

CHAPTER 1

The Canvas

[kǎn'vəs] n. 1. A piece of such fabric on which a painting, especially an oil painting is executed. 2. The background against which events unfold, as in a historical narrative. (Farlex, 2012)

1.1. Introduction

'So I said to myself – I'll paint what I see – what the flower is to me; but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking the time to look at it – I will make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see in flowers.' – Georgia O'Keefe
(Wikiquote, 2011)

'Perhaps you should start your thesis in the traditional way,' my supervisor said when we had finally done all our catching up and gotten to the intended topic of discussion. 'You can use your introduction to prepare your readers for what is to come; introduce them to your metaphor and describe the writing style that they can expect.' 'Perhaps you're right,' I agreed; chuckling at my recurring tendency of unknowingly venturing into the unfamiliar (and often unorthodox), out of sheer curiosity.

The student peeks into the office and aims an uncertain knock at the door. She can feel the nervous tension swirling around in her innards and her palms are sweaty. 'Come in,' calls a voice from the inside. She arranges a smile on her face and walks into the office with a fake confidence. What if her research idea is not good enough? She hasn't got it all figured out yet. What if all the questions milling around in her head are not as interesting to everyone else as they are to her? What if... 'Hi', she says. 'Hi Rolyn, how are you? Where are you working now? You completed your undergraduate degree at the end of last year, didn't you?'

She relaxes a little, so that, when she says that she is interested in applying for a master's course, she can feel the tension being replaced with excitement.

'At one of the clinics where I am working at the moment, the therapists host a fitness- and support group for thirty-something arthritis patients once a week,' she starts, 'have been for a couple of years now. Their routine is always the same; they start by singing a few songs together, praying, and telling each other about their weekend and then one of the physiotherapists present a fifteen-minute fitness session. For the rest of the day the group waits in a queue for a session of either interferential – or heat therapy of 15 minutes. They go home quite satisfied, but we see them carrying around wooden tables on their heads or sweeping their homes with short brooms, so that they have to stand in a bent-over position for hours on end throughout the rest of the week.' She goes on to describe how the community service therapists have tried to reorganise the group, so that it would provide the patients with an opportunity to take more responsibility for their own health. 'We've started teaching the group members to run their own fitness group. We've taught them the joint-protection principles and the principles of following a resting regime and also how to apply their own hot-packs at home. None of them have applied what we have taught them and many have stopped attending the fitness group altogether, though they still come and wait in line for a 15 minute heat therapy treatment, which would have been equally effective at home.' She carries on, 'We encounter this kind of thing all the time, and though I find it tremendously frustrating, it has also started tickling my interest. It is as though the people find it difficult to identify, amongst the vast lack of resources, the resources that *are* available to them and make it work for them in changing their situations. It seems that many patients are unable to cope with the effects of anxiety that are brought about by change or by the demands that a home programme, for example, places on them. I notice that patients are unable to exert maximum effort to meet a challenge, especially when they have to sustain it for a period of time before reaching the goal and even more so when the end goal is slightly abstract or unfamiliar. These are all characteristics that I

associate with a low level of creative participation. If it is true that each person possesses a certain creative capacity, then, either all the members of these communities that I have been working in have a restricted capacity – which I strongly doubt – or the environment which these people are living in is a barrier to the development of their capacity. This is what I would like my research to be about.’ She breathes out, sits back a little and waits for the departmental research coordinator’s reply.

‘The department usually advises people to wait a bit longer; gain more experience before they attempt a master’s degree,’ she cautions. ‘They usually recommend at least two years in the field. But you seem so excited that I don’t think we should prevent you from studying. Perhaps you can attempt an ethnographic study,’ she suggests. ‘What’s that?’ the student replies.

Ethnography is a research method which is characterised by the participation of the researcher in the lives of people within a specific community, for an extended period of time; “watching what happens, listening to what is said and asking questions” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:p1) that relate to the issues that are the focus of the research. Ethnography in a postmodern paradigm studies the “fragmentary and disjointed meanings” (Denzin, 1989 (a):p.90) that our world of science has created. Denzin further notes that “there is no attempt to grasp the meanings of cultures or structures as totalities.” (1989 (a):p.90) Instead, it works from the basic premise that all cultures are in constant motion and that human beings are active agents in the construction of their worlds of meaning. (Denzin, 1989 (a)) Though the ethnographer aims to express the lived experiences of the research subjects, she is not an objective recorder of experiences. Instead she is, through her writing, a co-creator of the experiences that are studied. “There is no pretence at being objective.” (Denzin, 1989 (a):p.91) The attempt is to display “the agonies, the pains, the successes, and the deeply felt human emotions of

love, dignity, pride and honour” (Denzin, 1989 (a):p.90) so that the possibility is created that others in the world may resonate (Ellis, 1993) with the picture that is painted.

It is the 22nd of July 2008. The alarm on my new contract cell phone wakes me at 5:00 am. I don't feel like getting out of the warm comfort of my bed, especially since getting up would mean facing the chill of a winter morning and the self-discipline of a new meditation practice. I decide to lie just a bit longer, indulging in the heat and the comfort of a bed and someone to share it with, and enjoying the sound of birds waking up in the lush garden.

Another young woman, in a dilapidated high-rise apartment building a mere five or seven kilometres from the upper- to middleclass suburb that I find myself in, wakes from her shallow, dreamless sleep with a start at the sound of a loud crack – like someone kicking down a door? She picks up the second-hand cell phone that she got from someone at work. '5:00 am?' she thinks. Also, almost subconsciously, she notices that her cell phone battery is low, 'I'll have to take my charger to work today; get my phone charged.' She hears a commanding male voice saying something, but she can't make out exactly what. Then she hears her neighbour shouting out in fear and panic, 'Please, no! What are you doing? No! Please, no!'

I finally drag myself out of bed at 5:30 am. 'I'll only have time for a short meditation this morning...again,' I think to myself, angry at my lack of will-power. I hurry through my morning routine with little regard for the luxuries that facilitate (and on which I have become so dependent for) the smooth running of my early mornings. 'Gotta go,' I tell my husband as I walk over to kiss him goodbye. 'Don't wanna be late for the bus again.'

The young woman, her heart now beating hard and fast in her chest, reaches out in the pitch black and grasps at thin air. ‘Shit!’ she thinks, ‘where’d I put the torch?’ She breathes faster and feels the fear threatening to overwhelm her. ‘My kids! My kids!’ she thinks. After what feels like an eternity she finds the torch in the darkness. She hurries to the room where her kids are soundly asleep. ‘Thank God, they’re still fine.’ She closes the door to their room and locks it. ‘If anything should happen to them...’ Now she rushes to the back window. When they broke into her apartment the previous time, they managed to get in by walking along the ledge at the back window. The ledge is completely silent. Without sparing a glance at the magnificent picture of lights that is visible from her apartment on the 20th storey, she rushes toward the front door and then stops. She hears a loud thud, more male voices, and her neighbour shouting and sobbing. Her hands are shaking violently and her thoughts are racing, ‘What’s going on? What should I do? I should try and help her – what if they are robbing her, or raping her? No, I should stay here with my kids. What can one woman do against more than one man in any case? No, I should try and do something. I can’t just stand here and listen. What if they murder her? I’d be as good as an accomplice.’

‘This really is one of the most beautiful suburbs in Pretoria,’ I think as I start walking briskly down the street toward the bus stop, ‘I enjoy living here.’ On one of the street corners I meet up with one of my friends who also takes the bus to work each morning. He is interested in hearing whether I am making progress with my research. I talk to him about the research setting and the contextual difficulties that the participants in my study have to endure, as though it is just another academic topic of discussion; still caught up in the blissful bias that I am studying *them*. (Ellis, 1993)

She gathers all her courage and unlocks the door. She opens it slowly and peeks through the crack. In the hallway are four men in red overalls, hauling her neighbours’ furniture out of the apartment and down the stairs. She walks into the hallway with a questioning look on her face. ‘What...?’ she begins to ask. ‘Shut

up woman! Go back to your flat!’ She looks through her neighbour’s open door into the, now chaotic, apartment. In the midst of the chaos stands her neighbour, shaking her head, sobbing and clenching her fists in complete helplessness.

I am greeted by a buzz in the hallways of the office where I work. ‘Have you heard?’ asks one of my colleagues, ‘this morning at ‘round five o’clock the red ants went into Schubart Park and started throwing out people whom they claimed were behind in paying their rent. It seems they have a list of people who owe between R50 000 and R100 000, but no-one has been notified about an eviction; it’s completely illegal! The residents are protesting in the square.’ I hurry down the street to the familiar towering blocks of flats, where I have spent hours sitting and watching and listening. I am filled with a bizarre sense of excitement as I anticipate the contribution that this dramatic turn of events could make to my research.

A section of Schubart street has been closed off with orange cones and danger tape. A fire engine and a dozen metro police officers are patrolling the area, waiting for a crisis which they can respond to. The business at the fruit stalls on the sidewalk has come to a standstill. All the passersby slow down, stop and look and listen. There are piles of furniture on the sidewalk and there are dazed people, some still in their pyjamas, who won’t have a place to sleep tonight. There is an angry chorus of voices coming from inside the building.

An angry mob of residents have joined in the square. They are singing and dancing in protest. They are directing their anger toward a handful of people in red overalls, masks and steel rods in their hands – the red ants – the governments’ appointed eviction officers. Their anger scares me. The intensity of it mounts as the leader of the protest shouts, ‘Comrades! We will not allow this! We will fight!’ At some point it feels to me as though a critical limit has been exceeded, as though this group has become uncontrollable and as though anything could happen. I am filled with dread. I spot a small group of my

colleagues and walk toward them. Perhaps I can hide in the familiarity of their presence. They have decided to split up and offer our organisation's help to people who seem destitute and in need of help. 'Split up?' I think. 'What? Are you crazy? I don't want to be left alone in this mob!' One of my colleagues gives me a handful of lollipops. 'For the kids,' he says, as though I know exactly what he means, and walks off purposefully toward a mom holding a screaming baby. I look at the lollipops and at the crowd and it all seems utterly surreal. In the midst of the chaos I find myself standing, shaking my head with tears in my eyes and clenching my fists in complete helplessness.

'I am no longer making a mere replica of what I have seen,' I realise, 'I have become a part of the creation of a vibrant and living ethnography - literally a "portrait of a people". (Hall, 1999-2012) I have become an artist; looking at an object closely, allowing it to become a part of me and handing it back to the world, looking like it did before and also looking like me. And I have also become the subject of an artwork; being painted and repainted by the other artists of this painting, the very subjects whom I had intended studying in the first place.'

'I'd like to write my thesis as an extended metaphor,' I told Daleen, 'I think that using the metaphor of an oil painting would be ideal.'

1.2. The layered account – Anticipating an oil painting

'A painting, before being a warhorse, a naked woman or some story or other – is essentially a flat surface covered in layers of paint, assembled in a certain order.'

– Maurice Denis (Wikipedia, 2011)

A layered account is a "postmodern ethnographic reporting technique" (Ronai, 1995:p.396) which "decentre(s) the authority of the 'scientific' voice" (Ronai, 1998:p.407) and levels the traditionally hierarchical format of science texts,

allowing statistical analysis and other forms of scientific prose to occupy a place beside abstract theoretical thinking, emotional understanding and the remembered and constructed details of everyday life as different, but equal 'ways of knowing'. (Ronai, 1995) It is a narrative form designed to "resemble...the stream of consciousness as experienced in everyday life." (Ronai, 1995:p.396) Much like an artist uses successive layers of paint in creating an oil painting, the layered account offers readers layers of experience (Ronai, 1998) – a multitude of perspectives that they must actively synthesize (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) – impressions which paint on their existing canvasses and under paintings, blending with and glazing over their own impressions, allowing them to create their own palpable, lived emotional experiences of the research process. (Ronai, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

However, the layered account does not merely aspire to create texts with which the reader can identify and empathise. Rather, it attempts to create texts that unfold in the inter-subjective space of individual and community, where a dialogue among authors, readers and subjects written / read is created. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) It aims at creating multi-voiced, dialogic documents that not only express the interactions between the observer and those studied (Denzin, 1989 (a)), but also moves the reader to look critically at his / her world. (Watson & Swartz, 2004) Through this dialogical encounter with others the reader is invited to a purposeful and tension-filled self-investigation of both the author- and reader's role in a context, a situation, or a social world. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) In such an instant exists the possibility that the reader might construct new meaning and purpose (Watson & Swartz, 2004); remaking him / herself and thus remaking his / her world. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

1.3. The research ontology – Preparing the surface

'It's all a big game of construction, some with a brush, some with a shovel, some choose a pen.' – Jackson Pollock (*BrainyQuote, 2001 – 2012*)

The next morning I had completed my usual morning routine and walked to the bus stop in, what felt like, a dream-like state of limbo, in which everything... happened...much...slower...than...usual. The newspaper-headings, finding the sensation inherent in the tragedy irresistible, were shouting from every lamppost and street corner – “Tower of Death.” (Hosken & Bateman, 2008:p.1)

Five die in city high-rise inferno as eviction ends in tragedy

**Graeme Hosken and
Barry Bateman**

A Pretoria man watched in horror as his brother desperately tried to escape flames and billowing smoke which consumed a city block of flats. Trying to direct his brother via a cell phone to safety Cyril Mkonsi could do nothing when his brother, Zakes (20), slipped and fell 23 floors to his death as he lost his precarious grip on a window ledge.

As Mkonsi fell, a woman several floors above him leapt to her death, flames and smoke trailing from the window she jumped through.

“I tried. I tried to tell him which way to go but he did not hear me. I heard him say yes, yes and then screams. That was it. There was nothing more,” he said, adding that his brother would have turned 21 on Sunday.’

‘Mkonsi was one of five people, including a toddler, who either fell to their death or died from smoke inhalation after the Kruger Park flats were set alight by mobs fleeing the Red Ants.’

‘The Red Ants, acting on orders from the Tshwane Metro Council after it obtained an eviction order, moved into Schubart Park flats yesterday on a

mission to evict 38 tenants who were rent defaulters. Residents began the morning by hurling petrol bombs at the Red Ants when they arrived at 6am with the sheriff who was armed with the court order. While some of the tenants’ anger spilled on to the streets as they torched dustbins and overturned rubbish bins, others clashed with the Red Ants. Tshwane emergency services were called in several times to extinguish fires in the stairwells so that the Red Ants could continue with the eviction. SAPS and Metro Police officers fired rubber bullets at tenants when they tried

to exit the courtyard between the four towers and prevent furniture from being loaded on to waiting trucks.

Fearing defeat, the tenants retreated from Schubart Park flats to the nearby Kruger Park flats where they took up defensive positions in stairwells, entrances and in corridors. A woman, who was one of those airlifted from the roof of Kruger Park flats, said she saw men pouring petrol onto the stairs and along the passages before lighting it.

“There were flames everywhere. I was on the 19th floor when I saw the men. I just ran. I tried to get past them but they

prevented me. I ran to my house on the 31st floor and when I got there I saw more smoke and flames.”

“The men were setting fire to all the floors. I tried to go up to the roof, but the entire floor above me was on fire.”

“People were screaming and I saw two people jump when I looked out my window. I was terrified. I thought I was going to die. They told me that if I tell the police what happened they would kill me.”

A tearful woman picking up her belongings on the pavement in Vermeulen Street said she was given no warning of the evictions.

“I am a single mother with two children, where am I supposed to go?”

She said the council had apparently given tenants 14 days’ notice following a march last week, but was surprised by the sight of the Red Ants outside the flats when she went to work.

“I paid R16000 last week, but the sheriff said I still owe another R21000.”

“They have damaged my fridge and one of my couches is missing,” she said.

(Hosken & Bateman, 2008:p.1)



The red ants violently threw people out of their homes (Born, 2008)



The Kruger Park building on fire (Born, 2008)



The pain of losing a brother – a victim of the Kruger Park fire (Born, 2008)

I got off the bus and walked along the sidewalk toward the offices of the non-profit organisation (NPO) where I worked, just like every other morning. I noticed the young man, waiting for his blind colleague to arrive, so that he may accompany her to work, and smiled at the man in his wheelchair begging for money in front of the coffee shop, just like every other morning. I squeezed past the queues of school children waiting for their busses to arrive, just like every other morning. ‘Everything is the same,’ I thought, ‘but everything is different.’

I was finding it difficult to walk that morning, as though the pull of the earth had doubled its efforts, requiring all my strength to lift a leg to move. I walked into Church Square and stopped for a while, looking in the direction of the building that had been set alight the previous day. It seemed as though the smoke had coloured the city sky darker. I passed the sidewalk where the homeless people

slept at night. The usual smell of urine had mingled, in my imagination, with a deathly odour of blood; the combined stench and the bitter feeling of guilt that pushed up in my throat left me nauseous.

When I opened my office door on 23 July 2008 I imagined, for a moment, that my entire office had been burnt to cinders and that I had set it alight. I sat down and vomited my remorse in words onto paper – an altar in remembrance of this epiphany; this event that would leave a mark in my life and after which I would never be “quite the same.” (Denzin 1989 (b), cited in Ellis, 1993:p.724)

Pretoria, 23 July 2008

You seem a shade darker today,
air that fills my lungs.

The shadow of smoke colouring you a darker shade of grey.

You're somehow harder today,
earth on which I tread.

The helplessness of death hardening the crust around your heart.

You feel somehow weaker today,
place of my unfound strength.

The pain of loss sucking the will to carry on from your soul.

You look somehow guilty today,
tower of my conscience.

The blood on your hands staining that which you touch bright red

And somehow you've become a part of me,
and your burden is also mine.

And somehow your life has become my heartbeat,
and your death is blood upon my hands.

And somehow I'm sure, on the day that Jesus died
the city looked just like you today.
And with a sigh of defeat, the city gave up hope,
but your hope, our hope arose again!

And somehow you've become a part of me,
and your burden is also mine.

And somehow your life has become my heartbeat,
And your death is blood upon my hands.

And my hope is life within your veins; my hope is life within your veins...

- Rolyn du Plessis, 23 July 2008

Throughout this text I will assume that some experiences and their expressions, such as this “turning-point event” are more important than others and, hence, I will emphasize social moments in which the “mundane, ordinary world of experience” was “exploded” “In these moments the threshold between the past and the future is illuminated...with existential consequence” for the persons involved. “In them character is revealed and lives are turned around.” (Denzin, 1989 (a):p.92)*.

Within the experiences of these epiphanies the connection between what society makes of us and what we make of ourselves also becomes clearer. Through this experience I realised that my activities give shape to the social world around me. (Giddens, 2001) All of the choices regarding my lifestyle, for example, in big or

*The placement of the newspaper article, photographs and poem in this section are intended to highlight this assumption.

small ways, have either supported or rejected the structures of power and money against whom the Schubart Park residents had protested, and as such I have contributed either to their construction or their deconstruction. Likewise, this experience sheds light on the ways in which our activities – and I daresay our ‘selves’ – are structured by the social world (Giddens, 2001). As such, I have assumed that “human societies are always in the process of structuration. They are reconstructed at every moment by the very ‘building blocks’ that compose it – human beings like you and me.” (Giddens, 2001:p.5)

Reality – “Man’s World” (Du Toit, 2004:p.2) – thus, is not fixed and unchangeable; rather, it is in constant flux. It is constructed and reconstructed by us and in turn also shapes us. In addition, it is also affected by people’s views thereof (Toch, 1996 cited in Watson & Swartz, 2004); the way in which people relate to their realities. “People’s perceptions and experiences of the environment can change” – their relatedness to the environment can be reconstructed – “and hence the environment itself can be experienced differently.” (Watson & Swartz, 2004:p.69)

The philosophical underpinnings of the Vona du Toit Model of Creative Ability (henceforth the VdT Model of Creative Ability), with its “phenomenological approach to ‘man’” (Van der Reyden, 1994), seem to resonate with the above-mentioned view of reality; “the starting point of any definition or description” – or, I might add, interpretation regarding either our “abstract, or material realities” is only possible from a “human relatedness” point of view. (Du Toit, 2004:p.2)

1.4. Introduction to the VdT Model of Creative Ability – The under painting *‘Love is an attitude, an orientation of character that determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole. If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism. Yet, most people believe that love is constituted by the object, not by the faculty. Because one does not see that love*

is an activity, a power of the soul, one believes that all that is necessary to find is the right object - and that everything goes by itself afterward. This attitude can be compared to that of a man who wants to paint but who, instead of learning the art, claims that he has just to wait for the right object, and that he will paint beautifully when he finds it. If I can say to somebody else, "I love you," I must be able to say, "I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself." – Erich Fromm (Fromm, 1956:p.46)

The VdT Model of Creative Ability is used among South African occupational therapists (Casteleijn, 2001) as a practice framework for the inter-relatedness between motivation and action (Van der Reyden, 1994) in activity participation. According to this model, each individual possesses a specific creative capacity; that is the “maximum physical, mental and spiritual possibility or promise in a particular person” (Du Toit, 2004:p.3). Du Toit’s earlier work implies that she regards this ‘maximum’ as an ever-increasing, changeable composite factor (2004) which becomes increasingly demanding in relation to the life stages of an individual. Moreover, it is influenced by all the factors inherent in, and in contact with an individual, such as his / her “intellectual ability, personality, environment and mental- and physical health” (Van der Reyden, 1994).

The level of creative participation that an individual has attained, refers to the area of that individual’s creative potential which has been actualised (Van der Reyden, 1994). This realised capacity affords an individual a space within which he / she can act freely and effortlessly (Du Toit, 2004), since it is an area in which he / she has attained mastery. Creative participation is described as encompassing both an aspect of motivation (volition) and action. Du Toit, in her earlier work, suggests that the vital needs of an individual which are “an indispensable part of human nature, and imperatively demand attention” (2004:p.4) are the primitive roots which fuel our initial creative instinct; the inner drive toward self-fulfilment – our motivation – which initiates or directs our behaviour. (Van der Reyden, 1994) “The satisfaction of vital needs through

action, serves to expose” individuals “to the extending needs” of their “widening environment,” (Du Toit, 2004:p.4) once again inducing motivation toward further action. Life, demanding “an answer, a decision, at every new moment of living” (Du Toit, 2004:p.8) entices our motivation into encountering our own realities and answering the demands through action. The model suggests that the quality of this “action is considered to be an expression” (Van der Reyden, 1994) of the quality of the motivation and that action in turn, influences motivation. “The nature of the influence is determined by the success or otherwise of the action.” (Van der Reyden, 1994) The continued realisation of the creative capacity takes place when an individual successfully responds with a creative action to challenges that require maximal effort in action – that is challenges on the boundaries on his / her creative participation. (Du Toit, 2004)

An individual’s creative participation becomes evident by his / her “ability to form a relational contact with people, events and materials” (Van der Reyden, 1994) and the quality of such contact progresses sequentially from unconstructive, frail and egocentric action to robust action which is characterised by initiative and contribution to society. (Du Toit, 2004) This sequencing of the quality of (inter)action is based on the assumption that true humanity is found only in “our relatedness to our fellowman” (Du Toit, 2004:p.5); that “Man is only a human being in his directedness towards other human beings” (Nel, 1960 cited in Du Toit, 2004:p.5). The highest form of motivation, then, is directed toward actions which find new, and if necessary, original successful solutions to life’s answers in response to the needs of *others*. “The manner of man’s relatedness to his fellow man,” writes Du Toit, “causes all individual gradients of World Man Contact, or Man isolation in his world.” (2004:p.5) The directedness toward the ‘other’ has the power to make the ‘world’ acceptable and so near, as to be within us. (Du Toit, 2004)

From the moment I first encountered the VdT Model of Creative Ability, during my undergraduate studies, I was intrigued by it. Not only did the model appeal to the existentialist in me; providing a means for people to rise above their everyday challenges and to live lives of meaning, but it also provided the community therapist in me with dreams of community members initiating projects, serving their communities and transforming them. Figure I illustrates my understanding of the interaction between some of the significant components of the model.

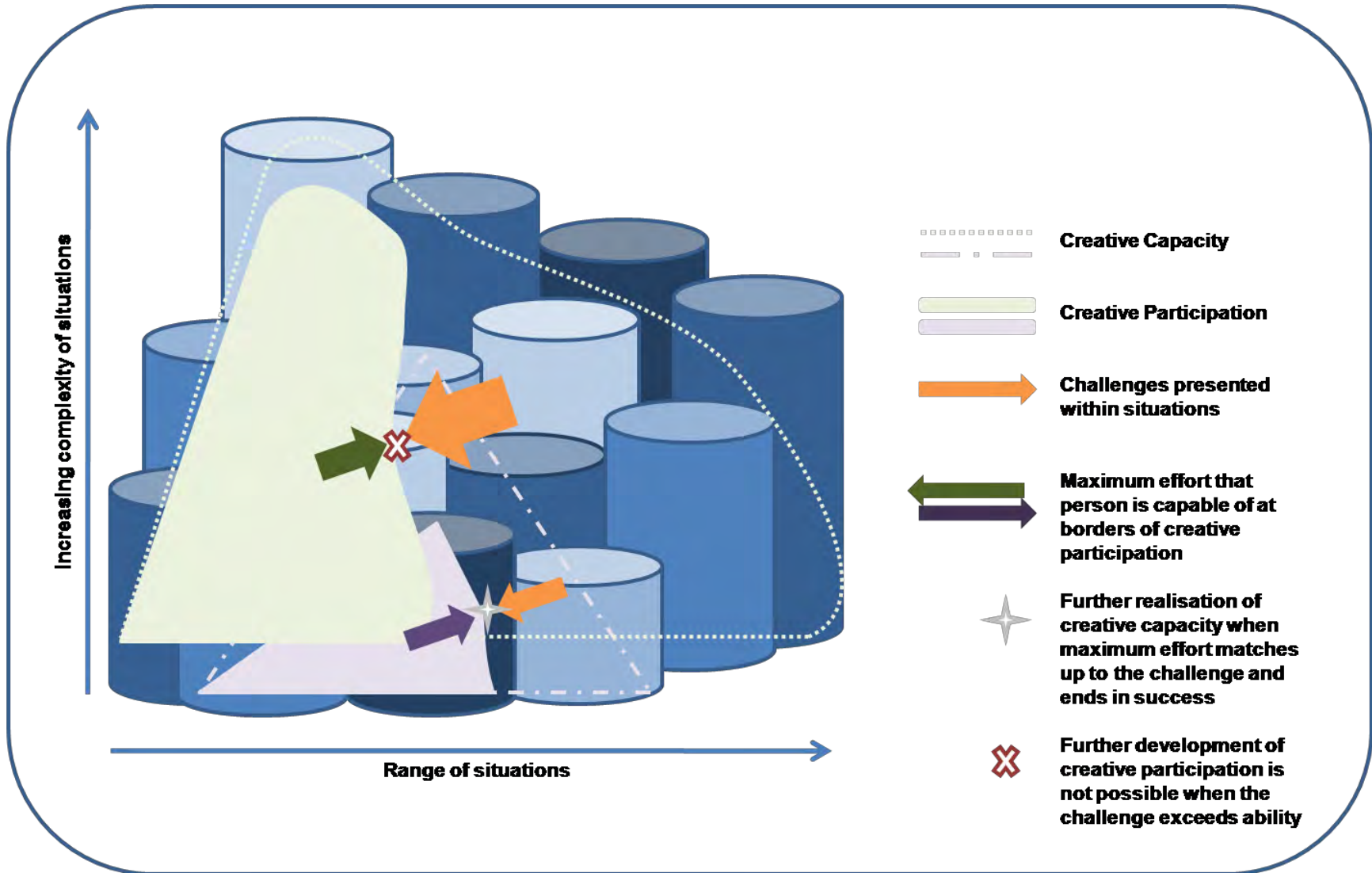


Figure 1 – A visual representation of the VdT Model of Creative Ability

1.5. Aim and objectives of the study – The drawing

All of the above-mentioned elements led to the aim of this study being: to explore how internal and external factors impacted on the creative participation of people living in an inner city.

The objectives of this study, that would inform the aim, were:

- To describe the research participants' experiences of their environment.
- To describe the research participants' perceived impact of the environment on them, specifically with regards to the emergence of (or change in) their creative participation.
- To determine to what extent the participants' creative participation had emerged (or changed) since living in this environment (inner city).
- To describe the sub-culture of the environment (inner city).

1.6. Clarification of Terms – Measuring the elements

Certain concepts that are contained in the aim and objectives, and others that are used throughout this document, needs to be clarified.

1.6.1. Creative Capacity

Creative capacity refers to an individual's maximal creative potential. In other words, it is the maximal level of creative participation that a person is able to reach. This creative potential, although present in all individuals, may be influenced by several factors, such as intellectual ability, mental- and physical health, personality and environment. (Du Toit, 2004)

1.6.2. Creative Participation

Creative participation is a term that describes the inter-relatedness between motivation (volition) and action as it manifests in activity participation. The volitional component is that which directs behaviour toward a goal. The action component represents the exertion of motivation and physical- and mental effort into a tangible or intangible end-product. The volitional component governs the action component and that action is considered an expression of volition. Action, in turn, influences volition. (Du Toit, 2004)

1.6.3. Culture

Culture is the complex system of meaning and behaviour that defines the way of life for a given group or society. It comprises intangible aspects; beliefs, values, and ideas which form the content of the culture, as well as tangible aspects; objects, symbols and technology which represent that content. Culture includes ways of thinking as well as patterns of behaviour. (Giddens, 2001) Culture has two essential qualities: first, it is learned through a process of socialisation, second, it is shared. (Harlambos & Holborn, 2000) Culture is a set of guidelines which tell individuals in a particular society how to view the world, how to experience it emotionally and how to behave in relation to other people, supernatural forces and to the natural environment. (Tjale & De Villiers, 2004)

1.6.4. Sub-culture

A sub-culture is the further sub-division of culture within a complex society. A profession is an example of such a sub-culture. The sub-culture forms a separate group with its own concepts, rules and social organisation. While each sub-culture shares many of the concepts and values of the dominant culture, it is also unique and has distinctive features of its own. (Tjale & De Villiers, 2004)

For the purpose of this research, I assumed that, despite various ethnic- and religious cultural differences between the research participants, they would have certain cultural characteristics in common. That is, I assumed that the research participants from the inner city belonged to the same sub-culture, because they were all living in the research setting; they found themselves in the same location in society.

1.6.5. Environmental Barriers

Environmental factors refer to all aspects of the extrinsic world that form the context of an individual's life and have an impact on an individual's functioning. These include the features of the physical world, the human-made physical world, people in their various relationships and roles, attitudes and values, social systems and services, and policies, rules and laws. Environmental factors which, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability are termed environmental barriers. (WHO, 2001)

1.6.6. Poverty

In his article 'The underestimation of urban poverty and of its health consequences,' Satterthwaite (1995) makes a distinction between 'income-poverty' and 'housing-poverty'. 'Income-poverty' is described as an income too low to allow individuals to meet their basic needs. He argues, however, that these minimum income levels are determined without making sufficient allowance for the cost of what might be termed 'minimum adequate quality' housing. People who live in conditions of 'housing-poverty' are described as living in overcrowded housing conditions of poor quality, with inadequate provision for water, sanitation, drainage and rubbish collection, so that their health is at risk. By implication, people living in 'housing-poverty' may not be 'income-poor' (in other words, they manage to meet their basic needs), but their income does not allow them better housing conditions. "If these people are considered to be living in poverty, it

greatly increases the proportion of the urban population considered poor.”
(Satterthwaite, 1995:p4)

For the purpose of this research ‘poverty’ is defined as ‘housing-poverty’.

1.6.7. Sub-Standard Housing

Sub-standard housing is characterized by poor quality shelter, overcrowding and inadequate environmental services; including the provision of water, drainage, sanitation and waste disposal, to the extent that people’s health is at risk.
(Satterthwaite, 2004; Stephens, 1995)

1.6.8. Socialisation

Socialisation is the process by which “individuals learn the culture of their society.” (Harlambos & Holborn, 2000:p.132) Primary socialisation takes place during infancy, when a child, by responding to the approval or disapproval of its parents and by copying their example, learns the language and basic behaviour patterns of its society. Further socialisation agencies include the educational system and the peer group. “Socialisation is not, however, confined to childhood. It is a lifelong process.” (Harlambos & Holborn, 2000:p132)

1.7. Organisation of the Thesis – Composition

‘No one is an artist unless he carries his picture in his head before painting it, and is sure of his method and composition.’ – Claude Monet (BrainyQuote, 2001 – 2012)

In Chapter 1 I have aimed at painting the events which formed the background to this study. By tentatively introducing the reader to the research design, the style of writing that could be expected throughout this text and the model that this research was based on, I have described the reason for and purpose of this

study. By highlighting a few excerpts of the research participants' lived experience, the reader has been given a glimpse into the research setting. The aims and objectives of this study were delineated, the organisation of the thesis outlined, relevant terms were defined and the chapter is concluded.

Chapter 2 accompanies the reader through an exhibition of literature pertaining to the concept of creative participation from the VdT Model of Creative Ability and how it relates to the intended purpose of this study. The widening possibility, not only for the use of the model but also for occupational therapy, which is afforded by viewing occupation from a political point of view, is discussed. Further, the relevance thereof, within a South African context – in which poverty and the associated environmental barriers are prevalent – is considered. Finally, the use of postmodern ethnography, and more specifically autoethnography, as the appropriate research design for this particular investigation is highlighted.

Chapter 3 describes the materials and methods that were used in the sampling, data collection, -recording, and -analysis of the study.

In Chapter 4 the results of the study are presented according to the objectives and the aim of the study.

The research findings are discussed in Chapter 5 according to the objectives and the aim of the study. Limitations to the study are identified and the study is evaluated. The implications of the findings for clinical practice, for the understanding of creative participation and for further research are considered and the study is then concluded.

1.8. Concluding Remarks

In this introductory chapter, I have pointed out that the intended area of inquiry of this study was the relationship between people, their environment (being an inner city slum) and their creative participation, from an ethnographic vantage point.

The following chapter serves to indicate the relevance of these objectives for current developments in occupational therapy and points out that research of this kind is lacking within the current occupational therapy knowledge base.

CHAPTER 2

The Museum

[myō̄'zēəm] n. (1)Building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are stored and exhibited. (Dictionary.com, 2012)

2.1. Introduction

'Living is like tearing through a museum. Not until later do you really start absorbing what you saw, thinking about it, looking it up in a book, and remembering - because you can't take it in all at once.' – Audrey Hepburn
(Wikiquote, 2012)

Traditionally, research questions are sparked off through a logical process in which a researcher reviews the literature – the current knowledge and truth about a subject – and then identifies an area of competing descriptions, either within the literature itself or between the literature and the perspective of the researcher, which must be resolved. Within a modern epistemology, with its demand for logic and the privileged position of 'science' as the paradigmatic example of human reason, the research question becomes a relentless search for certitude; demanding a homogeneity of experience that does not exist. (Lose, 2003) Instead of emerging from such a linear process, this research steadily grew from my encounter with situations in which I experienced “the influences of a specific context on a community and on individuals.” (Olivier, Oosthuizen and Casteleijn, 2007:p.63) These situations, in which I came “into contact with occupational restriction and deprivation, poverty, effects of HIV/AIDS on family structures and the community, lack of resources and poor access to health care, inadequate housing and the like,” (Olivier, Oosthuizen and Casteleijn, 2007:p.63) left me with a sense of unease; groping in the dark at ideas for what I could do that would be helpful in effecting some sort of change. And always, in the back of my mind, was the VdT Model of Creative Ability.

2.2. Creative participation – The private collection

'I'm touched by the idea that when we do things that are useful and helpful - collecting these shards of spirituality - that we may be helping to bring about a healing.' – Leonard Nimoy (*BrainyQuote*, 2001 – 2012)

'Each of the groups has to implement some kind of community project and my group has to figure out which factors could help make all those other projects sustainable. Then we have to convince the other groups to incorporate those factors into their projects,' I told my fiancée. We were sitting at the top of the pretty little waterfall on the farm where my parents lived, savouring the serenity, which was so rare during my fourth year of undergraduate studies. 'All the groups of students who have been going to Hammanskraal for their service learning blocks have implemented projects, which seemed at the time to have worked well. The problem was that, as soon as the students left, the projects dissolved into nothingness. There is almost no evidence of any projects ever being done there before.' 'Mmm, so what are you planning?' he asked. 'Well, I think we're going to make use of this model that we have been learning about...'

In her model, Vona du Toit proposed nine sequential interdependent levels of motivation with corresponding levels of action (refer to Figure II). (Du Toit, 2004) In postulating the fundamental concepts of the model, Du Toit and Van der Reyden (Du Toit, 2004; Van der Reyden, 1994) explain that the levels of motivation indicate what motivates a person, the strength of motivation and the stages of development thereof. The levels of action, in turn, indicate the exertion of motivation into physical or mental effort, the creation of a tangible or intangible product and the level of skill that a person has attained.

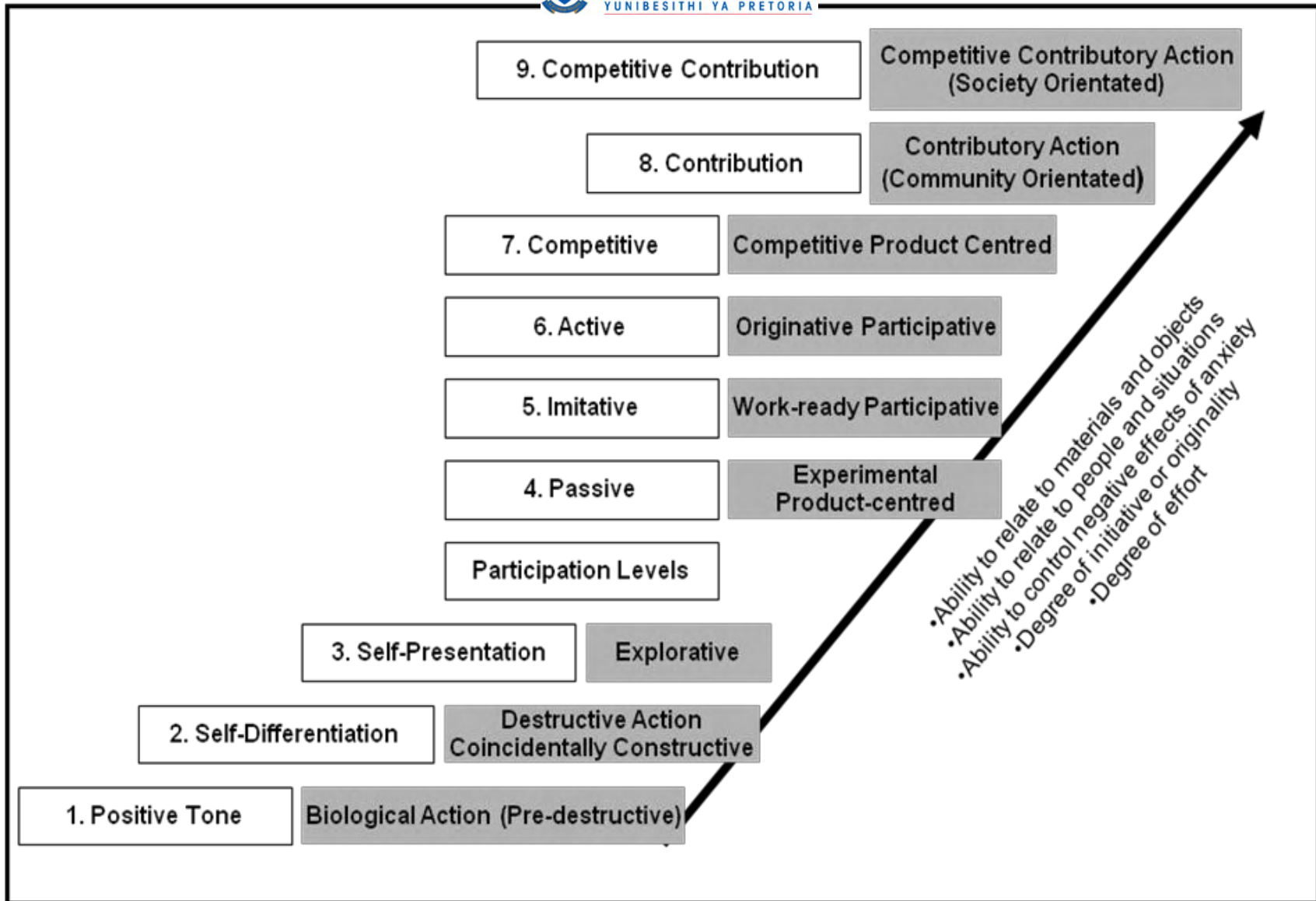


Figure II – The levels of motivation and action (Du Toit, 2004)

Each level of action is described in terms of specific characteristics; these pertain to an individual's ability to relate to materials and objects, people and situations, the ability to control the negative effects of anxiety, the degree of initiative and originality infused by the individual into thought and action and the quality of the degree of effort which he / she is prepared to channel into tasks and challenges in all spheres of life. (Du Toit, 2004) Each level further comprises three phases of progression; in the therapist directed phase an individual requires external support and initiative, in the patient directed phase the individual is able to sustain performance independently and in the transition phase an individual demonstrates signs of progressing to the following level, whilst still retaining characteristics of the previous level. (Du Toit, 2004; Van der Reyden, 1994)

Growth through these stages is dependent on mastery and success in action and a disruption of growth is also possible. (Du Toit, 2004) Though there seems to be agreement that factors, apart from physical and mental illness, which may cause such a disruption, include "general environmental stress, lack of opportunity and stimulation or even specific stressful incidents," (Van der Reyden, 1994) the specific environmental factors and their effects have not been investigated or documented.

This lack of documented research (Casteleijn, 2001; Van der Reyden, 1994) has, in my opinion, disrupted the possibilities of growth for the model itself. The use of the model has extended over the years to include not only "selected, carefully planned and graded treatment sessions" for individuals, but also "full day programmes in which the basic principles have been applied to all activities of daily living," (Van der Reyden, 1994) the categorization of patients for the purpose of training support staff and the treatment of large numbers of patients. The model has also extended its reach into a variety of settings, "such as day centres, community clinics, centres for substance abuse disorders and protective employment work areas." (Van der Reyden, 1994) However, broadening definitions of health, the changing political environment of South Africa and

progressive views regarding the social role that occupational therapy has to play might provide opportunities for the application of the model to extend even further.

2.3. Participation, well-being and politics – Exhibition designers

‘To whom does design address itself: to the greatest number, to the specialist of an enlightened matter, to a privileged social class? Design addresses itself to the need.’ – Charles Eames (BrainyQuote, 2001 – 2012)

‘Isn’t it possible that the students simply aren’t addressing needs that are important to the community itself – so that, when they leave, the community can see no value in continuing with the projects?’ he asked, probing for gaps in my developing hypotheses. ‘I don’t think so,’ I started. ‘The method that we employ in developing our projects, actively involves the community in identifying the problems that need addressing. Also, they seem motivated to participate in the projects, as long as there is an external force coaxing them on. Rather, I think that many of the community members are functioning on lower levels of creative participation; self-differentiation or self-presentation, and they simply cannot maintain projects of such magnitude without external support – the projects aren’t matched to their levels. What bothers me is that it seems as though the majority of the people in this community are functioning on lower levels of creative participation. I wonder if the development of an entire community’s creative participation can be disrupted by the environment that they find themselves in?’

The full effect that environmental factors have on individuals and communities, and on their creative participation, can only be considered against the background of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) statement of Alma Ata (1978), the definition of health which is contained therein and the implications that it has for occupational therapy. It reads as follows: “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or

infirmity.” (WHO, 1978:p.1) Yerxa (1998), in an article in which she explores the relationship between occupational engagement and health, agrees; she views health “not as the absence of organ pathology, but as an encompassing, positive, dynamic state of ‘well-beingness,’ reflecting adaptability, a good quality of life, and satisfaction in one's own activities.” (1998:p.412) From this vantage point, participation in meaningful occupation becomes a fundamental human need, without which health cannot exist.

The work of Wilcock (1998 cited in Watson & Swartz, 2004) has extended our understanding about the centrality of occupation to life. She contends that humans’ innate occupational needs are the species’ primary health mechanism. Not only is it through occupation that a person is able to meet his / her biological needs and ensure his / her own survival, occupation is also the vehicle through which individuals engage in society, realise their potential, pursue their aims, overcome barriers and discover meaning and purpose in life. Law (2002) agrees that “participation...in everyday occupations is vital for all humans, and that the very focus of occupational therapy is to enhance participation – “it is what we are all about; it is our unique contribution to society.” (2002:p.640) As such, all factors which lead to participation that is less diverse, that is restricted to a certain setting, involves fewer social relationships, includes less active recreation, (Law, 2002) and – I daresay – is restricted or disrupted in the development of its quality, inform the scope of occupational therapy.

It is for this reason that the term ‘occupational deprivation’ has become relevant. “Occupational deprivation is, in essence, a state in which a person or group of people are unable to do what is necessary and meaningful in their lives due to external restrictions. It is the state in which the opportunity to perform those occupations that have social, cultural and personal relevance is rendered difficult if not impossible. It is a reality for numerous people living around the globe today.” (Whiteford, 2000: p.200) Not only does occupational deprivation pose a threat to people’s access and ability to participate in health-giving occupations,

the resultant consequences “include an increase in psychosocial and other illnesses; asocial risk-taking behaviour; wasted or under-developed potential; a lifestyle dominated by certain occupations; and a limited ability to adapt to changes in the environment and circumstances.” (Watson & Swartz, 2004:p.22)

Though it seems clear that there is a relationship between occupation, health and well-being, (Law, 2002; Hammell, 2007) Hammell (2007) maintains that the occupational therapy profession demonstrates an overwhelming preoccupation with illness, injury and impairment. Kronenberg and Pollard (2006) agree; “a critical look at our profession’s engagements in the world reveals that we are only (or mainly) working with people who are referred to us with a medical diagnosis—patients; people within institutional settings; and (perhaps most problematically) people who can afford our services, so-called clients or consumers.” (Kronenberg & Pollard, 2005 cited in Kronenberg & Pollard, 2006:p.620) Instead, these authors propose that occupational therapists should be working towards the improvement of quality of life for all people who would benefit from participation in meaningful occupations. This implies that the connection between well-being and human rights should be made explicit and that the right to participation in meaningful occupations should be recognised as a political issue (Hammell, 2007).

“Politics here refers to an aspect of human occupation and human relationships that can be found everywhere, in contrast to big-*P* Politics, which is defined as a particular sphere of human relationships, indicated by terms such as the state, government, public administration, and political parties.” (Kronenberg, Simó Algado & Pollard, 2005:p.70) The politically loaded history of segregation in South Africa, so fresh in the memories of its citizens, the disparities which remain as a result of the lack of opportunities, and a new constitution that promotes everyone’s right to an environment which is not harmful to their health and well-being (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996), emphasises the need for occupational therapists, in South Africa specifically, to develop a political

consciousness and capacity to inform (Kronenberg & Pollard, 2006) the new roles that are available to them. Discussion surrounding the bigger political pictures of reality would be incomplete without the inclusion of the concepts 'occupational justice' and 'occupational apartheid.'

Occupational justice is a term derived from the concept of social justice (Wilcock & Townsend, 2002) and "has been described as the recognition of, and provision for, the occupational needs of individuals and communities, as part of a fair and empowering society." (Watson & Swartz, 2004:p.56) Occupational justice asks us to consider the inequities that arise when participation in occupations is "barred, confined, segregated, prohibited, undeveloped, disrupted, alienated, marginalized, exploited, excluded, or otherwise restricted" (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004:p.71) and encourages us to enable "people to participate as valued members of society despite diverse or limited occupational potential." (Townsend, 1993:p.176) Occupational apartheid departs from the notion of occupational justice and refers to the "segregation of groups of people through the restriction or denial of access to dignified and meaningful participation in occupations of daily life on the basis of race, colour, disability, national origin, age, gender, sexual preference, religion, political beliefs, status in society, or other characteristics. Occasioned by political forces, its systematic and pervasive social, cultural, and economic consequences jeopardize health and well-being as experienced by individuals, communities and societies." (Kronenberg, Simó Algado & Pollard, 2005:p.67)

Occupational therapists are in a key position to act as agents of social control, lest they empower themselves as social agents. As such, "occupational therapists are required to understand the 'not so very fragrant world' we live in." (Chandler, 1964 cited in Kronenberg, Simó Algado & Pollard, 2005:p.75)

2.4. Poverty, environmental barriers and context – Public exhibits

It is not a fragrant world. – Raymond Chandler (*BrainyQuote*, 2001 – 2012)

I breathed out and smiled; certain that I had made a relatively convincing case in defending my protocol. ‘Yes but...’ the senior therapist started. ‘This is not good,’ I thought. ‘It’s actually about internal locus of control. People view their worlds from their internal frame of reference. Their value systems are part of that frame of reference. The external factors in the environment don’t have such a big impact; rather the personal factors – emotional barriers and cognitive barriers – are the determining factors,’ she said. ‘I just find it hard to believe that the entire community has a restricted intellectual capacity – and even if they do, the environment has probably played a role,’ I tried. ‘Look,’ she said, ‘the people you are describing reminds me of the experiences I had on the farm...’ She continued to describe her experiences, convinced that, even if these people had lived in a more enabling social context, they still would not have amounted to much and still would have required ‘help’, because their ‘internal factors’ didn’t allow them to become anything of worth. ‘I’m not so sure...’ I thought.

“Poverty is a global phenomenon affecting an estimated 2.8 billion people worldwide and 25% of the population of the developing world.” (Watson & Swartz, 2004:p.44) It is a brutal reality that almost 50% of the South African population is faced with. In addition, “the distribution of wealth between the rich and the poor (in South Africa) is considered to be one of the most unequal in the world.” (Watson & Swartz, 2004:p.46) Poverty is “a pervasive, persistent and perplexing reality, which has a profound effect...on what people do or may become.” (Watson, 2006:p.155) In an interview that Watson (2006) conducted, the interviewee characterised poverty as “an impairment because it makes people unable to realise their full potential at times...it actually restricts people...from participating in activities, going about their daily activities, as is

preached in occupational therapy.” (Mmambo, 2005 cited in Watson, 2006:p.157) However, poverty is also closely associated with the environmental barriers, which may cause restricted participation in occupations.

In a study, comparing the psychological well-being of the rural and urban poor, (Amato & Zuo, 1992) the authors contend that the poor are more likely than others to be exposed to factors which could be classified as environmental barriers. These include unemployment, crime, victimisation and job dissatisfaction. Additionally, the poor also seem to have fewer social resources to draw on; they have smaller social networks, less organisational involvement and less frequent contact with friends and family. Furthermore, they seem to find their interpersonal relationships less useful, since poverty is associated with lowered support from immediate family members in the form of poor quality marital relations, increased risk of divorce, and general dissatisfaction with family life. It seems as though the poor in South Africa experience a greater vulnerability toward environmental barriers as well. For poor South Africans their experience of poverty includes, amongst others, alienation from community, crowded homes, usage of unsafe or insufficient energy, lack of jobs that are adequately paid or secure and fragmentation of the family. (Poverty and inequality report, 1998 cited in Watson & Swartz, 2004)

Numerous occupation-based practice models and thousands of authors have highlighted the importance for occupational therapists of understanding the effect of environmental factors on occupational participation. This may lead to “a more in-depth understanding of how participation evolves.” (Law, 2002:p.644) Law (2002), in her review of the literature, which includes subject matter from disciplines such as social ecology, mentions that institutional environmental factors (economic, political, attitudinal) have been found to significantly affect the participation of persons with disabilities. (Law et al, 1999 cited in Law, 2002) In addition, she found that “research on resilience cites major environmental risk factors such as poverty, a violent neighbourhood, a peer group that acts as a

barrier to participation.” (Rutter, 1990 cited in Law, 2002:p.644) She also mentions the major impact that a person’s family and people in close relationship with a person may have on participation. According to Law, however, further “occupational therapy research is needed to examine the complex relationship among person, environment, and participation in occupations,” (2002:p.640) so that occupational therapy practice may contribute to the development and fulfilment of participation for persons with *and without* disabilities.

Peloquin agrees that we should “extend the caring ethos of occupational therapy, its spirit, beyond traditional boundaries. ... It begs unfolding in groups that are untouched by its benefits...those who are poor, disenfranchised, socially isolated and marginally cared for beckon us as they have never done before.” (Peloquin, 2005 cited in Watson, 2006: p.155) In order for the purpose of occupational therapy to expand in this manner, Watson argues that it is necessary to differentiate between ‘environment’ and ‘context.’ (2006) ‘Context,’ she says, has a different emphasis; “whereas occupational therapists usually think about environmental factors that promote, limit or prevent a person’s functioning, contextual influences are not personalised and impact the whole population, positively or negatively (e.g. social policies, economic trends and historical facts).” (2006:p.155) Sen mentions that, as expressions of culture the above-mentioned contextual factors are the ultimate sources of power and influence over the capabilities people are able to develop (1999 cited in Watson, 2006). Christiansen and Baum (1997 cited in Watson, 2006:p.61) suggested that “culture affects performance in many ways including the prescribing of norms, for the use of time and space, influencing beliefs regarding the importance of various tasks” – in other words, the meaning that is ascribed to occupations – “and transmitting attitudes and values regarding work and play.” Watson (2006) contends that occupational therapists have yet to take into account “the cultural uniqueness of different contexts” (2006:p.151) with regards to their professional epistemologies, values, beliefs and assumptions.

The WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), is a set of terminology which could be used for understanding, studying and describing health, taking into account the effect of environmental and / or contextual factors. (Hemmingsson & Jonsson, 2005) The ICF provides a description of situations with regard to human functioning and its restrictions and serves as a framework to organise this information. It is structured in an interrelated and easily accessible way and is organised in two parts. The first part deals with functioning and disability, while the second part deals with contextual factors. (WHO, 2001)

A list of Environmental Factors comprises the first component of Contextual Factors and encompasses the physical, social and attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their lives. These factors are external to individuals and can have a positive or negative influence on the individual's performance as a member of society and on his / her capacity to execute actions. Environmental factors are organised in the classification to focus on two different levels; the *individual* level addresses the immediate environment of the individual, including settings such as home, workplace and school. This level encompasses the physical and material features of the environment that an individual comes face to face with, as well as direct contact with others, such as family, acquaintances, peers and strangers. The *societal* level addresses formal and informal social structures, services and overarching approaches or systems in the community or society that have an impact on individuals. This level includes organisations and services related to the work environment, community activities, government agencies, communication and transportation services, and informal social networks as well as laws, regulations, formal and informal rules, attitudes and ideologies. (WHO, 2001)

The basic construct of the Environmental Factors component is the facilitating or hindering impact of features of the physical, social and attitudinal world. An environment is viewed as facilitating or enabling when it supports personal

aspirations, enabling potential to be realized and fulfilment to ensue. (Watson & Swartz, 2004) The environmental factors which are perceived as contributing to the creation of such an environment are classified as environmental facilitators. Factors which create a hindering or disabling environment, that do not match individual needs, and hinder opportunity and the realisation of potential, are classified as environmental barriers. (WHO, 2001)

Hemmingsson and Jonsson have identified that “an occupational perspective on participation in the ICF reveals major shortcomings regarding the subjective experience of meaning and autonomy.” (2005:p.569) Wade and Halligan have recommended a subjective or internal sub-division within the ICF, which would include personal (i.e., role satisfaction and happiness) as well as the environmental factors (i.e., salience and local culture). (Wade & Halligan, 2003 cited in Hemmingson & Jonsson, 2005) Ueda and Okawa have further argued that the understanding of the inner world of the client has proved an asset in clinical practice and, hence, needed to be included in the ICF. (Ueda & Okawa, 2003 cited in Hemmingson & Jonsson, 2005) Research that employs a postmodern ethnographic design may provide this kind of understanding.

2.5. A case for reflexive ethnography – The registrar

The more one does and sees and feels, the more one is able to do, and the more genuine may be one's appreciation of fundamental things like home, and love, and understanding companionship. – Amelia Earhart (BrainyQuote, 2001 – 2012)

Postmodern ethnography; the anthropology of experience, seeks to capture and interpret the problematic lived experience of those that are studied. (Denzin, 1989 (a)) Its concern is in the first place with meaning and experience. “The intent is to show how the micro-power structures of everyday life (the political economy of interaction) create and shape turning point moments of human experience.” (Denzin, 1989 (a):p.93)

Postmodern ethnography provides the researcher with the opportunity of giving the research subject a voice; bringing to life the subjects' "own theories of why they act the way they do." (Denzin, 1989 (a):p.91) However, the ethnographic research experience cannot be separated from the life of the researcher and as such, post-modern ethnography becomes a synonym for autoethnography. The researcher is allowed, no compelled, to reflect on his / her own relationship to the worlds studied and his / her interactions with those studied. (Denzin, 1989 (a))

"Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. Autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (graphy), on culture (ethnos), and on self (auto). Different exemplars of autoethnography fall on different places along the continuum of each of these three axes." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:p.739)

Finlay argues that, "in terms of occupational therapy research, the things we focus on in therapy (namely people's motivation, emotions, thinking and relationships,)" (1998:p.453) which are difficult to quantify, may be ideally observed by means of qualitative research methods that employ reflexivity. (1998) From this point of view, the use of reflexive ethnography seems ideally suited for occupational therapy research.

Reflexive ethnography is one of the approaches that are associated with autoethnography. Reflexive ethnographers focus primarily on a culture or sub-culture and use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions. The researcher's experiences become important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under

study. A reflexive ethnographic design, being ethnography, allows a researcher to enter into a close and relatively prolonged interaction with people in their everyday lives, enabling him / her to better understand their motivations and behaviours. In addition, as a *reflexive* ethnographer, researchers may use their own experiences to further illuminate the culture under study. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

2.6. Concluding Remarks

Occupational therapists and specifically therapists who make use of the VdT Model of Creative Ability, aim at providing clients with ‘just-right’ challenges. This entails matching the challenge inherent in an activity to the level of creative participation that a client is functioning on and structuring the environment to enable active participation from such a client. From experience and the literature it is clear that the world that we have created and the systems that we have set in place, very often don’t pose people with ‘just-right’ challenges (challenges which do them justice) in perfectly structured environments. People living in poverty; almost half the South African population – are faced, instead, with environments in which they are deprived or segregated from meaningful participation. In such instances of occupational injustice or occupational apartheid, the fine balance between one’s ability to act, and the available opportunities for action (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) is disrupted. Du Toit suggested that the extent to which the effects of a challenging environment can be counteracted or its influence modified needed to be thoroughly tested, taking into account individual difference in the response to an environment. (Du Toit, 2004) A post-modern ethnographic research design is ideal for the task at hand.

CHAPTER 3

Materials and Techniques

[mə'ti(ə)rēal] n. (1)The articles or apparatus needed to make something. (2)A group of ideas, facts, data, etc. that may provide the basis for or be incorporated into some integrated work. (Dictionary.com, 2012)

[tek'nēk] n. (1)A way of carrying out a particular task, especially the execution or the performance of an artistic work or a scientific procedure. (Google, 2012)

3.1. The research design

The research question of this study, pertaining to the effect of the environment on the creative participation of people living in an inner city, required a research design that would aid understanding of a phenomenon in a context-specific setting. It further needed a design which would take into account the complex and dynamic interactions that take place in a social setting, and finally, it required a design that would enable the understanding of a phenomenon about which limited research has been done in occupational therapy. (Hoepfl, 1997) As such, a qualitative research design seemed the obvious choice.

Furthermore, an autoethnographic research design seemed to suit this research well, for a number of reasons. The purpose of employing an autoethnographic research design is to understand complex situations and to describe the richness and nuances which would be missed by superficial enquiry. In addition, such a design would allow me to participate in the lives of the research participants and to give voice to their lived experiences without any pretence at being objective. It would allow me to link the personal to the cultural by reflecting on my own experiences, and how these made sense in the light of the experiences of the research participants. This choice further implied that narration would dominate my text and that, throughout the research process, my own views, perceptions and values would give way to understanding of the cultural setting under study; it implied a 'remaking' of my own world. (Chang, 2008)

3.2. Sampling – *Selecting the palette*

‘The hard part is how to plan a picture so as to give to others what has happened to you. To render in paint an experience, to suggest the sense of light and colour, of air and space.’ – Maxfield Parrish (BrainyQuote, 2001 – 2012)

“Qualitative research uses non-probability samples.” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:p.78) Non-probability samples, in contrast to probability samples, do not aim to produce statistically representative samples. Instead “the characteristics of the population are used as the basis for selection.” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:p.78) Various non-probability sampling approaches have been developed and in this section I will discuss the approaches that I chose to employ for this study.

I initially made use of a *strategic* sampling method to select a *purposive, illustrative* sample, (Mason, 2005) and throughout the research process I employed an *opportunistic* sampling method as well. (Burgess, 1982)

The aim, when employing strategic sampling, is to produce, through sampling, a relevant range of data in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent it directly. The relationship between the sample and the wider universe is, however, not ad hoc or accidental and it does not include simply those elements of the wider universe that will substantiate one’s argument, while ‘strategically’ excluding those elements that might inconveniently counter it. (Mason, 2005) For the purpose of this research, I wanted to establish an illustrative relationship between my data and the wider universe and I was particularly interested in sampling a relevant range of human experiences.

Strategic purposive sampling, which is synonymous with judgement sampling, (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) implies the selection of groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to the research questions, the researcher’s theoretical position or analytical framework and the argument or explanation that she is developing. In other words, I constructed a sample that contained certain

characteristics and criteria, which would help me to develop the research argument. (Mason, 2005) The characteristics of the people in my sample included that they all belonged to a specific sub-culture (for the reason that they all lived in a specific location in society) and that they all had numerous experiences in which they have had to deal with environmental barriers.

An illustrative approach in sampling seeks only to provide a flavour, and sometimes a very vivid and illuminating one, of how things can be in the wider universe, but makes no claims about how well it represents that wider universe. (Mason, 2005)

My sample would provide an illustration of:

- The way in which people might experience the environmental barriers that are associated with low socio-economic circumstances in an inner city.
- The impact that people might perceive such barriers to have on them (and specifically on their creative participation).
- The cultural values and beliefs which people may hold, which shape the way in which they experience their environments.

My initial planning didn't involve the use of opportunistic sampling. However, throughout the research process, I encountered unforeseen people, events and opportunities and deliberately included them in informing this study. Opportunistic sampling requires that a researcher adopts a flexible approach, putting together the sample according to the research context as events unfold and as people show up (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Burgess, 1982)

During the initial phase of the research I gained entry into the research setting by getting involved in existing activities, which were driven by the organisation that I was working for – PEN. This allowed me to start building relationships with the people within the research setting and to observe the population for potential research participants.

It was in June – the middle of the winter. The electricity in the block of flats just around the corner from our organisation had been off for a week already; implying that the residents (all 6000 – 8000 of them) were without water as well; save for a single tap which functioned independently of the electrical pump system. The residents were united in their speculation that the municipality had deliberately turned off the power in an attempt to get them to move out. No water and no electricity for an entire week – this was starting to become a threat for the elderly and the disabled, who were unable to walk down multiple flights of stairs several times a day, queue for water and carry heavy containers back to their flats. It was also starting to become a threat for children of working single parents, who had to walk up multiple, pitch dark flights of stairs on their way home – alone.

Our organisation felt it their duty to seek out and find the elderly and the vulnerable, and to offer help in the form of basic supplies such as bottled water, candles, blankets and a 24-hour emergency number. As such, they dedicated an entire week to scouting the blocks of flats in search of people in need of help. I found it the perfect opportunity to embark on a search of my own.

We were divided into small groups. Each day the different groups were assigned to a number of floors in one of the four blocks of flats. We had to knock on every door, introduce ourselves and find those who needed help. I had to find those who could be of help to me.

I tried to take it all in; the 23 gruelling flights of stairs on the first day, the overwhelming smell of urine and rotting garbage on the staircases, the graffiti against the walls, the caution and fear in the darkness, the deafening music on some floors, the dangerously open garbage shoots, the leaking pipes and subsequent puddles in places, the broken fire extinguishers and the cracked

walls. We were invited into some flats and even offered a cup of tea. At others we were eyed suspiciously and subtly asked to leave. We were ignored at a few. One of the flats was home to 17 foreign refugees who had been living there for 6 months. Many flats were occupied by students; an affordable stepping stone to a better life later. In one of the flats we found a plush double bed as the main attraction of the lounge and a host wearing no more than boxer shorts. In many of the flats I found people who did not match the criteria for potential participants, but every now and again I found a person who was exactly what I was looking for and I greedily took down their information.

I identified two appropriate participants in this manner, phoned them and arranged a meeting for an informal discussion concerning the research. During this discussion I described my research in an understandable manner, explained what would be expected of a research participant, answered questions which arose and gained consent from them. The other participants of this study were identified through opportunistic sampling; in other words, I didn't go out looking for them. Instead, they crossed my path throughout the research process and I identified them as appropriate research participants. (Refer to Appendix A for an example of the participant consent form)

The fact that I would conduct intensive interviews with the research participants dictated that I would need a relatively small sample; four - six participants, including myself. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

I documented my sampling decisions as part of my research audit trail, in the form of a reflexive journal. (Refer to 3.6.1. Data collection and –recording for the content of the journal). The data that was recorded in this journal proved an invaluable source of autoethnographic information, specifically with regards to tracking my own reflections in relation to the research setting.

3.3. The research population – The brand

*‘...now I paint people who happen to be in a particular place.’ – Peter Wright
(BrainyQuote, 2001 – 2012)*

This description of the research population (the wider universe of interest) is intended to clarify the logic behind my sampling strategy and to better explain the relationship between my sample and the research population.

In its broadest sense, the research population that I was interested in were people living in poverty (Refer to 1.6. Clarification of terms) who were more likely than others to be exposed to environmental barriers (Amato, 1992). However, I was working in the inner city and it was convenient for me to conduct my research in an urban setting. Comparatively little is known about the implications of rural poverty versus urban poverty for well-being (Amato, 1992), and hence, I chose to narrow my population to urban areas, and more specifically “the urban poor” who “cluster in inner city neighbourhoods with sub-standard housing, high crime rates, excessive noise levels, and inadequate services.” (Stephens, 1995:p109 - 110)

Council runs ‘death traps’

Tenants march on mayor’s office over squalid flats

Amukelani Chauke

Thousands of Tshwane residents are living in stinking, filthy conditions in city-owned buildings.

Residents of the Schubart Park and Kruger Park complexes in Vermeulen

Street said their health was being affected by the council’s failure to properly maintain the buildings they label ‘death traps’.

Jacolien Ackerman of the community organisation Pretoria Evangelism and Nurture said: ‘Last year, a

woman in a wheelchair died after she could not get to the ground floor to use a public phone to call for medical assistance – because the lift was not working.’

Metro has established that the company that operates the lifts in the two buildings

has switched them off, citing non-payment by the council as a reason for not carrying out necessary maintenance work.

In addition, said residents, water and sewage leaks in both buildings are out of

control, leaving the walls of many flats damp and smelly. Said one resident, who did not want to be named: 'Due to the water the walls are turning green, they stink and one can easily put a finger through the wall.'

A spokesman for Tshwane Housing...blamed the deteriorating condition of the buildings on the 'wear and tear' of overcrowding, and vandalism by tenants. (Excerpts from Chauke, 2008:p.1-2)

Nightmare in complex is council's mistake, says dr. Gwen Cobus Claassen

'We have a huge, huge problem on our hands.' With these words Dr Gwen Ramokgopa, executive mayor of the Tshwane Metro council, highlighted her concerns yesterday, after visiting the council's deteriorated apartment complexes, Schubartpark and Krugerpark, in the western part of the Pretoria business centre.

Ramokgopa described the inhospitable conditions and deterioration of the buildings as a 'safety- and health nightmare'. The once popular block of flats, which boasted its own shopping centre, swimming pools, play parks and community halls in 1977 when it was opened, has deteriorated into an unsafe slum

dwelling in the past few years.

There isn't a single working elevator, water is seeping down walls everywhere, residents rarely have water and the structural damage is unmistakable. (Freely translated excerpts from Claassen, 2008:p.7)

The Schubart Park apartment complex in the inner-city of Pretoria seemed to match the description of a 'sub-standard' (Refer to 1.6. Clarification of terms) housing facility, in which people living in poverty were densely concentrated. I selected it as an appropriate research setting.

3.4. The research participants – The primary hues

‘He always mixed his colours on the canvas. He was very careful to keep an impression of transparency in his picture throughout the different phases of the work ... he worked on the whole surface of his canvas [and] the motif gradually emerged from the seeming confusion, with each brushstroke.’ – Jean Renoir, son of the Impressionist Painter Auguste Renoir, writing in his memoir Renoir: My Father (About.com, 2012)

3.4.1. Sampling criteria

The research participants were not sampled primarily on the basis of belonging to specific demographic groups, but instead on the basis of their experiences (Mason, 2005) with poverty and the resulting environmental barriers. Hence, the participants I chose from the research setting were all people living in poverty, as it is defined for the purpose of this research.

I selected participants from different age-, gender-, and ethnic groups in order to maximise variation, for the purpose of increasing the trustworthiness of the study. (Refer to 3.7.2. Maximising variation) This also allowed me to consider differences in the way that people experienced their environments which were related to age, gender or ethnic culture, and it allowed me to consider similarities despite these differences, which would be an indication of the characteristics of the sub-culture.

I did not choose people on the basis of their religious orientation. However, people’s religious values and beliefs influenced the way in which they experienced their environment and I explored this during the interviews.

Even though I expected that the majority of the population from which the sample would be chosen, would be functioning on lower levels of creative participation (that is self-differentiation and self-presentation), I purposely included persons who seemed to function on a higher level of creative participation (that is imitative- or active participation) as a discrepant- or negative case, (Mason,

2005; Merriam, 2002) as a strategy of increasing the trustworthiness of the study. This implies that I included cases in my sample which contradicted my developing analytical ideas – that people living in poor socio-economic conditions were mostly functioning on lower levels of creative participation. In other words, I used my sampling, not only to generate data which supported my explanation, but I also searched rigorously for cases which did not fit with my ideas and could not be accounted for by the explanation that I was developing. (Mason, 2005)

I did not include people with noticeable physical disabilities in the sample. The reason was that physical disability brings along its own additional environmental barriers, which would considerably affect the way in which people experience their environments. Additionally, the lowered physical endurance that is associated with physical disability may have hindered the participation of individuals in the interviews.

I did not wish to include people who presented with acute symptoms of any of the psychiatric illnesses as they are classified in the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) (Sadock & Sadock, 2003) in my sample. The reason was that the cognitive and volitional effects of psychiatric illness would hinder the participation of individuals in interviews and hence, prevent me from generating rich data from these participants.

For the sake of this study, I assumed that the Schubart Park residents would have a normal intellectual distribution and that the participants of the study would reflect such a distribution. Intellectual ability would, hence, play a negligible role in the changes that I observed in the participants' creative participation. The variation of the participants' personalities was viewed as an internal factor that might plausibly affect the creative participation of the participants of this study.

3.4.2. *Experience sampling*

The nature of this study required that the research participants should possess rich knowledge about their context, that is; they should have been able to generate data which described depth, nuance and complexity (Mason, 2005) regarding poverty, environmental barriers and the sub-culture of the research setting. For this reason, only individuals who had had at least five years' worth of experience in the research setting were included in the sample, as they would be able to provide the necessary rich data and representativeness of the research setting.

3.4.3. *Texts & artefacts*

I selected texts, such as newspaper articles, of which the content described the research setting and the perceived effect that the setting had on its residents. I also included photographs which described my experience of the research setting or which carried particular meaning within the sub-culture. I described the logic of selecting specific texts and artefacts as part of my audit trail. (Refer to 3.7.3. Dependability)

3.5. **The measurement instruments** – The brushes

'A violinist had a violin, a painter his palette. All I had was myself. I was the instrument that I must care for.' – Josephine Baker (*ThinkExist Quotations*, 1999 – 2012)

3.5.1. *The researcher*

Patton, in writing on qualitative methodology, states that: "The only way for us to really know what another person experiences is to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for ourselves." (Patton, 2002:p.106) For this reason, in qualitative research, the researcher is considered the primary data collection

instrument (Merriam, 2002). Patton (2002) further notes that, in autoethnography, the foundational question of the researcher is: “How does my own experience of this culture connect with and offer insights about this culture, situation, event and / or way of life?” (2002:p.84) This implies that the researcher maintains no pretence of being objective (Denzin, 1989 (a)), but rather reflexively evaluates her own experiences, with the aim of gaining understanding into the culture under study. (Patton, 2002; Denzin, 1989 (a))

I was the instrument for this study; collecting field notes and artefacts.

3.5.2. Interviews

I made use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews to generate data from the research participants. I made use of a procedure which is suggested by Mason (2005) to plan for these interviews. (Refer to Appendix B for an interview schedule)

The questions were adjusted and additions were made throughout the research process. The response of the research participants to the interview questions determined any such changes. I conducted pilot interviews with two Schubart Park residents before the commencement of my data-collection. It was analysed and I received feedback from my supervisor. This adds to the trustworthiness of the research. (Refer to 3.7.3. Training and practice)

3.6. Procedures – The techniques

3.6.1. Data collection- and recording

Table I provides a summary of the data collection- and recording process.

Data Source	Method of collection & recording
Researcher	Passive –and participant observations were recorded in a reflexive journal, field notes and memory
Various Schubart Park residents (some of whom were selected participants), inner city residents and PEN personnel	Semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded. The content of informal conversations were recorded in a reflexive journal and memory
Local and national newspapers, websites and blogs	Articles, photographs and posts relevant to the Schubart Park protests were filed as artefacts

Table I – Summary of the data collection –and recording process

- Passive observations

The initial method of data collection that I utilised was that of passive observation, and I employed it throughout the course of the research. This method allowed me to place myself within the research setting for short periods of time to observe the population, in an attempt to identify suitable research participants and to initiate contact with them. It also allowed me to make observations regarding the research setting and the sub-culture which functions in it. This method further compelled me to remain unobtrusive in situations in which I might normally have intervened or made suggestions as a therapist, for the sake of a deeper understanding of the culture. These observations were recorded in the form of field notes.

- Participant observation

The most characteristic technique of data collection in ethnography is that of participant observation. Working in the inner city allowed me prolonged access to the research setting as both a participant in, and observer of the inner city community. The data of my experiences in the research setting were recorded in the reflexive journal as field notes. Supporting photography was recorded as artefacts.

- Individual in-depth interviews

I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with each participant individually. Though I used the interview schedule as a guideline (Refer to Appendix B) the questions that I asked the participants varied according to each of their unique stories. All the interviews were, however, opened with the question: 'Could you tell me about your life in Schubart Park?' The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

- Reflexive journal

I am naturally inclined toward writing down my intense experiences and emotions in the form of poetry as a means of dealing with and making sense out of them (Refer to the poem in Chapter 1). As such, a written journal, which would form part of my field notes, seemed a natural choice for collecting my own experiences. The content included my own experiences (thoughts and emotions), which I documented by making use of a process called emotional recall. I also reflected on these emotional experiences and thoughts by making use of a process called systematic sociological introspection, in which one analyzes one's thoughts and feelings as socially constructed processes. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) The content further consisted of questions which arose throughout the research, problems and issues which I experienced and the reasons behind the solutions which I decided to employ, ideas that I came up with and a running record of my interaction with the data. This journal serves as the audit trail of the research, as a strategy to ensure the reliability thereof.

- Assessment of levels of creative participation

Throughout the research, I made informal observations of the research participants' everyday lives, which related to their level of creative participation. Such information was noted in the field notes and enabled me to determine the participants' level of creative participation.

- Collection of artefacts

I collected relevant texts as I came across them during the course of the research. I collected photographs of objects and events and collected documents as their meaning within the setting and in relation to the sub-culture became clear. Artefacts other than documents were recorded digitally, while documents were kept in a filing system.

3.6.2. Data analysis

Data in the form of field notes, transcriptions and journal entries were analysed by making use of an inductive data analysis process. (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007) This process required that I emerged myself in an analysis of the raw data to try and identify units of meaning; that is pieces of information (a word, a sentence, a few lines or even several pages) which contain a single idea. From these meaning units I then identified topics which emerged from the data and categorised similar topics under a descriptive name. I then identified relationships amongst the categories, looked for recurring patterns and interpreted them as themes.

Artefacts were analysed and matched to the emerging themes from the data analysis and then served to enrich such themes.

3.7. Trustworthiness – Preserving the painting (Krefting, 1991)

3.7.1. Credibility

Credibility pertains to the researcher's ability to adequately represent the multiple realities, which were revealed by the research participants. A research study is regarded as sufficiently credible when it presents accurate descriptions and interpretations of the lived experiences of the research setting. (Krefting 1991) In an autoethnography, this depends to a great extent on the credibility of the narrator. (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) As such, I employed the following strategies to ensure the credibility of this study:

- Triangulation

I made use of multiple sources of data as a means of triangulation. These data sources included interviews with various participants, collected texts and artefacts and my own experiences as a passive- and participant observer.

- Saturation

I planned on continuing to collect data, specifically by means of interviews, until I reached a point of theory-saturation. (Refer to 3.2. Sampling) Though much of the information that the interviews produced proved similar across the various participants, there were also large discrepancies amongst their responses. I was, hence, unable to reach a point of data saturation.

- Discrepant case analysis

I purposefully sought out individuals in the research setting who challenged my expectations of the findings. (Refer to 3.4.1. Sampling criteria)

- Reflexivity

I kept track of my own bias by keeping a reflexive journal throughout the study, in which I critically reflected on my position toward the research topic, the factors on

which I based decisions as well as the values and assumptions which might have affected my findings. Within an autoethnographic research methodology such reflexivity is deemed as important, in that it illuminates the culture under study. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011)

3.7.2. Transferability

Transferability pertains to the extent to which the findings of this research study matches contexts outside of the research setting. In autoethnography sufficient transferability is determined by the researcher's ability to sufficiently illuminate cultural processes, so that readers may determine the extent to which a story describes their own experiences, or experiences of others that they know. (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) During this research, the following strategies were employed to ensure the transferability of the study:

- Adequate database

Autoethnographic writing is highly personal. For this reason it was important that the descriptions I made and the information that I provided were thick and rich; adequately conveying the nuances and experience climate of the research setting, so that readers would be able to determine how closely their situations matched the one that I was describing.

- Maximising variation

Though I selected a diverse sample as a means of maximising variation, (Refer to 3.4.2 Sampling criteria) I didn't fully utilise the potential for maximising variation in this study. Fully utilising it would entail selecting a much greater number of research participants and handling a load of data that would be inappropriate for the academic purpose of completing this dissertation.

3.7.3. *Dependability*

The dependability of a research study relates to the consistency of its findings. It is important that the data collection, -recording and –analysis is sufficiently described, so it would be possible to repeat the study. (Krefting, 1991) During this research, the following strategies were employed to ensure the dependability of the study:

- Training and practice

I was trained in interviewing skills during my undergraduate studies. However, I practiced these skills by conducting a pilot interview, on which I received feedback prior to going into the research field.

- Audit Trail

The audit trail of my research was documented in the form of a reflexive journal. (Refer to 3.6.1. Data collection- and recording)

- Peer Review

I provided excerpts of the raw interview data to my supervisor, to assess whether the conclusions that I have drawn from the data were plausible.

3.7.4. *Confirmability*

The confirmability of a research study suggests that another researcher could reach comparable conclusions, given the same data and research setting. (Krefting, 1991) In autoethnography, being as highly personalised as it is, the confirmability measures would ensure that the findings emerged from the data, rather than from my own predispositions. (Shenton, 2004) During this research, the following strategies were employed to ensure the confirmability of the study:

- Investigator's position

My position was recorded in a reflexive journal. (Refer to 3.7.1. Reflexivity)

- Peer Review

My supervisor reviewed whether my interpretation of the data was plausible. (Refer to 3.7.3. Peer review)

3.8. Ethical Considerations

During the initial stage of the research, while employing passive observation as a data collection technique, I informed members of the research population that I was a researcher who was interested in learning more about the way that people conducted their living in the research setting. This information formed part of my informal introduction to the research setting. I wished to represent myself as a non-threatening observer without creating false expectations that I was going to effect some sort of change within the setting.

I obtained permission from the executive committee of PEN (Refer to Appendix C for the PEN consent form), since some of the PEN activities provided me with an opportunity to enter the research setting. (Appendix D provides a description of the organisation and its relevant functions)

An informal discussion was held with each participant, during which the research was explained to them. They each received a consent form (Refer to Appendix A for the Participant consent form), which they were expected to sign once they understood the purpose and process of the research and if they were willing to participate.

All interviews throughout the research were handled with confidentiality. The interviews were conducted in the privacy of an office and the recordings and

transcriptions were used only for the purpose of the research. I removed any names and identifying information from the transcriptions.

I realised that the content of the interviews could elicit emotional responses from the participants, which I would handle by making use of the counselling skills which I was trained in. I planned that, if the situation stretched beyond my own capacity, I would refer the participant to one of the social workers or the psychologist working at PEN. This was never necessary.

The research, specifically during the participant observation phase, posed the risk of negatively affecting me. My supervisor monitored me and helped me to regularly bracket and debrief. I also had the option of consulting a psychologist when it became necessary.

Due to the nature of this research, the possibility existed that additional ethical issues may have arisen during the research. In such a case, I planned on consulting with the Ethics committee for guidance.

3.9. Concluding remarks

This chapter has set out a detailed and systematic description of the methodology that I made use of during this research process. Here and there it has also provided an inkling of the experiences that I would encounter in employing this methodology; hinting at what is to follow in the next chapter – the content of which describes, for me, a life-altering experience.