The Position of "Power" when Engaging Marginalised Youth

Abstract

Qualitative data analysis underlines the importance of the researcher's reflexivity, which involves the researcher's own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, and social identities that may have shaped the research and the data analysis process. The identity of the researcher influences his or her choice of a particular research topic. Thus researchers should reflect on how past personal experiences influence them to choose certain research topics, and an understanding of the self within the research context helps in being critical of his or her work. This article examines the experience of power as researchers, as engaged in a qualitative study of marginalised youth from Orlando West, Soweto, on the growing phenomena of train surfing. The navigation of race, gender and perceived class shifted our understandings and perceptions of how identity is constructed by adolescents and allowed for a platform for alternative youth voices to be heard. These voices spoke of how issues of race, gender and class may predispose them to certain difficulties, but there was a simultaneous acceptance and rejection of stereotypical outcomes associated with their age, gender, and race. The article illustrates how qualitative methods of research can be used as a tool of "social change research", as experienced by the researchers through personal reflection.

This article critically analyses the use of reflexivity as a process central to qualitative research within the context of a study conducted by the first author and supervised by the second author that focused on adolescents' perceptions of risk-taking behaviours in the light of the increased popularity of the phenomenon

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Keywords

of *train surfing* (see Moroke, 2015). In an attempt to further understand the decision made by adolescents to participate in a deadly "pastime", the activity needs to be understood as an example of risk-taking. This is risk taking that can be better understood if local histories and contemporary conditions are used to bring context back into descriptions of risk and risk-taking. Conducting qualitative research, more so, fieldwork, changes a researcher in many ways and this process was no different in this study. Through reflexivity we have come to acknowledge that the changes that occur between a researcher and participants brought about by the research process also have transformative value in qualitative research being conducted in South Africa. The journey of discovering how researchers shape and are shaped by the research process and the final output is an iterative and empowering process. More so when positionalities are challenged, we have come to acknowledge the importance of reflexivity in research that yields social change.

Train surfing is a phenomenon that involves individuals, usually males, jumping in and out of train carriages along the platforms and jumping on top or underneath a moving train in search of what some may refer to as "a thrill" (Malon, 2005). This risk-taking occurs with growing popularity in several countries such as Germany, Australia, India, the USA, and the UK (Strauch et al, 1998). It has similar aspects to other extreme sports, such as bungee jumping, skydiving and abseiling, but these are costly, and tend to be a past time for middle class white adolescents or adults. Within the last decade, adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds have gravitated towards train surfing as their extreme sport, a trend identified in countries such as Germany, India, and South Africa (Strauch et al, 1998; Roussow, 2007).

Within the South African context, train surfing is commonly known as *staff riding*, which has a number of variations. According to Sedite et al (2010), the most popular type is the *sparapara*, a term derived from the noise made by the tap dancing of the young men's feet on the platform and the train, at full speed. Usually performed by adolescent boys on route to or from school, whilst this is happening other young men interfere with the hinges of the automated doors to keep them from opening and closing. According to Kgeledi (2010), other types of train surfing in South Africa entail slipping under the train and holding on to the metal rods, going over the top and then underneath like a loop, and playing soccer on the roof of a moving train.

In South Africa, there have only been two studies on the growing phenomenon. The first, by Hesselink (2008) amongst Sowetan youth, sought to determine the motives and possible associations with thrill-seeking. The study found that those participating in train surfing also participated in other risk-taking behaviour, such as alcohol and drug abuse; and that participation in this "criminal" act was not accompanied by

further criminality (Hesselink, 2008). The second study by Mackay (2009), explored the motives behind participation. This study explored the role that train surfing played in the social construction of black, South African masculinities. Mackay (2009) found that train surfers tended to come from discordant families that usually had no permanent father figure. Furthermore, young male adolescents usually participated to attract girls, gain status and popularity, often due to peer pressure from other males that deemed this activity a test of masculinity. Mackay (2009) also found train surfing to be associated with other risk-taking activities such as drug and alcohol abuse and gang-related activities.

It is thus of importance to understand the reasoning behind the participation in such risky behaviour, especially as South African adolescents have been identified as the group and gender at greatest risk of violence, traffic injuries, and substance use and abuse (Ratele, 2008). Moroke (2015) attempted to understand this perilous behaviour within the context of Orlando West, Soweto – a context which is perceived as both hybrid and marginal because of its peripheral location (Sedite et al., 2010). Of great interest in the study was these boys' and men's choice to endanger their lives, where, the positive consequences (fame and recognition) appeared to outweigh the risk of physical harm. This choice has been linked with steps towards "adult-manhood" (Gqola, 2007), and from this emerged an interest in the constructions of gender and masculinity within the socially changing context of risk-taking.

Background to the study

Train surfing is positioned as a risk-taking activity practised by marginalised individuals (here the term is used to describe those that are excluded from mainstream social, economic, and political life). In his study of train surfing David Le Breton (2004) explored risk-taking behaviour among adolescents and account is used to argue that adolescents that participate in this dangerous activity have little control over their daily living conditions and therefore exercise control of their body-politics in an attempt to find meaning for their lives and their surrounding environment. Moroke (2015) examined adolescents' constructions of train surfing in Orlando West, Soweto. This research sought to explore the adolescents' understandings and descriptions of risk-taking and death-defying performances of identity and masculinity. To understand the complexities and richness of the adolescents' experiences of risky behaviour and train surfing specifically, a qualitative approach was employed. Participants for the study were drawn from secondary schools located near train stations where this practice was common. Data for the study was collected through three focus group discussions with 32 school-going adolescents. In examining adolescents' constructions of train surfing, the study explored what these constructions revealed about the broader socio-political and developmental factors that influence train surfing among youth, and how the

phenomenon is linked to young men's identity within an urban context. Specifically, the study examined how race, class, culture and masculinity were represented in young people's constructions of train surfing.

The study was underpinned by a qualitative approach to research as this was considered the most appropriate way to gather data on the subjective dimensions of the phenomenon, namely train surfing as a risk-taking behaviour that is being influenced by contextually constructed factors such as identity and masculinity. Willig (2001: 15) describes qualitative research as being concerned with "the construction and negotiation of meaning, and the quality and texture of experience". According to Boonzaier and Shefer (2006), the main focus of most qualitative research is on understanding the various dimensions of human behaviour instead of explaining and predicting it. Durrheim (2006) argues that an advantage of qualitative research is that it allows for a deep and detailed exploration of the particular dilemma or question by the researcher: "if the research purpose is to study the phenomena as interrelated wholes is required" (2006: 47). This was considered the most appropriate approach to use as the focus of the study was an exploration of how the adolescents of Orlando West, Soweto, constructed identity and masculinity in relation to the risk-taking phenomenon of train surfing. This focus and methodological choice served to augment a gap on knowledge in this area of research, as existing studies predominantly highlighted injuries associated with train surfing (Hessenlink, 2008; Mackay, 2009; Sedite et al 2010) or examined train surfing in isolation of contextual factors and the broader challenges facing youth within the community (Sedite et al, 2010).

Within qualitative research the researcher is guided to treat all data collected as a dynamic interaction. An interaction that involves the researchers' own values, experiences, beliefs, and social identities and how these shape the data collection and analysis process (Halloway & Jefferson, 2000), and the interactions between the researcher and the participants during the data collection process. These interactions just as all other dimensions within the qualitative research process require critical engagement and reflexivity. Borochwits (2005) contends that to be reflexive within qualitative research is to acknowledge and critically examine the constitutive role the researcher plays in the developmental trajectory of the research process, central to which requires the researcher to critically examine their own positions and experiences. This reflection is especially important within the paradigm in which it is suited, in which research fosters a rebalancing of the power dynamics within the researcher and participants relationship, and encourages a greater focus on marginalized understandings and experiences (O'Conner & O'Neil, 2004), especially within the vulnerable and sometimes invisible marginalised youth of Orlando West, Soweto.

In order to effectively unpack the seemingly naturally occurring constructions of identity and masculinity from the data collected, the social constructionist paradigm was utilised. Social constructionist researchers argue that individuals' feelings, thoughts and personal experiences are informed and shaped by the social context in which they reside, in such a way that the meaning of experiences exists at a social rather than an individual level (Terre Blanche et al, 2006). According to Gergen (1985: 266), "social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live", and assumes that world views are constructed and changed during the course of interactions with other people, for example, experiences or conversations. Specifically, social constructionist research aims to identify "the experiences or conversations of social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and to trace the implications for human experiences and social practice" (Willig, 2001: 7). For Gergen (1985), social constructionist thought deals with examining the words that individuals use and the ways in which they understand the world, the social and political processes that influence how individuals define words and explain events, and the implications of those definitions and explanations. In thinking about the performance of train surfing by young black adolescents in contemporary South Africa we could not find a fitting explanation as to why the "Born Free Generation" would risk their lives partaking in such a dangerous act. What were these adolescents attempting to control or forget? Or could it be just a thrill-seeking activity no different to sky diving that researchers were overthinking? What became clear is that this was more than just an issue of identity and masculinity, and instead, required a deeper analysis of the processes through which these adolescents came to account for, describe and explain the world in which they live in (Gergen, 1985).

Although many social researchers have identified the centrality of reflexivity when conducting qualitative research, and have identified its presences as being paramount in identifying a lack of objectivity within research processes and findings, qualitative research has at times avoided addressing dynamics of power (see Joofun, McGhee, & Marland, 1999; Karneili-Miller et al, 2009). This is not to imply that power differentials within qualitative research are not considered, but rather that very few researchers have interrogated the influence of power differentials beyond the realms of ethical considerations during the formulation phase and the ethical steps taken during the data collection phase of the research. Within the South African context, little has been written on the process of "doing qualitative research", in which the nature of the qualitative research positions the researcher as the main data collecting instrument. From this standing, in this article we critically examine the ways in which the researcher and the research process shaped the research relationships between the researcher

and gatekeepers, and the relationships during data collection (focus groups with the participants). To do this, we critically examine the researcher's role within the research, particularly in relation to gatekeepers and participants within the research. We then explore the concept of multiple researcher identities and their role in power differentials during the research process.

Negotiating power in qualitative research

The concept of relationships within qualitative research is not fully understood, nor clearly defined, and thus there is no correct or optimal relationship. Stier (2007) however does identify that the relationship between the researcher and participants changes according to the researcher's personality, worldview, ethnic and social background, perceptions derived from the researchers' professional discipline, the paradigm in which the research is positioned, the research goals, methodology, and the researcher's own perception of the place and the role of subject/participant/ collaborator/co-researcher in the research process (Berg & Smith, 1985; Anzul et al, 1991). Using reflexivity as a springboard for greater insight into the research, it becomes evident that each stage of the research process leads to changes in the power dynamics between the researcher and the participants. This issue of powers within qualitative research gave way to the use of reflexivity, as a concern within research relationships, an issue central to the feminist paradigm of qualitative research (Lather, 2004).

Concerns around power within research usually centre on ethical issues such as informed consent procedures, or research design decisions, such as research processes, methodology, data collection and analysis. Within this article, a closer analysis of power dynamics and their effects on the data collection process is considered. The significance of power within research requires the paper to adopt a specific definition of power. A definition of power that centres the conceptualisation of the power as an issue or non-issue within research relationships. There are several definitions of power within social research, many of which dovetail into the definition provided by Hoffman (2007) in which it is characterised as something that is multidimensional and shifts back and forth. According to Hoffman, power is constantly shifting from the researcher to the participants and back from the participants to the researcher. Power in discourse is constantly negotiated and constructed between the participants as well as between the researcher and the participants. In this study, although the first author did attempt to control the format of the focus group by ensuring that the research aims were obtained, it became clear that she had to allow for the natural flow of conversation during the focus group. This allowed the participants to challenge her assumptions and created a space in which the participants accessed shared knowledge which the researcher was ignorant to (that is,

the everyday realties of adolescents who are viewed by academia as being "vulnerable to risk taking"). This was certainly experienced when participants enthusiastically focused conversations on specific incidents happening in their communities and school. By allowing for these conversations to unfold, despite them not being linked to the research aims, the participants' natural and spontaneous interaction was captured. At times participants even seemed to forget that they were part of research focus groups, providing important material that might not have risen if the structure had been stricter.

As popular as this definition is within the qualitative research field, it is not suitable for the scope of this paper. Hoffman's definition fails to consider the broader relations of power relations existing beyond the research interaction. By simply limiting the research to Hoffman's scope of the definition of power, the researcher may run the risk of homogenising the participants that took part in the study without fully considering the effects of power dynamics that occur outside of their interaction. In searching for a definition of power that considers both the power dynamics within the research relationships and the power dynamics beyond the interaction, we turn to the conceptualization of power provided by Michel Foucault (1977; cited in Bordo, 1993). For the benefit of the paper and accessibility to the definition, Bordo (1993:191) posits that within the Foucauldian approach, "the fact that power is not held by *anyone* does not entail that it is equally held by *all*. It is (held) by no one; but people and groups *are* positioned differently within it. No one may control the rules of the game. But not all players on the field are equal". In positioning the argument within this conceptualisation of power, we are able to critically analyse the ways in which the research participants are variously located within relations of power inside and outside the immediate interviewing environment, as well as how a researcher is simultaneously positioned within the research process.

The insider-outsider in qualitative research

Just as the research is embedded within a certain research paradigm, researchers are also embedded within a particular theoretical practice (Watts 2006). As already discussed above, this study of the constructions of identity and masculinity in relation to train surfing was situated within the social constructivism paradigm and thus in this case so were we. Epistemologically, constructivism places great emphasis on the subjective nature of the interrelationship between the researcher and the participant and the co-construction of meaning (Hayes & Oppenheim 1997). Just as the constructions of identity and masculinity within the participants found a multitude of identities that were constantly shifting dependent on context (that is, school, home, favourite hangout etcetera.), thus Acker (2000) contends the researchers' pre-assigned or enacted positions as researchers can affect the types of

research relationships they experience. Troyna (1998:101) notes "researchers bring multiple identities to the research process and… these (identities) are constantly being negotiated in the course of the interviews in ways which might strengthen the insider/outsider status of the researcher".

An extensive discussion of the insider/outsider theory within qualitative research is beyond the scope of this article and only a brief description of the status in relation to positionality will be provided. Chavez (2008:475) describes the insider positionality as "the aspects of an insider researcher's self or identity which is aligned or shared with participants". Expanding on this positioning, Chavez states that an insider researcher may either be a "total insider" who shares multiple identities and or profound experiences with the community and/or the community members that are being studied, or a "partial insider" who shares a sole identity with a certain extent of distance or detachment from the community.

In order to shed light on these dynamics, the section that follows documents the first author's reflexive comments on the research made in hindsight of the completion of this study. These reflections are informed by the deeper insights gained as an academic, researcher and psychologist. Specifically, in writing this article, the first author re-read and re-examined the reflexive extracts written in the research report. This section provides a critical commentary that examines the interplay between identity and power in the research relationship. Post-research reflections on this relationship are illustrated using extracts from the reflexive commentary written in the research report.

First author's post-reflections of power and positionality

As a black, female student researcher, there were a number of assumptions that were made with regards to data collection during the research process. The first of these assumptions were the assumptions that gaining access to youth participants in the schools of Orlando West would not be *that* difficult. However, my experience of gaining access significantly challenged these assumptions. These issues are evident in the following extract from a reflexive chapter of the report:

"Gaining entrance to the schools proved to be the first hurdle to overcome. For days I sat in the reception areas of the school waiting for a head or deputy head teacher. Now I can reflect back on those many hours spent waiting to speak to someone other than the receptionist and laugh, but at the time I was angered. This was especially so when I could tell that the head had been made aware of my presence and then being ignored, but in that time I was able to think and consider some of the reasons behind their resistance and reluctance. The heads of the school are the gatekeepers,

defined by Kelly and Van der Reit (2001) as those who give entry into a community. Perhaps me introducing myself as a master's student conducting research I was perceived to have been sent to find a fault in their community. I was aware that the timing of my data collection was in possible conflict with the school's preparation for the final exams and I might have been considered an unnecessary distraction, but if this was so I was not being told. Being ignored was my experience at three schools before my persistence paid off on the fourth. The head teacher of the eventual research site walked up to me one morning and said "I hear you have been waiting for me for a while now, please come in". I recall seeing him walking from his office to the administration office on a number of occasions and I knew he had seen me. A part of me understood that, as the leader of a community, one would not want someone coming in and finding fault, and once he knew the purpose of my study he was more amenable. It was through the discussions with the deputy head that I was granted full access." (Moroke, 2015: 74)

As a researcher, I assumed that because there was an element of "sameness" between myself and the participants, gaining access to conduct the research and positionality would not be problematic. I am black and shared this ethnicity with the gatekeepers and the participants required for the data collection. I also shared with the participants, the identity of being born in Soweto and raised there till the age of seven. The exasperation I experienced due to not gaining access to the schools, while simultaneously feeling anxiety due to the academic pressures of meeting research expectations and research deadlines, was frequently raised at this stage in research supervision. Supervision discussions and my own personal reflection were used to process the seemingly frustrating power relations occurring in these initial school visits. A few things become evident in the secondary reflection of the research's reflexivity. The first being in relation to the research context, Soweto in post-apartheid South Africa has become a "popular" site for research on black adolescents. Schools are especially over researched as the "institutional participants" become easier to access than the laymen in the communities being researched. Perhaps the management and the students themselves where fatigued from participating in studies being conducted in institutions that they had limited access to. Perhaps they had and continue to grow tired of assisting others achieve success in areas that these very institutions make difficult for most of them to access. The second is that indeed the insider-status is constantly shifting and being negotiated, and while there were unifying factors such as race (Black African) and ethnicity (mixed Tswana and Xhosa), issues of age and gender (female); professional status as a psychologist and class (middle) appeared to create a division in the research context. The longer I sat waiting for the Headmaster of the School (the gatekeeper) the longer I was perhaps seen as an outsider by every member of

staff that walked past me, including the Headmaster himself. There was an air of mistrust, a feeling of being an outsider trying to access a community I knew nothing about. That I was there to merely "use them" to complete my research and had no real interest in making a change within their school and greater community. Regardless of my upbringing and a deep personal knowledge of the community, in that moment I was viewed and felt like a stranger. To this Hellaway (1972) notes that simply having knowledge of a community does not automatically imply that you must be a member. Through persistence and a shared cultural identity (race identity), access was gained, despite being viewed as a social stranger (not a resident of the community of Soweto). In retrospect, this was the first indication of the effects of both the researcher and the participants' identities on the research process. The process of gaining access revealed to the researcher how identities are closely associated with positionality. My positioning during my interactions with the headmaster and subsequently with the participants was based on perception. My perception of others as well as the way in which I thought I would be perceived by both the headmaster and the students of the school I was trying to access. Guba and Lincoln (1998) state that all individuals are influenced by their history and cultural context, which results in a shaping of the individual's view of the world and their understanding of truth, and it is perhaps these underlying assumptions of the world that were taken for granted. Perhaps by virtue of being a psychology masters student my positioning based on educational and professional background and assumed class (identity) made me too much of an outsider, causing feelings of mistrust and thus not being granted access to the students. Perhaps I was a symbol of the "other" that managed to overcome institutional barriers that have held back so many within their communities.

Once permission was granted to speak to the gatekeeper, I was then faced with the task of explaining the research and alleviating any concerns they may have had about allowing the research to take place within their school. I was placed in a position of having to convince the gatekeeper that there is some benefit in having the study conducted within their school. In this attempt to gain access I had to reach a compromise on how I would conduct my research; the compromise was to conduct my focus groups all in English as the head master and deputy headmistress had wanted the students to "hear how well I spoke", unaware of the fact that my "private school" accent distanced me from the community that I held some connection with. Perhaps this was part of the resistance to conduct the focus groups in English; not wanting my differences to hamper the process of establishing a rapport with the participants, but I was equally aware that allowing the participants to use the language which they felt most comfortable with would allow them to feel more at ease. Restricting them to just English, could have created a power differential that

may have made it difficult for the participants to open up about their experiences, especially experiences that reveal a vulnerability. These issues are elaborated in the following reflexive extract from the report:

> "Reflecting on issues of power between me and the participants was central to the research process as well as the analysis (see Reicher, 1994 in De Le Rey, 1997). All the participants were informed by the heads of the school that I was a master's student of Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand. My academic achievement immediately put me in a position of power, as I was viewed by both the teachers and the students at the school as educated and presumably middle class and from a wealthy background. This presumption I assume was based on my accent (I was told by one of the participants that I sounded like a white person), and the car that I drove (many of the students saw me driving as I arrived and left for my focus groups – a popular German car). As a researcher I needed to be aware of this position of power when interacting with the participants. The participants referred to me formally, despite me introducing myself using first name, and perhaps in some way this was their way of locating me as similar to a teacher in their environment. I also believe that this was done out of respect, which is common practice within schools in South Africa, in which a visitor is referred to as 'Ma'am' or 'Sir'. I feared that this would distance me from the group and make it harder for them to relate to me, thus perhaps causing many not to present their 'true selves' but rather provide me the researcher with what could be perceived as a false self (what they thought I wanted to hear) and not with their everyday reality." (Moroke, 2015: 74)

As much as I had feared that my academic and professional background would have created power differentials when I was introduced to the potential participants as a Masters student, being asked to conduct the entire data collection process in English seemed to create another difference between the participants and myself. This difference or positionality appeared on reflection to take on a hierarchical approach, in which my authority during the focus groups was incorrectly being enforced by the headmaster. This was not the positioning I wanted to take with the participants, as I had prepared to "deliberately take a less powerful role or abandon some of the power" (Hoffman 2007: 321), but perhaps within the context of a school which is governed by a hierarchal system this was an element the headmaster was trying to also enforce into the focus groups as a way of order and to assert authority. Negotiating this stance was considered, but with the time taken to gain access to this point, it was decided to rather shift the power back to the participants during the focus groups by allowing them to use the language they felt most comfortable speaking.

The dissemination of power was an attempt to create a non-threatening environment. A non-threatening environment refers to "a feeling of empathy for the informants" that enables "people [to] open up about their feelings" (Taylor & Bagdon, 1998: 48). What is crucial to the creation of such an environment is an informal, anti-authoritative, and non-hierarchical atmosphere in which both the researcher and the participants are able to establish a rapport in an environment that is unequal (Taylor & Bagdon, 1998). Despite this attempt to shed off some of the power (introducing myself using my first name, requesting them to refer to me by my first name and by allowing them to express themselves in any language) it is of importance to consider that the participants may have perceived me as possessing a greater power and hence they continued the use of the terms "Ma'am" and "Sir". I now wonder if the participants may have been inclined to emphasize or completely avoided expressing certain thoughts and feelings as they may have thought that they did not coincide with the research and the researcher's discourse. Some of these tensions can be found in this reflexive extract from the report:

"In preparing for the focus group the researcher considered if the focus groups should be facilitated and conducted in English or in the language with which the participants felt most comfortable. To my advantage I am familiar with most of the languages that are spoken in Soweto and felt comfortable communicating in any language the participants felt comfortable with. To my surprise, on the day of the focus group I was asked by the head English teacher to conduct the research in English so as to expose the adolescents to what a 'master's student' sounded like. At first I did not understand what this meant and admittedly was thrown by the statement, as I consider master students to be different, all with their unique characteristics. I explained that I needed the participants to feel comfortable and to be in a position to be express themselves and I would not forbid the use of English. She seemed unsatisfied with my response and concluded that she wanted them to know that they too could sound like me if they applied themselves. This left me thinking about what it is that symbolised intelligence and academic success to educators. Did sounding 'non-black' symbolise something for them?" (Moroke, 2015: 75)

The various identities brought into the research relationship by both me, and the participants from the above extract, reveals a negotiation of power within the focus group dialogues. A secondary reflexive analysis reveals that perhaps in an attempt to establish rapport and norms with each other within the research relationship, this was done based on the premises of gender, class, social status, educational and professional status and shared cultural norms. In addition, conducting the focus groups with the grade eleven and twelve students provided for some interesting observations. Not only were my various identities shifting in relation to the participants, there was an oversight in the first reflective write up of how

the participants' identities appeared to shift in relation to one another and the phenomenon of train surfing which was under investigation. These shifts again were dependent on the conversational and contextual dynamics.

If qualitative research's hallmark is having the researcher as the main instrument of data collection, it is of importance that the researcher's multiple identities are examined, as understanding the "self" within the research process is vital in unearthing the impact it has on the research process and the knowledge that is constructed through the relationship between the researcher and the participants. It should be noted that this article is not attempting to "cast doubt" on what is referred to within the field of qualitative research as their "conceptual baggage" and its effect on the research process (Kirby & McKenna 1987), but rather attempts to make explicit the ways in which identities are formed and redefined through the various interactions within the data collection of the research process. Conceptual baggage here refers to "the researcher's biography with regards to race, gender, class and socioeconomic status being already informed prior to the research experience rather than being an emergent feature of the research process itself" (Best, 2003: 908). Conceptual baggage is further broken down into two components, comprised of the researcher's experiences, and the inter-connections between the researcher's intellectual assumptions; subjection location(s) intersecting with class, race, sexuality, gender, beliefs and/or emotions. All of these biological and socio-economic factors combine to impact on the nature and outcome of a research relationship and the interviewing process (Kirby & McKenna, 1987). This, on further reflection about the reflections that were made during the write up of the study, was not fully considered. I was, like all novice research students, focused on understanding and making sense of the participants' constructions of identity (the aim of the research study), that my knowledge and identity was not completely interrogated during the data collection and write up process. Parahoo (2006) however, does highlight some of the difficulties with the process of reflexivity; not only is it difficult to carry out but that for a novice researcher and to some seasoned researchers it may not always be possible to stand back and take note of the effects of one's personal preconceptions, as the researcher may simply not be aware of them. Just as positionality and power appeared to shift dependent on the context in which it was currently being negotiated, the researcher's identity is also continuously shifting. The article shifts its focus and takes a closer look at the first author's identity, more specifically its fluid state during the research process.

A closer look at the various identities held by the first author, as well as those that emerged during the research process highlighted the need to "perform" specific types of identities in relation to certain types of participants in an attempt to facilitate a

successful research project. Here, Norton's (2005: 5) understanding of "identity" is used in order to "reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future". What has already been identified is that I had to select a certain part of my identity to put forward in the attempts to establish rapport with both the gatekeepers and the participants. With the gatekeepers of the school I had to draw on more professional identities to access the students of the schools. This identity that I put forward and the identity that the headmaster subsequently perceived as being trustworthy enough to grant access to the school, was the identity that unconsciously conformed to a hierarchy that could have accounted for the respect and conformity demonstrated in the students' discourses during the focus groups. Despite this hierarchical stance the focus groups appeared to be characterised by different types and degrees of power differentials. Both the participants and I used our power to negotiate the level of information provided within the study.

Despite the positionality and the power the headmaster tried to dispel on me, the participants also determined that the level of power given to me, depended on the identity I put forward in my interactions with them during the focus groups (Karnieli-Miller et al, 2009). My purposeful position during the focus groups did have an effect on what the students revealed during the focus groups. Asking open-ended questions about the life and every day experiences of youth from Orlando West, Soweto yielded more honest answers than questions specific to the aims of the research. The participants were made to feel comfortable to express their thoughts openly in the group. Some of these thoughts would not have been expressed if a more authoritarian position was taken during the focus groups. For example, *"MP2: Mam, after drinking neh, everything feels nice. You feel nice, you feel great and think and know you feel good. The girls look extra nice, and then one-two-three you are sleeping with her and that also feels nice (laughter from group)… When you drink everything feels nice."* (Moroke, 2015: 87)

Multiple identities are common within qualitative research and have never been identified as being incorrect but rather as being problematic. Deaux (1993) conceptualizes identity as being defined by the self internally and by others externally. This conceptualisation provides the best platform for understanding the multiple identities that make up an individual, and not just a researcher. The complication with multiple identities ensues when a researcher decides to prioritize a particular identity. This uniform identity has been viewed by some, such as Khan (2000), as running the risk of the researcher being construed and a unitary subject by the participants of the study. As it has been illustrated above, the multidimensionality of identity can be implemented to avoid being perceived as unitary to the participants. My identity as

a co-constructor is not necessarily a process that runs smoothly, and identity can be misread and challenged (Best, 2003). The fear of being misunderstood is a fear held by many novice researchers, a fear that appears to be easily dispelled by aiming for intersectionality, which urges the researcher to conceptualize social categories as different experiences, fluid, and mutually constituted. This allowed me to think more broadly about categories and thus create a space for the complexities of identity and experiences. Additionally, it has become clear to me through the re-reflection of the research report that prioritizing intersectionality can assist in the positionality and power dynamics, as intersectionality resists the assignment of "Master status" (Brekhus, 2008), but most importantly assisted in considering how the multi-dimensions of identity may be relevant to the research relationship and the entire research. The diversity of identities which researchers may be required to negotiate within a single piece of research may be created, adopted and required by both researchers and participants.

In the end, the multiple identities and the decisions researchers make in relation to them, is dependent, in part, on the location of the self, as in the self within the hierarchical power dynamics and the constellation of gender, race and class. According to Mead (1934) the "self" is something that arises in the process of social experience, activity, and development within the individual. This understanding of the "self" dovetails into that of Reissman (2003: 3) who argues that "one can't be a 'self' by oneself; identities must be accomplished in 'shows' that persuade". A researcher must thus strive to possess the ability to shift between identities and to do so without causing noticeable disturbances to the research setting. Although the idea of multiple identities may create tension through its construction and performance, it is important for the qualitative researcher to keep in mind that their identities are shaped and constructed dependent on the needs of the participants within that particular context, and through the researcher's need to create an approachable identity that would allow for a greater understanding of the participants' perceptions of themselves and the world around them. These multiple identities are unconsciously being created to illustrate a type of respect (remaining interested in their experience, not probing but listening) for the memories and experiences that were being shared.

Van de Hoonard writes "if we are able to take self-reflexivity seriously, we must recognise that we are always producing two works – a research biography and an autobiography" (Van de Hoonard 2002: 123). In reflecting back on the interactions that took place during the course of this research project, the concept of researcher identity, positionality and power were considered. We become attuned to the multiple identities that are held in one single research process. These identities are dependent on how we perceives ourselves and others and how we are perceived by others. Careful

dissemination reveals that these various identities are at times created by researchers to best cater to their own needs, and on other occasions these identities were created and performed to benefit the participants' needs.

In writing this reflective article, it has brought to light that at times it is difficult to uphold disingenuity when juggling the various identities present during research, but this ability to co-construct and perform identities, especially those that will aid in a deeper understanding into the lives of a marginalised group of youth, is part of developing a skill central to being a qualitative researcher and interviewer. For me, being a black female, and now a practising psychologist, and being from the greater community of Soweto, are all different identities and positions that make up my position as a unique researcher.

At the core of this change lies a personal identity, an identity that is protected from the outside world to see and is perhaps the identity that grew the most from this experience. By personal identity we mean the "valued personal attributes and characteristics" (Jones, 1997: 383). I had feared that acknowledging the fluidity of identity meant forfeiting a personal identity for the sake of a successful identity in relation to data collection. I feared that by confirming to some of the rules set for accessing the participants, the identity that is constructed by the participants and required by the participants would be at the cost of her authenticity but simultaneously was thankful. The influences of sociocultural conditions, family background, experiences past and present were considered with regards to the participants' construction and understanding of identity, but here I, the first author, failed to fully turn the observation glass on myself. Through the acknowledgement of my thoughts, feelings and experiences, another deeper layer of data has been identified for further analysis. In this post-research reflective analysis, I became the researched, tipping the power dynamics away from the traditional hierarchical stance adopted both by traditional research methods and the South African schooling system. Admittedly, this left me feeling vulnerable and exposed insecurities that are indicative of both self-awareness and an expression of greater authenticity in understanding the complexities of the research relationship. Although greater knowledge of the "self" is always a positive outcome, it would be an oversight if the tensions that "over reflection" may cause were ignored. According to Bishop and Shepard (2011), when a researcher "over reflects" there is always a possibility that it may lead to a greater emphasis on the researcher's experiences, resulting in what they termed "self-indulgence", where the research becomes an ethnographical study of the researcher.

On reflection, these different positions and identities allowed for a self-awareness and knowledge growth that comes with a reflexive process. Indeed, a researcher

needs to be aware of their conceptual baggage, but also needs to be as aware of the social impact their multiple identities have on the research process. In this case, the social identities of the researchers must be engaged with in terms of their complex relationship with the empowerment of marginalized youth in Soweto. Griffiths (1998) unequivocally states that research has the ability to fundamentally contribute to social justice through the empowerment of research participants. Griffiths posits that social justice is not only one of the aims of constructivist research but can also form part of the subject matter of the research itself, "In social justice research, it is precisely the effects of the justice of the relationship between the participants and the researchers that constitute some of the data" (Griffiths 1998: 71). Despite there being a notion that not all research relationships are created equally, in the co-construction of knowledge within the social constructivism paradigm, this is disputable. With this aim in mind, the researcher found herself working "within, against and through existing power differentials" (Griffiths 1998: 71), and adopting the role of a "social agent of change" within a school even when there was evident tension around allowing the participants to speak openly and about anything related to the phenomenon being investigated.

Conclusion

From the reflections of the first author above, it is evident that it is of great importance that a qualitative researcher does not have preconceptions of what is of significance to individuals, but should take the steps to actively listen to how the person [participant] perceives themselves. In highlighting manifestations of power and positionality in this paper and conducting a secondary reflexive process on the research experience, we illustrate the importance of seeing marginalised youth as they are and as they reveal themselves within the context of a focus group discussion, through their interactions with the researcher and with the other participants within the group. Just as participants want to be understood by the external world as they understood themselves, so do researchers. Both the participants and researchers want to be seen in totality and not just through the externally imposed labels and singular identities, as illustrated in this paper. Through engaging in a reflexive re-examination of the research encounter at a deeper level, greater self-awareness can be gained about the social implications of the practice of qualitative research. In addition, this may lead to a new understanding about how the researcher-researched relationship is interlinked with the phenomenon of investigation. In this paper, this further reflexive engagement with the study had led to a greater appreciation for the complexities that emerged in the research. These complexities were revealed in understanding youth constructions of identity and masculinity in relation to the risk-taking behaviour of train surfing, its relationships with the researcher personally and professionally, and the relationships with the various stakeholders within the research process and with the phenomenon

that was being studied. Using reflexivity, as an exploratory process, and as a continuous process, revealed how self-representations were implicitly used to revise and make sense of identity and the phenomenon of train surfing.

Working with marginalised individuals requires that researchers be cognisant of the power dynamics existing in an already unequal research-participant relationship. The need for researcher reflexivity and integrity in this process is critical, as writing on their experiences and their perceptions of themselves and the world is not only empowering but moving away from the status quo. Reflecting on power dynamics, actively listening to the participants as they narrate their experiences and getting a better understanding of how they see the researcher, the process, themselves and understand the world are all central to empowerment that leads to social justice. Griffiths (2008: 71) states "in social justice research, it is precisely the effects of the justice of the relationship between the participants and the researchers that constitute some of the data".

Author Contributions

First author
This paper is based on Mapule Moroke's Master Thesis. Mapule Moroke was the lead author of this paper.

Second author
Professor Tanya Graham, supervised the Masters Research Report this article is based on. During the production of this particular paper Professor Graham continued to provide supervision in the form of verbal and written feedback on drafts of the article.

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