



IDENTITY NARRATIVES BY NZ AFRICAN YOUTH: A participatory visual methodological approach to situating identity, migration and representation

By Makanaka Tuwe

An exegesis submitted to Communication Studies, Business Enterprise and High Technology Network in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of International Communication, Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand (2018)



Declaration

Name of candidate: Makanaka Tuwe

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project **entitled:** IDENTITY NARRATIVES BY NZ AFRICAN YOUTH: A participatory visual methodological approach to situating identity, migration and representation is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of International Communication

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I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this Master of International Communication creative research project is to situate identity, migration and representation of African youth in New Zealand using participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework. This creative project involved a series of workshops, a focus group and reflexive diary entries by a group of ten youths of African descent in Auckland, New Zealand, including myself as a researcher and co-participant over a period of four months. The participants (who were all women of African descent) are referred to as *'The Storytellers'* or *'The Storyteller'*.

As part of this research each *Storyteller* developed, created and executed a visual project that serves as a representation of their identity as a third culture youth. Through the creation of content, I explored and examined the co-creative space for African youth in New Zealand and how creating narratives to counter mass media messages can provide a space for self-determination, confidence and a sense of belonging. The research project has two components the analytical and the creative. The analytical component focuses on how a methodology can be used to create new knowledge about people of African descent within the contemporary New Zealand society. The creative component reflects on the process and uses visual images as an expression of identity construction. It is presented in three parts: The first is content exemplars that include photography, memes, narrative essay, audio recordings, music and poetry co-created by *The Storytellers* and I. The second is a website I developed that serves as a digital platform with the content created. The third is this document, the exegesis that explores the process of creating and developing narratives about African identity in the diaspora by producing a visual participatory project.

In this exegesis I examine the ways in which participatory visual methodologies within an indigenous Afrocentric framework can be used to enable the process of collecting and sharing stories of the African community in New Zealand, specifically the youth and our young women, whom I consider as my sisters. In mainstream media people of African descent are commonly

portrayed negatively and as the number of people of African descent living in New Zealand increases due to migration and birth, it becomes imperative to create stories that represent the lives of those individuals.

I begin this exegesis with a personal narrative I wrote as a reflexive diary entry during the research process. The decision to begin Chapter One with *Home but never Home* was to highlight the reality of navigating life as a woman of African descent in New Zealand and the conversations I engage in about identity and belonging. The second chapter *Methodology and why representation matters* explores the media representation of people of African descent and the literature about it. In this chapter I introduce the research project and the rationale behind applying participatory visual methodologies within an indigenous Afrocentric framework. I conclude the chapter with the research questions, objectives and detailing the design and process of the research project. In Chapter Three *The Projects* I share the projects *The Storytellers* and I created during the research process. In the fourth chapter titled *Reflections on the process*, I share my reflections on the process including emerging themes that came as a result of thematically analysing the data from the workshops, focus group and reflexive diary entries. I conclude the chapter by answering how participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework can be used to enable authentic voice representations of African youth in New Zealand. This exegesis is concluded with Chapter Five which details a recommendation and a way forward. This research is aiming to provide an impetus for researchers, policy makers and those interested in African development to start exploring different alternative methodologies such as participatory visual methodologies within an indigenous framework to countering the issues that come with migration, identity and representation for people of African descent in the New Zealand context. Through critical ethnography I was able to co-create narratives from within the community while actively engaging with the research process, *The Storytellers* and community. The significance of this research lies in its potential to generate content for mainstream media, inform community media. It also can be applied for the creation of a youth empowerment programme not only for African youth but for other migrant communities in New Zealand.

DEDICATION

To the sisters, the storytellers, the mama's mama's mama, without you they would be no story to tell. This is dedicated to the years stories have forcibly been buried in your mouths, your tongues severed and your voices silenced.

To the heroes and sheroes that leave home when home can no longer house you, this is for us.

To amai na baba (mother and father) ne hanzvadzi (brother), Annette and Kudakwashe Tuwe and Munashe Tuwe, to decolonise and to un/learn with you on this migrant journey has been one hell of a ride. Thank you for your unconditional love and unwavering support through this never ending process.

To my sisters Adorate Mizero, Chanwyn Southgate, Rumbi Tomu, Laila Ben-Brahim, Rita Wakefield, Synthia Bahati, Tadiwa Tomu, Favour Gift and Mwangileni Kampanga, thank you for journeying with me through this project. In you I have found kinship, home, support, the sisterhood and everything nice! 2017 was indeed fi di gyal dem!

Special thanks to Evangelia Papoutsaki for journeying with me as principal supervisor. Your patience and support in the last three years is appreciated. To Elena Kolesova, thank you for your support and guidance in this project as secondary supervisor.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

HOME BUT NEVER HOME

17 July 2017

Munhu, munhu nekuda kwevanhu

- *I am because we are. Shona proverb.*

Many conversations these days are being had about the notion of home and recently a question that has come up has been: where is home and who is it home to? Home has now become more of a concept that is fluid than an actual place and structure due to us being simultaneously present in various places and spaces, whether physically or digitally. Recently I described myself as being "home but never home" and when I look around me I see the refugee crisis, migration, globalisation and the increased rate at which we travel and I get the sense that I am not alone in being home but never home.

*A few months ago I finished reading a book titled 'Far from home' by Na'ima B. Robert about two Zimbabwean women. One of them, Tariro is a descendant to the Native Shona people and Katie is a descendant of British colonists. As the story weaves their narratives together, it manages to provide historical context about Zimbabwe as well as insight and multiple perspectives about land reform in the 2000's. As I continued to read, it became clear that Zimbabwe was home to both these women. During a trip to Matakana I had a conversation with a white Zimbabwean, *Amy about home. She was born and lived during the Ian Smith regime and I was born and raised a born free (someone born in a country after its transition to democracy). When we spoke the conversation began with how I didn't have a strong Zimbabwean accent. My response to such statement is usually cheeky and along the lines of "we were colonised and robbed of the language of our mothers, you know the typical symptoms of colonisation and then after independence our economy was put on hold by ridiculous sanctions by the West which led to my family's migration to New Zealand when I was ten". This*

time around I don't know, it felt weird so I said I went to a private Christian School that was attended by local and international students and because of our linguistic diversity the English language was compulsory with the rationale to unite us all through how we communicated. Heck our Shona (native language) lessons consisted predominantly of a,e, i, o, u's. I digress.

Her response was she wished she had been raised during the time I had been raised in order to experience a diverse Zimbabwe and I sort of mumbled "oh yeah terrible times those were". The interesting fact was that she was probably between my Grandmother and father's age and as someone interested in contextualising time, place, history, narrative and its implications on our experiences, I couldn't help but wonder how different my father and grandmother's upbringings would have been, how different their stories were and how Zimbabwe was home for all the three of them.

Later on that week I had a conversation about home and belongingness with one of my sisters, Jess, (my friends are my sisters) who identifies as Kenyan-Kiwi (Born in New Zealand to a Kenyan father and Pākehā/White mother). She was telling me about her time in Kenya and how growing up she never felt like she belonged here (New Zealand) and she always imagined her trip to Kenya would be a welcome home. While her trip was beautiful and fulfilling to some extent she was still othered in Kenya, a feeling she felt growing up in New Zealand.

What struck me the most about these conversations is that I know the feeling of being neither here nor there but when I go back to Zimbabwe I fit in to some extent. I feel more at ease because I am no longer someone that everyone stares at or wonders where I am from. While I feel like I don't belong in Zimbabwe because of my lived experience being raised in New Zealand, a Western society, the way I look and the Shona that slides off my tongue with ease welcomes me home. I can visit both my parents' villages and be known as "muzukuru wekwaMutema" or "muzukuru wekwaTuwe" (the grandchild of the Mutema clan or the Tuwe clan). Whereas when Jess visited Kenya there wasn't that ease due to language and how she looked.

*I thought about the reception that *Amy would receive if she returned back home to Zimbabwe. In fact I didn't even ask if she had been back to Zimbabwe because that would mean having that conversation about the state of affairs. As it stands there is tension regarding the treatment of white farmers by Zanu-PF, the ruling party of Zimbabwe. From global media narratives the story is after independence the blacks revolted and kicked out the whites and after that failed to govern themselves. What is omitted from the narrative is colonisation, the sanctions Zimbabwe faced, the treatment of the black body pre and post-Independence and the insidious reign of white supremacy and oppression regardless of the notion of independence. The country suffers from the effects of post colonisation, something that is eerily familiar when you visit countries that used to be British colonies; the remnants of colonisation (in architecture, names of roads, statues, modern segregation in neighbourhoods, elitism), sanctions imposed by the West and the "debt" most African countries still pay to the Western nations for instance Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to France. Again, I digress.*

This all struck out to me because the concept of home is different for each person. Although experiences can be interwoven, they require their own place of enquiry. These experiences require an understanding of identity construction especially in a Western society riddled with misrepresentation of what an African is, an understanding of what it means to be an African, what is Africa and what that all means for third culture identity construction and how those who identify as youth of African descent living in the diaspora can navigate and represent their identity.

*At the end of both conversations with Amy and with Jess I echoed something that someone once said to me: **home is an energy**. I suggest that energy is a sense of belongingness because home is such a fluid concept. Home may no longer want you in the physical sense. It means that home may no longer be able to house you and protect you forcing you to move out and seek a new home. In that new home you will continue to search for a new home and to start feeling that you are at home, whether or not you are welcomed. That is why I say that home is an energy not physical place. Who knows.*

How do we share these stories and experiences of navigating belonging? How do we shift the culture and change the narrative? We become The Storytellers.

Keywords: third culture, media representation, migrant identity, visual narratives, African youth, migration, media, participatory visual methodologies

**Name changed for anonymity.*

KEY CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

African youth – According to ¹UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation) , youth is defined as the transitional period from the dependence of childhood to adulthood independence (What do we mean by “youth”?, n.d). With this independence comes as awareness of interdependence as a member of the community (What do we mean by “youth”?, n.d). For the purpose of this research project, and in accordance with Unesco’s definition, African youth will be individuals aged between 18 – 25 of African descent; either born in one of the 54 African countries or born to parent/s of African descent.

Identity – From a sociological perspective, identity begins with the notion that there is a relationship between the self and society. The self influences society through action and reciprocally, society influences the self through language and meanings that enable the individual to engage in social interaction (Stets, 2003). As the self emerges from society, it is important to understand that the self is always acting in a social context and that identity is dependent to a large extent of the society within one lives in (Stets, 2003).

Indigenous research framework – An indigenous approach to research was defined by Hart (2010) as an encirclement of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that involves individual cultural groups processing and creating knowledge in everyday interactions. In order to create knowledge for Sub-Saharan African youth in New Zealand, it is important to develop an awareness of the values that underpin the worldview of the cultural group being researched

¹ The UNESCO definition of African youth was used in this instance as it was the definition readily available at the time of study.

(Thomas, Eggins & Papoutsaki, 2011). In terms of the Sub-African community the Afrocentric method will be applied as it suggests cultural and social immersion as the best approach to understanding African phenomena (Mkhabela, 2005). It has been argued (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013) that the Afrocentric method is similar to qualitative methods such as participatory action research as it assumes the use of interpretative schemes to understand, contextualize and articulate the character of the local group. However, the core of the Afrocentric paradigm is the involvement of participants from the beginning to the end of the research. It encourages a spiral methodology of data collection whereby community, participants, researchers and decision-makers interact in a synergistic and bidirectional manner (Mkhabela, 2005), honouring the African value of Ubuntu/oneness.

Migration – Migration is defined as movement by people from one place to another with the intentions of settling permanently or temporarily. According to New Zealand Aids Foundation (African Communities) African migration to New Zealand was on humanitarian grounds with refugees predominantly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Sudan. It is estimated that between 1992 and 2001, 3,000 refugees settled into New Zealand. In addition to the African refugee population, approximately 46,806 migrants arrived in New Zealand between 2002 and 2004 mostly from Southern Africa (predominantly South Africa and Zimbabwe).

Media representation – Media representation is defined as the manner in which the media portrays particular communities, experiences, groups, ideas and topics from a particular ideological perspective (Shohat & Stam, 2014).

Participatory visual methodology– The participatory visual methodology approach refers to a research paradigm and method that emphasizes participation and action from both researchers and local communities. It seeks to understand a phenomenon and changing it using collaboration through collective inquiry and experimentation. The participatory approach responds to the needs of the community as it recognises the value of the ‘insider’s’ insight. (Jenkins, 2009) states that participatory visual methodologies are an elixir for researchers and participants who wish to make their work accessible and relevant to broader audiences. It is a method of increasing the project participants’ lived experiences and to humanise those

experiences. As it offers opportunities for holistic connections, participatory visual methodologies can be used to commensurate with postcolonial indigenous paradigms (Chilisa, 2011).

Third Culture Kid - The term Third Culture Kid (TCK) was first used in the 1950s by Ruth Useem and is used to describe someone who grows up in a culture different from the one in which his or her parents grew up in. The third culture aspect is due to the mixed identity that is assumed by third culture kids that is influenced by both their parents' culture and the culture they are raised in. In 1994 Nick Voci said "Third culture kids have a unique place in any society to which they belong. Theirs is a confusing and quite often debilitating condition. They are confronted with cultural walls or pitfalls at every turn. Unable to completely relate to their parent's culture and yet at the same time labelled as "different" from the mainstream culture they are encouraged to belong to, they are basically cut adrift and left to float in a sort of "twilight zone" state. They form a cultural hybrid, a blend of cultures that can be interesting, but also confusing and frustrating to them. This condition is exacerbated growing up in a country like Canada" ("What is a Third-Culture Kid", n.d).

Please note that in some of the reflections they are spelling and grammar errors. This was done deliberately as I wanted to keep the entries authentic as it was where The Storytellers reflected during the research process.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY AND WHY REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Media representations are defined as the ways in which the media portrays particular groups, communities, experiences and ideas from a particular ideological perspective (Shohat & Stam, 2014). From observation, in mainstream representations such as commercials, literature, movies and news reporting, the African subject is commonly presented as the criminal, from a poor country, needing aid or is centered on adventure, discovery, rituals and wildlife. Coverage of the continent tends to be reductionist and superficial with a focus on devastation, despair, tragedy and violence that perpetuates a racially charged denigrating and dehumanizing negative image (Dersso, 2014). Humanist theories and studies have stated that long-term exposure to media has an influence on the way reality is informed, perceived and shaped as the imagery and messaging produced shapes our culture and at a minimum reflects it (Rivadeneyra et al, 2007). Given that reporting serves as a vehicle for shaping the opinion of the public, such narrow and simplistic representations perpetuate stereotypes that inform interactions of people of African descent with the justice system, education system, social system and in the workplace.

Studies (Bell & Janis, 2011) have sought to find the connection between the negative and biased portrayal of Africa in Western mainstream media and the impact that it has on people of African descent's integration into society. The discourse has primarily focused on mapping out the media's stereotyping and othering of Africans and other minority groups, the representation of people of African descent and the impacts of the representation. One of the critiques of these studies is that they are limited to the connections between media use and attitude without examining how new stories, narratives and representations can be created to counter the negative narratives (Rivadeneyra et al, 2007). With the emergence of new technologies and possibilities to exhibit and showcase cultural narratives, it has become

possible and important to consider alternative approaches in reporting to dismiss the vicious circle of minority representation.

Research by Elias and Lemish (2008) showed that the host country media shapes and spreads negative stereotypes of immigrants, and exposure to them causes feelings of alienation among immigrants towards the host society and fosters their social segregation which results in isolation (Noronha & Papoutsaki, 2014). Ultimately, the continuous biased reporting has done nothing to promote the goal of multicultural equality in society (Curran & Park, 2000). The study conducted by Hollings' (2007) that analysed the New Zealand census data of 2006 revealed that 82% of journalists were European, 12% Māori, 12% Asian, 4.8% Pasifika and 1.8% belonged to other ethnic minorities (Noronha & Papoutsaki, 2014). While there is no updated data of ethnic representation of New Zealand journalists, one can argue that the lack of equal representation in journalism could be one of the reasons that the coverage of minority communities in New Zealand is one-dimensional. This supports the argument that mainstream media does not fully address the communication needs of ethnic groups or represent them in a balanced manner (Robie, 2009).

After conducting a literature review on the *Media Representation of People of African Descent* in 2015, I established that numerous studies have been conducted to corroborate the impact of media representations on people of African descent – notably African-Americans. The vast majority of literature focuses on mapping out the problems by describing and analysing existing patterns in the media with a lack of focus on identifying courses of action or testing hypotheses about what might help to improve matters (Bell & Janis, 2011). The literature highlighted that identifying the impact was not enough and in order to co-exist in a multicultural society, contra narratives have to be created (Shohat & Stam, 2014; Mahtani, 2001; Silverston & Georgiou, 2005). It highlighted a need to consider alternative methodologies to address countering negative narratives and balancing the reporting of issues, or, as I later realised, a need for space and methodologies that allowed the ownership of narratives. The methodologies and research would need to allow narratives to move beyond stereotypes and help to convey a full representation of the aspirations, challenges, issues, opportunities and what it means to be

African, as told by the African. Just as it is important to debunk the patterns of distortion and biased narratives represented by the media, it is also important to include the untold stories that seek to provide an opportunity for a new forms of representation of African New Zealand youth.

VISUAL METHODOLOGIES AND THE AFROCENTRIC FRAMEWORK

Africans first arrived in New Zealand in large numbers in the early 1990s. It was recorded between 2001 and 2006 that there was an increase of Africans in New Zealand by 63% and between 2006 and 2013 the number increased by 25%, raising the population of Africans in New Zealand from 33,939 to 42,306 (Nakhid, 2015). In total the African community is less than 1% of the population in New Zealand as of 5 March 2013 (Perumal, 2010) with 25% of African community born in New Zealand and 75% born overseas. The most common region of residence for the African community is the Auckland region with approximately 52% of the total African population. In order to create narratives with the intention to tell African stories (Dersso, 2014), it became important to explore the methodology of participatory action research (PAR). PAR involves collaborative research, education and action activities aimed towards social change. One of the PAR methods that can be applied to remedy portrayals of Africans in mainstream media is participatory visual methodology. The participatory visual methodological approach refers to a research paradigm and method that emphasizes participation and action from both researchers and local communities (Gubrium & Harper, 2013). It seeks to understand a phenomenon by using collaboration through collective inquiry and experimentation through visual outputs. By applying a participatory visual methodology one is able to create a process that enables the creation of narratives and representations and allows for conceptualization and research to be integrated while recording cultural activities which, has the potential to become an avenue for advocacy (Meadows, 2003).

It has been argued that media technologies can be used as a tool for self-reflection and self-representation (Thomas, Eggins & Papoutsaki, 2016). As visual-based research method emphasise that people make sense of their lives through the interplay of sensory relations, they

aid the ability to embody and reveal the embodied sensorial lives of participants (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). Using visual methodologies wherein participants can interact/produce outputs with different platforms, such as photography, video, drawing, painting or literature, permits for viewpoints, experiences and resources that can be used to situate identity, migration and representation ultimately, establishing a shared collective experience that is engaging on multiple levels. Additionally, visual methodologies can be used to not only tell the untold stories but to also investigate the ways youth represent and express their experiences of migration. This allows for an analysis into the exploration of youth and social constructions of cultural identities in relation to their experiences of migration (Gomez, Neils, Newell & Yefimova, 2015). As participants have control and ownership of their representation through creating their own narratives, the methodology ultimately allows the participant to define how they want to be represented, which in itself is empowering (Shohat & Stam, 2014).

While visual methods have been used extensively to carve out the experiences of migrants in relation to place and a sense of belonging, literature revealed that there is a lack of such research amongst the African communities in New Zealand. In order to create knowledge about African youth in New Zealand it was important to develop an awareness of the values that underpin their worldviews (Thomas, Eggins & Papoutsaki, 2011). This was achieved by applying an indigenous framework which, as defined by Hart (2010) is an encirclement of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology that involves individual cultural groups processing and creating knowledge in everyday interactions. The indigenous framework that I applied is the Afrocentric method which suggests cultural and social immersion as the best approach to understanding African phenomena (Mkhabela, 2005). Owusu-Ansah & Mji (2013) note that the Afrocentric method is similar to qualitative methods such as participatory action research as it assumes the use of interpretative schemes to understand, contextualize and articulate the character of the group. However, the core of the Afrocentric paradigm is the involvement of participants from the beginning to the end of the research process. This encourages a spiral methodology of data collection whereby community, participants, researchers and decision-makers interact collectively, honouring the African value of Ubuntu/oneness (Mkhabela, 2005). Additionally, the Afrocentric method and participatory visual methodologies

triangulates qualitative research, as it enables collecting and telling stories that empower a community riddled with marginalization as a shared rather than individual experience (Pont, 2012).

The use of the Afrocentric method within this project was in line with Asante (2008) who stated that in order for people of African descent to free their minds, it is imperative to use the theory to relocate the African person as a co-participant instead of the subject. In 1997, Mkhabela & Luthuli argued that research has largely ignored, misunderstood and disregarded the value of African indigenous communities' collective ethic. The collective ethic or Ubuntu recognises that survival is derived from group harmony and that all actions are within a collective context characterised by generosity, love, maturity, hospitality, politeness, understanding and humility. Methodologically speaking, such research is translated into collaborative and cooperative research (Mkhabela, 2005). Applying this research methodology not only emphasises and strengthens African values it also affirms the centrality of African indigenous ideals and values as legitimate frames of reference for conducting research (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013).

KORA THE THIRD CULTURE RESEARCH PROJECT

Known and named by the African youth community, the purpose of *Kora – The Third Culture Research Project* was to develop and create content and narratives about New Zealand African youth. Cultural identity of this group is of a specific interest. In order to conduct research, contribute and participate in work that is accessible I posted on Facebook suggestions for the name of the project. The post read as follows:

“Lovelies, I need your help.

I am about to embark on an exciting research journey with a group of about 8 people and we need a name. The research's aim is to co-create content and narratives by youth of African descent in NZ while also looking at how a co-creative space can be used to situate identity, migration and representation.

I'm thinking of calling it: The Ubuntu Project but I am not feeling it 100% (I am at that awkward 80%).

Help with any names please <3

Thank you in advance xx

[#forusbyus](#) [#fubu](#)”

The idea of the post was to identify the name which received the most “likes” for the project name. The comment that received the most “likes” was by Bro Osei and it read as follows:

“The Kora is a 21st-string West African instrument and it is evident that the youth are instrumental in our development. The strings represent the many facets of our lives that make us and the stretched strings represent trying to connect our African identity with diasporic relevance.”

The project was then named *Kora – The Third Culture Research Project*.

Renaming the project was the initial invitation to the community to join in the collective collection and creation of narratives relating to our experiences as sons and daughters of the diaspora. It was about actively involving us in the process of generating new knowledge about third culture kids. Actively including the voices of the community from the beginning of the project is something underlined in both the Afrocentric research framework and participatory action research methodology (Asante, 2008).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES & DESIGN

The research project aimed at answering the following key research question:

How can participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework be used to enable authentic voice representations of African youth in New Zealand?

The following sub questions assist with answering this question:

1. How visible are indigenous African worldviews in African youth identity construction in New Zealand during this research process?
2. How can an African indigenous framework be used to explore the experiences of African youth in New Zealand?
3. What are the challenges/opportunities in producing visual participatory outputs that will incorporate an indigenous research framework?
4. How can participatory visual methodologies be used to situate identity, migration and representation of African youth in New Zealand?

The project was guided by the following objectives:

1. To situate identity, migration and representation of African youth in New Zealand using participatory visual methodologies within an indigenous framework
2. To explore how the co-creative space reflects the worldview of participants when navigating their identity as African youth in New Zealand
3. To produce visual outputs that explore identity representations of African youth in New Zealand

4. To provide narratives of people of African descent in New Zealand by providing a visual participatory strategy for creating alternative voices
5. To produce a visual participatory project that is informed by participatory action research within an indigenous framework

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC & AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

Although there is debate about the definition of ethnography, authors are in agreement on the fact that ethnography is about writing about a way of life (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) define ethnography as a method that involves the ethnographer participating in the daily lives of people for an extended period of time, observing what is happening and what is being said, asking questions and collecting data relevant to the focus of the research. Ethnography is centred on the belief based on the idea that people are meaning-makers with an emphasis on understanding how people interpret their worlds. What differentiates traditional ethnography and critical ethnography is that the latter is less concerned with the analysis of a culture and is instead concerned with “communicative behavior or the interrelationship of language and culture” (Brown 2004, p.3). What this means is there has been a paradigm shift where aims and outcomes are now focused on “serving the needs and interests of the participant” (Revell 2014, p.26). Similarly, autoethnography has multiple meanings but essentially, it is the method of research and writing about culture that is based on someone’s personal experiences.

By employing a partial collaborative approach, a researcher can choose at what stage of the research process participants can be involved, however collaborative data collection is the key component (Ngungiri et al., 2010). As part of my partial collaborative autoethnographic approach, I included myself as a participant in the research. I worked along 9 other participants (*The Storytellers*) to collect data together through a process that was cooperative and self-reflexive using reflexive diaries, focus groups, workshops and the outputs created. However, I am solely responsible for the roles of report generator, developer, designer, facilitator of this research project. As a cultural insider and someone who has worked

extensively with Sub-Saharan African youth on various projects, it felt natural to create and design a project about representation as a continuation of my work as an activist involved with social change. I felt like I was engaging in a space of exposing and changing the dominant worldview through emancipatory action research by creating a process that created narratives to challenge and contribute to the current representations of people of African descent in the media. I am looking at ways of shifting the narrative and creating new narratives in a collaborative space by providing an alternative process to situate third culture identity construction, migration and representation. Additionally it also contributes to African indigenous ideals and values being applied as legitimate frames of reference for conducting research.

Research Design

In order to answer the research question, the research project employed the indigenous approach to visual research and practice outlined by Thomas, Eggins and Papoutsaki (2014).

The research design involved the following process:

1. A consent and community introduction session that aimed at providing more information about the project as well as feedback.
2. Data collection which involved three workshops, one focus group and reflexive diary entries.
3. Review of the data collected and content produced.
4. Downloading, digitalising and editing which involved the written process of creating a visual participatory project with outputs as well as finalising the production of the final visual outputs.
5. Screening/performing by presenting and getting feedback about the exegesis, final outputs and website from *The Storytellers*.

Below is an outline of how I applied the main steps of the indigenous approach to visual research through a series of workshops, a focus group and reflexive diary entries:

1: Consent and Community Introduction

An introductory session that involved 10 youth of African descent was hosted on the 30th of June 2017. The participants were selected using a combination of snowballing and convenience sampling. Both techniques are non-probability with convenience sampling being an approach whereby I approached participants due to their convenient accessibility and proximity e.g being in the same community or living in Auckland and snowballing involving interested participants recruiting more participants among their acquaintances. During this session participants were introduced to each other and it was an opportunity to explain the project, gain consent from participants and answer their questions and have time for feedback on the outlined process. After the introduction session I created a Facebook Page for *The Storytellers* (participants of this project). Nine people signed the consent form and agreed to participate in this project and became *The Storytellers*.

2 : Data collection

A combination of three qualitative data collection methods within the Afrocentric framework were used in this research. They include reflexive diaries (written, diary format), three workshops and focus groups. The main objective of the workshops was to work closely with participants to establish themes as well as enable the co-creation and co-production of content.

Workshop One: Experience mapping - 16 July 2017

The first workshop involved mapping and detailing the participants' experiences with media representations, migration and identity. Exploring participants' understanding/vision of their African identity is important as it helps to establish storylines/themes, content and the outputs they are going to create. The mapping exercise involved exploring in group discussion the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions about African identity in New Zealand?
2. What is the representation of African identity in the New Zealand context?

3. Does the perception and representation match your reality?
4. What is the gap between your reality and the perception and representation of African identity in New Zealand?

This was followed by establishing themes and action plans for the research project. During this time, I shared with *The Storytellers* examples of the different visual participatory projects that I had developed and executed as Founder and Creative Director of *Afrika on My Sleeve* with people of African descent in New Zealand. *Afrika on My Sleeve* is a social enterprise that combines digital storytelling and content with third culture narratives. I founded the platform in 2013 for the education, empowerment, growth and representation of third culture kids.

Towards the end of the first workshop we discussed the reflexive diaries which we were planning to start recording weekly. At the end of the week each *Storyteller* wrote a reflection of their week. The questions, informed by Penelope Plowman (2010) and Revell, Papoutsaki & Kolesova (2014), guided the reflections process:

1. What happened this week that really made an impact on you and how you perceive/relate to your African identity?
2. Why do you think this moment has stuck in your memory? Describe how you felt at the time and why?
3. What did you learn from this?
4. Was there anything else you found interesting?

Workshop Two: Introduction to chosen visual output - 23 July 2017

At the second workshop, *The Storytellers* were introduced to the different methods and tools to assist with the production of the visual output they showed interest in during the mapping workshop. The possible outputs identified by the participants were photography, poetry and music. We also had a visit from Todd Henry, an ethnographic photographer. Todd shared his background, examples of his work, such as photographic storytelling of the deportees in Tonga.

At the end of the workshop we shared what projects we were brainstorming and working towards. This included a blog to share the experiences of being born to a European mother and West African father, photographs of people of African descent and a song celebrating our heritage.

Focus Group: 6 August

A focus group was held with *The Storytellers* to discuss the questions we were answering for the reflexive diary entries recorded at the end of each week during the research process. The reflexive diary entries were guided by the set of questions that included what happened this week that really made an impact on you and how you perceive/relate to your African identity (Penelope Plowman 2010 and Revell, Papoutsaki & Kolesova 2014). Some of the answers to that question included the reflection I shared (as the introduction of this exegesis) and one by Rumbi Tomu (a *Storyteller*) about wearing African clothing to a job interview and the conversations about identity, migration and African representation that were a part of their daily lived experiences. I will detail and share these entries in the reflections chapter of this exegesis. At the end of the focus group we discussed the progress we were making with our projects. At this stage Synthia and I had sent out invites to the African community to attend a photo shoot we were hosting at Silo Park for her project *Huemans of Africa* that sought to show the different African faces living in Auckland.

3. Workshop Three: Review - 27 August 2017

Four weeks after workshop two, we met to review tasks we had detailed in the individual action plans I had worked on with *The Storytellers*. At this stage the finalised outputs we were creating were audio recordings, memes, videography of movement and a letter, song, poetry, narrative essay, affirmation cards, photography and diary entries. In the next chapter I will share the outputs along with the links to view them online. We also discussed how each project was going to be edited and how we were going to exhibit each output online (social media and the

website created to house the outputs of this project) and at an exhibition. *The Storytellers* agreed that they would be looking at hosting an exhibition to showcase the outputs that would include performances such as the song and movement piece.

4. Downloading, Digitalising or Analysing/Editing

This stage involved thematically analysing data recorded at workshops, focus groups and in the reflexive diary entries in order to establish emerging themes. My tasks for this stage included creating a website to host the outputs we created as part of this research project as well as information about the analytical aspect of the research (methodology, emerging themes and aims) and working with *The Storytellers* to complete their outputs. I also started writing this exegesis at this stage.

5. Screening/Performing

This stage involved presenting and getting feedback from *The Storytellers* about the project. At the completion of this exegesis, they will be presented with a copy along with the final outputs which are audio recordings, memes, video, song, poetry, narrative essay, affirmation cards, photography and diary entries. *The Storytellers* will also continue to have access to the website (www.africaonmysleeve.com) which I created to share their content with their friends and families. The intention is to share the outputs on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and showcase third culture African youth in Auckland, New Zealand. Smith (1999) states that presenting the final project to participants is an important aspect of the research process as this allows the researcher as well as the participants to reflect.

CHAPTER THREE: THE STORYTELLER'S NINE OUTPUTS

Over a period of four months *The Storytellers* and I met every Sunday afternoon and what was a creative research project soon became a space of healing, seeing ourselves reflected in our worlds and a safe space where we could unravel. Through the creation of content we produced visual outputs that explore and share the experiences of third culture identity, African representation, being a woman of colour, black love, racism, cultural heritage, indigenous African worldviews, colourism, tokenism and intersectionality within African identity. In the following section I detail the outputs we developed and produced.

OUTPUTS



Figure 1 Makanaka Tuwe Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: The Storytellers

Name: Makanaka Tuwe

Motherland: Zimbabwe

Age: 24

Output: Audio recordings

Output Link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/inconversation>

The Storytellers are the sisters, the brothers, the youth and all the migrant or “others” whose identities are constantly being reconstructed as they un/learn, decolonize, reclaim and piece together the elements of their multifaceted identities. Through these audio recordings, I take you on a journey through the lives and experiences of the participants of *Kora – The Third Culture Research Project*, in their own worlds. We get to find out what are their passions, how they define themselves as well as their challenges and opportunities of navigating life as a third culture kid.



Figure 2 Adorate Mizero Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: A Reflection of the Diasporic African Millennial

Name: Adorate Mizero

Motherland: Burundi

Age: 21

Output: Memes

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/adorate>

'A Reflection of the Diasporic African Millennial' is a series of memes that depict the experiences of third culture youth of African descent across the world (global African diaspora) and experiences specific to African youth who were born or have grown up in New Zealand. Through memes Adorate breaks down the sometimes difficult and serious discourses by using humour in the hopes that it will offer self reflection and critical analysis.



Figure 3 Chanwyn Southgate Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: Brenda Fassie

Name: Chanwyn Southgate

Motherland: South Africa

Age: 21

Output: Movement & letter

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/chanwyn>

This body of work is an on-going self-discovery and exploration of being a third-culture woman in New Zealand. I asked myself how can I utilise my craft of dance to explore all that my mind and body has to ask tell. The answer was Brenda Fassie. Overall, the project explores different layers of myself, my African genealogy and how living in New Zealand has shaped me. –

Chanwyn



Figure 4 Laila Ben-Brahim Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: Our Heritage

Name: Laila Ben-Brahim

Motherland: New Zealand, Samoa, Morocco

Age: 22

Output: Song

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/laila>

This song is about finding my love and appreciation for my heritage and culture in my early adulthood. Having discovered this part of me and acknowledging my heritage enables me to write my own narrative and fill in my future's unwritten pages. - Laila



Figure 5 Bloom Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: A weak in my life

Name: Mwangileni Kampanga

Motherland: Zambia

Age: 21

Output: Poetry

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/mwangi>

I perceive mental illness as incredibly subjective and artistically uncharted territory. This makes it a perfect area for poetic expression. The poems, collectively titled A Weak in My Life, are about healing oneself from the trauma of casual racism, institutional racism and sexism and the days when anxiety takes a firm hold of your day. Moreover, treating yourself with the utmost respect, even on a day when you are overcome with the grief of your experiences. A Weak in My Life is an effort to marry poetry and theory; to merge feelings with thought; the subjective and the objective. Inspired by the work of Audre Lorde and introducing the quiet power of mental awareness - "a configuration or other way of experiencing the world, though difficult to name." Lorde says "we can serve them and seek their articulation." A Weak in My Life is an attempt at articulating such a configuration. - Mwangileni



Figure 6 Rita Wakefield Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: What is Blackness?

Name: Rita Wakefield

Motherland: United Kingdom and Sierra Leone

Age: 22

Output: Narrative essay

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/rita>

Hi, my name is Rita and I'm black. Is that just stating the obvious? I'm not sure. Maybe to some people it is, and we will get back to that later don't you worry, but strangely enough, to me this wasn't always so clear-cut. Through this essay and my experience I share the complicated journey of navigating my blackness as a mixed race child. - Rita

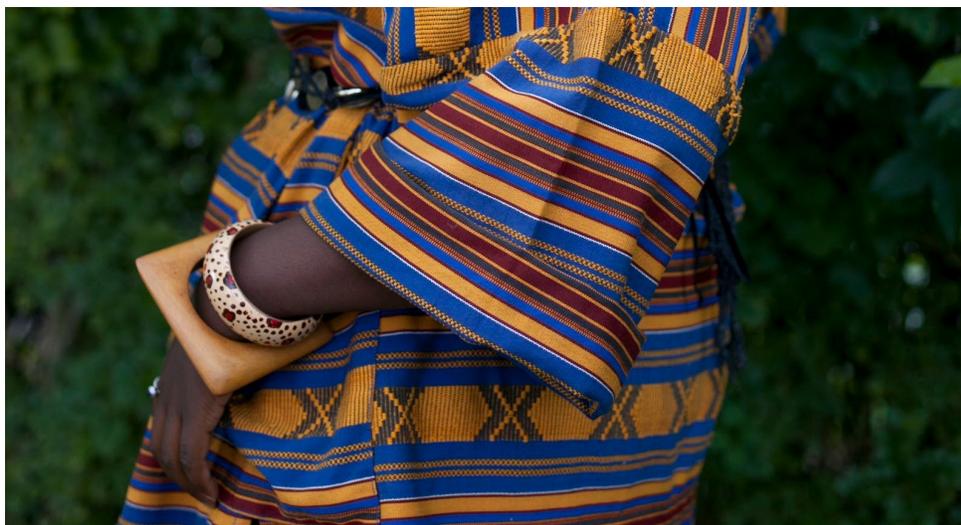


Figure 7 Rumbi Tomu Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: Black Love Is

Name: Rumbi Tomu

Motherland: Zimbabwe

Age: 25

Output: Affirmation cards

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/rumbi>

I once read somewhere that black love is the manifestation of acts of love between people of colour. Whether it be a couple, a mother braiding her daughter's hair, two black men acknowledging each other on the street with the "nod", sisters of colour gathering together eating and dancing and it is also un/learning what it means to love yourself as a black person. 'Black Love Is' is a set of affirmation cards that define what black love is as worded by The People of Light (Black People) and defined by the Oxford Dictionary of English 2017. -

Rumbi



Figure 8 Synthia Bahati Photo by Aleya Martinez

Output name: Huemans of Afrika

Name: Synthia Bahati

Motherland: Burundi

Age: 19

Output: Portraits

Output links: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/synthia>

What does an African look like? Through photographing people of African descent in black and white portraits Synthia explored the visibility of people of African descent and sought to represent the diversity of people that identified as African in Auckland.



Figure 9 Tadiwa Tomu Photo by Synthia Bahati

Output name: #BlackGirlDiaries

Name: Tadiwa Tomu

Motherland: Zimbabwe

Age: 21

Output: Diary entries

Output link: <https://www.africaonmysleeve.com/tadiwa>

Being a black girl wasn't easy for her, especially in a community where everyone made fun of her. They made her believe she was something less because she was black-er. The saddest thing

was she let it get to her.

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

During the fourth stage of the research process, I thematically analysed the data from the workshops, focus group, and reflexive diary entries to identify the emerging themes. This analysis also provided examples of the daily experiences of third culture kids. The emerging themes were experiences of microaggressions and racism in everyday life, self-acceptance as a form of resistance and the need for safe spaces. For instance, a microaggression that was discussed was having your hair or skin touched by strangers. Then when you state your discomfort at your personal space being violated you are told by these strangers that you are race baiting or when you share those experiences with peers it is “playing the race card”. I questioned how one’s experience cannot involve an aspect of colour, racism or discrimination when the colour of one’s skin is a determining factor into how society experiences and perceives you. Despite the microaggressions faced, *The Storytellers* had embarked on a self-discovery journey that involved deconstructing and reconstructing themselves and how they identify on their own terms. There was a sense of one reclaiming their energy and space as a form of resistance to the racism they faced living in a predominately white society. Within this self-discovery journey was a yearning to rekindle and reconnect to African culture through music, fashion and various forms of expression.

Of the emerging themes, the one that stood out the most was the necessity of a space where your experiences are validated by your peers without having to defend your humanity, it activates a sense of belonging. As researcher and co-participant, this process helped me connect even more with my sisters, women of African descent and the African community. I was able to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of home in their presence. We created a space for each other to be and during the research process we formed a safe space. In the following section I have grouped my reflections based on the emerging themes supported by

direct quotes from *The Storytellers*.

Emerging themes

Microaggressions & racism

One of the first themes that was discussed was the shared experiences of microaggressions and racism. Microaggressions are defined as a statement, action or incident that involves an indirect or subtle discrimination towards marginalised groups such as ethnic or racial minorities (Sue, 2010). While we have extensively heard about the experiences of prejudice against black people, it is important that in the process of creating new narratives or narratives that provide a fuller representation, that we acknowledge those experiences (Bayou, 2016; Harrell, 2000 & Real housewives & the real racism NZ prefers to pretend doesn't exist, n.d). The following was shared in two reflexive diary entries:

"I was at a 21st birthday party on Friday night when the conversation got around at one point to whether or not we would like to live in the South Island. I immediately laughed and said 'nope', been there, done that, very miserable experience, at which point another person in the group looked at me quizzically and asked why I said that. I replied simply "well I'm brown", to which he responded, what exactly is that supposed to mean? Luckily, some others jumped in, meaning that I didn't have to get into a potentially very awkward conversation, that I definitely was not in the state of mind to be having. This doesn't relate to impacting my 'African identity' as such, but it relates to the realities of being black in a white society." (Rita)

"We were in Hamilton, just come from a night out. Everyone was being really loud and rowdy then one man yelled at us crazy loud telling us to be quiet. Our friends yelled back. We were the only ones that he was yelling at but everyone was yelling in Subway. It was 4am, Saturday night right next to a club. I thought about it and I didn't know why he only

had to yell and swear at us. Maybe it was a racial thing but it really made me think about how much we stand out when we are in a group. We, as Africans, stand out and whether people see it as a good or bad that is up to them. Because this man was so angry one of our friends told him to go home and he said " I AM HOME". This man was like 50 years old so we were unsure why he was expecting it to be quiet on a night out with heaps of drunk teens. I thought about what he said later and I am now wondering if he meant NZ is his home so he doesn't need to leave and I want to know why he said it like that because I felt so attacked for no reason." (Synthia)

During the first workshop with *The Storytellers*, a discussion regarding the media representation and perception of people of African descent took place. An important aspect of the discussion was the comparison of those media representations and the reality of individuals of African descent and how the difference had an impact on how they navigated life. It was noted that overall the representation and public perception of the continent was that it was a small and undeveloped place that requires civilisation and modernisation. There is this underlying desire to modernise Africa as its people's way of life is portrayed as different to Western perspectives, standards and values. Such portrayals lead to the continent being labeled as "developing" and contrasted with developed or first world countries. The narrative of tribes and jungles mystifies the real issues and masks that many of the continent's misfortunes are a direct result of colonisation and the presence of the West on the African continent. Unfortunately the narrow narratives perpetuate stereotypes that inform daily interactions of people of African descent.

An example of stereotypes informing interactions is when one of *The Storytellers*, Rita recounted her experience as a 9-year-old where she participated in a school production that sought to celebrate culture and represent where students were from. Without consultation or research, she was asked to put on a loincloth. To make it look more authentically "African", she was asked to wear no top and while the other children wore shoes, it was insisted that she wore no shoes. Such an occurrence is an example of how stereotypes and an element of

exoticism can be restrictive. In his book *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said argues that '*Orientalism*' is the West's view of the East as exotic, backward, uncivilised and dangerous that is reproduced and used as a starting point for theories, in novels, as social descriptors and political accounts concerning the Orient - people from Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East (Said, 2006). Loincloth (a piece of cloth that is wrapped around the hips and covers genitalia), no top and no shoes is what came to mind when representing Africa and this is similar to the carpet vendors, snake charmers and veiled women Said suggested were partially indebted to Orientalist fantasies. In this instance Rita was restricted by an assumption of what African culture and what could have been an opportunity to learn and research more about her culture was taken away. Additionally, it could have been a rich and informed cultural exchange in which she would have shared with her peers. In this situation her cultural heritage was projected onto her and it reproduced a negative cultural stereotype. Recently, *The National Geographic* admitted its role in racially denigrating coverage and, as part of the publication's *Race* edition, the Editor issued an article titled '*For Decades, Our Coverage Was Racist. To Rise Above Our Past, We Must Acknowledge It*' (Goldberg, n.d). Within the article Professor John Edwin Mason notes that "Americans got ideas about the world from Tarzan movies and crude racist caricatures," National Geographic came into existence at the height of colonialism, and the world was divided into the colonizers and the colonized. That was a color line, and National Geographic was reflecting that view of the world" (Goldberg, n.d). National Geographic as a magazine that has tremendous authority was not teaching as much as reinforcing messages that were present in mainstream society. This edition essentially acknowledges the role that *National Geographic* played in reinforcing stereotypes and worldviews of developing countries and people to their audiences.

Nowadays with the increased reports of racist encounters, there has also been an increase in reporting that classifies extreme forms of interpersonal racism as a form of casual racism (Hunkin, 2017; & Kuo, 2017). Casual racism is a term that is used to define varying forms of interpersonal racism and can include behaviour and speech that treats differences such as – practices, physical features, accents and forms of dress – as problematic resulting in either

disapproving glances, unconscious exclusionary body language/gestures and the marginalisation of other people's experiences as valid through racist slang, jokes, remarks and behaviour that perpetuates stereotypes (Nelson & Walton, 2014). As Solange penned in her essay:

"It's the same one that says to your friend, "BOY.... go on over there and hand me my bag" at the airport, assuming he's a porter. It's the same one that tells you, "m'am, go into that other line over there" when you are checking in at the airport at the first class counter before you even open up your mouth. It's the same one that yells and screams at you and your mother in your sleep when you're on the train from Milan to Basel "give me your passport NOW." You look around to see if anyone else is being requested this same thing. It's the same tone that the officer has when she tells you your neighborhood is blocked for residents only as you and your friends drive home from a Mardi Gras parade, when you have a residents tag on your car. You've been in the car line for 10 minutes and watched them let everyone else pass without stopping them at all. You and your friends have been called the N word, been approached as prostitutes, and have had your hair touched" (Knowles, 2016)

These behaviours are the ones that then become normalised and infused in daily conversations and interactions. While it must be noted that there is nothing casual about racism, reporting it as such diminishes the gravity of such experiences and "casual" suggests that we do not take this "type" of racism too seriously. Such reporting and labeling fails to address what Essed noted as the crucial but largely neglected dimensions of racism: how it is experienced; how it is recognised; its covert manifestations; how that knowledge is acquired; and how racism is challenged in everyday life (Essed, 1991). It also fails to acknowledge that the cumulative effect of "casual racism" is the ongoing experience of marginalisation and repression which is a heavy burden that results in future incidents triggering memories of past experiences (Nelson & Walton, 2014).

During the first workshop it was also noted that in New Zealand there was no discourse about the migrant journey after migration that focused on the self-esteem, mental health or experiences of the realities of being third culture kids. One of *The Storytellers* stated that upon arriving to New Zealand at the age of 10 her mother dropped her and her brother off at school she went home and cried. It was only in adulthood that her mother shared this experience with her and stated that her reasons for crying was she did not know what was going to happen to her children, what was going to be said to them and she felt sad knowing that no matter what was happening she would not be able to do anything about it. This *Storyteller* suggested that during her first few weeks at school some of the children refused to play with her and their reasons were that she was black. She never told this to her family as prior to that experience she had never experienced a confrontation or an instance that excluded her from participating due to her “blackness”. This is telling of the constant internal battle that occurs for third culture kids when navigating life and it led to the realisation that sometimes parents of migrant children never sit down with their children to discuss their “blackness” because they too are also learning about their “blackness” and what it means to be “black” in a predominately white society. As one *Storyteller* suggested - internal discussions about the implications of “blackness” do not occur because while the migrant child is being bullied their parents and communities are being bullied too – systematically and socially, in the workplace and encountering microaggressions and racism. Research conducted in New Zealand revealed that African youth are subjected to name calling and racist abuse by the police due to the stereotypes held by the justice system about African youth (Nakhid, 2015).

Self-acceptance as a form of resistance

In a world that does not accept you and often demonises people that look like you, the best form of resistance is accepting yourself. As mentioned earlier, all *The Storytellers* spoke about discovering what their identity is and being in the process of connecting to who and how they defined themselves, individually and collectively. Within that self-discovery journey was an affiliation with having pride in being a woman of African descent. In the introduction session as part of an exercise to get to know each other, I asked each of us to share what we were

passionate about. One of *The Storytellers*, Favour said: *“I am passionate about being black and I don’t know if it’s a weird thing but I am passionate about it”*. As she was speaking the whole room was nodding their heads and murmuring in agreement. While being proud to be African can be perceived as “weird” due to the lens that Africa and her people are viewed in by others, in reclaiming their identities, one of the foundations was taking pride in their African heritage. This rekindling and reconnecting to African culture was expressed in reflexive diary entries and in conversations during workshops. It was defined as a desire to express one’s “Africanness” in any way possible and journeying into discovering the various ways to connect to it through dress, through hairstyles and through introspection on redefining for themselves what being African means. In reflexive diary entries three of *‘The Storytellers’* shared the following:

“I was clearing out my closet and I found a whole bunch of fabrics and some traditional clothing that my dad had brought back from Sierra Leone and it really inspired me to try to start incorporating it into my wardrobe. I know this sort of thing has got a bit trendy now, but I spent a lot of time either sheltered or shying away from my African heritage so for me it is symbolic of a lot of personal growth and maturity. It’s an even bigger thing for me, because it’s not like I get a lot of encouragement or support from my immediate friend group (or family), so it is still quite a ‘controversial’ thing for me to do.” (Rita)

“Like I started this new job and I was like uum since I’m like a newbie it might be inappropriate going with colourful hair. Funny thing for the first time I didn’t wish for a weave. I was like oh wow lemme express my identity. I’m AfriCAN not afriCANT this is me and this is what I am. What I learned from this is that you don’t have to be like any others to fit in the community, you don’t have to wear a wig to fit into society. If you feel like yourself in that green wig then do you boo boo and of course people are going to talk and laugh but who cares they are the same people at the end that they are going to take your style and make it theirs, I realised people aren’t shit they hatin coz they aren’t you. Nothing feels good than being true to yourself.” (Tadiwa)

“I went to a job interview (corporate world) earlier this week and I wore a whole arm full of African print bracelets just because I looked good on paper and I wanted to present a part of who I am in person. This moment stuck with me because I've heard/read a lot of stories of how some women were banned from wearing colours to the office. I had that thought at the back of my mind but it didn't stop me. I got compliments from the lady interviewing me and she said the bracelets really stood out just like my personality both on paper and in person. What I learned from this was just because I have dreadlocks and wear African print I'm not less qualified than the next person applying for the same position. Just a minor lesson on my behalf, Go forth and honor myself. All of me, no apologies necessary.” (Rumbi)

#BlackGirlMagic - Safe spaces, connectivity & home

As a researcher and co-participant, this process helped me connect even more with my sisters, women of African descent and the African community. Feeling at home in the presence of *The Storytellers* was something that was felt by the group when in spaces created for people of African descent, in reflexive diary entries two of *The Storytellers* shared the following:

“When I am out with my fellow African friends/family. I feel safe, I feel like someone has got me because they understand me if that makes sense.” (Synthia)

‘This past weekend I attended a youth symposium that brought together Maori, migrant, ethnic and former refugee youth. On the last night we were told we had to get into our workshop groups to put together a performance that we would present to everyone after dinner. While our initial workshop groups disbanded, I immediately gravitated towards a few of the other African girls and we quickly put together our own afrobeat routine. Apart from being a recent event, it was really nice to be in such a diverse space and young people from other cultural backgrounds. At the same time, it was quite special to naturally gravitate to a group of other African girls who I had not met before, because I strongly identified with and related to them. It was not just in that moment of

deciding what I wanted to perform, but throughout the symposium. We made jokes about our African upbringings, our communities and all things related to the third culture African youth experience. Reflecting on this past weekend, I feel grateful that I can find a sense of belonging and familiarity when I'm in an unfamiliar place. It also reminded me of my genuine love and appreciation of African people and culture. Also afrobeat is life." (Adorate)

From the focus group discussion, it was agreed that the space that we had created during the research process was a meeting place of understanding that enabled rich intercultural dialogue and ideas. Some expressed they had found a safe place to share and vocalise their experiences and despite differences they had found a space of mutual love, respect and honour. We carved a space where everyone belongs without having to put on a mask. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon says "The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites. A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man" (Fanon, 1952. p1). He suggests that the reason for this difference in behaviour is due to black people feeling inferior so we alter our behaviour/wear a white mask as we aspire to gain admittance to the white world (Fanon, 1952. p.41). While having to put on a white mask is something that was joked about when one is for instance in the workplace or school, during the research process we created a space where we did not have to put on that mask. Instead during the process I noticed that to validate ourselves as third culture kids we didn't have to mimic a white mask. We were constructing a new mask, not necessarily "black" or "white" but one that considered the intersecting elements of our identity, a mask that considers and brings together the fact that you are living and navigating a life that straddles two or more different cultures. The space we created was one reflective of the journeys of self-acceptance we were making where we can find our roots and construct our identity as women of African descent and feel affirmed, powerful and valid in our identities without the white mask. Others described the research process as being a fun and therapeutic process.

From those shared experiences it was agreed that at times you feel helpless about being black

in a white world and being able to channel those experiences creatively felt like while you were creating something that meant something to you, you were also releasing it. A commonality that drew *The Storytellers* to participating was that they were all aware of their individual and collective experiences and an opportunity to use their voice to see and make a change was the channel to free of expression they had been seeking. One of *The Storytellers* shared that the research process and the collaborative space that was created helped with her confidence, *“When I came to the first session, I was quiet, shy and reserved because of the new faces. When I realised that it was a judgement free zone, I started opening up”* (Tadiwa). Another echoed similar sentiments adding that the space was refreshing and a true reflection of the sisterhood. While the space created aided a sense of belonging, it was noted that there was a need for more spaces that catered to the needs of youth of African descent. As one Storyteller stated: *“We need more spaces like this because you need to be around people who look like you and who understand what it is that you go through. It’s a safe space”* (Rumbi).

In the following sections I discuss the emerging themes. From these themes I noted that participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework facilitated the production of new narratives. Researchers have stated that black cultural (Nelson, 2009) restoratives such as the outputs we created have the ability to create new representations that promote the recuperation of new ways of the presentation of the identity of young people of African descent.

CARRYING TWO DISPARATE CULTURAL BAGGAGES - AFRICAN YOUTH IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

For third culture kids, “kids” who have grown up in a culture different from their parents (Goldberg, n.d), the quintessential question of identity, *“so where are you from?”*, has become the normalised conversation starter and a welcome question. As Clancy (2014), contends it has become a way to feed the curiosity of the other without consideration of the implications of the question. Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo (2010) perceive that being asked such a

question in a white dominated society is exclusionary in nature due to it being asked mainly to people who are visibly different. In the first workshop, one of *'The Storytellers'* shares her experience when she is asked where she is from, she states comments that the question is usually closely followed by questioning her blackness and a comment about how she does not look African or act like an African. While the justification of this question being asked is on the basis of being visibly different, it erases hyphenated identity and the lived daily experiences of life "here" that predominantly defines the lives of third culture kids. Hyphenated identity is a term used to define dual ethnocultural identity (Sharobeem, 2003). Asking where one is from becomes reductionist as it doesn't take into consideration the duality of our identities and the lived reality of straddling two worlds: New Zealand and our home countries in Africa. It doesn't take into consideration the complexities of identity re/construction for third culture kids. For instance, in Africa we are identified as the 'other' due to disconnection to place in the sense that our behaviour and way of living is "learnt" in New Zealand therefore making it and ultimately us "alien" to the cultural norms of our home countries (Clancy, 2014). The place you once called home, just like you, is no longer the same, it has changed. That then makes being from "there" a distant and nostalgic past and belonging "here" - a challenge because of the visibility in difference and never quite assimilating to the cultural norms and mannerisms (Fanon, 1952). For us, responding to the question can be a task of sorts, for instance, among Africans the answer would be to respond with your birth country, acknowledging your origins or place amongst the larger group. At other different times you respond with the place you are a local to, in this instance Auckland to locate where you currently reside. The different answers given to the question reveal the complexity and fluidity of our identities, things that are usually omitted or not considered by the person asking the question. Additionally the different answers given highlight the constant navigation and negotiation between our "Kiwi" selves and "African" other or as Edward Hall contends, it exposes that we "carry two disparate cultural baggages" (Hall, 1998). While the question allows others to 'locate' us it points how third culture identity is a constant paradox: a place where we simultaneously belong and don't belong.

African Worldviews and identity construction

A worldview is defined as pertaining to an individual group or society's overall set of beliefs and values (Cobern, 2016). This includes how the person or group interacts with people, land and animals. It has been noted that although an individual is going to have their own lived experiences and ways of interpreting the world, their worldview will be influenced by their culture – that is in this instance society's shared customs, philosophies and values. As such we live in a world that is in essence multicultural and therefore has a plethora of worldviews (Joseph, 2016). With this in mind the following questions need to be addressed/discussed: the notion of being African, the idea of home and media representations of a homogeneous continent and really what does it mean to be African? Such a question is multifaceted and complex due to the interdependence of the past/history and the present/reality and how that history has influenced the present and how the present reality is the aftermath of the past. Additionally, how possible is to have one pan-African identity when the continent is made up of diverse cultures influenced by many factors including geographical locations, history, current political and economic situations. In post-colonial theory the questions of migration, representation and place are explored along with their importance in understanding the experiences of peoples impacted by colonialism. This makes it necessary to explore dislocation with the intention of understanding how belonging and identity construction is negotiated in new locations, in this instance African migrant youth in New Zealand (Hall, 1998).

To contextualise the complexity of identity construction Clancy (2014) noted that "African" is a concept that was thrust upon a mass of land where a diverse people with connected history and culture had lived and occupied for millennia. Currently the continent (Africa) is made up of 54 countries where an estimated 2000 languages are spoken, without counting dialects and sublanguages (Childs, 2003). Where it becomes even more multi-layered is in the migration process, where one, in this instance youth migrate/move to a new society with a different set of cultural values and norms. In the host country they are categorised into one group regardless of the multiple realities of people of African descent.

In its re/construction, identity involves ongoing negotiation and cultural exchange that results in it being dynamic, fluid and subjective (Hall, 1998). Identity transforms, it is influenced by factors such as time and place. From a sociological perspective, identity begins with the notion that there is a relationship between the self and society. The self influences society through action and reciprocally, society influences the self through language and meanings that enable the individual to engage in social interaction (Stets, 2003). As the self emerges from society, it is important to understand that the self is always acting in a social context and that identity is to some extent largely dependent on the society in which one lives in or one's worldview (Stets, 2003). What does that mean for the third culture kid: what parts of these intersecting identities do you claim in their entirety of complication and disconnect? In one of her reflections one of *'The Storytellers'* shared the following:

"My friend group is predominantly white, so I constantly find myself in a position where I have to be cautious about what I say because I don't know how they will respond. At the time I mostly felt exhausted, both by the fact that there are people privileged enough that they are entirely clueless as to why brown people have to be cautious in certain situations, and exhausted at the prospect of having to explain that we had to leave the South Island because I was being mercilessly racially abused. Honestly, I'm not really sure if I learned anything from this. Except maybe that I have a tendency to get really frustrated in situations like this and it would have generally ruined my night, especially if I'd had to go on some long winded explanation and it had got too awkward. I know that it is important to have conversations to help people to learn, and it's something that I increasingly feel like I have/want to do (especially because I used to be very against doing it because I didn't want my friends to think I was 'like that') but I think also, sometimes I have to pick the context wisely and let things go for my personal sanity."
(Rita)

This feeling of being hyper-aware of what is said is a topic that we discussed in the second workshop and *The Storytellers* referred to it as feeling like a shapeshifter. We defined being a shapeshifter as the negotiation we make when we re/construct our identity or alter/change who we are in order to fit into certain spaces or to be taken seriously. There is this notion in society that encourages individuality and its expression but that expression is restricted for third culture kids who have to act like shapeshifters and mainly it is to debunk the preconceived notions that others have before they are allowed the space to be who they are.

While conversations about where one is from can trigger a sensation of hyper-awareness and in some instance insecurities, at times it is viewed as a welcome opportunity to engage in dialogue about Africa and being a child of migrants. In one of the reflexive diary entries it was noted that:

“While having a conversation with someone who seems to have a strong interest in Africans and African culture, they told me about how they never thought they would ever get the chance to meet/have a conversation with a person of African descent. I felt kind of proud and relieved that their interest seemed to come from a genuine place of wanting to connect and learn from a group that is culturally different than their own, especially my own. I also sympathised that the reactions they got from people were standoffish and that they were judged not to be not worthy of a conversation/interaction. What I learnt from this is just as I would like to believe for myself, not everybody is always coming from a place of othering, stereotyping and negative preconceived notions about different cultures and groups. Sometimes being super defensive (which I am a lot of the time lol) can deprive us of great interactions and mutual exchanges.” (Adorate)

This continuous negotiation when navigating spaces or straddling of our identities calls for methodologies and processes that recognise the existence of multiple realities. It calls for the co-construction of knowledge and representation that is actively inclusive of our experiences and allows us to share those experiences in our own voice.

In the context of African youth identity in New Zealand, it was the consideration of the cultural spaces the youth occupy and in this instance the specific cultural spaces *The Storytellers* occupied physically, psychologically, emotionally, ethnically, spiritually and creatively (Mhando & Yenika-Agbaw, 2014). It has been stated by Nelson (2009) that youth of African descent no longer have a clear sense of an “African” identity due to previous intersections of African traditions with Western colonialism and now with globalised Western cultural values. Juggling these multiple and varying forms of consciousness makes it difficult to develop and decipher a “clear” identity that can neither be specifically termed as traditional or African or as an identity, in this instance of African New Zealanders (Nelson, 2009).

The idea that mainstream representation projected identities and pigeon-holed *The Storytellers* was the foundation of this project and the projects that were created as a result of it. Having that foundation required a need to explore the ways in which the “self” was constructed and how these influenced multiple identities and realities manifested as: the other, the imagined self and/or new selves (Nelson, 2009). It was that in-between space where different influences intersect that called for critical evaluation for how we represent the other. It is that straddling of various marginal spaces that are influenced by both locations and languages (of home and host country) where our identities are constantly re-constructed that calls for processes that feel safe for us to tell our stories. In the current globalised climate, it is sometimes difficult to discern what “truth” is and whose “truth” it is. This brings into the conversation a need to discern what is “truth” about these representations and whose “truth” it is.

Mhando and Yenika-Agbaw (2014) note that the most effective form of resistance to one-dimensional representation has been through black cultural restoratives (Mhando & Yenika-Agbaw, 2014). Black cultural restoratives are cultural artifacts that assist with creating new representations that promote the recuperation of new ways of the presentation of the identity of people of African descent. The authors discuss that various identity constructions occur through traditional and non-traditional art forms that can include music, poetry,

photography, painting, books and social networks (Nelson, 2009). This construction and manifestation of the “self” through various art forms is the creation of black cultural restoratives. Part of these black cultural discourses is the production of narratives by people of African descent. Through the production of new narratives using participatory visual methodology within an indigenous research framework, not only is new knowledge being constructed about African youth identity in the New Zealand context, the methodology also assisted in empowering *The Storytellers* and I through the creative outputs we co-created.

I NO LONGER CREATE WORK IN OPPOSITION

At the beginning of the research project one of the objectives was to provide counter narratives of people of African descent in New Zealand by providing a visual participatory strategy for creating alternative voices. As the research project progressed, the premise and notion of creating counter narratives changed. It became about creating narratives without the opposing/counter element. The objective transformed into the need to produce narratives of people of African descent in New Zealand by providing a visual participatory programme and strategy for creating alternative voices that allows for the enhancement of the community’s self-knowledge and self-expression. I believe this changed the tone to an affirmative one and allowed us to create a space to not only share our experiences as third culture kids but one that enhanced our self-determination. We were able to create a space to own our experiences, narratives and how they are presented. I accepted that varying forms of opposition towards our identity, how we are perceived and how we navigate life are present and that in order to move beyond their existence there is a need to transition into what Ana Louise Keating (2013) refers to as a state of post-opposition. Transitioning or moving into a state of post-opposition is the resistance of discussion, of perceiving and positioning one’s work as separate, different or opposite to existing discourses. In creating these narratives about our experiences I realised that in order for these narratives to exist they did not need to be counter narratives or opposite to what exists. They could just exist as a contribution and an addition of the African narrative. I wanted this body of work to be a part of multiple discourses and be in itself an act of

accommodating and contributing to those discourses about third culture identity, African media representation participatory visual methodologies and indigenous research frameworks. As the project evolved it became about owning our narrative spaces not as antagonism or oppositional or countering the other but about us creating the stories because they are our stories and it is only natural that we share them. After all, why must we create our discourse around someone else?

In addition to the premise of the project evolving, I noticed an evolution in myself. Through analysing the data, I realised that we, as third culture kids, had internalised those negative opinions of ourselves and they in turn have affected how we look at ourselves. The complexity of that realisation is cemented in the notion that in order to appear civilised and as part of the current society we reside in, we have to deny our “blackness” or caricatured representations of that blackness (Fanon, 1952). For example, in the first workshop we discussed whether the perception of Africans matched our realities and it was noted that stereotypical representations created a rift in interactions between people of African descent. When spoken to about other people of African descent it is not uncommon to have had an experience where one’s reaction is to defend their character by stating “I am not like other Africans”, whether we like to admit it or not. This rush is underlined by a need to be a model citizen or what Bhattacharya (Bhattacharya, 2015) refers to as the desire to be seen “as good colonized citizens – perhaps just as good as the master” as a form of resisting being labeled “backwards” or proving the stereotypes to be correct. It is an illustration of how deeply etched and internalised the messaging has become and also “reflects a deep pain in the consciousness of the colonized” (Bhattacharya, 2015). At the start I wanted to create a space where we could showcase ourselves through the creation of narratives in order to change the mostly negative way we are perceived. As the project progressed the focus shifted from trying to alter external perceptions to more of introspection and trying to change how we perceive ourselves and construct our identity. After all to heal oneself is the key to transformative works in social justice (Bhattacharya, 2015).

FOR US, BY US

While mapping a way forward for the research project, I reflected on some of the challenges I faced during the research process and it led me to reflecting on the experiences I had as an individual who champions for the African community creatively.

The first challenge is a lack of platforms and spaces for third culture kids to create and own their own narratives. This can be remedied by creating platforms and spaces that enable third culture kids to share their experiences and stories. While it may be argued that they are platforms and spaces created for third culture kids and in this instance African youth in Auckland, there is a lack of adequate funding to support such initiatives. Currently most funding that can be allocated to the African community involves an aspect of performance but there is a need for funding that supports an educational and transformative function that is actually needed for our integration and participation in society. In addition to a lack of adequate funding there is a lack of African representation when designing and delivering the programmes, the African subject is merely the “fortunate” recipient who is being presented with something that is designed with you in mind that had no consideration for your needs as there was no consultation in its design phase. In short, this fuels what’s arguably a white saviour complex as it further perpetuates notions that Africa/Africans need to be saved, civilised and modernised and studied. The lack of representation also leads to no sense of ownership from the community and at most some of the programmes further perpetuate the “poor refugee/migrant” stereotyping as that labeling is used in their delivery and execution. Programmes and initiatives that seek to empower the African community need at a basis to stop reductionist labels that only serve the gaze from the outside and voyeurism of the past experiences of the community, and quite frankly are engineered as tools that cushion white guilt. As Anzald stated “Who, me confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only your labels split me,” (Anzald.a, 1981, pp. 45-46) after all there is much more to the African narrative and story than being an African from a migrant or refugee background. Being a youth of African descent these are observations I have made while preparing for projects I have developed or when seeking collaboration with other organisations. To protect the privacy of these organisations and to

continue to foster a relationship were we can work together I will not be making a direct reference.

In creating these spaces there is a need for the active participation from members of the African community from the beginning of the process in order to understand what it is the community needs and requires. When these platforms are created there needs to be an understanding that they are for the empowerment of African youth and as such should reflect in their operation, delivery and execution. I believe that such platforms and spaces will enable us to tell our stories in a manner that will not dehumanise, diminish or simplify our lived realities and experiences. The creation of such platforms and spaces will enable a rightful ownership and accountability of those narratives from youth of African descent while providing a space that enables a sense of belonging and a therapeutic experience. The opportunities are endless and the challenges remediable through resources and access to resources.

During the research process I also identified three areas that impacted self-care for *The Storytellers*: (1) how women of African descent have to be psychologically durable yet there are no safe spaces or an encouragement of behaviours that preserve psychological durability; (2) while striving to be equal you are oppressed; and (3) while you are feminine in your bid to discover yourself and connect to your heritage you are rejecting traditional Eurocentric feminine norms (Hunter & Watson, 2015). This highlights a need for the creation of spaces, programmes and initiatives that produce outcomes that encourage self-efficacy, participation and deliberate focus on self-care as part of the process. Through the creation of content, I explored how collectively creating narratives provides a space for self-determination, authentic expression, representation and a space where one's sense of agency is enabled. The space created in collectively creating narratives not only served as an engine for authentic expression, the activities engaged in served as a tool for self-care. In terms of the outputs, they served as a start to action-oriented dialogue about expanding not only our narratives and how we are represented but how we can provide spaces that heal the transnational warrior.

In that regard, I feel a significant aspect of this project is that it created a safe space during the research process that facilitated internal healing. This was made possible through the

ownership of representations, narratives, stories and experiences we shared. It also allowed for the creation of a space where we are able to see ourselves reflected in a framework that centers us and actively includes our voices from beginning to end. From my observations and reflexive diary entries, there was a sense of belonging that came about in being in a space where your lived experiences and reality is affirmed and reflected. Through the shared experiences you are able to see yourself in the world and have a space where you explore the varying dimensions of your identity construction as well as question them and the role that being neither from here or there plays in the reconstruction, navigation and negotiation of your identity. Throughout the process what became visible was that the establishment of a co-creative space allowed for the collective reconstruction of identity and representation. In essence what became visible was that it allowed for multiple voices and multiple truths. This resonated with the African indigenous worldview that focuses on holistically understanding the role that experiences influence the existence of the whole, meaning that there can be more than one truth because truth is dependent on the experience of the individual.

Something I also observed was the collection and sharing of knowledge that was occurring naturally from the sharing of resources, helping each other in our projects or listening and offering advice to each other. This resonated with the indigenous worldview that governs that the accumulation of knowledge and wealth is to be shared by the community (Joseph, 2016). The same principle of knowledge being accumulated and shared by the community was one of the premises that resulted in the inclusion of the participatory methodology within an indigenous Afrocentric framework. That important factor was that this same principle of community involvement and sharing was present in the individual projects by *The Storytellers*. Somehow in their individual projects the community also participated, they shared their stories and experiences while also sharing the space, which ultimately resulted in the collective expansion of stories and experiences. For example, Synthia's project was to increase the visibility of the presence of African people in photography, she wanted to see people that looked like her and also show that there was more than one way to look African and to be African. In sharing her experience of needing representations and images that showed us, she

was also able to involve the community. As part of her project we hosted a photo shoot in Silo Park and invited members of the African community to attend. This allowed for the collective experience and creation of African representations as images.

Another example of the collective creation of content is Laila's song '*Our Heritage*'. When writing the lyrics for the song she collected the ideas from the experiences of other people. She posed the following questions to *The Storytellers*:

1. Can you describe your heritage?
2. How does your heritage help you navigate life?
3. What do you love about yourself, your heritage or culture?
4. Have you ever faced a cultural or identity challenge as a young adult?

Using the answers from the above questions, she was able to inform the lyrics of the song using her personal experiences as well as the experiences of the collective. In her exploration of the project she stated that her interpretation of what her heritage was fundamental but she also knew that her story wasn't the only story and in sharing her story she also wanted to include the voices of others. She realised the similarities between her and her parents who she considered part of a 'muted group' in the sense that their words and traditions were drowned out by dominant structures. The similarity was reflected in that she felt the effects of that severing and oppression and how dominant structures still dictated her experiences therefore muting her. She wanted the sharing of her experiences and reality to be something that acknowledged and authentically represented the individual identity within the collective and shared identity.

RHIZOMES & IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Finally, how can participatory visual methodologies within an indigenous African research framework be used to enable authentic voice representations of African youth in New Zealand? How visible are indigenous African worldviews in African youth identity construction in New

Zealand during this research process? Honestly, what took place or what governed our interactions and the way we embraced each other both literally and figuratively, cannot be explained, it is something that can only be felt. To try to explain how and what governs the way in which people with a shared history interact in order to understand how it impacts identity construction almost feels like further perpetuating the simplification of the realities and experiences. In this instance however the visual exemplars serve as an introduction or a lens at which we can see how participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework situate identity, migration and representation.

In 2003, Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (Carpentier, Lie & Servaes, 2003) charted different approaches to understanding alternative media resulting in an outcome of four approaches. The approaches, built on community media, (Approach 1) emphasised the role of community media as a tool that serves the community and alternative media models (Approach 2) which focus on the relationship between alternative and mainstream media (Carpentier, 2016). In the third approach they define the participation of community media in the community as being part of civil society. To create the fourth approach, a critique of alternative media was applied and unified with aspects of civil society theory resulting in community media being a metaphor or a rhizome. According to the Oxford dictionary a rhizome is an underground stem, which connects the shoots and roots of plants at intervals ("Rhizome," n.d). By applying a process that enabled the exploration of authentic voice representations for third culture kids resulted in the produced outputs serving as rhizomes. Therefore the produced outputs are the rhizomes that connect and recognise the entirety of the diversity of African youth representation in Auckland. Additionally, our interconnectedness and relationships with each other were the rhizomes that informed the narratives created.

Similarly to Kakali Bhattacharya (2015), during the research process what became even more apparent was that while the relationship I had with the participants and the relationships they had with each other had shared experiences that were relatable and entangled, ultimately they

were and are not monolithic. While similarly our experiences cannot be fit into a singular category, those similarities and differences can be the basis of helping us understand third culture identity and how the varying discourses shape our lives (Bhattacharya, 2015).

What the outputs or rhizomes tell us about the diversity of African youth representation is that how we choose to represent ourselves is characterised by fluidity and adaptability to the places and spaces we occupy. Through exploring how participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework can be used to enable authentic voice representations of African youth, I discovered that in the spaces we occupy we strive to carve our identity. While our identities are complex and fragmented and are presented as homogeneous resulting in a need for narratives to expand and to be inclusive, this process and these outputs serve as a bridge. They serve as a bridge that connects the isolated community to the mainstream in a manner that does not enable or perpetuate existing stereotypes. Similar to a plant or tree's rhizomes, our identities are non-linear, nomadic and uncontrolled by convention despite how the media portrays, represents and pigeonholes us. By creating outputs that served as sharing stories, experiences and narratives, these rhizomes have the ability to build linkages that inform mainstream media while serving the community.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION & A WAY FORWARD

In a participatory project like this what mattered the most was that we produced narratives collectively. While we went on a learning journey together, this project was about creating narratives and now that we have accomplished that, where to from here? If this is social change oriented research how is it going to continue gathering momentum?

From a methodological perspective, participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework can be used to enable authentic voice representations of African youth in New Zealand through the creation of programmes and narratives. The findings of this research can now be used as a framework to generate content examples to inform audiences including New Zealand media about third culture narratives and/or to inform the creation of a space (physically or digitally) for third culture kids. The process can also be applied as a framework to create empowering and educational programmes and processes across various social change, development and media institutions. This can be workshops, curriculums and methods for alternative arts education including different marginalized groups, e.g. women, youth and other minority communities. The findings of this research project can now also provide an impetus for researchers, policy makers and those interested in African development to start exploring different participatory methodologies to countering the issues that come with migration, identity and representation for people of African descent in the New Zealand context.

Importantly this exegesis can now serve as the beginning of dialogue about third culture identity navigation and construction, representation, migration, African youth and participatory visual methodologies within an African indigenous research framework in Asia Pacific, specifically, Auckland, New Zealand. This research project is the start of addressing the gap around the opportunities in producing visual participatory outputs that incorporate an indigenous research framework and how it can be used to enable authentic voice representations of African youth in New Zealand, the diaspora and, in fact, many third culture

youth. While it does identify a gap, it also identifies the directions for the future research. Further studies can perhaps explore the application of this process and methodology to other groups reflecting on identity construction, visual outputs and participatory indigenous methodologies.

As a social changer, I too want my work to not only talk but create spaces where multiple ways of understanding can occur while engaging in projects that de-colonise, provide a platform, share a story and heal. As Kakali Bhattacharya suggested in her research, she wanted her work to be in a web of consciousness that is entangled in multiple discourses, social movements and acts of resistances (Bhattacharya, 2015). Based on this research project, its significance and the way forward I have noted, I want this body of work to become my contribution to writing a story for us and creating our own narratives and spaces. “The colonizer, the master, and all those who benefit from oppressive discourses are not obligated to listen to us, to legitimize us, to make us matter. Our desires to heal, to transform, to disrupt, to explode, to find peace, to engage in non-violence toward self, and, by extension, toward the world have the potential for multiple border crossings” (Bhattacharya, 2015, p.499). This is the contribution I am making towards works that transform us inside and out, for us by us.

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CONSENT FORM

Project title: IDENTITY NARRATIVES BY NZ AFRICAN YOUTH
A participatory visual methodological approach to situating identity, migration and representation

Project Supervisor: A/Prof Evangelia Papoutsaki & Elena Kolesova

Researcher: Makanaka Tuwe

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mm yy.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I have understood that there is an audiovisual component to the project
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.

I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):

Yes No

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Unitec Institute of Technology Ethics Committee. Ethics committee ref: 2017-1010

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Kora – The Third Culture Project

IDENTITY NARRATIVES BY NZ AFRICAN YOUTH

A participatory visual methodological approach to situating identity, migration and representation

Auckland, New Zealand

Ethics committee ref: 2017-1010

Makanaka Tuwe

021 1321 481

africaonmysleeve@gmail.com

You are invited to take part in a creative research project that focuses on youth of African descent creating their own narratives relating to their identity in New Zealand. As the presence of people of African descent living in New Zealand increases due to migration and birth, it becomes imperative to create stories that relate to the reality of those individuals.

The creative research project you are being invited to take a part in intends to create participatory visual outputs that will involve African youth in Auckland creating narratives about their identity. The aim of this research project is to explore the process of creating and developing narratives about African identity in the diaspora by producing a piloted visual participatory project. Accompanying the visual exemplars created by participants, which may include video, photography, literature, art and or social media will be an exegesis that will explain the process of applying a participatory visual methodology and how it can inform a strategy. The significance of this project is in its potential to generate content examples for mainstream media, inform community media and can be applied for the creation of a youth empowerment programme not only for African youth but for other communities in New Zealand.

This Participant Information Sheet sets out why this research is being conducted, what your participation would involve and what would happen after the project ends. I will go through this information with you on the **2nd of July 2017** at the Introductory Session and answer any questions that you may have.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form on the last page of this document. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

Whether or not you decide to participate in this project is your choice and if you wish not to take part, you do not have to give reason.

What are the objectives of this creative research project?

1. To explore the co-creative space of participants and how it reflects their worldview when navigating their identity as Sub-Saharan African youth in New Zealand
2. To produce visual outputs that explore identity representations of African youth identity in New Zealand
3. To situate identity, migration and representation of African youth in New Zealand using participatory visual methodologies within an indigenous framework
4. To provide counter narratives of people of African descent in New Zealand by providing a piloted visual participatory strategy for creating alternative voices
5. To produce a piloted visual participatory project that is informed by participatory action research within an indigenous framework

What will my participation in the study involve?

Your participation will involve you attending the following workshops and meetings. You will also be asked to complete an activity for a period of 4 months. Below is more information about what workshops you will be committed to attending.

Timeline

Introduction – 2 July

Workshop One – 9 July

Workshop Two – 23 July

Progress Meeting - 6 August

Workshop Three – 20 August

Please note that food, beverage and materials will be provided.

As the project will involve an audio-visual component and depending on the content that you choose to contribute, your profile may be made public. In the instance that you do not want your content/profile (e.g. self-portrait) to be made public, your choice will be respected. If your contribution is written and you want your literature to be published but not your name, you will be given the option of using a pseudonym.

What is the significance of this creative project?

The significance of this research project lies in its potential to generate content examples for mainstream media, inform community media and can be applied for the creation of a youth empowerment programme not only for African youth but for other migrant communities in New Zealand. Additionally, this research project is expected to play the role of a catalyst that will provide the motivation for researchers, policy makers and the African community to explore the different ways in which the one-dimensional representation of people of African descent in the New Zealand context can be countered by creating meaningful narratives. The exegesis will illustrate how a visual participatory methodology can be used to create meaningful narratives.

What are my rights?

- Participation in this creative project is voluntary and you are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the project.
- You have the right to access information that will be collected as part of this creative project upon its completion.
- You will be able to review the content that you will have created before the project is published as part of a thesis for the Master of International Communication studies.
- The data will be securely stored at Unitec Institute of Technology for three years and it will be retained for possible future use. In the instance that the data is used your approval will be sought prior to its use.

- The study findings will be communicated to you at the completion of the study and this will be in October 2017.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the project at any stage, you can contact:

Name: Makanaka Tuwe

Position: Researcher

Telephone number: 021-1321-481

Email: makanakatuwe@gmail.com

Declaration by participant:

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Declaration by researcher:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant, and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Declaration

Name of candidate: Makanaka Tuwe

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project **entitled:** IDENTITY NARRATIVES BY NZ AFRICAN YOUTH: A participatory visual methodological approach to situating identity, migration and representation is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of International Communication

Candidate's declaration

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2017-1010

Candidate Signature:  Date: 9 May 2018

Student number: 1384794



Full name of author: Makanaka Tuwe

ORCID number (Optional):

Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'):

IDENTITY NARRATIVES BY NZ AFRICAN YOUTH: A participatory visual methodological approach to situating identity, migration and representation

Practice Pathway: Department of: Communication Studies, Business Enterprise and High Technology Network

Degree: Master of International Communication

Year of presentation: 2018

Principal Supervisor: Evangelia Papoutsaki

Associate Supervisor: Elena Kolesova

Permission to make open access

I agree to a digital copy of my final thesis/work being uploaded to the Unitec institutional repository and being made viewable worldwide.

Copyright Rights:

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Signature of author: 

Date: 11/07/2018