Giving youth a voice: Eliciting representations of safety among children in a high-risk community

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Abstract

Youth populations are often marginalised in community decision-making processes. However, as integral members of a community, they can provide fresh and valuable insight into the various risk and strengths of their community. South African research on youth populations in high-risk, low income communities has tended to focus extensively on sources of risk and the immediate amelioration of risk, harm, and danger, but strengths-based approaches and process-oriented prevention perspectives can complement risk research. Using the Photovoice methodology, youth representations of sources of safety within the high-violence community of Nomzamo were elicited. Analysis of individual interviews, group discussions, and photo content revealed that physical security, education, and pro-social engagement within the community with positive role models and community leaders are crucial sources of safety to youths of Nomzamo. However, perceptions of safety within the community were influenced by extent these sources were accessible. Limitations of the study are also briefly discussed as well as its significance regarding asset-based youth development in high-risk, low-income communities.

Keywords: *asset-based community development; health promotion; Photovoice; youth assets; safety*

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Only over the last five years have we begun to realise the extent to which the youth populations are victimised within South Africa. Victimisation at an early age has been identified as an influential risk factor in the development of negative outcomes in children. Ultimately, this social issue requires an effective and efficient solution. However, deliberation and research concerning public health issues and solutions rarely involve dialogue with citizens, especially the youth (Castleden, Garvin, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008)

Violence, victimisation, and injury

A large proportion of South Africa's population (26%) is under the age of 24, thus the population is relatively youthful (Burton et al., 2009). Victimisation and perpetration of violence is strongly divided by gender, with young men between the ages of 15 and 29 years being the most likely to be victims of and to engage in violence (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, Ratele, 2009). Compared to adults, young people are twice as likely to be victims of at least one crime or instance of violence (Burton, 2006). With the current socio-economic landscape in South Africa, the vast majority of these victimised youths lack the means to escape from high-risk environments. Ultimately, the normalisation of violence within South Africa has led to the social exclusion and negative socialisation of a large section of the population (Pelser, 2008).

The National Youth Victimisation Survey (NYVS), conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in 2005, provided some crucial insight into the extent and nature of youth victimisation in South Africa. The survey revealed that between September 2003 and September 2004, 42% of South African youths between the ages of 12 and 22 were victims of crime, with one in ten youths experiencing more than one crime. The data showed that more respondents experience violent crime (e.g. assault; sexual assault; murder) more often than they experience property crimes (e.g. theft; house-breaking). For groups older than 14 years old, firearm- and sharp-object injuries are the leading cause of death (Matzopoulos et al., 2002)

The problem is further intensified through consistent exposure to violence within the home, school, and community environment (Burton, 2006). For instance, Shields, Nadasen, and Pierce (2008), in their study of youth experience of violence in Cape Town, found that 48.4% of their respondents had actually witnessed a murder within their community. Sexual and physical child abuse is also extremely prevalent in South Africa with 39% of girls reporting that they had experienced some form of sexual violence before the age of 18. Similarly, exposure to violence within the home is an issue with 35-45% of children reporting that they had experienced their mother being beaten (Seedat et al., 2009)

Unintentional accidents from traffic accidents, burns, and falls also contribute significantly to South Africa's high death rate. The National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS) shows that, in 2000, there were 59,935 deaths due to injury caused by fires, falls, and traffic accidents (Matzopoulos, Van Niekerk, Marais, & Donson, 2002; Seedat et al., 2009). This equates to a death rate of 157.8 (per 100,000 population), which is nearly double the global rate of 86.9. Data from the NIMSS illustrate that for children younger than five years old, burns were the leading cause of death, but for children between the ages of 5 and 14, the leading cause of death was pedestrian injury. Furthermore, Seedat et al (2009) show that the leading cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 14 is unintentional injury.

While local researchers have a good understanding of the range of specific risk factors youth experience in South Africa, our understanding of the factors that protect youth from crime, violence, and injury is not well-informed. However, there has been a rise in amount of locally-based literature that examines resilience and asset-based approaches to intervention and policy design. For instance, Burton et al. (2009) highlight a range of protective factors that promote youth resilience to crime, violence, and victimisation: education; gender (i.e. being female; non-violent family environments; non-exposure to criminal role models; substance abstinence; interaction with non-delinquent peers; no previous victimisation; living in a safe neighbourhood with limited or no access to guns, knives or drugs; and attitudes that are intolerant of violent, aggressive an anti-social behaviour.

The NYVS revealed that one in five respondents did not actually feel safe within their own community (Burton, 2006). Seedat et al. (2009, p. 68) argue that "a weak culture of enforcement and failure to uphold safety as a basic right" are pertinent social factors that have compounded the myriad risk factors associated with high levels of violence, victimisation, and injury. Ultimately, prevention of violence and injury, especially in youth

populations, through the adoption of comprehensive, intersectoral, and evidence-based programmes and policies should become "a national public health priority" (Seedat et al., 2009, p. 68).

However, many authors argue that strategies that have been designed to reduce and prevent high levels of violence, victimisation, and injury have been ineffective, especially within high-risk communities (Burton et al., 2009; Pelser, 2008; Seedat et al., 2009). By using an asset-based approach, interventions and policies can be designed to target specific populations within their social contexts by enhancing the existing resources and assets of high-risk communities (Burton et al., 2009; Pelser. 2008). There is an opportunity for community-based health promotion to play a critical role in improving the safety of young people within high-risk community environments by developing a contextually-specific, culturally-relevant, asset-based framework that can adequately inform the design of interventions and policies to reduce youth victimisation and injury. Within the community, the development of relationships between individual youths and their community leaders through after-school, youth, and religious groups is important methods of controlling and reducing the likelihood of youths being victimised and engaging in violent, aggressive, or anti-social acts (Burton et al., 2009).

Community-based health promotion

Community psychology is a relatively young field of psychology that has provided a theoretical framework with which to help examine social, political, and economic factors that impact on the mental health of individuals and their communities (Bhana, Petersen, & Rochat, 2007). Using this framework, theory and practices are developed which aim to help groups of people combat injustice, inequality, and oppression through the promotion of individual and collective mental health. Empowerment, capacity-building, skills development, and social change are all objectives within the community psychology framework (Orford, 2008). In this way, the community psychology framework is one which works very well with groups of people that are disempowered, marginalised, oppressed, and/or impoverished. Within this paradigm, important it is to link together insights into individual and community assets and resources that strengthen communities and provide support for individuals (Bogat, 2008; Buikstra et al., 2010; Orford, 2008).

Values and principles of public health, community psychology, and community development have merged to create a community-based health promotion framework, which "increasingly reflects strength-based approaches that identify and build on individual and community assets." (Wilson, Minkler, Dasho, Wallerstein, & Martin, 2008, p. 395) Within South Africa, this fusion of public health and community development principles shows promise in developing preventative programs dealing with psycho-social and health-related challenges within high-risk communities. Community-based health promotion allows for theoretical diversity, innovative methodology, and collaboration between researchers and community organisations. Furthermore, the emphasis on the social ecology, coupled with a public health perspective, necessitates that inter-disciplinary and collaborative projects are undertaken, in conjunction with existing community organisations and social networks in order to obtain lasting change in the target community (Merzel & D'Afflitti, 2002; Stevens, Seedat, Swart, & van der Walt, 2003).

Asset-based youth development

Over the past two decades, community-based researchers have questioned the efficacy and appropriateness of adopting the deficit-focused approach to community and public health research. This approach is steeped in the philosophy that suggests that "not using a particular behaviour is a deficit or problem to be solved." (Moore & Charvat, 2007) However, Kretzmann & McKnight (1996) argue that this approach has had unintended negative outcomes on community populations. Through this theoretical lens, the seemingly endless list of problems that high-risk communities have to endure comes to define the reality of the community itself. Furthermore, efforts to address social issues by ameliorating risk conditions are often fragmented and difficult to integrate.

In contrast, capacity-focused development focuses on the assets, resources, skills, strengths, and capacity of high-risk, low-income communities. Asset-based community development (ABCD) is an example of a capacity-focused development because is it focuses on the development of assets, resources, and strengths rooted within the community. Furthermore, ABCD is internally-focused on the community population and is driven by the quality of relationships between community members. However, it incorporates some elements of risk amelioration, acknowledging that risk conditions must simultaneously be addressed while developing available assets, across multiple levels within the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996; Youngblade, Theokas, Schulenberg, Curry, Huang, & Novak, 2007).

ABCD is linked very strongly to positive youth development theory. Youngblade et al (2007) suggest that optimal youth development involves reducing negative behaviours while promoting positive behaviours, within the family, school, community settings. Positive youth development theory proposes that the improvement of youth assets, such as interpersonal resources; connections between youth and positive role-models within the community; and conditions of safety will lead to desirable multi-level outcomes such as behavioural and intellectual competence; a sense of connection the community; and a sense of social justice and empathy (Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic, & Smith, 2006; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003; Youngblade et al., 2007).

Youth development is strongly linked to the wider social environment. The presence or absence of community assets and resources has a considerable effect on youth development (Kegler et al., 2005) Thus, the development of youth assets is intricately connected to the development of community assets. At the community level, strong youth-adult relations and feelings of safety are essential strengths that lead to positive youth and community outcomes. Additionally, facilitating access for youth to engage with community assets is of crucial importance (Lerner et al., 2006; Pittman et al., 2003). Youth with sufficient access and opportunities to engage with enhanced community assets develop assets and resources themselves "that enable them to avoid problem behaviours and to thrive as they transition into adulthood." (Kegler et al., 2005, p. 381)

Social capital

Social capital is both an individual and community asset (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). In youth populations, social capital refers to social networks, feelings of trust and reciprocity, and a sense of belonging/connection (Kahne & Bailey, 1999; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Developing social capital at an individual level tends to improve academic performance and sociability, as well feelings of belonging and trust. At the community level, increased social capital improves civic and democratic participation and bolsters community development. Furthermore, youth with access to social capital are able to make the transition into adulthood more easily, allowing them to develop meaningful roles in society (Jarrett et al., 2005; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004).

Community-based asset development in youth populations is relationship-driven. Thus, a lot of emphasis is placed on building and developing relationships between pro-social peers and adults within the larger community context. Creating a safe environment for youth to develop these relationships is also important (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Safety can be

broadly defined as "an important neighbourhood construct associated with the presence of youth assets," influenced by various forms of formal and informal social control, yet there is a difference between home safety and neighbourhood safety (Kegler et al., 2005). Ultimately, if the community is perceived as safe by its youth inhabitants, there will be more opportunity for them to develop relationships with positive role models. By developing these kinds relationships and encouraging active civic participation within the community, social capital is developed, which is critical to youth development and the safety of youths (Gaetz, 2004; Jarrett, Sullivan, Watkins, 2005).

Considering the wide range of risk factors South African youth have to face within their communities on a daily basis, it is important that community members, including youth members, take active roles to enact social change and community development. However, youth members in high-risk communities very rarely are given the space to voice their perspectives on the community or to identify assets and resources that are salient for them (Wexler, DiFluvio, & Burke, 2009). Unfortunately, the reality is that, in Western society, there are relatively "few opportunities for meaningful interaction between youth and adults in the community." (Jarrett et al., 2005, p. 42)

Youth participation in safety research

While there is substantial research on adversities and risks for young people in South Africa, relatively little is known about how youth perceive safety, especially within high-risk South African communities. It is possible that young people may view things differently to the adults in their community. Rather than pre-selecting community deficits and strengths for youth to engage with, perhaps engaging youth as critical thinkers and problem –solvers can shed some insight into what risks, assets, and resources are most pertinent to the them. Ultimately, asset-based approaches allow for youth to participate in critical dialogue and act as problem-solvers in addressing issues within the school and the wider community (Wilson et al., 2008)

Working within this theoretical framework requires that researchers facilitate spaces for "necessary voices" to be heard. This has important implications for the development of a contextually-specific community psychology framework, insight into social issues from previously unheard voices within adverse contexts is important to our understanding of pertinent cultural forces that shape community and youth development (Trickett, 2009). Participatory and collative research projects with youth are not only provide valuable insight into what the youth believe to be important social issues, but they are also useful tools for

fostering a sense of social responsibility and connectedness to their community (Hamilton & Flanagan, 2007; Wexler et al., 2009).

Research aims

The aim of this study was to examine the ways in which youth represent assets and resources associated with safety within a high-risk, low-income community. The primary objective for the research team was to explain salient sources of safety for young adolescents in Nomzamo. We aimed to identify the ways in which these sources provide a sense of safety and discern how the participants perceived the accessibility of these sources of safety.

METHODS

This study was conducted within the qualitative paradigm as it was concerned with the exploration of meaning-making, experience and action of youth with regards to safety and protection within their community. Within community-based health promotion and development research, there is a strong emphasis on a collaborative research process, typically through the use of participatory action methods or community-based participatory research (Orford, 2008).

Community-based participatory research (CBPR)

CBPR strategies aim to emphasise the voices of people within the community; to facilitate co-learning and discussion; to advocate for change within communities; and to enhance strengths, assets, and resources within individuals and their community (Catalini & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009; Strack, Lovelace, Jordan, & Holmes, 2010) With the participants acting as co-researchers, CBPR strategies assist in the development of culturally-relevant models that address social issues (Castleden et al., 2009; Shetgiri et al., 2009). CBPR draws on intra-community relationships and encourages dialogue on contextually-relevant themes in order to facilitate and promote proactive social change (Castleden et al., 2008; Shetgiri et al., 2009).

The CBPR strategy used in this study is an methodology known as Photovoice, a form of qualitative research that is based in principles of constructivism, feminist theory, and documentary photography .This method was developed with three goals in mind: to allow individuals to record and represent their realities through photography; to promote critical discourse and discussions surrounding the strengths, capacities, and concerns of individuals and their community; and to reach policy-makers and intervention designers (Catalini & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather et al., 2009; Wang, 2006). This method, with its focus on researcher-participant collaboration, provides a space for youth to engage critically and creatively with assets, resources, and strengths in their community. Wang (2006, p. 159) explains that "youth involvement in photovoice harnesses the desire of young people to exercise autonomy and express creativity while documenting their lives."

When used in psychological research, Photovoice tends to adhere to a common framework: identification of community issues/strengths; participant recruitment; photovoice

and photography training; taking of photos; discussion of photos; data analysis; identification of influential community members and advocates; presentation of findings; and, finally, creation of plans of action for change (Hergenrather et al., 2009).

Sample and setting

Young adolescent participants were selected from the Western Cape community of Nomzamo, with the assistance of community-based organisations that operate within the community. Nomzamo is a predominantly isiXhosa –speaking community, with the total population of the community estimated at 22,087 residents (including 8,065 children). Within Nomzamo, there are very specific social and public health issues, such as crime, violence, and unintended injuries (to both adults and youth), which are compounded by low levels of community resources and a high unemployment rate (Economic and Human Development Department, 2006).

Ten participants (five boys and five girls) between the ages of 12 and 13 years were selected to take part in this project. This ensured that both genders were represented in the study. The Photovoice method combines individual interviews and focus group discussions. However, a focus group larger than ten participants would have difficult to facilitate. Thus, the number of participants recruited for the project was capped at ten. All ten participants were first language Xhosa speaking, but several of the participants spoke limited English as well. One boy did not return to the project after the second session, and so, was dropped from the study, but was not replaced.

Church-based youth organisations and other non-profit organisations that run programmes for youth in Nomzamo were approached to assist with the identification of potential participants. They were instructed to recruit young adolescents who were seen as being at risk for negative outcomes or had been exposed to or victimised by violent and anti-social acts. Contact and communication with the participants was facilitated by community volunteers within Nomzamo, who also helped with acquiring consent from the participant's parents and assent from the participants. Furthermore, due to the fact that the participants were predominantly isiXhosa-speaking, there was a translator present for the focus groups discussions and interviews that took place over the duration of the project.

Data collection

Following an inductive approach, all the data was collected during the project was collected to form a larger database from which theory could be generated and revised during the iterative process. Data were collected through three focus group discussions and individual semi-structured interview with the participants, which were audio recorded. Thereafter, the recorded interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed by the translator and the Xhosa sections were translated into English.

The content of and meanings behind the photos were elicited through short semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in a mixture of Xhosa and English, with a bilingual translator present. With a translator present, three main questions were asked for each photo, with three probing questions prepared to help the participant elaborate on the content and themes of the photo (see Appendix B).The ordering of questions were not set at all, thus the participants were given a degree of freedom to elaborate on any aspects or themes of their photo that were pertinent to them. Due to issues of language and communication, the aim of the short semi-structured interviews was to provide the participant with some direction in discussing abstract themes related to safety in the photo.

Procedure

The project ran over seven sessions, lasting around two months in total, with the sessions being held in the Nomzamo Community Centre. For each session, two facilitators were present, as well as a translator. A community volunteer assisted with the organisation of the sessions, making sure that a meeting time and place for the participants to gather was established prior to the session starting. Each session was designed to run for approximately two hours and was held in the afternoon from 3pm until 5pm. This was done so that the sessions did not coincide with the participants' school schedule. Each session began with a brief introduction to the aims and objectives for that session. At this time in the session, the participants were informed of any note-taking or recording of the session that took place.

The primary focus of first session was to facilitate a group discussion that allowed the participants identify issues and strengths within Nomzamo that were associated with safety. The entire group then designed group norms to be adhered to, which included a discussion about what material from the sessions could be disclosed outside of the group context, as well

as what material could be disclosed within the group. Additionally, the participants were reminded and encouraged to speak and write in whatever language they felt comfortable with as the translator was present to translate and explain points and opinions put forth by the participants.

The second session provided some basic photography training for the participants. During this session, a professional photographer met with the participants to explain some fundamental photography concepts and techniques, after which the participants received a disposable camera. The participants were also informed about safety guidelines for taking photos, especially when taking photos of other people. Participants were instructed to take photographs; specifically people, place, and things that made them feel safe within Nomzamo. The week after that was dedicated to the collection of the participants' cameras (with the help of the community volunteers) and printing of the participants' photos.

During the third session, each participant was instructed to select five of their photos that best represented safety in preparation for the individual interviews. At the end of this session, two participants were selected for short interviews about their photos so as to help streamline the interview process for the next session. The fourth session set aside the group discussion and focused exclusively on conducting individual interviews with all the participants about each one of their chosen photos. This was done with a translator present. Since one of the participants dropped out of the study, four pairs were interviewed, with one participant being interviewed alone. The participants discussed one photo at a time, alternating between each other, until all five of their photos were discussed.

In the next session, the participants discussed their photos as groups, in order to elicit some collective representations of safety. In the final session, a focus group discussion was facilitated which explored the participants' ideas for they could become more involved with safety promotion within Nomzamo, in collaboration with adults in the community. The project finally culminated with a photo exhibition, presented by the participants, showcasing their five chosen photos, which were supplemented with a short description of the photo as elicited during the personal interviews.

Analysis

Once the data collected from the focus group discussions and the individual interviews were transcribed, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify common codes,

categories, and themes within the data. The entire analysis process was conducted by the researcher alone and was conducted manually, without the use of qualitative coding software. Sections of text from transcripts of the focus groups discussions and interviews were analysed by identifying various words, sentences, and phrases that related to specific categories and themes. The identified sections were then sorted into different codes and categories, before an initial thematic framework was discerned by creating extensive mind-maps linking each coded section to the larger categories. The coding process itself was recorded in a research journal and coding memos were also used to track important analytic decisions made over the course of the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, analysis of the data was taking place during the data collection phases as well.

Considering this method of qualitative data analysis usually takes a lot more time and energy than other methods, the analysis was conducted over three months using manual methods. This provided enough time to become immersed in the data and to consistently generate and review codes and categories. After the initial coding phase, the data collected was interpretively examined for any latent themes that relate to safety and protection within Nomzamo. Through the process of constant comparison, new themes that emerged were reviewed and altered. Where redundant categories were identified, they were merged or collapsed into a broader category or removed entirely (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The participants' photos were not included as part of the thematic analysis. The photos taken were very descriptive in nature, rather than dealing with abstract manifestations of safety. As a result, the photos were used to supplement the thematic analysis of the individual interviews as the interviews were based on the photos that the participants felt best represented the notion of safety in their community.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from parents, and informed assent will be obtained from participants, prior to commencement of the study (see Appendix A). Participants were also instructed to obtain verbal consent from people they photograph, in order to protect the rights of those people. Participants were given the choice to withdraw from the study if they choose to do so. The anonymity of participants was maintained by using pseudonyms and avoiding the use of information that could be used to identify the participants.

FINDINGS

The thematic analysis identified four main themes related to how youth perceive sources of safety in their community. The themes that emerged from the data encapsulate patterned responses and systems of meaning across the focus group discussions and the individual interviews. These themes were labelled physical safety; pro-social community interaction; education; accessibility.

Physical safety

A vast majority of data collected made reference to the physical assets, resources, and strengths within the Nomzamo community that made them feel safe. The theme 'physical safety' refers to actors and objects that directly aim to prevent or protect children from risk and to respond directly to risk/conditions of harm. The data relating to this theme were then categorised into sub-themes: home infrastructure; service providers; and collective security.

Home infrastructure

Many of the comments, opinions, and photos focused on tangible objects and places within Nomzamo that were associated with the participants feeling physically safe from harm and danger. The home was considered to be a main source of safety here, but the extent to which the home was considered safe was tempered by the presence or absence of objects associated with safety at and within the home. Many of the participants took photos of gates, fences, locking doors, and burglar bars and described how these improved feelings of safety in their homes.

> *When I am in the yard, I feel safe if the yard is kept closed and locked.* (Participant 1)
>
> *When I'm at my house maybe when the gangsters are chasing me I can run to my house and lock the door.* (Participant 4)
>
> *I would install a fence, those with electricity, if you touch it and you are a robber you will burn and also a camera.* (Participant 3)

Figure 1 – Gate and fence (Source: Participant 2)

Figure 2 – Gate and burglar bars (Source: Participant 3)

Service providers

Data categorised into this sub-theme referred to actors within the community that provide safety-related services to children and other members of the community. A number of participants focused on police services within Nomzamo. The participants' view of the police tended to be very positive - police personnel were viewed as an important part of promoting safety and positive behaviours within the community and, similarly, the police station itself was seen as place which promoted safe behaviours and prevented people who harmed others from continuing to do so. However, the police were viewed as primarily serving deterrent and responsive functions.

The police help to take the wrong people away. (Participant 9)

They (the police) are saving the people. (Participant 7)

When I'm in the police station I feel safe cause the gangsters can't come in the police station while I'm here cause the polices can shoot them. (Pariticipant 2)

Interestingly, the participants illustrated that private security guards play a different role compared to that of the police. Security guards were seen to provide more direct security services to individuals and families within the community, such as escorting and home security (during both night and day). Many of the participants also highlighted that many security guards give out their phone numbers to members of the community so that they can be contacted directly.

They (security guards) watch us as at night and some of them, they escort us at late times. (Participant 2)

The security keeps me safe from places where there are gangsters. They are always behind me taking care of the house, and our community, Nomzamo. (Participant 3)

Figure 3 – At the police station (Source: Pariticipant 9)   Figure 4 – Security guards (Source: Participant 3)

Collective security

Not to be confused with connectedness or sense of community (to be discussed later), this theme refers to feelings of safety and protection associated with merely being around other people or things. All of the participants discussed at least one instance of feeling safe and protected from harm when in the presence of trusted elders, either within the family or community-based contexts, like church or school. However, the participants also expressed that they felt safer when in the presence of friends, regardless of whether or not they were older.

Children must always be close to older people most of the time… or things that make them safe. (Participant 2)

If I'm walking with my neighbours I feel safe because I know that I'm walking with an elder person. (Participant 6)

It's my family. I feel safe when I'm with them. They protect me when I am in trouble. (Participant 8)

When I am with my friends and all of my family every day I am safe. (Participant 5)

However, this theme does not necessarily suggest that only large groups of trusted people contribute to feelings of safety. More than half the participants suggested that dogs within Nomzamo, while some may be dangerous, are an important source of safety. Interestingly, while some participants discussed how their family dogs act as both alarms and

a means of defence against intruders, others discussed how they feel safe even in the presence of stray dogs that roam around the community.

When there is a dog at home I feel safe. (Participant 3)

Houses must get a dog or something to make the neighbourhood safe. (Participant 9)

No matter where I go, even if I could get lost the dog will go back and be able to show them where I went to. (Participant 1)
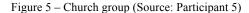

Figure 5 – Church group (Source: Participant 5)

Figure 6 – With friends (Source: Participant 6)

Education

Participants placed a lot of emphasis on learning skills, acquiring knowledge, and spreading information. Data categorised in this theme referred not only to academic education, but also cultural and social education. The participants highlighted that education about safety and safety-related behaviour must start in school, but that important information, advice, and recourse is promoted throughout the community. Therefore, education involves two distinct elements: active learning and active teaching.

Active learning

Many of the participants highlighted that adults are the most important source of knowledge and information about the world for them. The elder members of the family (most importantly the parents) impart familial, religious, and cultural values upon the youth; teaching them about society and how to live good lives. Interestingly, some of the children explained that trusted elders and family friends within the community are often important sources of protection and pro-social interaction outside the family.

My parents are the ones that guide me show me how to respect others. (Participant 2)

When I am with my teacher I feel safe and the tsotsi cannot come when I am with her or an older person. (Participant 1)

Furthermore, the participants described how they are aware of the risks and dangers within Nomzamo, but they acknowledged that youth need to be made aware of how to avoid becoming victims of crime, violence or injury or engaging in anti-social acts. Teachers and principals within the school environment were seen by the participant to play a large role in imparting advice to the children within the community, but influential members within the community, such as pastors and community volunteers, were also represented as playing a role in teaching the youth. Interestingly, the participants expressed the importance of knowing one's rights as citizens and as children. Additionally, the participants emphasised that the advice and knowledge that they give must be continually developed and applied to their own lives, their home environment, and the community in general.

The teachers help me to stay away from bad people like gangsters, "skollies", who will rob me. (Participant 9)

When I am seated in front I want to see all the things that the reverend is saying. (Participant 3)

I need to continue with my schooling so that I am not like the tsotsis. (Participant 1)

Figure 7 – Teacher (Source: Participant 1)

Figure 8 – Community volunteer (Source: Participant 4)

Active teaching

This sub-theme can be considered an extension of the previous sub-theme as this involves actively teaching others about safety and safety-related behaviours and promoting these across a wide range of contexts, through a variety of different methods. Nearly all of the participants recognised that they too play a role in being safe and creating a safer community. They highlighted that they must help those that are younger than them, but that they also can teach older people within their own family and within the community. Furthermore, the participants, as a group, also expressed a desire to take what they had learnt and experienced over the course of the project into the community and promote safety within Nomzamo themselves, using schools and churches.

If there was a small child at home I would tell them to play close to the house because I also play close. If I had an elder sister I'd tell her not to stay out till very late and know the right time to come back home. (Participant 2)

If I had a younger brother or sister you would tell them to play in doors and advise them to come home early. (Participant 4)

I would tell you not to walk here, not to enter here, and not ask for help here… (Participant 9)

Don't walk around Strand at night because there are "skollies" (gangsters). (Participant 5)

I would start a project about safety. (Participant 4)

Figure 9 - Taking care of children (Source: Participant 4)

Figure 10 – A culture of learning (Source: Participant 9)

Pro-social community engagement

Qualitatively separate from collective security and education, pro-social community engagement refers to active, positive, social networks that instil feelings of safety and contribute to positive behavioural outcomes among the participants. Central to this theme is the notion that pro-social engagement within the community involves the promotion of positive behaviours and avoidance of negative behaviours, leading to desirable multi-level outcomes. Data categorised under this theme were further separated into two sub-themes: formal engagement and informal engagement.

Formal engagement

This sub-theme refers to peer and adult interactions that the participants experience within structured and organised environments, such as the school, church, neighbourhood committees, and youth sports groups. The participants described how these kinds of environments not only provide a safe and supportive space to engage influential adults in the community on individual and social issues, but they also provide rules and moral guidance. By engaging with such pro-social actors in the community (such as teachers, pastors, coaches, and community leaders), the participants highlighted how this connected them to community values and gave them a safe environment.

> *I am safe when I am at school.* (Participant 9)
>
> *It helps people to pray.* (Participant 7)
>
> *He says when the coach is around when they are playing ball for instance, he feels safe when the coach is around.* (Participant 2)

Additionally, the participants expressed that the Photovoice group itself was a source of safety and empowerment for them, further encouraging them to promote a safety-related lifestyle within their families, their schools, and the wider community.

> *Being with the (Photovoice) group and talking about good things so that we can also talk to people about them.* (Participant 1)
>
> *We like what is happening in this group, this project about the things that make us feel safe and those that don't make us feel safe.* (Participant 4)

I think this was good that we not just hang around and not have anything to do. We now learnt about things about safety that would help us in our community. (Participant 2)

Figure 11 – Church service (Source: Participant 5)

Figure 12 – At school (Source: Participant 2)

Informal engagement

Informal engagement refers to common, everyday social interactions with peers and adults within the wider social environment. Interpersonal interactions, relationships, and experiences within the family and community were included in this theme considering the much larger role adults play in many of the participants' lives. Furthermore, the participants illustrated that extended family, family friends, school friends, and trusted neighbourhood elders often support and give guidance when it is needed. Risk-related behaviours were deemphasised, and safety-related behaviours, such as crime reporting and non-participation in violence, were strongly emphasised.

Even when I'm going far I can go with my family because they make me feel safe. (Participant 6)

If I know a tsotsi I will tell the police. (Participant 1)

If the gangsters do something or if maybe the gangsters chase me or the robbers when I'm from the shop then I will go to the house and tell my mother and then my mother will go quickly to phone the police or the neighbourhood watch. (Participant 4)

Figure 13 – Looking after family (Source: Participant 6)   Figure 14 – Being with family (Source: Participant 8)

Accessibility

As discussed above, the participants identified a wide range of assets and resources that promote feelings of safety and create a safe environment for youth to interact. However, one of the most significant characteristics of these sources of safety was that they are accessible. Many participants expressed how access to sources of safety around them plays a significant role in youth feeling safe. Data categorised in this theme delineate influencing factors which impact on children's ability to make use of safety-related assets and resources.

Availability and cost

This sub-theme refers to issues of availability and cost, especially with regards to elements of physical safety. Three of the participants highlighted that there are many families within the community do not have burglar bars, gates, and lockable doors. They pointed out that such things are produced by certain individuals within the community and thus only a limited amount of these safety-enhancing objects can be provided to families. Furthermore, they indicated that many families can simply not afford to secure their houses at all. In the same way, the cost to replace doors, gates, or locks when they are broken or removed becomes a financial burden on the family.

Some of the house they don't have gates. Some of them they have gates. (Participant 1)

The people who make the gates can tell you that they can't do it for you when you need say you want it they will tell you they are busy. (Participant 1)

Lots of people don't have enough money to buy (burglar bars). (Participant 4)

The cost of certain services is also a hindrance to youth access to safety. The most prominent example of this is the cost of employing a security guard. These guards work for private companies and are employed to patrol the neighbourhood during the night. Additionally, they also provide home-based security services. However, while this is a strong preventative measure, only a small minority within the community can afford such services.

Lots of people can't afford the securities because the securities cost a lot of money. (Participant 4)

If I know of a company and know a security there I'll be able to ask his boss for my people to be protected. (Participant 3)

Proximity and contiguity

Nearly all of the participants indicated that they felt safest when sources of safety were close by or easily contacted. Many of them highlighted that they felt safest at home, in the company of their family. They pointed out that playing in the surrounding neighbourhood, on the streets, was dangerous for children and that young children should play at home or in their yards, close by their family or caregivers. A number of participants also pointed out that while being with family or an elder is an important source of safety and protection, sometimes it is not possible for children to be with them, especially when they are working. Nonetheless, some participants explained that they are able to phone their parents if they need assistance. Others explained that they would seek out family friends or other elders to help them instead.

If I'm at home I feel safe with my parents and sister. (Participant 3)

I chose this photo (of school) because it is close to take and close to walk to (Participant 9)

Most of the time they (the parents) watch me while I play or sometimes they call me after two minutes ... they call me to make sure I'm safe. (Participant 2)

If your mother is not there maybe she's at work you can't get your mother. (Participant 4)

The participants expressed similar sentiments towards the police and security guards as well. Many participants explained that the police station being within walking distance plays a role in how safe they feel. Furthermore, they highlighted that police information and contact numbers should be made known to everyone in the community. In a similar vein of thought, they also explained that if they required an escort at night or some kind of emergency response, they could also phone a security guard as these guards are often willing to give out their contact details to members of the community, especially children.

The police aren't too far from us. (Participant 9)

If something is going to happen I can call the police or I can even go and take a walk to the police. (Participant 6)

Sometimes they (the security guards) give us their numbers so we can call them. (Participant 2)

Visibility and mobility

Data categorised in this sub-theme refer to the extent to which safety service providers are seen and can move around the community. Most of the participants pointed out that a visible police presence was important to them feeling safe. They also explained that the police in Nomzamo are often very responsive, as were security guards. However, they pointed out that information about safety and related safe behaviours should also be made more visible around the community.

The police are all-over. (Participant 8)

We call them when the "skollies" want to come in. (Participant 8)

I'd ask from the police station to have a truck so that the police trucks could have a stamp about being safety that would tell people and then the ambulance if someone wants to know the numbers. (Participant 3)

It (the police truck) would go around the location and look for "skollies." (Participant 3)

DISCUSSION

The participants identified people, places, and things that they associate with safety in Nomzamo. People associated with safety were nuclear and extended family members, especially the parents and older members of the family; police; security guards; teachers; and community leaders such as pastors and community volunteers. According to the findings, the home was seen as the most important place associated with safety, which is consistent with findings of the study conducted by Gaetz (2004). However, there were other places associated with safety-related people (such as the police station, clinic, and school) that were also seen as being important places of safety. Ultimately, the participants indicated that any place in which they were supervised by a trusted adult or family member made it safe for them.

The participants also identified a number of objects and things related to safety, which were also related to places associated with safety. Burglar bars, fences, and locking doors, especially at home, the police station, and school were identified was being important to making children feel safe in Nomzamo. Interestingly, the dogs (both owned and stray) within the community were perceived as a source of safety for children. These findings suggest that these sources of safety, while distinct and separate entities, operate and interact with one another within the family, school, and community context, thus giving rise to feelings of safety. This implies that these sources of risk and protection are in constant transactional interplay with each other, across multiple levels of interaction, which is consistent with the literature on youth asset development (Kegler et al., 2005; Youngblade et al., 2007).

Furthermore, interpretation of the data suggested that youth representations of safety differ between the home environment and wider community environment, which Youngblade et al (2007) consider a crucial distinction to make. While the findings indicate that the home environment is the most important source of safety for children, it is important to note that the home is not only a secure, protective shelter for children. It also represents the centre of family life, allowing for children to connect with adults and older members that they trust, which is consistent with the literature (Gaetz, 2004; Kegler et al., 2005). However, it was interesting to note that feelings of safety associated with the home differed depending on the presence of burglar bars, locks, gates, and fences. The participants suggested that houses which had less of these objects securing the house were not as safe as those with them.

Interpretation of the findings suggest that the perceived safety of the neighbourhood environment and quality of interaction also impacts on the perceived safety of the home, which is a very important point emphasised by Pittman et al (2003). In contrast to home safety, neighbourhood (or environmental) safety was perceived as being positively affected by the visible and mobile presence of the police and security guards in Nomzamo, but also by street committees and neighbourhood watches. However, the participants also indicated that the police and security guards play a very important role in them feeling safe and secure within their individual homes. These findings are consistent with the findings of Kegler et al (2005) as they illustrate that safety within the home and the neighbourhood are both influenced by formal social control (e.g. police presence) and informal social control (e.g. parental/adult supervision).

Much of the literature on youth asset development suggests that the outcomes of positive youth development are dependent on three factors: interpersonal connection and resources and opportunity to access these; safety and the absence of violence; and promotion of safe and healthy behaviours (Kegler et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2006; Youngblade et al., 2005). The findings from this study suggest that interpersonal resources; connections with others (especially adults); and safe, health promotion behaviours all to contribute to feelings of safety in youth, which, in turn, leads to positive youth development. Additionally, the findings from Nomzamo illustrate that safety does not include a mere absence of violence or reduction of the extent of risk and danger present within the community - it also includes learning and adopting health- and safety- promoting behaviours within a supervised and safe environment, corroborating the interpretations made by Youngblade et al (2007). These behaviours range from alcohol and substance abstinence to commitment to schooling to taking care of others.

The findings strongly suggest that connection between youth and pro-social adults is crucial to youth feeling safe at home and within the community. Positive adult and peer role models are viewed as important community assets that help youth to develop their own assets, but also protect youth from becoming victims and perpetrators of violence, crime and aggression in their community. This finding is consistent with literature on protective factors for youths (Burton et al., 2009; Lerner et al., 2006). Furthermore, this pro-social interaction between youth, their peers, and adults in the community is strongly associated with feelings of safety within the neighbourhood/community. This finding is corroborated by literature on

the link between social capital and youth asset development (Jarrett et al., 2005; Kegler et al., 2005).

While adults provide an element of physical protection, they are also perceived by youth as being cultural, social, and academic educators and role-models. Pro-social relationships and interaction between adults and youth protect youth from exposure to anti-social role-models and give them an opportunity to learn behaviours and attitudes that will reduce their likelihood of becoming victims or perpetrators of violent, aggressive, or anti-social acts which is consistent with the protective factors presented by Burton et al., 2009. The findings suggest that interaction and interpersonal connection with pro-social adults, in both formal/organised and informal social settings, ultimately help youths to make the transition into adulthood by providing them with a safe, supervised context in which they can engage with community assets and resources. This context also allows them to discuss shared experiences, values, and goals and encourages civic participation within the community, thus fostering a sense of community, which is an important finding of both Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) and Jarrett et al (2005).

Within the context of Nomzamo, the findings seems to suggest that positive youth-adult interaction leads to the development of social capital which further helps youth to connect to the community and adult world in general. If the youth have limited access to social capital (i.e. access to community assets and resources and opportunity to use them), this negatively impacts on how safe the youth perceive themselves to be, which is consistent with the findings presented by Gaetz (2004). Furthermore, the findings show that social capital for youth also includes elements of sociability and social trust, which significantly increases the amount of assets and resources available to the youth, which is consistent with the literature on social capital in youth populations (Jarrett et al., 2005; Kahne & Bailey, 1999; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Ultimately, the findings indicate that trust is an essential precursor to any interaction between children and adults in Nomzamo. Much emphasis was placed on the importance interacting with trusted, pro-social adults

Related to the notion of social capital, the findings revealed that the most important characteristic of each of the sources of safety identified in Nomzamo is that they are accessible to the youth in some way. A sense of connection between youths and adults within the family (especially the parents) and community seemed to be the most important factor, which is consistent with the findings of Kegler et al (2005) and Youngblade et al (2007). However, very few studies have investigated how the cost, availability, and proximity of

these sources play a role in how safe youth perceive themselves to be. The findings suggest that even logistical variables such as these can impact on the safety of the home and community environments.

Reflexive considerations

Using a collaborative CBPR method such as Photovoice provides a route for 'outsider' researchers to develop a working relationship with community members to address problems of victimisation and injury. However, as an 'outsider', it is important to take into account how the race, class, and language of the researcher may have influenced the data that emerged, as well as they analysis of that data.

As an outsider to the Nomzamo community, it was important that I remained immersed in the research process. However, as a white, middle-class, male, I felt that I may not have entirely understood the extent to which sources of risk and danger affect the children there. Furthermore, it is possible that, despite careful translation during the interviews/focus groups and of the transcripts, my limited knowledge of the Xhosa culture, language, and customs may have lead to some misinterpretation of data. Similarly, the fact that I do not speak Xhosa may have influenced the way I was perceived during the project by the participants, thus limiting what they felt able to communicate and reveal about their live experience.

To address these issues, close attention was also paid to the development of trust and rapport in the groups so as to provide a structured, yet supportive environment for discussion. Furthermore, over the course of the project, the research team focused on encouraging the participants to participate as much as possible.

Limitations

Some limitations of the study need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the data may have also been effected by the relatively young age of the participants in so far as they may not all have understood how to take photos of and discuss an abstract concept such as safety. Also, different sources of safety may be salient for older adolescents, so the findings are not representative of youth in general. Secondly, the study was conducted with a small and selected sample recruited through community-based organisations. It is likely that these children different in some important aspects from other children in this community who have

not joined existing youth organisations. For example, the sample may represent a less at-risk group with regard to victimisation. Therefore, one would have to question the extent to which these findings are transferable to other high-risk, low-income contexts. Youth in other contexts may identify different sources of safety, or perceive them differently.

The most important limitation to this study is the English-Xhosa language barrier. Although a translator was present for the sessions, the individual interview process was quite convoluted considering that the researcher was trying to engage the participants in descriptive and abstract themes. Instructions given and questions asked by the facilitators often required translation, which may have lead to various misinterpretations throughout the Photovoice project, not only in the interviews, but the focus group discussions as well. Unfortunately, this need to constantly translate things being said may have lead to some of the participants not understanding some of instructions, questions, or themes. In a similar vein, the research team may have misinterpreted some of what was said by the participants

Due to time constraints, the researcher did not go back to the participants with the themes emerging from the analysis, in order to elicit their views on the veracity of these findings. Ideally, co-construction of knowledge between researchers and participants should entail recurring feedback processes between the two.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, there are a few tentative recommendations for future research. Research on safety and protection within high-risk communities would benefit greatly from using a community-based health promotion approach. This approach allows researchers to identify, through an ecological perspective, sources of risk, protection and health promotion within various high-risk, low-income communities.

Additionally, future research should look to place more emphasis on the voices and perspectives of youth populations. Ultimately, researchers need to be aware that adult populations and youth populations may experience and perceive things in different ways. Working within the asset-based community development framework using CBPR methods is very much appropriate for investigating youth voices and opinions in community contexts by engaging participants as critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Future research should aim to investigate how youth across different age groups perceive safety, within different high-risk and low-income communities.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations, this study adds to the growing body of community-based health promotion literature in South Africa. Its focus on contextually-specific manifestations of safety and protection in high-risk communities also has implications for the development of an asset-based approach to intervention and policy design. This study has also shown that CBPR methods, such as Photovoice, are useful research tools with which to encourage discussion and dialogue between researchers and communities. Furthermore, use of the Photovoice method has provided crucial insight into sources of safety that are pertinent to young adolescents in the Nomzamo community and why they are perceived that way.

The main reason this study was conducted within the community-based health promotion paradigm was to assist in the development of a body of asset-orientated local literature that addresses social issues in disempowered communities. It is hoped that this study, with its focus on community-based health promotion of assets and resources associated with safety in youth populations, can assist the development of a robust intervention framework that focuses not only on risk amelioration, but, more importantly, the development of assets; resources; strengths; and capacities of the high-risk, low-income communities.

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Appendix A

Dear Parent,

The Medical Research Council - University of South Africa Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit and the University of Cape Town are conducting a research study with teenagers in Nomzamo. The aim of the study is to hear what teenagers think about safety in their community. This information will help us to create community projects that will teach young people how to help build a safe and peaceful community in Nomzamo.

Taking part in the study is voluntary. This means that your child can choose not to take part at all or can stop taking part at any point during the study. Your child will be asked to fill in a form in which they will tell us if they do or do not want to be part of the study.

If your child takes part in this study, they will have to do the following:
1) Receive some training from the researchers about how to take photographs
2) Take some photographs of their neighbourhood with a free disposable camera (after school and on weekends). A friend or family member must go with them when they are taking photographs. The photographs will be printed by the researchers.
1) Attend 6 meetings with the researchers. The meetings will take place at the Nomzamo Safety and Health Promotion Organisation office once a week during April and May 2011, after school hours, and will last for one and a half hours each. The meetings will be tape recorded. Snacks and cooldrinks will be provided.

If you give permission for your child to take part in this project, this mean that you agree that their photographs (but not their names) can be used by the researchers for research reports and for academic publications or presentations. If the researchers want to use the photographs for any other purposes, you and your child both need to give permission.

If you **agree** that your child can take part in this project, please fill in below:

Your child's name and surname:_____

Your name and surname: _____

Your signature: _____

Today's date: _____

If you have any questions please contact **Mr Samed Bulbulia on (021) 938-0534 or 082 4671158**

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Mzali Obekekileyo,

Icandelo lophando eMedical Research Council isebenzisana neDyunivesi yase Mzantsi Afrika Kukhuselo Noxolo (Medical Research Council - University of South Africa Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit) neDyunivesi yase Kapa lenza uphando noluthsa lwekokishi yase Nomzamo. Injongo yoluphando kukuva iizimvo zolutsha malunga nokuseleko kwiingingqi zazo. Olulwazi luzosinceda siqale ii-projects ezizofundisa abantu abathsa ukwakha ukhuselo noxolo eNomzamo.

Akukhosinyazeliso ekuthatheni inxaxheba. Lonto ithetha ukuba umntwana unelungelo longavumi ukuthatha inxaxheba okanye ayeke nakwesiphi isigaba soluphando. Phambi kokuba abeyinxalenye yoluphando, umntwana wakho uzo kucelwa agcwalise incwadi yemvumelwano.

Xa umntwana eyinxalenye yoluphando, kuzo funeka enze ezizinto zilandelayo:
    1) Uzokufumana i-training yokufota.
    2) Uzokufota izinto engingqini yakhe nge-camera elahlwayo xa seyisebenzile (xa ebuya esikolweni nangee mpela veki). Kufuneka akhathswe sisihlobo okanye ilungu losapho xa efota izinto. Ezifoto zizo printwa ngaba phandi.
    3) Uzokuya kwi ntlangaiso nabaphandi eziyi-6. Ezintlanganiso zizo bakwii ofisi zase Nomzamo Safety and Health Promotion Organisation kanye ngeveki kwii nyanga zika April no May 2011. Ezintlanganiso zizo hlala iyure okanye iyure enemizuzo emi30. Zizo rekhodwa ezintlanganiso.

Ukuba unike imvume yokuba umntwana wakho athathe inxaxheba kule-project, lonto ithetha ukuba ukwavuma ukuba iifoto azifotileyo (hayi igama lakhe) ngelilixa zisetyenziswe ngabaphandi kwii-report zophando, kwincwadi zeemfundo eziphakimileyo, kwakunye neemboniso. Ukuba abaphandi bafuna ukusebenzisa ezifoto kwezinye iindawo, wena nomntwana wakho nobabini kuzofuneka ninekeze imvume.

Ukuba uyavuma ukuba umntwana abeyinxalenye nale project, nceda u gwalise ezantsi:

Igama nefani yomntwana wakho: _____

Igama nefani yakho: _____

Nceda usayine: _____

Umhla wanamhlanje: _____

Ukuba unenye imibuzo nceda u qhagamishelane no Mnumzana u **Samed Bulbulia on (021) 938-0534 okanye 082 467 1158.**

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Appendix B

PHOTOVOICE – NOMZAMO: Individual interview schedule

- Before starting the interview, explain the aim of the interview and obtain permission from participant to scribe and record the interview.

1. **Description of the photo's content – Explain to me what is happening in this photograph?**
   a. What is this a photo of?
   b. Who is the person in the photograph and what are they doing?
   c. What is the thing you photographed and where is it?

2. **Eliciting meanings of the photo – Why did you choose to show us this photo?**
   a. What does this photo tell you about your life in Nomzamo?
   b. What does this photo tell you about the lives of other people in Nomzamo?

3. **Exploring how the photo represents safety – How does X make you feel safe?**
   a. What is it about X that makes you feel safe?
   b. What does X keep you safe from?
   c. Is it easy for you to find X if you need to feel safe? If not, why?

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

1.   I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is using another's work and to pretend that it is ones own.

2.   I have used the American Psychological Association (APA) as the convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project/… from the work, or works of other people has been attributed and

        has cited and referenced.

3.   This essay/report/project… is my own work.

4.   I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

5.   I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____