything. This is why some of the men expressed their reluctance to telling their children the truth about their incarceration.

**Agbeze:** *I can't tell my daughter that I'm in prison. She worships and idolizes me, if I tell her I will lose her forever. So right now, what she knows is that I'm working in Joburg.*

**Brian:** *I will never tell my kids. Do you know the kind of stigma that will follow them everywhere they go?*

**Themba:** *My child has not been born yet, I hope by the time I go out the baby will still be too young to understand.*

**Nkululeko:** *I wish I had not told my oldest son. It's taken a toll in school and out. He reacted badly. He's angry with me and hates me. He never visits. He's behind in school. He has no friends.*

**Frank:** *My 15 year old son has fallen into my footsteps. He is into gangsterism and tells people I'm a gangster and that gives him a reputation in the neighbourhood. It almost feels like he's proud of me. When he visits, I try to tell him to stop, but it's hard to do that when you are locked inside*

It is interesting that after the discussion, the men resolved to present the character of Tata Ndlovu as remorseful and repentant of his ways. I mentioned in chapter one that the prison accepts a lot of religious programmes. Therefore, this repentant masculine trait is one that is preached and encouraged by religious groups as the alternative. The religious men act as the 'social fathers' who model manhood for the men inside prison. Ratele et al (2012: 558) argues that fathering does not have to be done by the biological father alone because 'fatherhood is a set of behaviours far beyond biological reproduction and thus can be fulfilled by other adult men in a boy's life', such as uncles, grandfathers, church leaders, school teachers and so forth. The prisoners are involved in religion to deal with the guilt of their actions and to improve their own self-concept. They feel better about themselves because at the heart of religion is the idea of acceptance, forgiveness and love, which they hope their families will also extend. In some cases, religion is a 'con game' which inmates play inside for manipulative purposes.

### 5.3.2 Provider

In the same narrated scene about a father who abandoned his son, Agbeze, a Nigerian immigrant pointed out how heavy the responsibility of providing for one's family is. Below is an extract of the scene which he and Owen did in role as father and Bobby respectively:

**Bobby:** *I want to know why you left me to grow up without a father.*

**Father:** *An opportunity came to go work overseas, so I left so that I could provide for you and your siblings.*

**Bobby:** *And yet you ended up settling there with another family forgetting me?*

In the discussion that followed, it came out that Agbeze's father left for the UK with his mother's best friend when he was 2 years old only to re-appear when he was 28 years old. He was raised by his stepfather and when he became of age he changed his last name, taking his stepfather's. Three years later, Agbeze did the same; he left Nigeria for South Africa to look for work, leaving his family behind.

The participants presented a successful man as one who is able to provide for his family which means it is pivotal to have an income. During a story building session using a newspaper article on a local man who was found in possession of drugs, the group came up with a number of scenarios as to why he started dealing. One of them was from Frank's personal experience. He said he had a stable childhood and his father provided well for them. When he got married, he wanted to provide for his own children in the same way he had watched his father do, so he started dealing drugs to gain more money. Dealing drugs was a 'job' to make money over a short period of time that he got into. However, the motivation for participating in drug dealing which was to provide for his family, started to diminish as the instant gratification of easy money became a reality. Ultimately, all he wanted was to fulfil his social role as provider. Drew agreed that the wife can take care of the rest, but providing for the family is a man's responsibility. This suggests how gendered the concept of a job is. The role of provider is fundamental to being a man in their eyes. Barker and Ricardo (2005) argue that in African culture, employment is a requirement for manhood status. Not only is becoming employed a passage from childhood to adulthood or dependence to independence, it also symbolises masculine growth. Ratele (2003) emphasised that it is in situations like these, when young men project their futures and ability or inability to attain

manhood based on job security, that they experience a sense of overwhelming desperation which translates to violent and criminal activities. Unemployment in South Africa has, therefore, undermined men's ability to meet accepted social roles of manhood and fatherhood (see Hunter, 2005; Mfecane, 2008; Wilson, 2006) and their sense of masculinity is threatened (Gheradi, 1995).

The men revealed how unemployment encourages involvement in gang activities. In the same narrated scene, Sihle suggested that it was probably because the father could not afford to provide for his son, Bobby, so it was as good as not having a father. The men who abandon fatherhood responsibilities still feel emasculated; therefore, they affiliate themselves to gansterism as a means to negotiate their male identity. Salo (2003) further suggests that these masculine constructions may also be an attempt to display the expectations of what it means to be a man in their communities.

Salo (2003) argued that 'Coloured' men are not deemed breadwinners, yet still they experience emasculation for failure to gain employment. The historical context in which 'Colouredness' was shaped plays a vital part in this. 'Coloured' women were the preferred workforce in the textile, canning and leather industries in the Western Cape. With a male workforce that consisted of casual labour, more women were thus employed and were also afforded state housing and welfare grants which increased their authority in their households and communities. It may therefore be argued that 'Coloured' men may have been encouraged to express their manhood by way of hyper-masculine expressions (Cooper and Foster, 2008; Stevens, 2008).

***Paul:** when you don't work, your wife or girlfriend nags you. So when a dealer comes, you go for it. Not that it is the way out, but it's a way. So if I can make the money then there will be no more nagging because I can buy whatever she needs.*

***Frank:** When you start you will never stop. It will be difficult. It is a process but you are deeper in the thing. You will start to enjoy it afterward.*

Being in a gang is not only a lucrative business, but also a street brotherhood. Under Apartheid, being part of a gang was 'an attempted defence against personal pain and isolation' (Pinnock, 1997: 5). Now, the men join also to escape the stress associated with being a provider. The 'Coloured' men also concurred that it is a way of securing protection for themselves and their families. Therefore, a successful rite of passage into the gang places one in a privileged position.

As highlighted in the literature review, the constitution of South Africa prioritizes women as the main beneficiaries of legal and political reform (Langa, 2012). This has challenged men's authority in the homes. The men in the group expressed how retaining the status of head of the household is a struggle.

***Paul:** women should know their place and should adhere to the rules set by their husbands.*

***Brian:** the wife can also work for the house, but as a man you should stay the head of the household, cause you are the head*

***Mark:** the bible says wives should submit to their husbands.*

There seemed to be a consensus in the group that the head of the household status is rightfully men's and it should not be attached to or dependent on their employment status. In a situation where the woman refuses to acknowledge the man's authority, the men discarded the use of violence and physical abuse, not necessarily because they infringe upon women's rights, but because they were aware of the repercussions stipulated by Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998. They therefore suggested the use of verbal abuse and restricting women's freedom as good replacements.

### **5.3.3 Heterosexual Prowess**

Heterosexual sex 'is essential in the realization of maleness, in the social mobility of the male from boy to man, to father, to head of household, to decision-maker to MAN' (McFadden 1992: 183). Heterosexual prowess as an attribute of 'real' manhood came about during the creation of the sexual dance scene. Although the men condemned Jimmy's treatment of women as sexual objects, some of them admitted that they have been promiscuous once or twice in their relationships. Those who admitted to promiscuity reported that this was 'normal' since sexual activeness is a biological need that they have to satisfy. Wood and Jewkes (2001) buttress this point by arguing that such men have a hope to achieve and maintain traditional manhood, and therefore, they are promiscuous in an effort to convince their peers of their masculinity. Below are the opinions of some of the participants in an effort to interpret Jimmy's behaviour:

*Nkuuleko: I think men like Jimmy would have experienced abuse or had their male ego crushed at some point in their lives and so by sleeping with many women, they seek to boost their self-esteem.*

*Mark: Some even go to the extent of raping women. Rape is a big problem in this country. It is because of bruised manhood experiences, and so men want to re-instate their superiority over women.*

What is presented here is the notion that having multiple sexual relationships serves as a way of attaining a sense of masculinity. I found it interesting that Mark would share those thoughts considering he was serving time for rape. What he pointed to is the fact that it is mostly marginalized men who inflict their superiority upon women by a method of rape in order to deal with their frustrated masculinities (Jewkes, 2009).

Male rape is associated with the construction of manhood inside prison. The men commented that the perpetrators of rape in prison are men who consider themselves heterosexual. These men only sexually penetrate and if penetrated they lose their manhood status. Therefore, the men highlighted that they constantly have to fight for their manhood inside prison. Gear (2001: 15) says ‘the construction of manhood in prison is a magnified form of relations which contribute to violence outside the prison walls’. Sexual interactions are controlled by the ‘numbers’ gang, the ‘28s’, also known as the *Ninevites* or *Nongoloza*. Though the numbers work distinctively, they are connected in their operation. Drew, who is a ‘27’, decided he was going to drop the Jimmy character if he was supposed to dance *Mbende*. In the course of the *Mbende* dance, he was to crouch while jerking both arms and vigorously kicking the ground with the right leg in imitation of a burrowing mole and ‘mate’ in the middle with the men who were cast as women. In the context of the play, the dance was characterized by a hyper masculinity, that is, sexual prowess; but the fact that he was dancing it with other men, brought his masculinity into question by the members of his gang. The men reiterated that it is risky inside prison to do or say anything associated with femininity.

#### **5.3.4 Feelings and expressive behaviour**

Men and women cope with and manage their feelings in different ways that are specific to gender (Simon and Nath, 2004: 119), and influenced by cultural beliefs (Hochschild, 1981 cited in Simon and Nath, 2004). Robin Simon and Nath Leda (2004) suggest that there is an emotional culture

which contains norms that discourage and encourage certain feelings and expressions. In a focus group discussion, the group agreed that, culturally, they are not allowed to be emotionally expressive; otherwise they risk being seen as less of a man.

***Nkululeko:** As little boys we grew up being told that men don't cry and so I keep my emotions to myself.*

***Frank:** when my father died, I could not cry. The night after his burial, I went out to drink and that's when it hit me. I cried alone in my room.*

***Themba:** it is inappropriate for a real man, I mean a man who is not gay to say to another man 'I love you' or 'I miss you' or walk around holding hands, but women can do it very comfortably*

From Themba's response, the type, target, intensity, and duration of feelings are specified as appropriate by cultural norms. Also, according to Kemper (1991, cited in Simon and Nath, 2004), differences in social position influence regularity of certain positive and negative feelings to social situations. Stanley said he is not afraid and ashamed to show how he feels and some men are like that. Stanley was raised in a middle class family and worked in a bank. He said he frequently tells his children that he loves them, which most fathers in the group said they do not pay much attention to because they find it uncomfortable.

Frank did not cry when his father died probably because of how the expression of emotions and feelings is heavily socialised. Simon and Nath (2004) say that when people's feelings and expressions depart from cultural norms, they often engage in emotion management or expression management. One can argue that his intoxication was a way of managing his hurt and pain. Alcohol and drug abuse was pointed out to be one of the ways in which men deal with social issues.

***Christopher:** no one can solve all life's problems, but drugs always made me forget my problems for a while*

***Michael:** I turned to drugs, I know that was wrong and didn't make the problems go away, but at least in the moment I was high, I felt carefree.*

In dealing with their inability to fulfil their responsibilities, the men said they felt frustrated and distressed and thus turned to substance use as a coping method.

Expression of feelings for men is behavioural (Brody, 1993 cited in Simon and Nath, 2004). Men have always been viewed as those most likely to be inclined to enact negative displays of their gender, such as violence and anger. Anger is closely associated with males.

*Paul: an angry woman is unsexy. Women cry and that's sweet. Men don't cry, they show their anger, by... I don't know. (Pause) I shot my father because I was angry*

*Owen: when I'm angry I want to hit something, a wall or something*

While women deal with their anger by seeking social support, men are likely to express violence against women. Owen argued that in most cases, the violence against women is because of the constant nagging received from the women. He said it is almost as though the women ask for a beating.

*Owen: I might not be working, but I should still get respect in my own house and be able to control both the children and the wife*

Although the men agreed that unemployment left them feeling powerless, they saw the importance of maintaining masculine power through retaliation. They argued that disrespect is a motivation for using violence towards women.

The men said that a man has to be tough. They display toughness on the streets, in prison and in their homes. 'Coloured' men in the group agreed that there is an exaggerated toughness and audaciousness that is observed in their constructions of masculinities. In the homes, physical abuse is used as a form of validating male strength (Wood and Jewkes, 2001). On the streets and in prison, they perform and endorse masculine norms that display optimum physical strength. Optimum physical strength relates to their display of violence against other men. The men said that if one is beaten down by another man, he feels emasculated and goes out to seek other means to retain his manhood.

## 5.4 Negotiating manhood

Throughout the whole performance making process until the end, participants were being challenged in their ideas and opinions of manhood. This section will highlight snippets of the project's impact on the participants' perceptions and attitudes.

The performance making process was encapsulated under the motto '*You Can Make a Change in Your Life*', which became the title of the performance piece. The below chant devised and performed by the men in scene four, clearly indicates how self-transformation was desirable within the group.

*You can make a change in your life*

*Can make a change in your life*

*Make a change in your life*

*A change in your life*

*In your life*

*Your life*

*Life!*

*Be the change, Breath the change, embrace the change, live the change (Change, change)*

*Name the change, reach for change, touch the change, and respect the change (change, change)*

*I am changed, we're changed, and this is change, you can change (Change change)*

*CHANGE!!!*

We discussed what that change was and for Drew, who at the beginning of the programme said felt ashamed of his past and incarceration, to the extent that he never wanted to tell his child to know about him, wrote and shared the poem below with the group during the rehearsal process of the play.

*I'm a father nothing can change that*

*I've been given this wonderful gift by God our Creator*

*I'm back and I'm better, I'm rising from the ashes*

*I know you are not pleased to hear me say that*

*I'm a father nothing can change that.*

*Tender loving is not what I'm used to  
But being a father, that is something I will get used to  
It's going to be a challenge with many obstacles along the way  
There will be the Nay-Sayers, hoping that I will disappoint  
I know I'm good at nothing and spoken many words that are untrue  
I'm a father and that's so true  
I'm a father nothing can change that.*

*I am a father and I know I have failed  
However this true sound, only the grave can be my failure  
I'm gonna do this, I'll give it all my best shot and when I'm done with that, I'll start again  
and be even better  
I'm a father don't you forget that.*

*I've got my eyes on the prize; my arms are wrapped around my joy  
This is serious, a life is at stake, and a future hangs in the balance  
There's no turning back, I've made up my mind  
My heart in tune with the future  
I'm a father I'm gonna do this  
I'm a father nothing can change that*

Drew said his biggest piece of learning was the importance of communication. He said it is better to be a distant rather than a non-existent father. According to him, the whole process raised his awareness of how children are affected by absent fathers.

Owen, whose perception of women was somewhat traditional, dedicated the below piece of writing to all the women:

*You are a woman, woman  
You are incapable of hate, yet when you do, you do it passionately  
You are incapable of anger, yet when you do, you do it ferociously*

*You are the stability of a nation  
The very foundation of morals and values  
You are the personification of purpose, your aim is to please  
Sometimes you might ask yourself. Why me?  
I will most gladly answer that question for you.*

*You are a woman, woman  
You are the very air that I breathe  
You are the substance of my weary soul, you make me whole  
Most importantly  
You are a woman, woman*

*What is it about you that makes me so intoxicated?  
Is it because when you love, you love righteously?  
Or has it got to do with the way you exude confidence in what you set your mind to?  
Maybe it's your extra-terrestrial beauty that is so captivating  
You are breath-taking  
To tell you the truth, it can be a lot of things, but there is this one thing I'm very sure of*

*You are a woman, woman  
And without you there can be no me  
Without you how can I be?  
Without you I will cease to exist  
Without you. Without you.  
No!!!*

*You are a woman, woman  
And I salute you.*

Odwa's picture, **fig4**, was according to him, the ideal manhood which he desires to attain. The group had a discussion about his drawing arguing that considering his present circumstance, it is only but a fantasy. He argued that he saw his fathering role from prison starting from the level of providing emotional support. In light of emotional support, I asked the men what they thought of

Tata Ndlovu's heart pouring moment with his sons at the end of the play and if they will ever have such a moment with their children.

*Nkululeko: My father and I never had heart to heart moments and so when I had my own kids I never used to tell them I love them, but I really wished my father told me he loved me and was proud of me, it would have made a difference. I have committed to telling my children every time they call that I love them and I am proud of them. They say it back and it feels good.*

*Brian: I wrote a letter to my son and gave it to his mother to give him. I didn't actually say the words, but I drew a heart.*

The men argued that starting from emotional support will make it easier to fulfil their fatherly responsibilities when they finally go out to their families.

**Fig4.**



The men also saw the affirmation exercise as helpful in encouraging them to be more comfortable in saying how they feel about each other and their family members. In a 'role reversal' exercise, in which I tasked the men to embody the characters of people who had been affected by their crime, most of them played out their children:

**Michael as M.J:** Mommy, where's daddy? I miss him so much.

**Owen as Ocean:** playing chess with you is boring, playing with daddy is fun, and he lets me win. I miss him. He promised to buy me new sneakers on my birthday. He's coming back from Joburg with them.

***Agbeze as Joyline:** today at school, the teacher asked us to draw a picture of our families, I didn't draw daddy because he's not with the family.*

The men acknowledged how tough the exercise was but appreciated that it made them consider how their crime might have affected their families which they had never done prior to this. Generally, there was a resonance about how the process gave them the opportunity to share opinions about fatherhood and to reassess their own.

***Themba:** I am really nervous about my unborn baby, but I picked up some tips that I will use when my child finally comes.*

***Mark:** it was interesting to me that we are all fathers but there were different ideas shared about how to handle a situation, like when we had that discussion about child spanking.*

In an informal interview, I asked the four men who played female characters how they felt playing women characters

***Paul:** It was fun. I think I looked funny in the wig and the skirt. I really tried acting submissive but it was hard, I guess because I have never really observed how women do it.*

***Andrew:** I enjoyed it; it brought back memories of when I used to dress up like a woman so that I could sneak into my girlfriend's room*

***Brian:** I felt silly and stupid in a woman's clothes*

***Stanley:** At first I felt really uncomfortable, I didn't want to do the dance, but I told myself it was only acting*

Stanley and Paul's responses point towards the possibilities for men to perform complicit masculinities; that is, masculinities that challenge hegemonic manhood by respecting women; and this is only when they are provided with opportunities to imagine and discuss their female counterparts.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Applied theatre emphasizes the body as the most important material in the discussion of how performance operates and makes meaning (Parker-Starbuck and Mock in Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011: 211). Therefore, the correlation of the inmates' bodies in this a/r/tographical research offered them the opportunity to share and embody their ideas and experiences of manhood. They were offered a close reading to and a shared inquiry about their experiences and circumstances of being fathered and fathering. The process revealed that men's understandings and successful attainment of masculinity can be understood through their contexts, which include social upheaval, apartheid history and culture. It also highlighted the fact that manhood is an ideal hoped to be attained by all men, regardless of their life situations and trajectories. The process offered an opportunity for the men to imagine alternative ways through which they individually can redefine their manhood identity in ways that are not detrimental to their families and society. A key point raised and supported by the men was that their current circumstances is not an excuse to be absent in their children's lives. They argued that providing financially is not the only criterion to fatherhood. They can be there emotionally and also reach out to other significant male role models to step in, in their stead. The men also expressed their desire for platforms such as theatre to give them opportunities to reach out to their children and families in a safe and relaxed atmosphere.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the limitations of research and some concluding thoughts.

In pursuing this prison theatre research, I did not set out with a sense of a problem or a set of questions or preconceived hypothesis, I simply was enthusiastic to make theatre ‘without purpose’ with prisoners – without purpose in the sense that I eschewed big claims of social efficacy. There are a number of conclusions which can be drawn from this project, in terms of:

- the empirical research work that was undertaken
- the implementation of the theatre programme
- the methods used and shaping understandings of artist’s practice

The research project sought to address a gap in the research evidence around artistic work in applied prison theatre. From the findings, it can be concluded that the aesthetic of theatre in a prison setting has in itself the potential to facilitate therapy as far as theatre has been therapy in communities for centuries. The methodology presented an opportunity for the participants’ minds, bodies and souls to be affected in a dramaturgical perspective which organically resulted in a process of therapy. The therapeutic process was further supported by the processing techniques which I borrowed from the Geese Theatre Company (see Baim, Brookes and Mountford, 2002), although this was not the intention. The aesthetic of the art form organically connected the men with the world around them and invited them to make sense of it. It led into an inquiry about manhood and offered the participants an opportunity to negotiate an alternative manhood identity. Theatre making process provided the men with a relaxed and safe environment to draw on their personal situations and experiences in shaping the theatre piece. They shared their experiences of manhood, whilst challenging pre-existing traditional forms of masculinity and each other’s beliefs, opinions and perceptions of what manhood is. It also gave them the opportunity to explore alternative manhood identity. The aesthetic space provided an opportunity for the participants to practice, rehearse and shape new identities, lifestyles, and to improve self-image. They acquired knowledge about themselves and what was achievable for them in terms of employment and relationships with their families and friends when they are released from prison.

In light of the process techniques from the Geese Theatre Company, I felt that they bordered too much on therapy. I realized that I would leave the prison feeling overwhelmed on some days. The participants would transfer their anxieties, fears, and uncertainties on to me, which I did not have the skills or the training to deal with. In such moments, this created a sense of hopelessness and despair for the men. I also wondered if it were the processing techniques or the prison setting or both that influenced the shaping of the performance making process. The prison as a geographical site of performance impacted on the performance making. Prison is a small world within a bigger world. The discussions that issued forth conveyed the kind of attitudes, behaviours and talk expected of prisoners by the prison system and parole board as a proof of their change. Also the space we worked in influenced the participants' narratives. The programme was hosted in a space with an original function to have meals, but it was also used for holding counselling and spiritual sessions. Transforming it into a theatre space needed more than just a few games and exercises.

My core argument in pursuing theatre 'without purpose' in prison was that theatre without any preconceived intentions had something to tell us about aesthetic intervention in a prison setting. I argued that aesthetic should be moved from the margins to the centre of applied prison theatre praxis to become a facilitating quality for prison theatre intervention. Some of the distinctive contributions of the performance making process were:

- Theatre programme provided a distraction from prison gangs. The participants thought about something else other than gang activities,
- Since the programme served as an incentive or privilege, the participants abided by the prison rules and avoided disruptive behaviour in the duration of the programme,
- Through the process, the men recognized that they were not just learning how to act, but also discovered their talents and abilities,
- The method of journaling offered by the practice of a/r/tography is one that the participants evaluated as having given them a form of expression that the prison does not give. The journals gave them the opportunity to be witnesses to their past behaviours which may have paved the way to refine thoughts and emotions and give them fresh perceptive without judgement. It was also a great companion inside prison,
- The process provided positive mood, emotions and energies in the songs, music and dance,

- The everyday Bonfire ritual, which sparked some creativity, passion, skills and energy. It encouraged and motivated them to contribute something towards the process,
- The imaginary garbage bag in which they threw all the tensions, had a cathartic effect in that it gave them the opportunity to release their bodies, minds and suppressed emotions caused by the prison,
- The Xhosa ritual and Zimbabwean dance gave them a cultural experience and appreciation,
- The songs and music created mood and emotion,
- The affirmation exercises provided them with the opportunity to re-script their lives.

‘Theatre of little changes’ freed my research from the limitations of preconceived notions of outcomes to the research. I was able to explore the possibilities of the work in prison settings. This was a reorientation for me given the fact many prison theatre practitioners have narrowed their work in terms of therapeutic outcomes by aligning with the therapeutic and rehabilitative agendas of both corrections and dramatherapy (see Pensalfini, 2016). Be that as it may, although moving between the two poles of facilitation and directing gained the process more critical thinking, it was a cost to the final production. Since the participants were equally creators and researchers in my a/r/tographical approach, I gave them too much leeway in the creation process. It was only later on in the process when I realized the cost this had on the final piece. Time ran out and we ended up with little time to polish the play. In the post-performance discussion, the audience highlighted that the storyline was not very clear. Part of the reason why the final production fell short is because we did not have enough time to rehearse. On a daily basis, it was either we started fifty minutes later or three to five participants were locked in and could not come for rehearsal.

Since prison is a space heavily controlled by the state, it made it challenging to bring in with me some design elements such as props, lighting and costumes, which would have made the final production more visually appealing and the process more engaging on sensory, cognitive, emotive and spiritual levels. My budget was also a limiting factor. Although the actors performed in a few costumes that I borrowed from the UCT Drama Department, I could not bring them in for more than three days. Movement and sound was limited because the room was too small. The small space restricted blocking which would have established character relations and conflict and created more beautiful pictures on stage. The acoustic of the room was poor. It distorted the voices of the actors and many times they would be interrupted by loud announcements that came through the

speakers. The actors would have loved to incorporate their musical instrument skill. The plan was to borrow musical instruments from the prison band; unfortunately, they were busy practicing for the Grahamstown Festival. Be that as it may, the actors made use of the African drum. Overall, the aesthetic creation became intimately connected to a moral vision, one that encouraged the virtues of responsible fatherhood in the participants.

The Department of Correctional Services is service oriented. The needs of the community are more important than aesthetics. Props, costumes, stage, designs were irrelevant and a luxury. It was challenging to reclaim the artistic and aesthetic as the core experience. Also working in a setting that is service oriented, this subtly put pressure on me to want to justify my intervention. I felt a need to articulate my practice in light of the DCS expectations for future partnerships. Be that as it may, high production values or not, the inmates valued the experience and used the space to start conversations around themselves in the world and the world in themselves – which is what art should do.

The HIAF Theatre Company took over after me. If I had the opportunity to continue, the participants and I would have started the process of thinking about seriously professionalizing the theatre company, mainly for sustainability of programme after me and HIAF. When we started the process, the men were not as disciplined and did not have a sense of production ownership. Towards the end of the programme, when the actors started thinking about what lay ahead for them outside, they began to write poems, songs, create storylines and compelling characters, conceptual drawings about Cape Town, families, the government and so forth and they proposed the idea of compiling their pieces of writing and drawings for publication. They began to imagine catalyst networks with other theatre companies, local schools, DCS and national stakeholders. In other words, they were implementing the ‘change in my life’ in terms of practice.

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## APPENDIX

### A. INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

**Project Title: Goodwood Prison Theatre 2016**

**Research Team: NICRO, Help! I'm Free, University of Cape Town**

This consent document describes the research study to help you decide if you want to participate. It provides important information about what you will be asked to do during the study, about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your rights as a research subject.

This is a participatory research study that will result in two related things. The first and foremost is an academic written document that will be made available in the University of Cape Town library. Second is a theatre production that is hoped to be performed by you the subject of research at Artscape in September 2016.

#### A. ABOUT THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH STUDY

This research is an a/r/tographical inquiry – performance making in simpler terms. The focus is on participant embodiment, experience, practice and feeling. The conceptual framework through which the practical research is designed is aesthetic practice, research and education.

There are 4 groups of people who will participate in this research. 20 inmates from Goodwood Prison, Help! I'm Free theatre team from Norway, Applied theatre Masters' student from the University of Cape Town, and the South African National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO).

If you agree to take part in this participatory research, your involvement will last from May to September 2016. You will be required to be present on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 09:15 – 12:45. There may be changes in the timetable; which if they happen will be communicated to you.

You will participate in a series of theatre games, exercises, improvisation, storytelling, which will lead to the making of a performance. In the process, the researchers will allow moments of personal and group reflections, discussions and interviews which will invite you to reveal personal information about yourself. Each participant will keep a journal which at some point in the process will be asked to share with the rest of the group.

The participation will take place inside Goodwood Prison. There will be no video or audio recordings and no photographs will be taken. The only aspects that this research will involve are the productions of a dissertation and a theatre piece.

## **B. RISKS OF THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH**

Potential risks or discomforts may include physical risk, psychological risks, emotional risks, breach of confidentiality. You may feel embarrassed when acting out some scenes and answering some of the questions. Personal information about you could be revealed if the researchers do not properly protect the data. Personal information could also be revealed if required by law to reveal it.

However, to reduce these risks or discomforts you may decide not to respond to any questions you find disturbing or not act a certain character.

## **C. BENEFITS OF THIS RESEARCH**

This participatory research makes no promises; however, the hope is that it will provide the opportunity for your personal growth and development and also teach theatre skills.

You will not be paid for being in this research study or receive any compensation for your participation.

Taking part in this participatory research is completely voluntary.

Your participation will not affect or influence the length of your sentence, your parole, or any other aspect of your incarceration. Likewise, if you decide not to participate, or if you leave the research before it is over, that will not be held against you. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify.

#### **D. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your participation in this research will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by the law. However, it is possible that other people may become aware of your participation in this participatory research and may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Your identity will be kept anonymous in the written document in moments where the researchers refer to a personal experience from the theatre making process.

Under certain circumstances, the researchers might decide to end your participation in this research earlier than planned. This might happen because of bad behaviour, lack of commitment and dedication, substance abuse, psychological or emotional instability.

#### **E. CONTACT PERSON(S) FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS**

For questions and concerns please contact me or NICRO or Goodwood Prison Education and Recreational Department.

**Participant's Agreement:** I have read the above information (or it has been read allowed to me). The study has been explained to me. My questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to be in this participatory research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_