THESIS

SEEING WITH OUR OWN EYES:

YOUTH REVEAL STRENGTHS IN MATHARE USING PHOTOVOICE

Submitted by

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School of Social Work

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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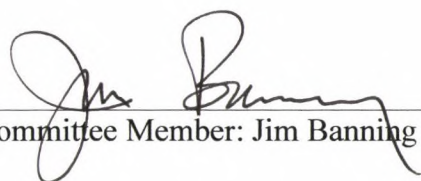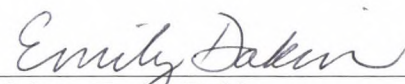Colorado State University

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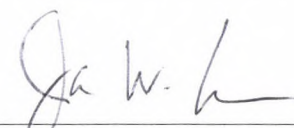
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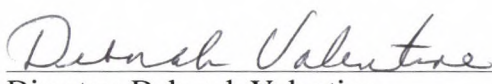WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR
SUPERVISION BY SARAH NOYES PARKER ENTITLED SEEING WITH OUR
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BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

SEEING WITH OUR OWN EYES:
YOUTH REVEAL STRENGTHS IN MATHARE USING PHOTOVOICE

In this study, adolescent residents of the Mathare slum of Nairobi, Kenya documented their strengths and the strengths of their community using the Photovoice methodology, a participatory qualitative research approach. This study also sought to explore the utility of the Photovoice method for empowering youth in the Mathare slum and as a tool for social action. Research was conducted in collaboration with the Mwelu Foundation, a youth based photography program in Mathare slum. Adolescent and community strengths were a focus of this project given that the majority of prior research related to the Mathare slum has been oriented towards documenting its deplorable conditions with a lack of focus on its capabilities and resources. Template analysis was used to code the data, with resilience, resourcefulness, identity, purpose, and community resources emerging as themes related to adolescent and community strengths. Empowerment of the Mathare youth and social action related to the Mathare slum are deemed viable outcomes of the Photovoice method. Implications of the relevance of the photovoice method for social work practice are discussed.

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Seeing With Our Own Eyes: Youth Reveal Strengths in the Mathare Using Photovoice

## Chapter I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within Nairobi, Kenya's city limits are seventy-eight informal settlements, a kinder term for slums (Gulis, Mulumba, Juma & Kakosova, 2004). The Kibera and Mathare slums are two of the world's worst and largest slums, both a quick bus ride from the heart of the capital. As these informal settlements are illegal, the Kenyan government feels no need to provide infrastructure and basic services such as electricity, water, health services, or law enforcement (Erulkar, & Matheka, 2007). Conditions can only be described as deplorable and yet roughly one third of citizens of Nairobi live there (Harding, 2002).

Several studies have identified factors contributing to the life situation of these slum residents, however they have merely identified factors, leaving the social work practice significance or future steps unidentified (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007; Kaim-Atterhog & Ahlberg, 2007; African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), 2002). What these few studies lack is an actual voice from the people. Seeing With Our Own Eyes Photovoice Project was one of the first of its kind, allowing the under represented youth of the Mathare a chance to enhance their own as well as the world's understanding of the life conditions in the slum. This project aimed at answering the following research questions: 1.)Is photovoice a viable outlet to express the needs, concerns, and strengths of the adolescent population residing in Mathare? 2.)To what

extent is photovoice a means of empowering youth in the Mathare slum? 3.)Is photovoice a viable means for addressing social action in Mathare? An additional aim of the research project was to address the social work practice significance of using photovoice in a community such as Mathare.

The methodology used was photovoice, a qualitative research method. Photovoice, a concept coined by Caroline C. Wang, aims to empower research participants by putting a camera in their hands and allowing them to document what is important to them (Wang, 2006). Many photovoice studies have been carried out with a variety of populations and in a variety of different settings. Almost all studies using photovoice found it to be an effective means of identifying themes, and collecting information and insight into the population being studied. To varying degrees, photovoice was also seen as a way of empowering participants. All studies recommended further research on the photovoice method with a variety of populations.

This study used a qualitative ethnographic design with participatory action research (PAR) methodology and an interactive reflexive component using photo-elicitation. All research was conducted in the Mathare slum on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. I worked directly with Julius Mwelu, founder of the non-profit Mwelu Foundation, which currently runs photography groups with adolescent Mathare residents. The sample size was 20 adolescents enrolled in the Mwelu Foundation's program, ages 13-19.

The photovoice and photo-elicitation methods were used to document and gather information pertaining to the research questions. Interviews, focus groups, field observations, and photographs were used as methods of collecting information. The

SHOWeD method of questioning was used and expanded upon during photo-elicitation interviews. It was my hope to gain valuable insight into this population and explore issues of empowerment as they relate to the adolescent residents of the Mathare slum living on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. In the end my organizing themes were: resourcefulness, identity, purpose, and community resources/opportunities. My global themes were resilience, social action, and empowerment.

## Chapter II: INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Problem Statement

Kenya is a desirable tourist destination, appealing to many an adventure traveler with its multitude of guided safari tours, glimpses into the Masaai culture or summit bids on Kilimanjaro. However, just minutes from the heart of Nairobi lie seventy-eight destinations you won't find in your lonely planet travel guide. Nairobi is made up of seven districts and within those are seventy-eight "informal settlements," a kind term for slums (Gulis, Mulumba, Juma & Kakosova, 2004). Mathare slum is one of the world's worst and largest slums, a quick ten-minute bus ride from downtown Nairobi.

Mathare sprawls with an estimated 800,000 people in an area roughly the size of New York City's Central Park (Kimutai, 2008; Harding, 2002). As it is an illegal "informal settlement," the Kenyan government feels no need to provide infrastructure and basic services such as electricity, water, health services, or law enforcement (Erulkar, & Matheka, 2007). Conditions can only be described as deplorable and yet approximately one third of Nairobi lives there (Harding, 2002).

When looking at the population of slum dwellers, youths and adolescents make up a signification proportion however little is known about their experiences growing up in these poor urban environments (Erulkar, & Matheka, 2007). Some adolescents who reside in Mathare have been classified as orphans, refugees, internally displaced persons,

chronically poor or street children, yet little is said about their strengths. What about their resilience, creativity, or aspirations? What is empowering for them?

## 2.2 Significance Statement

Programs that specifically aim at addressing youths don't seem to hit their mark as, "the majority of programs for young people and adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa are gender blind and generic. Similarly, youth programs are being implemented in these areas, often with little understanding of the circumstances and the needs of the young people they target" (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007, p.6). A few studies have identified factors contributing to this population's life situation, however they merely identified the factors, leaving the practice significance or future steps unidentified (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007; Kaim-Atterhog & Ahlberg, 2007; African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), 2002). In essence, these studies put a spotlight on this population by identifying areas of concern, yet none have empowered the residents to speak for themselves. What these few studies lack is an actual voice from the people, a strengths based approach, and a means to empower the people.

Seeing With Our Own Eyes Photovoice Project was one of the first of its kind. This project allowed the poorly represented Mathare youth a chance to enhance their own and well as the world's understanding of the life conditions within the Mathare community. Working with an already established photography based program allowed for sustainability of the photovoice method, enabling the project to carry on after I left. Photovoice leaves the participants with a viable medium in which to communicate their needs, concerns and strengths as well as an viable tool to enhance empowerment and force community members, public officials and others, to listen.

## 2.3 Topic Overview

Photovoice, a concept coined by Caroline C. Wang, aims at empowering research participants by putting a camera in their hands and allowing participants to document what is important to them (Wang, 2006). Wang describes the potential valuable role of photovoice by stating, "images teach, pictures can influence policy, and community people ought to participate in creating and defining the images that shape healthy public policy" (Wang, 2006, p.148). While there have been many studies on photovoice projects working with youth (Berman, Gilboe, Moutrey & Cekic, 2001; Moss, 1999; Stack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Wang, 2006; Wilson, Dasho, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang & Minkler, 2007), there is limited research concerning as diverse and vulnerable a population as the adolescents in the Mathare slum, leading to questions about the usefulness of the photovoice method with this population.

This qualitative research study is designed to determine if photovoice is a useful method for empowering the adolescent residents of the Mathare slum. Can photovoice be taken abroad, brought to an area of dire need, and be used as a tool to document the strengths of the residents and empower an impoverished community? What can be learned from using this method in a setting such as Mathare?

**Chapter III: LITERATURE REVIEW**

**3.1 Setting: Mathare Slum, Nairobi, Kenya**

**Definition of slum**

What do you think of when you hear the world slum? Does it conjure up appalling images of horrifying living conditions? How does one define the term slum? The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines it as: "A squalid and overcrowded urban street or district inhabited by very poor people; a house or building unfit for human habitation". Some other terms for slum, from the *New Oxford American Thesaurus* include: Hovel, rathole, ghetto, shantytown, skid row, or shacktown. I can understand why negative images are thought of immediately.

In order to define the term I could paint a picture starting with what everyone knows about a slum; conditions are deplorable and life is tough. Upon entering the slum all senses are immediately on alert. Sounds include hawkers selling their goods in a mixture of Kiswahili and English; buses honking in a fashion that makes New York City traffic seem peaceful, rap music blaring from passing traffic, mothers calling their children home, school children playing. Taking in a breath of the Nairobi air can be described as a mixture of smells: sewage, burning garbage, diesel fumes, brown dust and twice daily when the hawkers and police clash, tear gas. People scramble every which way with no logical traffic pattern either on foot or by car. It is chaotic at best. Watch your step as you navigate through the narrow alleyways between tin houses; there's

inevitably garbage strewn everywhere. You must be most cautious around plastic bags, they're probably flying toilets (bags containing feces). Open-toed shoes are not recommended. As you get closer to the river, tin houses have now turned into mud huts. You're now in the poorest part. Chang'aa brewers are in the river brewing their illicit brew; barrels hiss, stew, and on a daily basis explode causing local fires. There are many cases of rape, kidnapping and murder reported, but because Mathare is an illegal settlement, the Kenyan government is not obligated to provide a police force. As the sun falls, people hole up in their one-room shacks because it has becoming increasingly dangerous. It is too dangerous—particularly for women—to go out outside for any reason, even to pee. Tension can be felt in the air. Mathare is most dangerous at nighttime during a rainstorm, as the rain on the tin roofs creates such clatter that it muffles cries for help. This is when thieves, murderers, and gangs do their busy work.

My intention is to revamp this image, to dispel the myth that only negatives come out of the slum. I aim to separate the people from the slum, to portray their strengths as they go about their daily lives working through struggles many of us have never had to face. What are the strengths and talents of the people residing in the Mathare slum?

**History**

Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, was named after the Maasai's term for the area "enkare nayrobi" which means "place of cold waters" however it is also known as the "green city in the sun," a reference to the seemingly cool climate as compared to the rest of the country (Mitullah, 2003). The City of Nairobi owes its birth and growth rate to the Kenya Uganda Railway (Mitullah, 2003) a British owned and operated railway. Nairobi, conveniently situated halfway between the terminal stations Mombassa and Kampala,

was designated as the railway's headquarters in 1899. In 1907 Nairobi officially became the capital of Kenya and in 1950, it had enough of a population to be considered a city. Tensions started to escalate between the British and the locals, eventually leading to the Mau Mau Rebellion during which Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta was arrested. Eventually the British seceded, giving Kenya its independence in 1963 (Nairobi History; Mitullah, 2003).

> Historically, Nairobi has always had a segregation problem, the forces that have contributed to urban spatial segregation in Nairobi are many and varied. Some are legal and economic whereas others are cultural. During the colonial period, the people of Kenya witnessed a large-scale government sanctioned spatial segregation based on tribe and skin color and reinforced by planning laws as well as exclusionary zoning regulations (Mitullah, 2003, p.10).

After Kenya gained independence, most of the policies prohibiting Africans from moving to Nairobi were lifted. However, new problems were created that led to the creation of the slums. The new government allowed some immigrants to put up shacks within the city as long as they were not near the Central Business district. The government, largely due to ethnic reasons, destroyed some settlements while allowing others. The term 'informal settlements' was used started in 1972, "when the chief allocated plots of land to people who were landless before independence. This was informal squatting, no ownership of land or titles" (Gulis, Mulumba, Juma & Kakosova, 2004, p.219). Because the informal settlements are technically illegal as there are no deeds, the Kenyan government is not obligated to provide basic infrastructure or services. Conditions can only be described as deplorable (Mitullah, 2003).

**Community Demographics**

**Conditions**

Slums owe their origins to six factors, "migration during the struggle for independence, rural-urban migration and urban population growth without corresponding housing provision, resettlement due to new developments, upgrading or relocation in suitable sites, and extension of city boundaries" (Mitullah, 2003, p.11). There are generally two types of slums in Nairobi, squatter settlements and those that are on government land but are illegal subdivisions (Mitullah, 2003). Nairobi is divided up into seven districts including the central business district, and industrial area and five residential areas; within those five residential areas are roughly seventy-eight informal settlements (Gulis et al., 2004).

While there are many informal settlements, they all have some common characteristics. The Kenyan government does not provide electricity, adequate drinking water, health services, sanitation services, roads or law enforcement to any of the informal settlements (Erulkar, & Matheka, 2007). Water and electricity are hard commodities to come by in the slums and are controlled by a few, creating an opportunity for those in control to charge a heavy premium. Twenty-four percent of slum households have access to piped water as compared to ninety-two percent in Nairobi; the quality of the water is also substantially worse (Mitullah, 2003). Water in the slums cost more than in other parts of Nairobi due to its high demand and limited supply. Water is almost always contaminated, yet little can be done to decontaminate it as boiling the water is not an option because fuel is too expensive.

Sanitation is always a problem because people do not have running water or toilets. Many slums either have pit latrines, which are overflowing, or the residents use flying toilets, a term that refers to defecating in a plastic bag and throwing it outside the home; flying toilets are typically used at night as it is unsafe to go outside. Other waste gets tossed outside the home, as there are no designated dumping sites. In the rainy season many of the slums are flooded creating a spread of human waste, garbage and filth. This contamination spreads to the food sources. Any food purchased at a street vendor is apt to be cooked in contaminated water and as mentioned previously, there is little that can be done to disinfect it.

Insufficient spacing and ventilation are common among the poorly structured houses. Houses are generally made out of corrugated metal, iron sheets or mud. Houses usually consist of a single room congested with at least five people (Mitullah, 2003). The one-room homes are used for all purposes, sleeping, eating, bathing, etc. creating further sanitation issues. Apart from lack of basic services, slums are also characterized by: high unemployment, low education levels, illiteracy, insecurity, risky sexual practices, illness, and violence (Kyobutungi, Ziraba, Ezeh, Ye, 2008; Mitullah, 2003). Crime is prevalent as is substance abuse and prostitution.

**Population Statistics**

Nairobi's current population is estimated at 2.3 million people (Mugisha & Aulu, 2004). Roughly 60 percent of Nairobi's residents live in the slums (African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), 2002). Other estimates place the percentage as high as 71 percent living in slum-like conditions (Kyobutung et al., 2008). The Mathare slum sprawls with roughly 800,000 people (Kimutai, 2008). In Nairobi's high-income

residential areas, population density is about 2-25 people per hectare. In a middle-income neighborhood, the population density is 40 people per hectare, and in a low-income neighborhood, it is 50-300 people per hectare. Appallingly, in the informal settlements the population density is a staggering 1,250 people per hectare (Mitullah, 2003). To put the numbers into perspective, 1.4 million people live crammed on only five percent of Nairobi's residential land (APHRC, 2002).

The slums are primarily composed of immigrants who have migrated from rural areas in Kenya. However, there are also refugees and internally displaced persons due to the post election violence stemming from the rigged elections of December 2007. These people have temporarily made the slums their home, as it is unsafe to return to their villages, making Mathare their only option. It is hard to estimate how many people live in the slums due to the political violence, however the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that up to 600,000 people were displaced in Kenya due to the violence (IDMC, 2008).

The slums are also home to street children (an estimate over a decade ago put their numbers at 45,000 (Suda, 1997)), abandoned children, many adolescents, and low-income family households. It is also more likely in slums than in other part of the country to have children born to unwed mothers. The mean number of people per household is four, however other sources have placed the number as high as eight (African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), 2002). Twenty-nine percent of slum women have never been married and 12 percent have had marriages that have been broken up for various reasons (APHRC, 2002). Most slums are ethnically divided, making ethnicity a decisive factor in deciding which slum or part of the slum to call home.

**Race/Ethnicity**

In the Mathare slum the predominant ethnic groups are the Kikuyu, Luhya, Kamba and Luo (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) Kenya, 2008). Ethnicity played a major role in the post election violence. When the election results were announced, clearly rigged, violence erupted spontaneously and was mostly carried out by the youths of the slums (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2008). Violence was predominately between the Kikuyus and the Lous. Violence was most pronounced in areas like Mathare. Many people were beaten, raped, lost property and were killed. Currently, there is a truce between the two groups but the mayhem that ensued could quickly be rekindled as the Kikuyus and Lous live side-by-side in close quarters in the slums.

**Age/Gender**

The breakdown of age for the residents of the slums is 21 percent ages 15-19, 50 percent ages 20-29, 23 percent ages 30-39, and eight percent ages 40-49 (APHRC, 2002). Children were not represented in the study and therefore there isn't any data representing that age group from that survey. While little is known about the percentages of children in the slums, when asked, most women report having had between one and eight children, with an average reporting five (African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), 2002a).

The age composition by gender for the residents of the informal settlements is quite different when compared to the age composition of Kenya as a whole and Nairobi as a whole. In the slums, the percentage of young people between the ages of 0-14 is 32 percent, which is lower than the national 47 percent, probably due to higher mortality rate

for children residing in the slum. Another distinction is the number of men within working ages (15-49) is much larger in the slum population at 40 percent versus 25 percent for Kenya as a whole; "the dominance of men in the slums and Nairobi populations is a reflection of the higher tendency for young men to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of work" (APHRC, 2002, p.9). The slums have a lower percentage of women (44 percent) when compared with the country as a whole.

**Education**

The general education level in the informal settlements is low, however this is a problem across Kenya. The slums actually have a higher educational attainment level than do rural areas in Kenya (APHRC, 2002). In the slums, 33 percent do not go beyond primary school, 14 percent finish high school, and only two percent have post educational schooling (Gulis Mulumba, Juma & Kakosova, 2004). In a study of adolescents in the Kibera slum (a slum similar to Mathare), 71 percent of boys were in school and 57 percent of girls were in school (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). The reasons most cited for leaving school were that the family could not afford the fees, the student got married or became pregnant, or there was a sickness or death in the family (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). A gender perspective shows that "men have better access to education than women and that more boys than girls are enrolled in schools within the slums" (Mitullah, 2003, p. 14). Level of education greatly influences one's chances for gainful employment and acts as a means to get out of the slums.

**Employment**

A lack of formal employment opportunities exist in the slums and when people are employed, it is generally on an informal basis. According to the Nairobi Slums Cross

Sectional Survey (NCSS), 40 percent of those surveyed were currently unemployed. Sixty-six percent of those not working were between the ages of 15-19 as compared to only 16 percent between the ages of 45-49 (African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), 2002). Unfortunately, the majority of those between the ages of 15-19 are not currently in school as they cannot afford the school fees. This leaves them vulnerable to seeking employment in dangerous fields such as brewing illicit beer or becoming street thugs. According to the Kibera adolescents study, 25 percent of boys and 14 percent of girls were working, and the boys worked a broader range of jobs than did the girls (Eruklar & Matheka, 2007). Some of the jobs the teens listed as having performed were: domestic worker, building/construction, hawking food/consumables, porter, tradesman, tailoring, cook, salesperson, cleaner, and hairdresser (Eruklar & Matheka, 2007). Other means of seeking income include brewing illegal chang'aa (liquor), prostitution, begging, and petty crime.

**Income/Cost of Living**

In urban areas in Kenya, the poverty line is defined as "spending less than 2,648 Kenyan Shillings (KSH) per month, about US $1.26 per day" (World Resources Institute, 2007, p.13). (75 Kenyan shillings is equivalent to one U.S. dollar). According to the Pamoja Trust Database, the average monthly earnings in the slums are KSH 2,512 (Mitullah, 2003). Most residents live on less than one dollar a day falling well below the Kenyan poverty line. Slum dwellers spend the majority of their money on food, housing, fuel, water, education, health, and transportation, leaving little to no money left for anything else. Food, education and housing are the three largest expenditures in that order.

**Health**

Health conditions in the slums, as one can imagine, are poor. There is a surprising amount of awareness about health conditions however, due to strained budgets, little is done about a health problem until it worsens and requires immediate medical attention. Due to the lack of economic means to acquire healthcare, "ninety percent of conditions that cause deaths in Nairobi's slums can be treated or prevented. The common thread among these health concerns is access, and quality/cost of treatment" (African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Summary of Findings; APHRC, 2002a).

Disease related to the unsanitary living conditions, lack of water, lack of nutrition and HIV/AIDS are the majority of healthcare concerns reported by slum residents (APHRC, 2002a). The five most commonly reported health problems were malaria, HIV/AIDS, pneumonia, sexually transmitted diseases and medical complications from illegal abortions (APHRC, 2002a). In terms of reproductive health, the lack of any type of family planning and lack of legal abortions are cited as major health concerns (APHRC, 2002a). In one study using data compiled from clinics, the most common health complaints were cough, abdominal pain, and headache. Most frequent diagnoses were viruses, acute respiratory infections and bronchitis (Gulis, Mulumba, Juma & Kakosova, 2003).

Health concerns for children include diarrhea, vomiting, typhoid, malaria, worms, pneumonia, skin rashes/issues, and colds (APHRC, 2002a.) In the slums one in ten children die before reaching the age of one, which could be attributed to the fact that only 30 percent of children have their immunizations (APHRC, Summary of Key Findings). "Children under the age of five years had more than four times the mortality burden than

the rest of the population" (Kyobutungi, Ziraba, Ezeh & Ye, 2008, p.1). The leading factors contributing to 60 percent of the mortality burden of children under-five are diarrhea, stillbirths, and pneumonia. For children five years and older the leading factors contributing to 50 percent of the mortality burden are AIDS and tuberculosis combined.

**Leisure**

The majority of the slum dweller's time is spent generating income to provide food, water and housing for their families. There is very little time in the slums for leisure. Many of the residents are at work during the day, and remain cooped up inside their homes after the sun sets, as evening brings with it less safety and more criminal activity. Slum residents lack assets for leisurely activities, although radios are the most common source of entertainment followed by television. The one activity that people willingly give up a day's worth of wages to either participate in or watch is soccer.

**Mwelu Foundation**

This project was conducted in the Mathare slum in the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. I worked directly with Julius Mwelu and Benson Kamau, founders of the non-profit organization, the Mwelu Foundation. At the age of fourteen, Julius Mwelu was involved in a similar participatory photography project called ShootBack. The ShootBack experience gave him his first camera, placing him on the path he is on today as a professional photographer. He is dedicated to giving back to the community. He writes, "I gave a few youths a point-and-shoot camera; I encouraged them to start taking photos of their lives. I tried to use the photos to show people the talent that exists in the slum and how the slum looks through the eyes of the youth" (J. Mwelu, April 15, 2009, Personal Communication).

The Mwelu Foundation uses photography and video-documentary to communicate the problems and desires of the Mathare community, hoping that these mediums will reach a broader audience. The Mwelu Foundation hopes to "displace the myth that slums like Mathare are dead-end places with no potential or home-grown talent" (Mwelu, April 15, 2009, Personal Communication). Although the organization's main programs involve photography, film, and journalism, the Mwelu foundation has also branched out into other community activities such as HIV/AIDS awareness, ESL training, computer training and community cleanups.

Working with an organization that is already established and run by locals helped me establish rapport more easily with the participants, cross cultural barriers, and be less intrusive. I spent roughly two weeks learning about the community and establishing community ties without a camera in hand. As Julius is notorious in the Mathare community, my first excursions into the heart of the slum were with him. After the locals got used to a muzungu (white person) plodding through their slum I was able to go into the slum with a group of youth (between three and five youth at a time). I was never able to go into the slum by myself due to safety concerns. I always left the slum prior to nightfall and remained with Julius in the Panganyi district right on the outskirts of Mathare.

**3.2 Context**

**Photovoice**

Photovoice, formerly referred to as photo novella, is a qualitative research method coined and developed by Caroline C. Wang. It is a participatory action research method, meaning it places ownership of the research project in the hands of the participants as a

means of fostering empowerment and sharing power (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang, 2006). A main objective of photovoice is "giving people cameras and using the pictures they take to amplify their place in, and experience of the world. It puts people in charge of how they represent themselves and how they depict their life" (Booth & Booth, 2003, p. 432). Photographs are inherently subjective and relative to the photographer's perspective and life situation. Recognizing that we as researchers are unable to provide the same perspective as those involved in our study and that research participants are the best authorities on their own lives, photovoice provides a medium through which we can gain insight into the everyday realities of the people we are studying. It not only empowers the participants to share their daily lives with us by giving them a tool to do so, but also enables them to control what they share and the depth to which they share (Berman, Ford-Gilobe, Moutney & Cekic, 2001; Booth & Booth, 2003; Clover, 2006; Forhmann, 2005; Hussey, 2006; Molloy, 2007; Singhal & Devi, 2003; Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang, 2006).

**Photo-elicitation**

Photo-elicitation refers to the process of eliciting information using photographs; its aim is to "challenge participants, provide nuances, trigger memories, lead to new perspectives and explanations, and help to avoid researcher misinterpretation" (Hurworth, 2003). While the terms photovoice and photo-elicitation are often used interchangeably, photo-elicitation does not require the participants to become the photographers thus pictures may be used that have previously been taken or were taken by the researcher. Photo-elicitation refers to the interviewing steps of the photovoice process. It should be noted however, that both photovoice and photo-elicitation use the SHOWeD line of

questioning as a starting point for building discussion of the photographs. SHOWeD is an acronym for the following questions: What do you *see* here? What's really *happening* here? How does this relate to *our* lives? *Why* does this situation, concern or strength exist? What can we *do* about it? (Shaffer, 1983).

## 3.2 Theoretical Frameworks

**Documentary Photography**

Documentary photography, popularized by the likes of Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine and Dorothea Lange, was considered a new medium through which to convey issues regarding social justice. Sometimes called social photographers, documentary photographers were able to "assemble a collection of images that amounted to a remarkable social commentary" (Huff, 1998, p.580). Dating as far back as 1850, and becoming popular in the mid-1900's social photographers captured and displayed the everyday reality of marginalized people.

Documentary photography aims at capturing the essence of social justice issues, in hopes of reaching a wider audience. Adding visual elements to communication often makes it more powerful and evokes a more intense response; likewise, photographs can be used to inform, persuade, and educate the public about a social problem (Szto, 2008). Photovoice is based on the principles of documentary photography and has the premise that "providing a camera to people who might not normally have access to one will empower them to record and instigate change in their communities" (Castleden, Gravin & First Nation, 2008, p. 1395). Photographs generated from photovoice projects can be used as a means to inspire social reform.

As the famous documentary photographer Lewis Hine so eloquently stated, "If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera" (Szto, 2008, p.108). The story the adolescent residents of the Mathare tell cannot fully be expressed in words. Photovoice expands upon documentary photography by "making a group of people visible; it engages people in a process to reflect on their reality and moves them toward social action" (Molloy, 2007, p.42). Social action is much needed in the Mathare slum and a main proponent for why the photovoice method was chosen for this project.

**Freire Education for Critical Consciousness**

In Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he asserts that most educational models suffer from "narration sickness. The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable" (p. 71). Freire argued that "most political, educational, and communication interventions fail because they are designed by technocrats based on their personal view of reality. They seldom take into account the perspectives of those to whom these programs are directed" (Singhal & Devi, 203, p. 1). The educator's challenge then is to understand and appreciate the people's lived experience. Similar to the educator's challenge, inherent in photovoice is the idea that participants are more knowledgeable about their own lives than the researcher. The photographs, produced from the photovoice method, act as a means for the participants to portray their lives and their experiences in their community. As a result of photovoice being a participant driven method, it further empowers those participating in the research project (Wang & Burris, 1994).

Freire suggests a problem-posing critical approach when working with oppressed individuals. Problem-posing education starts from a central issue or problem and through

a dialogue, seeks to empower the participants to identify their shared issues. Freire contended that "every human being, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. With the proper tools, anyone can gradually perceive his or her personal and social reality as well as contradictions in it, become conscious of those personal perceptions, and deal critically with them" (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 561). Friere felt that the visual image was one such tool the disenfranchised could use to critically think about their lived experience. Photographs can act as a "code that reflects the community back upon itself, mirroring the everyday social and political realities that influence people's lives" (Wang & Burris, 1994, p.172). Once issues are identified through dialogue around the photographs, further discussion ensues about individual change, community quality of life and institutional change. This process of critical reflection and awareness, driven by participant engagement, leads to participant empowerment, a specified goal within this photovoice project.

**Feminist Theory**

Similar to Friere's critical consciousness theory, "the principles of feminist theory specify that no one is in a better position to study and understand the issues of a group than are the people within the group, and that discovery is best promoted through shared experience" (Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2008). Photovoice is consistent with feminist theory as it recognizes local insight by acknowledging that the research participants are authorities on their own lives. Photovoice collectively seeks to understand those lives.

Feminist theory applied to to the photovoice method suggests that:

power accrues when those who have voice, determine what language is

used, write history and participate in decisions. Photovoice aims to test

this theoretical perspective in practice and to bring new or seldom-heard ideas, images, conversations, and voices into the public forum (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p.561).

While power is unevenly distributed, oppressed voices can be amplified through the use of images and discussions around those images using the photovoice method. The images then act as a means of inclusion rather than exclusion in decisions affecting the daily lives of the oppressed, as they were able to tell their story through this medium (Molloy, 2007). Furthermore, feminist standpoint theories propose that, "research that begins from the standpoint of a particular marginalized group of human being yields less partial and distorted understanding of nature and social relations" (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2006, p. 100), again, a goal of photovoice.

## Social Work Empowerment Theories

The concept of empowerment is central to social work practice. Empowerment, as defined by Barbara Solomon is "a process whereby the social worker engages in a set of activities with the client or client system that aim to reduce the powerlessness that has been created by negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatized group" (Robins et al, 2006, p. 110). Seeing With Our Own Eyes focused on a stigmatized group of adolescent residents of the Mathare slum. My aim was to increase the youths' sense of empowerment through their participation in the project using discussions surrounding their own ideas on needs, concerns and strengths of the community based on their photos. As social work is very much a strength-based profession, the main focus of the project was on the resilience of the youth, the positives of their community and what they liked about living in the slum. It should also be noted, that while the aim is to empower the

stigmatized group, in the process, the researcher might gain his or her own empowerment by working with the participants; this is a notion Friere whole-heartedly believed, and termed teacher-as-learner and learner-as-teacher, or in this case researcher-as-learner.

## 3.3 Empirical Research Using Photovoice

Many photovoice studies have been carried out with a variety of populations and in a variety of different settings. Outlined below are some studies involving either photovoice or photo-elicitation that I felt were most relevant to this project. I chose studies that were either conducted abroad, with youth, or concerned issues that were most similar to those faced by my participants. These studies are organized under three headings (international studies, youth and homelessness).

### International Studies

**Ugandan Nurses for AIDS Patients.** A study conducted by Fournier, Kipp, Mill, & Walusimbi (2007) examined the issues that nurses face in providing care to AIDS patients in Uganda. In total, six nurses (one male nurse) participated in the study. Findings indicated that the nurses confronted dire challenges in providing adequate health care to their patients. Some of these challenges included: poverty, insufficient resources, fear of acquiring the disease, and lack of training and education. Moreover, the themes identified were challenges to care and coping with those challenges. Through the use of photovoice and SHOWeD, moral distress was discussed as a primary reason nurses quit their jobs, which contributes to the shortage of nurses in Uganda. Practice implications were discussed in terms of ways to instill a sense of hope for these much-needed nurses, in an attempt to retain them in their profession (Fournier, Kipp, Mill & Walusimbi, 2007).

**Chinese Village Women.** Photo novella (the previous term for photovoice) was conducted in southwestern China with sixty-two rural women in a study by Wang, Burris, & Ping (1996). The primary goal of this research project was to empower the women by using their photographs to influence policy. Policy was influenced involving three different areas: day care, midwifery and girls education. The women's photographs and voices were used to make policy relevant to the participant's needs. Study results revealed that photovoice was an appropriate medium to affect policy changes and empower the participants and their communities (Wang, Burris & Ping, 1996).

**South African Gay Men and Lesbians.** Using photovoice, a study by Graziano (2004) explored how South African gay men (4) and lesbians (3) viewed themselves in relation to other gay men and women residing in South Africa. The main topics of discussion revolved around issues of interracial dating, lack of education on homosexuality, and lack of information on sexuality as well as health care. Themes that emerged were classism, segregation, oppression, and despair. However, amidst these negative themes, participants portrayed their strength, hope and optimism, and they reported that the process of participating in the study had been empowering to them. This approached increased the participants' reported sense of empowerment. The researchers recommended further research using photovoice with this population, and ongoing study and commitment to gay and lesbian issues in South Africa (Graziano, 2004).

**Chinese Immigrants Living Space in Hong Kong.** A study examining newly arrived Chinese female immigrants by Kwok & Ku (2008) sought to promote participatory action in the context of an urban living environment. Using photovoice, the main goals of the study included allowing the women to express their needs, their

understanding of their environment, as well as describing what their ideal living environment would look like. Many themes emerged around the differences of what the ideal living space was and what they were currently living in. Participants also reported that the project helped them to establish relationships with other new arrivals. A main concern of the project was how to transfer ownership over to local leaders within the community (Kwok & Ku, 2008).

**Australian Youth.** Photovoice was used in conjunction with other participatory action research methods (PAR) by Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller (2005) to describe and depict the physical activities and experiences of children struggling with childhood obesity. The researchers found value in using multiple methods as some themes emerged through discussion groups while others emerged through an in-depth analysis of the photographs. The researchers felt that studying children requires flexibility and creativity and that photovoice was an outlet that allowed for both (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005).

**Bosnian Youth.** Seven Bosnian refugee children residing in Canada between the ages of eleven and fourteen were studied using the photovoice method by Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey & Cekic (2001) as a means of capturing the children's perspectives, feelings, and understanding of their life situation. Study results revealed that the girls took mainly pictures of people, places, and objects that reminded them of home, whereas the boys took mainly pictures involving their lives in Canada. Throughout the photographs, and through a sharing of what the photographs meant to the children, the researchers identified the themes of strength, courage, and resilience. In the end, all of the participants were deeply affected by the war. Moreover, all expressed confusion about

trying to remain Bosnian while not being in Bosnia and not entirely knowing what "remaining Bosnian" meant anymore (Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey & Cekic, 2001).

**South African Youth.** In a study conducted by Moss (1999), Cape Town youth were asked to use photovoice as a medium to identify, represent, and enhance their understanding of their community as well as promote positive youth development. Some of the pictures displayed at their local exhibit were on child neglect, gangs, substance abuse, street kids, and relationships. While the pictures were taken on negative community aspects, the youth also generated their own possible solutions to these problems (Moss, 1999).

**Youth Studies**

**Engaging Youth.** A total of fourteen youth participated in a study carried out by Strack, Magill & McDonagh (2004) in which the youth were asked to take photographs of their concerns within their community. Evidence suggested that photovoice was empowering to the youth to some extent. Some youth stated that by participating in this project they became more aware of their surroundings. Moreover, those youth who had their photographs in a community exhibit found this experience to be both powerful and empowering. One photograph caught the attention of a policy official who reported he was going to address the problem depicted in the photograph (Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004).

**Children's Perspectives on Camp.** A study by Epstein, Stevens, McKeever & Baruchel (2006) used photo-elicitation interviews (PEI's) to explore children's perceptions of camp as a therapeutic place. The camp was a therapeutic summer camp for children who were critically ill. Thirty-five children were interviewed using researcher-

generated photos. These photographs helped start a discussion with the children and, in some cases when they felt these photographs weren't enough, the children brought out photographs of their own. In the interviews, children discussed certain areas of the camp less frequently than other areas. Researchers concluded that PEI's were a good means of engaging the children and gaining access into their views and perspectives (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever & Baruchel, 2006).

**YES!.** Another study performed by Wilson, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang & Minkler (2007) used photovoice as a method to enhance young adolescents' self-determination, self-efficacy, personal power, and control. It was also hoped that, throughout the process, the participants would become agents of community change. The sample size was quite large with one hundred and twenty-two participants in thirteen groups. Of the thirteen groups, twelve completed the last assignment, demonstrating some level of enhanced participation in community change. The researchers also noted that the photovoice approach was useful in engaging the youth in their natural surroundings, increasing their critical thinking skills, and raising awareness of issues affecting their surroundings and community. The researchers felt, however, that photovoice had to be adapted to this population (nine to twelve year olds), as their maturity level and age were a factor in their attitudes toward the assignments and topics being addressed (Wilson, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang & Minkler, 2007).

**Student Advocacy.** Students often feel powerless to make important decisions that affect their lives. Photovoice was used in a study conducted by Goodhart, Hsu, Baek, Coleman, Maresca & Miller, as a tool to increase urban high school students sense of empowerment (2006). The students collected data, ran the project, and analyzed the

results themselves. Their aim was to propose changes to the school that would benefit the student population using the photographs they gathered during the photovoice project. They then met with policy officials and discussed their pictures and offered recommendations for changes they would like to see in school. Issues of safety, health, alcohol, drugs, parking and food were discussed. Many students reported a sense of accomplishment with the project and recommended both photovoice and discussion groups to delve deeper into the issues at hand (Goodhart, Hsu, Baek, Coleman, Maresca & Miller, 2006).

**Homelessness Studies**

  **Language of Light Photovoice Project.** A study by Wang, Cash, and Powers (2000) asked homeless men and women to photograph their everyday living conditions. The goal of this study was to try and find a way of reaching policy officials while shedding light on the strengths, struggles, and concerns of the homeless population. Eleven homeless people participated in the study. The photovoice method was seen as creating an opportunity for the homeless members to "speak from their own experience and change the quality of discussion among themselves and those that advocate for their wellbeing" (Wang, Cash & Powers, 2000, p. 88). Study results found that the photovoice method fostered a sense of empowerment and collaboration between the participants and researchers. Participants also reported that photovoice enabled them to notice their surroundings in different ways (Wang et al, 2000; Wang, 1998).

  **Homeless Photography Project.** Another study by Miller (2006) explored the landscape of homelessness, as photographed by people who identified themselves as being homeless. Six people completed the project. Study results revealed that the

participants "use the images they create as tools for exploring and communicating their experiences and identities, and creating a sense of belonging while living at the margins of the wider community" (Miller, 2006, p.122). The findings also suggest that the photographs served as a means to empower the homeless, tell their stories and engage the community. However, the question was raised as to whether this would lead to lasting changes (Miller, 2006).

**Summary of Research**

In summary, results from almost all of the studies revealed that photovoice was a useful means of identifying themes and collecting information and insight into the populations being studied. To varying degrees, photovoice was seen as a means of empowering the participants and, along those lines, participants seemed to enjoy the process due to its facilitating self-expression, self-exploration, and self-reflection. In two of the studies, photovoice was shown to be a method that could bring about a policy change. For photovoice to be an effective means for bringing about policy change, policy officials must be involved very early on and it must be a stated goal of the research project.

Almost all studies touched on the limitations of photovoice, including whether photovoice helped to facilitate lasting change among study participants. It was also recommended that the photovoice method be adapted to fit the participants' needs, especially when working with minors. All studies recommended that more research is needed using the photovoice method with a variety of different populations. Many of the researchers who conducted studies abroad noted the challenges of doing so and suggested

that more research be carried out abroad to add to our understanding of photovoice in international settings.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

While unstated, all of the previously mentioned research studies have implications for social work practice. In the National Association of Social Worker's (NASW) code of ethics the preamble states, "The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty." Photovoice acts as a medium to gain insight into the lived experience of these populations. It provides a first-hand expression of the needs of those who are oppressed and acts as a means for them to gain empowerment. While photovoice can be used with all populations regardless of socio-economic status, it has demonstrated particular promise with those who are vulnerable and oppressed, making it a research method that is consistent with social work values and ethics as well as a method that could be incorporated into social work practice. Social work practice at both the micro and macro level can use photovoice as a means to tap into the vulnerable and oppressed populations that social workers serve. Photovoice can be used not only as a means of collecting data but also as a therapeutic tool to gain insight into participants lived experiences. Social action, empowerment, and a strengths approach are all key concepts in social work practice, values and ethics. In particular, social workers focus on the strengths of an individual or community through the systems theory lens. Social action with the end goal of social justice is fundamental to the social work mission.

## Chapter IV: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 4.1 Purpose

Little research has been conducted regarding the adolescent Mathare residents. What has been researched are the factors associated with living in the slums as an adolescent (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007; Kaim-Atterhog & Ahlberg, 2007; APHRC, 2002). More research is needed on the strengths of the adolescent residents. Photovoice is a method that can be applied to this population to focus on their strengths. Photovoice studies have been conducted with the intellectually disabled, men, women, transsexuals, ESL learners, nurses, youth, homeless people, immigrants, mothers, battered women, persons living with HIV/AIDS and rural villagers, however, no photovoice project has been conducted on a population similar to those who are living in Mathare. The purpose of this project is expand upon the limited research on the adolescent residents of the Mathare slum. The aim is to empower the youths of Mathare, using photovoice, to tell their story, specifically their strengths and those of their community. The focus is on empowerment and social action.

### 4.2 Research Questions

This study's aim was to answer the following research questions:

1.)Is photovoice a viable outlet to express the needs, concerns, and strengths of the adolescent population residing in Mathare?  2.)To what extent is photovoice a means of

empowering youth in the Mathare slum? 3.)Is photovoice a viable means for addressing social action in Mathare?

## Chapter V: METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Design

### Visual Ethnography

Seeing With My Own Eyes used appreciative inquiry built on participatory visual enthnography. An enthnograpic study collects data about a particular culture or segment of society (Berman, Gilboe, Moutrey & Cekic, 2001). Appreciate inquiry refers to the process of the SHOWeD line of questioning and the interviews with the participants. The visual component was the photographs taken during the photovoice process documenting the strengths of the Mathare community and people. It was participatory in nature, as all participants dictated what was discussed and shared. Adding a visual component to an ethnographic study allows for a more thorough documentation of "complex dimensions of social interaction and human behavior, to reveal economic realities, to explore relationships between ecology and community, to examine the everyday patterns of people's lives and culture, and to elicit insider perspectives" (Berman, Gilboe, Moutrey & Cekic, 2001, p.26; Collier & Collier, 1986). Another purpose of adding a visual component in an ethnographic study is to bridge the gaps between the worlds of the researcher and those being researched (Harper, 2002). The use of a visual component allows the researcher to further delve into the world of those being studied and helps to elicit information from the participants.

**Participatory Action Research Methodology (PAR)**

This project used an ethnographic design with participatory action research (PAR) methodology. A participatory action research approach can be defined as, "a collective, self-reflexive inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social practices" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p.5). The main objective of PAR is to allow the participants a say in each step of the research process (Fournier, Kipp, Mill & Walusimbi, 2007). Most importantly, PAR bridges the gap between the researcher and the participants (Harper, 2002).

**5.3 Procedures**

**Photovoice**

The photovoice method and photo-elicitation method were used to document and gather information pertaining to the research questions. Interviews, focus groups, field observations, and photographs were all used as methods of collecting information. The SHOWeD method of questioning was used and expanded upon during photo-elicitation interviews.

Photovoice, as laid out by Caroline C. Wang (2006), is a nine-step process. However, as this project does not aim to target policy makers, the first step of photovoice, acquiring relevant policy makers, was disregarded. The first step for this project was to gather a group of people willing to participate in the photovoice project (Wang, 2006). As the MWELU foundation had roughly forty-five students already enrolled in their program, this step was relatively easy. Prior to my arrival Julius Mwelu and Benson Kamau hand-selected twenty participants based on who they thought were most appropriate for the project. (Criteria can be found in the sample section). The twenty

youth were then broken into four groups of five based on their own choosing. I asked the groups to be mixed gender groups after securing consent from the youth. I allowed them to choose their mixed groups as I wasn't sure if affiliation with certain tribes would dictate who could work with whom (in the end it did not).

The second step was to "introduce the photovoice methodology to participants, and facilitate a group discussion about cameras, power, and ethics" (Wang, 2006, p.150). This introduction allows the participants a clear understanding of not only what photovoice is, but also issues they may face as photographers. This step is critical as it addresses how to minimize risks to the participants; it explicitly details ethics involved in picture taking such as getting approval to take someone's photograph (Wang, 2006). It also explains that there is a power difference between the person holding the camera and the person being photographed. This step was repeated throughout the project as some youth needed reminding about the ethics of picture taking. Specifically we repeatedly addressed taking pictures of people, how to do it appropriately, and maintaining your own safety.

The third step was to obtain informed assent and consent from the participants (Wang, 2006). Although all of the participants were adolescents, some were minors, while a few were 18 or older. Assent was obtained from each participant, regardless of age, and consent was going to be obtained from each minor's parent or guardian. As the parents signed consent for the youth to be in the Mwelu Foundation, Julius felt it was more appropriate to have him sign the consent forms as well as all the youth. Therefore, consent was also obtained from each participant. The assent form was developed to be at just below a 6th grade level of readability. All the youth felt they understood it well; if

they had any questions they asked. All participants were told that this project was not mandatory and that they could choose to drop out at anytime.

The fourth step was to "pose initial theme(s) for taking pictures" (Wang, 2006, p.150). Especially with youths, it is recommended that the researcher go in with a set project theme, since it tends to be difficult for youth to come up with a topic or all agree on a set topic (Fournier, Kipp, Mill, Walusimbi, 2007, p.258). As I was working with an already established organization, my aim was to work around their themes. Initially we decided to document their everyday lives. After two weeks of this, allowing time for the youth to get comfortable with me as well as with the cameras, we worked toward the theme of photographing the community and participants' strengths and issues around empowerment. We had weekly discussions about topics including the things they liked about their community, the positives, the good, the strengths, and the things they were proud of, to help generate photographs.

The fifth step was to give the participants their cameras and review how to use a camera (Wang, 2006). Questions arise as to what type of camera to use, and whether the researcher should give the camera to the participants. Many researchers use disposable cameras. For this project, because this organization is established and would carry on following my departure, the cameras were digital point-and-shoot and remained with the organization.

The sixth step was the actual photography. Consistent with the photovoice method, I was careful to allow participants time to take pictures during this phase of the research project (Wang, 2006). We met twice weekly; at the first meeting each week I handed out cameras and discussed topics for the week's photography, and at the second

meeting I collected the cameras and conducted the interviews with the participants to discuss the pictures that they took. Each group of youth had roughly three to four days to take the pictures. After the pictures have been taken, the seventh step was for the participants to meet to "discuss photographs and identify themes" (Wang, 2006, p.151). This step involved solo and group interviews, which took anywhere from twenty minutes to two hours. Each group had their own group interview, and when needed, participants were able to do solo interviews with just myself. This seventh step is a three-stage process involving first the participants selecting a few of the photos they wish to discuss, second engaging participants in a dialogue using the SHOWeD method, and third, participants identifying "the issues, themes, or theories that arise from their photographs" (Wang, 2006, p.151). I helped to identify themes and issues, however the participants confirmed the themes through member checking.

The eighth and last step in the photovoice process was to develop some medium in which to share the photographs and stories within the community (Wang, 2006). Previous researchers have developed books, exhibits or slide shows. Most importantly, the participants should approve the format and choose what they wish to share; the fundamental purpose is to benefit the participants rather than the researcher. Seeing With Our Own Eyes held a weekend-long exhibit at the Inspiration Center, a local building within the community. Each child displayed one blown up picture, a one-page write-up about themselves, and their photo album of pictures taken throughout the project. It was a great success, with the local news channel (NGTV) showing up to do a feature story on the nightly news, as well as a few brief articles in the children's section of the local Sunday newspaper.

**Photo-elicitation**

The photo-elicitation interviews (PEIs) were the primary source of data. All interviews were recorded, allowing me to transcribe them verbatim, and identify themes and issues. Much of the data analysis technique involved systematizing the data through template analysis. Following the procedures of Fournier, Kipp, Mill & Walusimbi (2007), themes that emerge from the individual statements of participants were summarized. Summaries were written immediately after each focus group and were reviewed with the participants for validation, allowing for correction and comments. Field notes were also used to document the process. Additionally, a ten-day trip back to Mathare during the coding process allowed for member checking after the themes were identified.

**SHOWeD**

Photovoice and photo-elicitation interviews were the primarily data collection procedures; these procedures involved solo-interviews, focus groups, field observations, and photographs. All interviews were recorded, using first name only to maintain confidentiality, however all the youth expressed a desire for their quotes and pictures to have their names on them and said I could use last names if I so chose. After reviewing this with Julius, he felt because of the nature of the photographs using names would be appropriate. Digital files and transcripts of recordings are password protected. Research records will remain in a locked file cabinet for three years following the conclusion of the study, after which time they will be destroyed as per IRB requirements.

The SHOWeD method of questioning was used as the primary data collection procedure. The SHOWeD questions are as follows:

- What do you *see* here?
- What's really *happening* here?

- How does this relate to *our* lives?
- *Why* does this situation, concern or strength exist?
- What can we *do* about it?

As photo-elicitation is less structured than regular interviews, the SHOWeD questions are a starting point to engage in a dialogue; "researchers can use photographs as a tool to expand on questions and simultaneously, participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives" (Clark-IbaNez, 2004, p.1512). Photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) add a greater depth to an interview.

## 5.4 Sample

The target population consisted of the adolescent residents of the Mathare slum. The accessible sample for this study was comprised of youth who were enrolled within the MWELU Foundation's photography program. A sample of twenty students was drawn from the forty-five students enrolled in the program. Selection criteria was developed with Benson Kamau and Juliu Mwelu and included, but was not limited to: willingness to participate, ability to speak English, age appropriateness, those for whom this project would be least disruptive, interest level and commitment. The sample was a non-probability convenience and purposeful sample, and ultimately, as Julius and Benson (the MWELU foundation's founders) work closely with the participants already, they largely determined who participated. The sample size of twenty students was chosen as any larger size becomes unmanageable due to budget concerns and time constraints. Of the twenty students only two dropped out within the first two weeks, and they were replaced with two other students.

The twenty students were then broken down into four mixed gender groups of five. The participants agreed to have the groups mixed gender. I originally had them

mixed as I was uncertain if I would be comparing each group or making comparisons across gender. I allowed the participants to chose their own groups as I was uncertain if tribal affiliations would determine who they'd feel most comfortable working with. In the end, the participants chose other group members they were closest with and tribes were not an issue.

Data analysis using qualitative methods was primarily conducted around the subject of empowerment; however in discussing empowerment, the broader research questions about needs, concerns and strengths were addressed. As this is a qualitative study, other themes inevitably emerged. I also found that the youth needed to explain the conditions in the slum and the things they did not like in order to put the strengths and the things they liked about the slum into perspective.

## 5.5 Template Analysis

Falling somewhere between content analysis and grounded theory, the essence of the approach to template analysis is the "researcher produces a list of codes (a 'template') representing themes identified in their textural data. Some of these will usually be defined *a priori,* but they will be modified and added to as the researcher reads and interprets the text" (King, 1998, p. 118). After having conducted a literature review on the Mathare slum, I went in to Mathare with some a priori themes, like the importance of education, family and religion. I was however open to these themes developing and changing as the research continued.

## 5.6 Trustworthiness

The aim of trustworthiness is to establish that the researcher's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290). Lincoln and Guba describe the four

criteria for establishing trustworthiness of qualitative research as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. If these four criteria are met trustworthiness can be established. Demonstrating trustworthiness in qualitative research is analogous to providing evidence of reliability, validity, soundness and significance in quantitative research. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility refers to whether or not the research has adequately represented the reality of the participants in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Four techniques recommended by Lincoln and Guba to produce credible results are prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing and member checks. Prolonged engagement is the technique where the researcher spends enough time establishing rapport, building trust, learning relevant information about the participants and learning about the participants' culture. As mentioned earlier, time was allocated for me to establish rapport. Triangulation refers to using multiple sources of data. This study used transcribed focus group interviews as well as field notes. The remaining technique, member checking, is inherent in the photovoice process as the researcher identifies themes from the SHOWeD interviews, and then verifies these themes through discussion with the participants.

Transferability in qualitative research is analogous to generalizability in quantitative research. Inherent in qualitative research is the inability to generalize to a larger audience, however those who wish to transfer the data to a new setting rely on the researchers descriptions of the data in order to judge transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My aim is to make data clear and the methods section detailed so that if others may choose to replicate the study with a similar population or similar setting they are able to do so.

## Chapter VI: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Coding

A coding system was developed where the "photographs are categorized according to descriptions provided by the participants rather than according to the objective content of the photograph" (Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, Cekic, 2001, p.29). The focus of the data analysis was on what the participants discussed in their interviews and involves participants' active engagement throughout the analysis process. Following a technique described by Jennifer Attride-Stirling (2001), basic themes were originally identified throughout the research (and are listed as basic themes in the appendix). The basic themes were then organized in clusters according to an organizing theme. Organizing themes were then analyzed for a global theme. Three global themes were identified. (Specifics are addressed in section 6.2 and a coding matrix is included in the appendix).

After five iterations I arrived at a final coding structure that encompassed the totality of my data: 500 pages of data, 5,500 photographs, and 25 hours of interviews. When I was in Kenya doing the interviews, I had each group meet twice weekly, once for a lesson on photography and once to conduct the interviews. During the interviews, the participants were able to select 15-20 pictures that they wanted to discuss from that week. Discussions were done in a group, led by the student who took the pictures; however, the group members were allowed to contribute and ask questions as well. During those

interviews, I recorded the conversations and flagged the pictures that were discussed. After the interviews, I created a template for each participant for each week. The pictures discussed for that week were put into the template as was the discussion that ensued around each picture. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. I highly recommend doing this while conducting the research as you can member check, and it saves weeks of transcribing at a later date.

When I was ready to start coding, I printed out each interview for each week for each participant (I had eight weeks of data for each of the twenty participants.) I put them in a folder by assigned groups to help with managing the large quantity of data. For my first cycle of coding, I knew I wanted to identify concerns, needs and strengths, with a focus on the strengths. I went through each folder and highlighted and took notes as to what "themes" appeared frequently, or seemed important. I then took all of those highlighted quotes and made them into a word document entitled "themes" by cutting and pasting from the original documents from each youth. My first cycle identified the following themes: Unity, education, housing, family, work/jobs, leisure, sanitation/environment, food, attitude, religion/God/faith, water, transportation, organizations, messages to the government, poverty/resources, violence/post election violence, drugs/chang'aa (illicit brew), health. I thought I was done coding. My thesis committee steered me in the direction of two very helpful articles on template analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Stirling, 2001). I learned quickly that I had many more cycles.

My second cycle of coding took my basic themes and organized them by concerns, needs and strengths (see appendix E for theme matrix for exact details). I'd

already identified the needs, concerns, and strengths in the previous cycle but had not organized them under those headings. I realized that if I explored these themes more in depth, my organizing themes might be around attitudes/mindset and community opportunities/resources. I felt the global themes arising were people's resilience and this sense of "I can live here but you cannot". I also developed a growing concern that I was not addressing my research questions in terms of photovoice as a means for empowerment and social action.

My third cycle involved going through the fifty pages of quotes I'd selected from the interviews and the basic themes already identified, and organize them by community resources and attitudes. I also needed to narrow down my selection of quotes. I did this about three times. This is where I came up with about sixty basic themes. (See matrix in appendix E for all sixty). These themes combined all the themes from the previous cycles. In my fourth cycle I took those basic themes and came up with six possibilities for organizing themes: resourceful, identity with place, sense of purpose, grateful, desire for change, community resources. I organized my sixty basic themes under each of these potential organizing themes.

In my fifth cycle, (much to the amusement of my committee) I cut up each quote that I wished to use and laid out the matrix on my floor. I ended up combining some organizing themes and titling others differently. In the end, my final organizing themes were: resourcefulness, identity, purpose, and community resources/opportunities. My global themes were resilience, social action, and empowerment. Many of the pictures and participant's quotes could fall in multiple themes; I've tried my best to organize it in a

manner that makes sense and explain it in the same manner. For a detailed layout of the basic, organizing, and global themes please reference the appendix.

My biggest concern through each cycle of coding was to not discount what the youth were trying to tell me. Inevitably to some extent this cannot be avoided, things will be overlooked or discarded. At the heart of this research project was the desire to document the strengths of the people and the community; therefore it must be stated that the negatives and the dissatisfaction with the community that the youth expressed have been overlooked. I'm not trying to paint a picture that is not there, I am however painting over the ugly parts.

## 6.2 Organizing Themes

## Organizing Theme: Resourcefulness



*Basic Theme: Hardworking.* *From top left, clockwise: woman selling sweets at a kiosk, man selling handmade soap at a kiosk outside medical clinic, woman selling fish at a stand, woman selling mangoes at a kiosk.*

The first basic theme that falls under resourcefulness is the people are hardworking. The youth stressed that while there are those that are not working (beggars, chokaras, street kids, thugs, etc), the majority of Mathare residents are either working, or trying to find jobs. Joseph states that, "Everyone is working in Mathare slum." Jeff agrees when he says, "People of Mathare are known to be hard working." The youth throughout the course of the project specifically brought up stereotypes of slum dwellers, and commented on what they felt were the "truths" surrounding these "myths". They

conveyed that it was most important for outsiders to know that Mathare residents didn't put themselves in these current conditions by being lazy.

A unique perspective on this idea of hardworking, was expressed by many youth, but best expressed by Joseph when he stated, "This was a kiosk and there was someone here who try to struggle. That's another good thing about Mathare, people struggle." All of the youth felt that to struggle was a part of life, and seen as a strength. If you are not "struggling", you are being lazy. They used struggle interchangeably with hardworking.

*Basic Theme: Affordability. From top left, clockwise: mangoes for 1KSH, various vegetables for 2KSH, tomatoes for 5KSH, beans for 35KSH for a ½ kg.*

A second basic theme identified under resourcefulness was affordability. Affordability came up frequently in terms of understanding your community, knowing your budget, and using the resources you had available to you. Many of the youth discussed prices in their interviews, an example was when Joseph said, "I was trying to show you that if you have one shilling you can get the big mango". Antony states, "As you can see in the picture most of the things are not expensive in the slum, that is one of the good things. You can buy something from a cheap money". Peter discusses this concept through a message to outsiders:

> And to the people of the United States of America: Living in the slums is
>
> sometimes enjoyable because things in the slum are cheaper, not like in the estates

(rich areas of Nairobi) where you must have good money, the cash, a lot of money. Here in the slum, if you just have 20 shillings you eat your lunch and you feel good until the supper.

Affordability of food was cited as a main reason why they were able to survive in Mathare.

*Basic Theme: Collaboration. Man selling bananas to locals.*

Leila takes the concept of affordability a step further when she explains the link between buying things that are affordable in the slum and how it helps her community:

You find even one banana (in town) may be costing 50 shillings but here you will find in Mathare one banana for five shillings so it makes us feel happy because he sells it he gets the money and us we get the things that we want in an easy way.

The sense of collaboration comes up frequently in our discussions, and is explored later as well.

*Basic Theme: Creativity.* *From left to right: man welding recycled materials into security door, man welding bars to safety door.*

Another concept under resourcefulness is creativity. The participants define creativity as things one can make with their own hands, or salvaging old products into new products. Antony states simply, "This is one of the good things about Mathare there are many people who work from their own hands with their creativity". Creativity acts as a strength in several ways. First, it creates more job options and secondly, it creates some sustainability within the community. Abdi tells me, "This is a product taken from the slum that has been already used now it is being renewed to a useful product". Many of the jobs involving what the youth call creativity (using your hands, creating products, etc.) actually improve the community because they act as a means for recycling and reusing products.

*Basic Theme: Affordable handmade products. From left to right: handmade gikos (cookers), handmade giko outside Mathare kiosk.*

An example of creativity as well as the concept of affordability is the use of gikos (handmade stoves) in the community. In Glady's own words:

> Us, we use a giko. You see a giko is not too expensive. But a stove, daily you have to buy the paraffin. You see? But if you buy charcoal (for the giko) for 20 shillings you will use for three days. So, it's good, the giko, I think it's a good improvement for these people to have.

Jeff expands on the creativity piece stating:

> These are stoves we call them gikos, cookers I think is what you call them. Okay they use charcoal, I was trying to point out although the people here live in poverty and all that, they still have the courage and even determination to sell and make things by themselves.

By getting creative with resources that are available, the residents create more jobs for themselves, are able to sell a product at an affordable price, and are able to sustain the production of the product through recycling of materials found within the community.

*Basic Theme: Small business. Kiosk selling a variety of goods.*

Another basic concept falling under resourcefulness is the importance of small businesses. Small businesses were discussed in nearly every interview conducted. Examples of small businesses include, fruit and vegetable vendors, small kiosk owners, ground-nut sellers, maize sellers, household item vendors etc. Pretty much anyone selling anything, regardless of quantity is deemed a small business owner. All of the youth stressed the importance of small business, and the need that small businesses fill. Moses O. declared, "Its not a must that you have a big shop or a big supermarket so you can be termed an average person". The youth agreed that small businesses were the best way to make money to pay for their daily needs. Gladys expresses the concept in this manner:

It is good to have a business, because these days life is difficult. If you don't have

a business what will you do? Laziness is not good, if you are lazy what will you

be? Sad and lonesome for your lunch. Everyone has problems, all has problems,

so you have to have a business so that you may manage your problems.

The youth all suggested that people of any age and education can open up a small

business to "manage their problems" and satisfy their daily needs.

*Basic Theme: Working together. From left to right: two women selling herbal remedies, woman selling herbal remedies at an affordable price.*

Small businesses act as the main source of income in families, and when all family members participate they have the potential to generate more income. All of the youth with parents who have small kiosks work with their parents and understand that it brings in additional income by allowing the mother to work two jobs, or sell more products. Leila describes as situation in a two-parent household (generally hard to find):

> As you can see this woman she's selling these herbal drugs. You see this woman she has a husband but still she does this work so that she can get that little money, that little money that she can get she adds it to the one her husband is earning and when they put it all together they can do something constructive. So this picture you see it will make you know that it's not all about relying on one person because you can always do something and if the other one is doing to, you can always do it to help him or her, so it's a matter of two people understanding each other and helping each other.

Leila's example nicely ties in the concept of Mathare resident's being hardworking and expresses an understanding that by everyone working together with a small businesses they'll be able to earn their living.

*Basic Theme: Owning your own small business deters crime. Adolescent boy selling soaps and dish products on side of the road.*

Small businesses also provide an alternative to a life of crime. As Leila explained to me in an interview:

> Then this person who started this small business is earning a lot of money. So he's not out here stealing, he's not out here waiting for people at night and taking their things, he's not a thief, he's not a robber. So it encourages so many people out here, if you don't have a job, you can always look for another alternative somewhere else. It's not about killing people and taking what they have. It's not about fighting for something which is not yours. It's not about reaping what you did not sow. It's about reaping what have sowed with your own sweat.

Again, the idea is that if the residents use their community resources, work hard, and sell products at affordable prices, they'll not only enhance the buyer's life but also the seller's.

**Organizing Theme: Identity**



*Basic Theme: Pride.* *Ghetto salon found in Mathare slum.*

Generally, when we hear the term slum we conjure up these negative images of a terrible place. Say the term slum in America and people cringe. In Mathare, you hear the word slum thrown into conversation all the time, and it is said with pride. The youth call themselves slum kids but that doesn't necessarily have a bad connotation. Joseph explained, through the use of one of his pictures, "When you enter Mathare slum you will find some banners that say here is a salon here is a public toilet this is showing here there is a salon and it's called ghetto salon". I asked him why he thought it was called a ghetto salon. He responded, "Because people like where they come from, yes even Julius (founder of Mwelu)". I then asked him if he thought it was a good word; there was no hesitation before he said, "Yes, it is a word that comes from slum, means like a slum. It's good".

*Basic Theme: Pride. Overview of part of Mathare slum.*

Throughout the eight weeks, this concept about liking where you come from and taking pride in where you are living continuously came up in conversation. Jeff brought in a photo of (part of) the overview of Mathare and explained what it meant to him. "Okay this is a very common picture every photographer will tell you but I kind of like it's like a blanket dark brownish blanket covering all over, it's like art." Not many would describe their own homes in the United States as art, let alone a slum. This unique perspective helps shine a positive light on the slum.

*Basic Theme: Proud of homes. Black and white of part of an overview of Mathare.*

Housing was also discussed with pride. Again, the youth wished to debunk myths about their homes and the place where they were living. Joseph told me:

> I started taking pictures of the tall buildings because if you come in Mathare first
> thing people say Mathare it's only with iron sheets but you can see it's not only
> iron sheets its also stones. Many people like to build up, they want to be up
> (high).

I heard "it's not only" many times throughout our conversations as youth tried to explain their perspectives. Joan explained that she was proud of her home:

> This is Mathare slum, and this shows how I am proud of the small houses that we
> live in and sometime I will to remember this, if I grow up, and live in the United
> States, I will still remember Mathare slum.

I believe Grace explained the youths' feelings best when she said, "Yeah in Mathare we stay in good houses even though they are tin houses they are good, and good enough for us to stay in". The youth felt they shouldn't be judged off the size of their home or the location of their home but rather the people that reside in these homes.

*Basic Theme: Sense of place due to family ties to Mathare. Laundry day in Mathare.*

Not only were the youths' homes a source of pride and a connection to the slum, but so were their families. This was one of the key elements of what kept them connected to the slum. All of the youths' identities are tied to some aspect of being born in and living in the slum. Below, Grace and I discuss these issues around family, pride, and identity:

> Grace: Yeah this is part of Mathare. It shows how I'm proud of Mathare and I love Mathare because this is where I was born and this is where my mother was also born; now nobody can tell me to shift (move) from Mathare because that this is my home.
>
> Sarah: So do you think you will always stay in Mathare?
>
> Grace: Yeah I always stay in Mathare because here is where I was born here is where I was brought up.

Sarah: And Grace what else do you like about living in the slum?

Grace: I like living in the slum because here is where I was born and now I think it difficult to go and live somewhere else, the estates (richer parts of Nairobi), I don't think I can stay there because I'm not used to living in the estates and I like the slum because I got used to the people in the slum, everything in the slum. Now if I leave the slum I'll be bored and I'll think that I'm not at home, I'll feel like I'm not at home. Yeah. That's the reason why I like the slum and if somebody tells me to get out of the slum I think we will fight because I was born here and I did not like it when I was small, but when I continued to grow up, eh I felt like, eh wow, the slum is good, and that's why I decided to live in the slum with my parents and that's all.

Grace expressed many of the things the youth told me repeatedly: that mathare was home because they were born there, raised there, and knew how to live there. They were also not ashamed of Mathare but proud of where they've come from.

*Basic Theme: It could be worse!* Maxwel glances out over Mathare.

Maxwel and I also chatted about his feelings about being raised in the slum. He expanded on these ideas of connection and pride by pointing out that, in other places conditions are worse:

Sarah: So do you like living in the slum?

Maxwel: Yes

Sarah: Will you tell me why?

Maxwel: Because it's a place where I was born and it's a place where my parents they were grown there, it's a place where we sell bananas, it's a place where we live.

Sarah: And if you could tell anybody a message, what would be your message from the slum?

Maxwel: My message would be, my message is that they should come in the slum they can see in the slum where we are living but even there is other places where there are worse things, like those that doesn't have water.

Abdi took the idea that things could be worse in a different direction by pointing out that people tend to focus on the worst parts of the slum. He remarked that people only view the slum for the negative aspects and don't take the time to figure out the positives. Abdi told me:

What I can just say is that people really talk negatively, they really look at Mathare as a place where thugs come from a place where criminals are situated, a place, this is a place of poverty but the thing is, these people who are in Mathare they just have the potential but it seems like people are not observing what they are doing, people are not considering as for their positives.

His reasoning for liking the slum was the people, not the conditions.

**Organizing Theme: Purpose**



*Basic Theme: Purpose. From left to right: a boy showing his gaps (missing teeth) in Mathare, a boy saluting showing off his smile in Mathare.*

In Mathare, religion, faith and God play a large role in each of the children's lives. Regardless of religion, all the children believe that God put them here in Mathare for a reason and that they each have a purpose in life. Abdi explains it like this:

> You see like this child he has a purpose each and every person has a purpose as what God has planned for him or her so these children are the future of this world so they should be handled with care and support.

Moses O identifies having a purpose as a source of strength and pride, stating:

> Being proud of yourself is somehow to be encouraged. It is better if you be proud of yourself. God created you. God had a purpose to create you as you are. And so a boy is smiling, saluting and being at least proud of himself with this gaps (missing teeth).

Their faith that their lives will unfold as they should is not only remarkable but a source of strength for them.

*Basic Theme: Helping out.* *From left to right: girl with a wash-basin on her head, girl with a jerry can of water on her head.*

This sense of purpose also led to the idea that the youth should help out, they felt that they could make a difference and that these things would be rewarded in the future. (This will also be expanded upon in the social action section). Moses O when explaining a photo said:

> A girl who is really proud of helping her parents even though poverty has really destructed their lives. But she really enjoys helping. She's very encouraged to help her parents because it may one day help her in future. God may help her and see that she was a helping girl. And a helping hand should be blessed and God may bless her. Even though poor she is, people should really be encouraged to help their parents. Even though they don't have good clothes and good shelters, it may just come to them one day in future.

Leila expanded on Moses' comments on the benefits of lending a hand:

Then this child she came to help her mother probably to sell some things. And this money that they get I'm sure the parents use it to take this girl to school, they utilize this money so that they can buy things that they need in the house so this girl she, I don't know how I can explain it, but she motivates me so much, because I learned something from her, one thing, by seeing this picture, is that even though I am a child I can still help other people out here. Okay if she wants she can go and party but you see she's not partying, she's helping her parents and she knows when she helps her parents this money will not only help her parents but also keep her future going. So I learned that I can also do the same for many people not only my family but other people out there.

Lending a hand and helping out, upon closer inspection was also tied to the youths' sense of community. As Leila tried to explain, it's not just about helping out her family, it's about helping out her entire community.

**Organizing Theme: Community Opportunities & Resources**



_Basic Theme: Organizations._ _From left to right: MYSA, a youth soccer program in the slum; WINGS truck, an organization helping street children._

When we really started to delve into the positives of the slum, the youth came up with many resources and opportunities that the slum provides that few outsiders know about. Many of the things they discussed were things one wouldn't expect when thinking about living in a slum, like certain organizations, or certain improvements. The first thing the youth came up with were a list of agencies or organizations that are in the slum: cleanup crews, Mathare Roots, Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA), Mwelu Foundation, Slum Sana (heart), World Food Program/World Feeding Program, Bishop Maragret Wanuru's initiatives, and WINGS. Many of these organizations either give the youth something to do after school, or are training programs, or help to clean up the environment or improve the slum in some way. Abdi explained the MYSA project to me:

> Now I think you have heard of this project its called MYSA. It's a youth project where these people help the youths and the children in the slum to be educated. It's a library inside, it has a cyber café it also has a football (soccer) project so it's like three in one, it has really helped so many people here in the slum. It was the first project that I have joined. It is where I learned how to use the computer, it is

where I learned how to read, it is where I learned to develop my skills as a footballer (soccer player). It is really encouraging too it has really helped the slum.

The Mwelu foundation was mentioned as the primary organization that has positively influenced the children however this will be discussed in the global themes section.
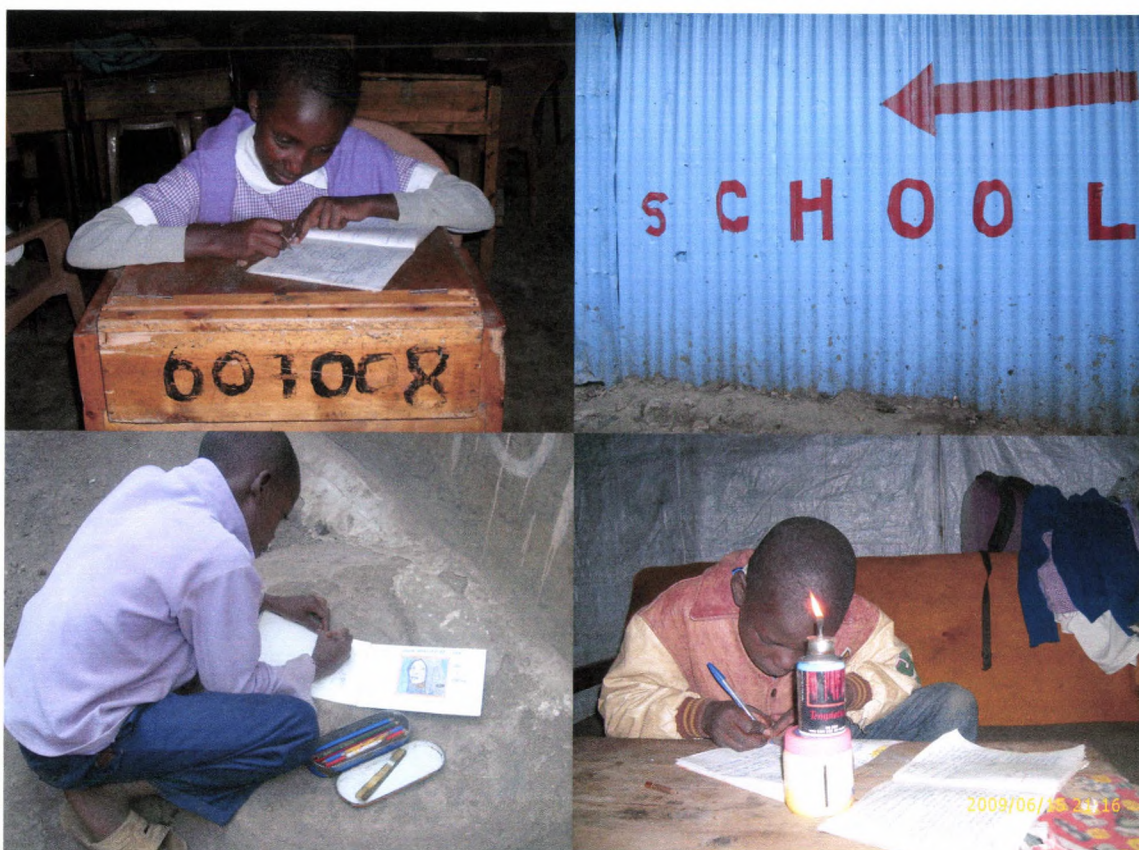
*Basic Theme: Education. From top left, clockwise: girl at her school doing her homework, sign pointing the way to school, child studying by candlelight, child studying outside while it's still light out.*

Education was also seen as a positive community resource. Currently, Kenya pays for most of the school fees for primary education and half of them for the secondary education. All schools provide some form of a "free" lunch (although usually the parents end up paying school fees for the lunch). Education was seen as positive, as Grace explains because, "As you know education is the way to success, I will get success after my education." Peter puts it another way when describing a photo of a teacher, "This is a teacher teaching our class. Although he is getting a few salary he must teach for us to be clever as him but not be like him, be a greater man than him." Education was seen as not only a means for success but a way to instill the work ethic we discussed earlier in the resourcefulness section. Abdi explains:

A: What I can say about his photo, is that you can see how students in Mathare are trying to change the slum by really working hard. Right now you can't say he's working hard or not working hard but you can see by the expression on his face he's…

S: Concentrating?

A: Yeah he's concentrating.

S: Do you think most children in the slum concentrate on school, and they go to school and do all of their work?

A: What I can say for the children who have the opportunity to go to school, they are really working hard. For me I can say I've seen some who are really, really working hard because they know that there are children out there who have still not gone to school. So they are really happy that they've gotten that chance.

Education is clearly not a resource that is taken for granted.

*Basic Theme: Government projects. New sanitation facility being built by the local government.*

While there are only three public toilets in all of Mathare, the youth felt it was important to note that the government is currently working on building more. Jeff told me in an interview:

> The government recently started a new initiative to help the people of Mathare so they are building this new sanitation joint here to help the people of Mathare. It's a really good initiative because for a long time they have been neglecting the people of Mathare so it touched my heart to see that.

Because the slum is an illegal settlement, and the government is not responsible for any government-funded initiatives however, slowly these initiatives are coming to the slum.

*Basic Theme: Electricity. Electrical boxes in Mathare.*

While most research says that many residents of Mathare do not have electricity, this is untrue. Most have a minimal amount of electricity in their homes. Some pay for the electricity directly to the electricity company, while others steal it off of the power lines. Jeff explained a photo of electricity meters to me, "This is to show how electricity is now even going up to houses in the slum." Peter jumped in to explain:

> This is a meter of electricity found here in Mathare slum. This is positive because people do think that in Mathare slum no one is having electricity, every one use candle or the small lamp. But also in Mathare people do have electricity, and they have their own meter.

When asked, all of my youth said they had some form of electricity in their homes, usually one small light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

*Basic Theme: Free water*. *From left to right: a boy fills up a jerry can of water at school, broken water pipe along the road.*

Prior to the post election violence, there were few water taps that provided free water to the residents of Mathare. After the post election violence, the government installed free water taps along the road as a measure to ensure peace among the residents. Rodgers told me how he felt about this new initiative:

Yeah this picture I took because you can see this picture the waters are being fetched on the road and they are just for free. According to me, just to me, I think that's a good improvement because the water is just free. Now you just fetching that way without paying just for free.

Grace reiterated Rodgers point with a message to the people of the United States:

Not only in the United States even in Mathare we have water and it is free, free of charge see, when you go to fetch water nobody can stop you going to fetch water over there because you know water is life. Without water you cannot survive. And this is how we get that free water, you cannot pay money for this free water, you can just go and fetch in the way you like. So what I can say is that not only in the United States but here in Mathare we have some free things.

Many of the youth liked to give messages back to the United States and compared what they know about the United States to their lives in Mathare.

*Basic Theme: Health clinics. From left to right: doctor going inside medical clinic, Uzima medical clinic.*

While the clinics in Mathare do not live up to U.S. standards, for many they provide a source of either cheap or free health care. Joseph provides pictures of two clinics but tells me that, "There is clinics, many, many, many in the Mathare slums. This means if you get injured you can go in, and he can do your first aid and then you can go. And he can give you medicine." He further explains about the free voluntary counseling and testing centers, "In Mathare slum, this is a free VCT, so there is a house, if you maybe have it, HIV, if you have HIV then you can go for treatment and its free, that's good about Mathare". Abdi also explained about other free services these clinics provide to the residents and their usefulness:

> As for this photo this is a hospital (clinic) for those situated in Mathare it provides all the facilities, it helps, it is a free hospital. So it tests the HIV person freely, the TB, everything it provides everything there is no charge in this hospital. People are really enjoying the services that are being provided. So its really an advantage to the Mathare slum residents.

For many these clinics are the only option for seeking treatment when they are sick as the Nairobi hospitals charge more than a month's wages for services.

*Basic Theme: Technology. Fiber optic cable being installed for internet.*

Jeff, my most technologically savvy student, pointed out that even in Mathare they have the internet:

> Jeff: Another thing I'm covering about Mathare is information as I told you earlier. People are becoming at the forefront of information, so this one is an information picture again. This is a fiber optic cable they are laying. It really makes me happy when I'm seeing this knowing we'll be connected to the internet very soon so even here in Mathare we will not be left out. So it's really nice.
>
> Sarah: Is that why everybody is digging all along the road, it's for internet?
>
> Jeff: Yes.
>
> Sarah: And when will it be done?
>
> Jeff: June 27 I even marked it on my calendar. It's a very big thing to me.

I think Jeff's most important piece in this dialog is the importance that Mathare is not

being left out in terms of some technological developments.

*Basic Theme: Freedom.* Woman selling fish.

Another important element of the slum was the lack of restrictions. Peter explains this sense of freedom by using a picture of a woman selling fish:

Peter: You see in Mathare everyone is free to do what he or she wants. This mother is selling the fish. So in Mathare you can do freely. No one can say, "Ah this my land, move out of here". This is a picture to show that a person has the right to sell anywhere he or she wants.

Antony: Peter, now what is good about that picture, the good about Mathare?

Peter: The good about the picture, you can stay anywhere you want in Mathare slum just if you pay the house rent you can stay wherever you want.

The participants repeatedly told me that anyone "can do freely", meaning, people can do as they wish in the slum.

*Basic Theme: Possibilities. Inspiration Centre, home to the Mwelu Foundation.*

When discussing reasons Leila enjoyed living in the slum, she cited the fact that there are possibilities one wouldn't expect coming out of a slum:

> I like living in the slum because of many reasons. One is living in the slum, like me it has really provided, it has really opened so many doors because I never knew I would find myself in a place like this (Mwelu Foundation) with so many computers talking to someone who doesn't have the same color (skin) as me. So it has really opened so many doors.

Had she not been living in the slum she may not have had access to these opportunities nor been in this photovoice project.

### 6.3 Global Themes

### Global Theme: Resilience



*Global Theme: Resilience.* Hens eating filth in the sewage.

I believe that an overarching global theme, as expressed by the youth, was their resilience. Not only was their resilience their greatest strength, it was what differentiated them from me. Simply put, they told me that they could live there, but I could not:

Peter: These are hens eating dirty food inside the garbages.

Sarah: And what is this?

Peter: That's the dirty water running, going downwards.

Sarah: Is there sewage in the water?

Peter: Yeah, this is sewage also.

Sarah: Do you think if you eat this chicken you will get sick too because it ate some dirty garbage and it drank some sewage?

Peter: Maybe you can get sick but me myself I don't know.

Sarah: What do you guys think?

Group: I don't think I will get sick.

Maxwell: No.

Sarah: What about me, do you think I'll get sick?

Peter: Yeah. You are not used to dirty water.

This concept, that I was ill equipped to live in the slum was constantly pointed out to me, especially each time I took out my water purifier to purify the water at a restaurant. Water wasn't the only reason why I couldn't live in Mathare, as Abdi put it:

> Now I'm very touched as to what these Mathare people they've really lived for so long living in a very dirty environment, but they still survive. It's really really hard to find someone, maybe example, like you come to stay here in Mathare, it's going to be quite complicated for you to live for maybe two weeks without using basic needs.

In other words, I've grown accustom to my life in the United States and wouldn't be able to last two weeks in the slum.
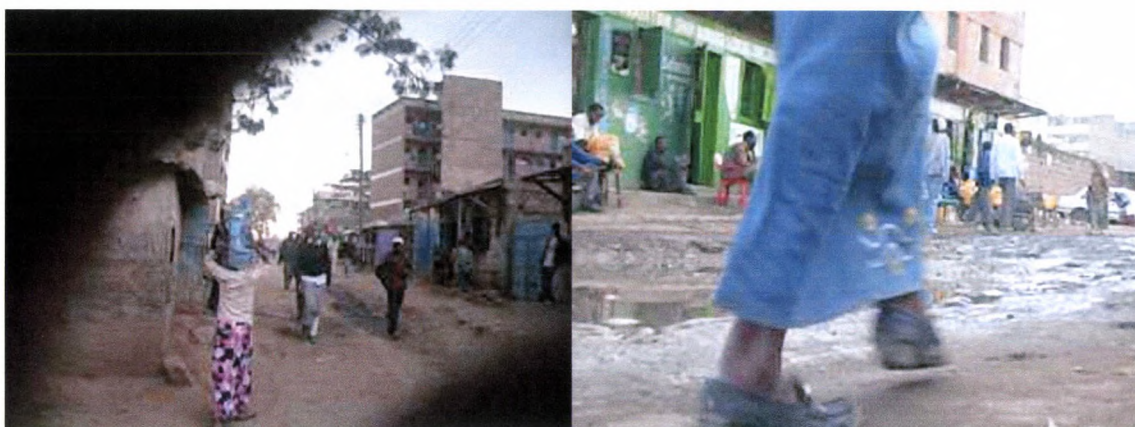
*Global Theme: Resilience. From left to right: Mathare residents on their way to work, navigating the rainy streets on the way to work.*

During one of our Saturday classes, we came up with a list of strengths of the slum. Many discussed resilience without knowing the word. I taught it to them that day. Later on in the course, Abdi and I spoke about the strength that has come out of the people through their lifetime of struggle:

> Abdi: You can see how Mathare is but if you go down to other places, it is even worse. So, these people of Mathare they are like they survived through all this, the environment is very dirty. They have survived all these troubles. So you can find that when a person from Mathare is taken to a place very strange to him or her, maybe like the U.S. or somewhere like the Westlands in Kenya, you can find it is very quiet, it is clean, the places don't have too much of rubbishes there. Now, when they are taken, I can assure you there is certain diseases that can affect them. So Mathare has really made the people here in Mathare to grow, it has made them be 'man'. We are meant to suffer, they have experienced the suffering, it has helped them to become used to the place as it has helped them. This has helped them in making them not weak, it makes them strong. I don't know how to put it.

Sarah: Resilient, remember when we learned that word? Do you remember what it means? It's exactly what we're talking about.

Abdi: I remember.

Sarah: That's the word you're looking for. That's the definition.

Abdi: Thanks.

**Global Theme: Social Action**



*Global Theme: Social Action.* *From left to right: Hen wandering Mathare, boy brewing Chang'aa (illict brew).*

One thing I asked in my research questions was whether or not photovoice can be used as a tool for social action. As I was working with an agency that does participatory photography, it is hard to separate their work with the photovoice component in this study. Leila and Moses each specifically addressed how they would bring about change when talking about a few of their pictures. I've used those dialogs as three examples that photovoice may be a viable option to at least start addressing the changes that need to be made within a community.

In the first example Leila discusses the living conditions and how she'd like to make them more present in Kenyan leaders' minds:

Then, this one too, it goes to the government again. Because if you see, this explains too much because you see these children are standing at a particular place. They want to pass, they want to cross. They don't know where to step on because everywhere is muddy. There is sewage here, there is sewage here. You'll see that a hen is here, feeding on these kinds of things. Then you'll find that someone will come and take it, sell it, after the person has bought it he's cooking

and eating it, you'll find that that person might be sick. Because the person doesn't know where the seller got the chicken. So actually I think they should do something here in Mathare. They always say they'll "change Mathare, change Mathare" but we've never seen it. So if they just sit down and look at these photos, actually they'll have goosebumps in their stomach. And they'll have to come and look at how they can help us in Mathare. For example where they brew chang'aa, these people don't have clean water. That is one fact we know. They don't have clean water. What we do know is that this water that comes from the sewage is the particular water they use to brew the chang'aa. People come and drink it but they don't know what they're doing. If only the government would come and look at that kind of work (chang'aa brewing) they'd say, "Okay, this work it earns money, but it risks the people who are living in Mathare". I think the government will just say "Okay, just give somewhere where they can sell maybe coconuts, and you can sell tomatoes, and we'll distribute them, we'll distribute the kind of jobs people want to have;" but because they don't see pictures like this they don't change, I'm sure they don't want to see pictures like this. They don't want the outside countries, to see this kind of place, because they are afraid that the Presidents that are there, the kind of Ministers that are there, they will always be asking them if they are seeing a change in Kenya, "Which kind (part) of Kenya are you changing?" So I think this photo, if actually it could just be me, I would actually just take it to the President's office and ask him if the money he gets, can he not distribute to his MPs (prime ministers) and (instead) help us in Mathare. So I think it really explains more to the people who are out there (not living in

Mathare) and they'll understand that it's not the fault of the people who are living here. If only the government can work with us we can always change Mathare. What Leila touched on here was the importance of bringing a visual element to the discussion. She mentions the prime ministers will get goosebumps when looking at her photographs. She also recognizes that people say they'll change Mathare but they have yet to do so, and bringing images such as these may help to stir the desire to make a change.

*Global Theme: Social Action.* Heart of Mathare down by the river.

In a second example Leila recognizes the need to not only showcase the

negatives, but also showcase the positives:

But if you can look at it like this, its really, it looks so beautiful. Mathare is

beautiful. That is one thing. And the people who are living in Mathare, even they

are more beautiful than that Mathare. But the government makes it look so nasty.

But us, ourselves, we love it. It doesn't matter where you come from, it matters

where, what you want to become in the future. Like now me, I am happy. I live in

Mathare, yes, but now I can hold a camera. That is one thing. They don't have to

say that "Mathare people are only Mathare people because they live in Mathare".

Okay, we live in Mathare, but some people are more educated than those people

who live in higher places. So it really encourages many people. And the kind of

message that I would like to give to other people is that they don't have always to

look down to someone who lives in a dirty place. It's not that. Because whether we live in Mathare or not, we're human beings and we have something inside us that is called love. We love ourselves. We love the people who are around us. And we care for each other. So I'd like just to beg the Government to cooperate with us and give us the type of life that we need. The same way they have it, the same way we want it. That's all.

Leila urges people to understand that just because she resides in a slum does not mean she shouldn't have the same opportunities as others. Her message is not to discount others based off of their living conditions.

_Global Theme: Social Action._ *Street child in the river searching for plastics to sell while school bound child looks on.*

In a third example, Moses O talks about how he would like to help his

community, but is uncertain of how to help:

Moses: And this photo is really depressing because you can see this boy (in green)

has the basic needs that children and others want but now if you see here this boy

(in the river) is trying to walk the river so that he can get at least 10 shillings (by

picking up plastics and selling them) to buy food in the hotel, which will not be

enough. And this boy (in the green) looks on. To him I think he is thinking now in

his heart, "I wish that I had, I wish that I was great, I could have helped this boy."

But he is not great.

Sarah: And what were you thinking?

Moses: I was thinking that if I take the photos of these two it will show the world that many people are willing but they cannot. That many, they want to help, but they cannot. They cannot get the help.

He explains that the only way he can think to help create a change is by showing the world and its leaders these photos from the slum.

While there was no concrete change in the youths' living situation, I do believe that photovoice acted as a means for the youth to at least start thinking about the changes they would like to see in their community and how they should address those changes. There may have been more of an opportunity to advocate for those changes if we had held an exhibit in downtown Nairobi or invited ministers from the governmental cabinet to the exhibit that we had locally. We did however get the word out, as Seeing With Our Own Eyes was featured in a few articles in the newspaper and the exhibit was covered by the local news station that weekend.

**Global Theme: Empowerment**



*Global Theme: Empowerment.* *Joseph teaching slum children how to use a camera.*

Again, because I was working with a youth based participatory photography organization, it is hard to extract where photovoice was empowering versus photography as a whole. I chose to use the youth's comments about photography and the Mwelu foundation in general in this section as I believe the comments are transferable to photovoice. Peter was quite the spokesman for the Mwelu Foundation, "This is a positive thing in Mathare slum because Mwelu Foundation, Julius teaches children how to take photos. This very positive so that even journalist come from the slum. Now they are not children at all but young photographers." When we go on to discuss this idea that the slum can produce photojournalists, he speaks about Julius Mwelu and Bonniface; both two award-winning photographers from the slum:

Sarah: Anything else you want to say Peter?

Peter: Messages? I want to say the slum is also good because here if you are a journalist, you can get good photos here in the slum, in an estate (rich areas of Nairobi) you just get good houses now. When the post election violence was here, many photos were from the slum, the best photos, Bonniface (Kenyan photographer) won the CNN award by taking a photo in the slum, not in the estates.

Sarah: And Julius won some awards too, yeah?

Peter: Yeah, yeah Julius won an award too by taking the pictures in the slum. He didn't have to go to the estate to get photos cause there you cant express the poor people no one can know that there is poor people in the world but if you are here in the slum you can see you can take a photo and change the life of a person and show people in the world how the slum is. Thank you.

I believe Peter not only understood how empowering photography can be, but also understood that he could use it to bring about change.

*Global Theme: Empowerment.* *Moses O taking photos of children in the slum.*

Some of the other youth also discuss how Mwelu has improved their lives. Judy Joy told me:

> Life here in the slum is very difficult but we try our level best. I am a member of the Mwelu Foundation and as for now I am in the Seeing With Our Own Eyes Project. My desire in future is to be a professional photojournalist. I know I will achieve and accomplish it. I would like to help change Mathare and make it a better place in the coming years, for indeed people yearn for what is absent and neglect what is there.

Jeff credits the Mwelu Foundation with changing his life for the better:

> It has given me a platform to showcase my abilities and also new friends with the same interest. I can see myself in five years to become successful, not with cars and riches but with knowledge and experience, that's how I measure my success.

Many expressed this same idea that they would become successful based off of the training they were receiving at the Mwelu foundation.

*Global Theme: Empowerment.* Picture of a Mwelu member documenting life in the slum.

Not only did the youth feel that they could achieve success through their skills learned at the Mwelu Foundation, they also stressed the desire to use those skills to make a positive change in the lives of Mathare residents. Stepehen Otieno told, "My vision for joining Mwelu Foundation is to be a professional photographer and to raise up the problems which surround Mathare slum through pictures." Antony put it poignantly when he said simply, "I do find it difficult to be in the slum because of its environment and daily life. I believe that one photo will save the slum and I wish it to be mine".

## Chapter VII: CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Summary

I am hoping that over the course of these many months and my many cycles of coding, I haven't left anything out (aside from the negatives). It is also my desire that I haven't discounted voices, put words into mouths or otherwise improperly conveyed what the youth were trying to tell me. While many of the quotes and pictures could fall under multiple themes, I tried to break them up in a manner that made sense and answered the three research questions.

Originally I posed the question, "Is photovoice a viable outlet to express the needs, concerns, and strengths of the adolescent population residing in Mathare"? I believe that it is a viable outlet for expression for the youth of Mathare. While the youth were able to express needs and concerns, I chose to focus on the strengths. A particular strength was their resourcefulness. The photographs that fell under resourcefulness had to do with using the community resources that were available to them. This involved being hardworking, using creativity, finding affordable products, creating small businesses, and using the small businesses as an avenue for an alternative to a life of crime. As with all the themes, there was a sense of pride associated with resourcefulness.

Another strength was their sense of identity within the Mathare community. The photographs and quotes that fell under identity had to do with the youths' ties to Mathare, be it their homes, family, birthplace, or sense of place. All established that Mathare was

their ghetto home, and that there was nothing wrong with that. They felt that Mathare was a source of pride, beauty and potential.

Resoundingly, the youth expressed a sense of purpose as another strength. God put them in their current situation for a reason and it was their job to make the best of it. They felt one of the best ways to make the best of it was to help out. They all felt that even though they were just youth, they could still make a difference.

Many of the community opportunities and resources were organizations, or improvements the government was making in the community after much neglect, again a source of strength for the community. Improvements included new sanitation facilities, more water taps, "free" education (residents must pay half the school fees), increased electricity, hospitals and clinics, and new technological improvements. Mathare also provided a sense of freedom as there weren't officials telling them how to live their lives.

I felt overall the youth's largest strength was in their resilience. Collectively the participants and I defined resilience as their ability to adapt to their living conditions, and their ability to make the best of their surroundings. They were clearly correct when they told me simply, "I can live here but you cannot."

A second research question I posed was, "To what extent is photovoice a means of empowering youth in the Mathare slum"? This was addressed under the global theme of empowerment. I felt photovoice was a means to empower the youth. The community exhibit, multiple newspaper articles, and the feature on the national nightly news empowered the participants. They expressed their understanding of empowerment in terms of "I can make a difference" and "I do matter."

Along these same lines, Seeing With Our Own Eyes, reinforced the youth's belief in themselves and their ability to make a change through their photos. I originally asked the question, "Is photovoice a viable means for addressing social action in Mathare"? Social action was addressed in the social action global theme. Photovoice was deemed a viable means for addressing social action. Seeing With Our Own Eyes may not have instilled changes in policy or law in Mathare however, the kids all expressed an understanding of what their photos and dialog could do to change Mathare. Antony put it brilliantly when he said, "I believe one photo will change the slum and I wish it to be mine".

## 7.2 Limitations

The largest limitation to this study is researcher bias. I in no way expected to go to Kenya for the summer and fall in love with twenty plus kids. Each of my kids had a profound impact on me and I will always be closely tied to them. Because of this bond, my research is inevitably biased. I've tried my "level best" as they say, to recognize my biases, and present them fairly. Furthermore, qualitative research approaches hold that knowledge is inherently biased, and as such, the role of the researcher is to be as forthright about their own assumptions and biases that they bring to their research endeavors so that they may be transparent (Creswell, 1998). I have tried to do this. I've been upfront that I chose to focus on the good of the slum, the positives, and the resilience. The slum is definitely not perfect, and describing the conditions as deplorable is legitimate, however, the negatives were not my focus.

Photographs are inherently subjective, and photography is "more 'active' and 'intrusive' in nature than simple observing. In essence, despite the dictum that 'seeing is

believing', visual frames are a reflection of the photographer's point-of-view, biases, and knowledge" (Singhal & Devi, 2003, p.13). My findings may not translate into a community collective, but rather into a personal perspective from the youth. Choosing to focus on the strengths instead of any of the negatives may negate certain voices or messages as well.

Balancing the needs of the community with the needs of the researcher is a limitation to any photovoice study (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). I may have gotten the information that I wanted to get however it may not have benefited the community or made any significant change in their lives. Or, it may not have made the change they thought it would make. However, I do believe that the youth felt empowered by our photovoice discussions and recognized at the very least their talents as budding photojournalists.

A limitation to Photovoice is the ethical concerns the method raises, which if not addressed, could create a risk for the participants. Intrusion into one's personal space, disclosing intimate details of one's life, and being placed in a false light (positive or negative) (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) are issues that can arise when taking photographs. Therefore the youth were taught who and what they could photograph, and how to do it in a safe manner. They were given extensive instruction around these issues, and also had the ultimate say around use of names, photographs, and written content.

Implementing the project in a sustainable manner, and the subsequent use of the photographs, clearly represent ethical issues. Most importantly, "it would be untenable to spur a false sense of empowerment where there is no opportunity for meaningful participation" (Wang, Burris & Ping, 1996, p.1398). Photovoice projects have outcomes

that continue after the researcher has gone. Implications of a photovoice project should be addressed prior to the start of a project, including long-term goals and other possible outcomes. To address this potential concern, any future revenues generated by the project through photography exhibits will be re-diverted back to the MWELU Foundation for the benefit of the foundation and its participants. Currently, through exposure of the project I've been able to send funds back to pay for all twenty student's school fees for an entire year. (Julius Mwelu felt this was the most appropriate use of the money.)

**7.3 Implications for Social Work Practice**

The addition of visuals to social problems help to generate a call for action because "photographs have the ability to stimulate feelings and emotions, and more specifically to make a sensory connection between often disparate groups of people" (Molloy, 2007, p.49). Photovoice is a method that can be used to draw attention to many "invisible" populations. It was my aim to bring to light the hidden potential in the slum.

Furthermore, photovoice is grounded in social work values and ethics. "Photovoice does not attempt to give voice to the voiceless, but assumes that people's voices are infused with an expertise and insight that professionals and outsiders lack" (Wang, Yuan & Feng, 1996, p.49). Inherent in photovoice is the notion that people are the experts of their lives by recognizing the dignity and worth of every human being. Photovoice is a collective process whereby the researcher and the subject are collaborating on the research process. Photovoice participants have an active role in the research, enabling them to go from participant being studied, to an active member of the research process (Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutney & Cekic, 2001; Harper, 2002). This

engagement of the client is similar to the social work concept of meeting the client "where they are at".

Photovoice can be applied in all social work practice settings, from collective action to individual empowerment. Photovoice can be applied to participatory action research, assessment, policy development and social action (Molloy, 2007). Studies have shown that it is a viable option for working with a variety of diverse populations.

Further research is needed on the usefulness of photovoice on empowerment with this type of population. Is it a means to empower other deprived populations? The research gathered from this study will enhance our understanding of not only photovoice as a method, and a means of empowering, but also on how well photovoice transcends cultures, making it perhaps an especially promising method with which to conduct cross-cultural qualitative social work research.

**7.4 Reporting**

As was discussed earlier in the procedures section, the final step of the photovoice process is to develop some medium in which to share the photographs and stories within the community (Wang, 2006). The findings were disseminated within the community during an exhibit held at the Inspiration Center. The youth were able to present their stories, their albums with captions, and a blown up photo of their choosing.

It is my intent to hold a gallery exhibit on CSU's campus as well as in the Denver and Boulder areas in order to raise awareness and funds. Proceeds will go directly to the MWELU foundation in order to sustain their own photography workshops and enhance their mission.

## Chapter VIII: EPILOGUE

Working with Julius Mwelu, founder of the Mwelu foundation, enabled me to see past the physical aspects of a slum such as the deplorable conditions. Together we stayed in Panganyi, a district right on the outskirts of the slum, a short five-minute bus ride to the office, or when traffic is at its worst, a two-hour ordeal. The Mwelu Foundation's office is situated in the Inspiration Center, a name that is fitting given the mission of the organization. My first day there, kids bombarded me with greetings ranging from muzungu, muzungu (translation: hello whitey), Sasa? (What's up) or offering a handshake. There's a school right below the office and I conveniently interrupted them during a break on a Saturday. It took me fifteen minutes to get through all of them and up three flights of stairs. For many of them, that was the first time they had encountered a muzungu. From the office window, I could see the sprawling nature of the slum; it consumes the entire area. If you think of New York City's Central Park covered in what one imagines as a "shanty town", that's Mathare. When my kids entered the room they changed my view of the slum almost immediately. They were bundles of excitement, loaded with lots of questions, giddy with anticipation; they were told I'd brought cameras.

Mathare's greatest strength lies in these children. Their belief in themselves, their desire to create change and their identity are all inextricably linked to this place they call home. As Leila told me, "Mathare people are not just Mathare people"; slum dwellers are

not just slum dwellers, they're real human beings. And as I found out, the majority of them are wonderful.

A slum is more than a combination of all of its parts. Conditions truly are horrible, sanitation is lacking, poverty is evident everywhere; but there's more to it, you must look deeper and be willing to find the good. Within a slum, people are making the best of a situation which they were born in to, with a strength that many Americans cannot muster. A slum is a collection of people, making do with what they've got and trying to enhance their life situation. You'll find hope, resourcefulness, strength, resilience, love, joy, and laughter. And that is the side of the slum on which I've chosen to focus.

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**Appendix A. Assent Form**

Hello,

My name is Sarah Parker, I'm a student at Colorado State University. I'm here to see if you want to be take photographs and talk to me about them for my research. When you study somebody it is called research. My research is about what you like about Mathare, what's good about Mathare and what you like about yourself. I am asking you if it is OK that I study you while I am here this summer. You will take pictures and we will talk about them.

If you say yes, I'll ask you to meet with me about once a week, for a total of about eight times. We will decide together what you want to take pictures of and then I'll get the pictures developed for you. You will not have to pay for the pictures and you will get to use one of the MWELU Foundation's cameras.

When I develop the photographs you get a copy and I get a copy. I'll ask you questions about the photographs, you do not have to answer all of the questions if you do not want to. I might ask you questions like, "Do you like photography?" "What do you like about living in Mathare?" When we are talking I will tape record our talks so I can listen to them later.

At the end of the project we will hang the photographs up so your town can see them. You can even write some words about the photographs if you want and we can put that up next to the photographs.

I will after completing my research, write a paper about the photographs and what you talked to me about. Other people will see your photographs and hear your stories. You can either use your real name or a fake name. If you don't want people to know it's you, I will still use your words and photographs in my project, but I will not use your name.

You don't have to do this research with me, you can say no. If you say "yes" now but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research any time by just telling me you would like to stop.

There aren't any benefits if you do the research with me. You will not get any money or gifts. There are no known risks for participating. I am a student at Colorado State University. Laws govern what the University can pay for. If you get hurt because of this study, the University may not be able to pay your doctor's costs. You might have to pay them yourself. If you get hurt, you have to take specific legal steps. If you have any questions you can ask me or ask Julius Mwelu from the MWELU Foundation.

Page 1 of 2 Participant's Initials _____ Date _____

Please **CIRCLE** the options that you want.

I want my name used for my photographs.

I want my name used for my interviews.

I DO NOT want my name used for my photographs, please use a fake name.

I DO NOT want my name used for my interviews, please use a fake name.

I will ask your parent/guardian if you are under age eighteen, if it is OK that you do this research. If you want to be in this research, sign your name and write today's date on the line below. I will sign it too.

_____     _____

Your name                                              Date

_____     _____

Your Parent's Name                                 Date

_____     _____

My Name                                               Date

**Appendix B.) Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Adults)**
**Colorado State University**

*TITLE OF STUDY:* Seeing With My Own Eyes: Youth In Mathare Document Their Strengths
Using Photovoice

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**    Sarah Noyes Parker
                                  snoyesp@gmail.com
                               001-203-258-2119
To contact while in Nairobi:        Contact either Julius Mwelu or Benson Kamau
                               MWELU Foundation
                               P.O.Box 20391-00100
                               Nairobi, Kenya

## WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

I want to study the adolescents in the Mathare. I want to know about you, what you do here, what you like about Mathare, what's good about Mathare, and what do you like about you. I am asking you if it is OK that I study you while I am here this summer. I'm asking you because you are the right age, working with the MWELU foundation and seem like a good fit for the study.

## WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Sarah Noyes Parker is doing the study. I am a student getting my degree at Colorado State University in the United States. I study social work. Social work tries to help people that need help. I will be the only one doing the study but I will get some help from Mr. Benson and Mr. Mwelu, both people you know from the MWELU foundation.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to see if photovoice works here in Mathare. Photovoice is a term we use when the people being studied take pictures and then together the researcher and photographer talk about the photos. It is to see if photography is helpful to you in your daily life, if it makes you feel good about yourself and if it has any benefits to you.

## WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place here in Mathare. I will ask you to meet with me at least once a week each week that I am here. We will meet for a total of eight times. It will start June 1, 2009 and end August 1, 2009.

Page _1_ of _5_ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

## WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

We will meet to decide what you want to take pictures of. Then you will have a week to take your pictures. We will meet again at the end of the week and then I'll get the pictures developed for you. This will happen each week for eight weeks.

You get a copy of the pictures and I'll keep a copy of the pictures. But first, you get to look at the pictures before I look at them. If there are pictures you don't want me to see, you get to keep both copies of those pictures and I wont ever see them.

When we have the pictures, I'll ask you questions about them. You don't have to answer all the questions and if you don't want to answer a question you can just say no to that question. I might ask you questions like, "Do you like photography?" "What do you like about living in Mathare?"

At the end of the project you get to decide if you want to show your photographs to your town. If you do, you get to pick which ones you want to show. If you want your pictures to have your name on them we can do that, but if you don't want your name on them that's okay too. You can even write some words about the photographs if you want and we can put that up next to the photographs.

## ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you don't want to take photographs and talk about them in this study you should not do the study.

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

➢ *There are no known risks to participating. We will review camera ethics, like "how to take a picture of somebody" so they don't get mad at you for taking their picture. We will also talk about things like not taking pictures of the police, because sometimes they get mad when you do.*

➢ It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

## ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known benefits to participating in the study.

## DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

You don't have to do it. If you say "yes" now but later change your mind, you can stop being in the research any time by just telling me you would like to stop.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?**
It will not cost you anything to participate and I will pay to develop the photographs.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?**
We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

When you talk about your photographs your interviews will be recorded, if that's okay with you. I will then write out word for word what the interviews said. Either your first name will be used when talking about what you said, or, if you don't want your name to be used then we will come up with a fake name when talking about what you said.

In the research paper I will make copies of some of your pictures and some of your statements. If we do a showing of your photographs in your town, you get to pick which ones we should show, if you want your name on the picture and if you want to write up anything to put with the picture.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

**WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
There will be no compensation for taking part in this study.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?**
The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

## WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

*Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator,* __Sarah Noyes Parker__ *at* __the MWELU Foundation's Headquarters in Mathare__ *. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 001-970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.*

*"This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on (Approval Date)."*

## WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

*To review: You will take photographs. You will discuss the photographs (although it is not required that you answer all of the questions if you do not want to.) Those interviews will be recorded. Your photographs and your words will be used in a research paper, however you will not be identified unless you want the researcher to use your first name. Your photographs are yours to keep but the researcher will be also have a copy and be using them in her research and in exhibits.*

Please **CIRCLE** the options that you want.

I want my name used for my photographs.


I want my name used for my interviews.


I DO NOT want my name used for my photographs, please use a fake name.


I DO NOT want my name used for my interviews, please use a fake name.


Page _4_ of _5_ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing __5__ pages.

_____          _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study          Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____          _____
Name of person providing information to participant          Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

**Appendix C: Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Minors)**
Colorado State University

*TITLE OF STUDY: Seeing With My Own Eyes: Youth In Mathare Document Their Strengths Using Photovoice*

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**     Sarah Noyes Parker
snoyesp@gmail.com
001-203-258-2119
To contact while in Nairobi:     Contact either Julius Mwelu or Benson Kamau
MWELU Foundation
P.O.Box 20391-00100
Nairobi, Kenya

## WHY IS MY CHILD BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

I want to study the adolescents in the Mathare. I want to know about your child, what your child does here, what he or she likes about Mathare, what's good about Mathare, and what do they like about themselves. I am asking you if it is OK that I study your child while I am here this summer. I'm asking you because your child is the right age, working with the MWELU foundation and seem like a good fit for the study.

## WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Sarah Noyes Parker is doing the study. I am a student getting my degree at Colorado State University in the United States. I study social work. Social work studies ways to help people that need help. I will be the only one doing the study but I will get some help from Mr. Benson and Mr. Mwelu, both people your child know from the MWELU foundation.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to see if photovoice works here in Mathare. Photovoice is a term we use when the people being studied take pictures and then together the researcher and photographer talk about the photos. It is to see if photography is helpful to your child in their daily life, if it makes them feel good about themselves and if it has any benefits to them.

## WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place here in Mathare. I will ask your child to meet with me at least once a week each week that I am here. We will meet for a total of eight times. It will start June 1, 2009 and end August 1, 2009.

Page _1_ of _5_ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

## WHAT WILL MY CHILD BE ASKED TO DO?

We will meet to decide what your child wants to take pictures of. Then he/she will have a week to take their pictures. We will meet again the next week and I'll get the pictures developed for him/her. This will happen each week for eight weeks.

He/She will get a copy of the pictures and I'll keep a copy of the pictures. When we have the pictures, I'll ask your child questions about the pictures. Your child doesn't have to answer all the questions and if he/she doesn't want to answer a question they can just say no to that question. I might ask questions like, "Do you like photography?" "What do you like about living in Mathare?"

At the end of the project your child gets to decide if they want to show their photographs to your town. If your child does, he/she gets to pick which photographs they want to show. If your child wants their pictures to have their name on them we can do that, but if you don't want your child's name on them that's okay too. They can even write some words about the photographs if they want and we can put that up next to the photographs.

## ARE THERE REASONS WHY MY CHILD SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you don't want your child to take part in this study you do not have to let them.

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

➤ *There are no known risks to participating. We will review camera ethics, like "how to take a picture of somebody" so they don't get mad at your child for taking their picture. We will also talk about things like not taking pictures of the police, because sometimes they get mad when you do.*
➤ It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

## ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known benefits to participating in the study.

## DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

You don't have to allow your child to participate in the study. If you say "yes" now but later change your mind, you can stop your child being in the research any time by just telling me you would like them to stop or they can tell me.

Their participation in this research is voluntary. If your child decides to participate in the study, they or you may withdraw their/your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

**WHAT WILL IT COST US TO PARTICIPATE?**
It will not cost you or your child anything to participate and Sarah Noyes Parker will pay to develop the photographs.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT MY CHILD GIVES?**
I will keep private all research records that identify your child, to the extent allowed by law.

Your child's information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. Your child will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your child's name and other identifying information private.

When your child talks about his/her photographs their interviews will be audio taped, if that's okay with you. I will then write out word for word what the interviews said. Either your child's first name will be used when talking about what they said, or, if you don't want their name to be used then we will come up with a fake name when talking about what they said.

In the research paper I will make copies of some of your child's pictures and some of their statements. If we do a showing of their photographs in your town, they get to pick which ones we should show, if they want their name on the picture and if they want to write up anything to put with the picture.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your child gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your child's name will be kept separate from other research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

**WILL WE RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
There will be no compensation for taking part in this study.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?**
The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Page _3_ of _5_ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

## WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

*Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study on behalf of your child, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator,* <u>Sarah Noyes Parker</u> *at* <u>the MWELU Foundation's Headquarters in Mathare</u>*. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 001-970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.*

*"This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on (Approval Date)."*

## WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

*To review: Your child will take photographs. Your child will discuss the photographs (although it is not required that your child answer all of the questions if your child does not want to.) Those interviews will be audio taped. Your child's photographs and words will be used in a research paper, however your child will not be identified unless you want the researcher to use their first name. Your child's photographs are theirs to keep but the researcher will also have a copy and be using them in her research.*

<p align="center">Please <strong>CIRCLE</strong> the options that you want.</p>

I want my child's name used for my photographs.

I want my child's name used for my interviews.

I DO NOT want my child's name used for my photographs, please use a fake name.

I DO NOT want my child's name used for my interviews, please use a fake name.

<p align="center">Page <u>4</u> of <u>5</u> Participant's initials _____ Date _____</p>

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing __5__ pages.

## PARENTAL SIGNATURE FOR MINOR

As parent or guardian I authorize _____ (print name) to become a participant for the described research. The nature and general purpose of the project have been satisfactorily explained to me by _____ and I am satisfied that proper precautions will be observed.

_____
Minor's date of birth

_____
Parent/Guardian name (printed)

_____          _____
Parent/Guardian signature                                       Date

_____          _____
Name of person providing information to participant       Date

_____          _____
Signature of Research Staff                                      Date

**Appendix D.) List of Participants**

| Name | Group | Sex | Age |
|------|-------|-----|-----|
| Moses Ouma | 1 | M | 14 |
| Judith Atieno | 1 | F | 14 |
| Calvin Muturi | 1 | M | 12 |
| Maryanne Thugori | 1 | F | 15 |
| Stepehn Ochieng Oteino | 1 | M | 14 |
| Joseph Kinyua | 2 | M | 16 |
| Rodgers Oluock | 2 | M | 15 |
| Peris Muthoni | 2 | F | 16 |
| Moses Masteba | 2 | M | 16 |
| Stepehn Otieno | 2 | M | 15 |
| Peter Gikinyo | 3 | M | 14 |
| Joan Convine | 3 | F | 14 |
| Leila Dayan | 3 | F | 15 |
| Grace Audi Elisha | 3 | F | 15 |
| Maxwell Odhiambo | 3 | F | 14 |
| Abdi Shaffi | 4 | M | 17 |
| Antony Mwelu | 4 | M | 13 |
| Gladys Waithera | 4 | F | 13 |
| Judy Joy Mugechi | 4 | F | 13 |
| Jeff Mohammed Osemo | 4 | M | 17 |

**Appendix E.) Coding Matrix**
**Attempt 1:**
Unity
Education
Housing
Family
Work/Jobs
Leisure
Sanitation/Environment
Food
Attitude
Religion/God/Faith
Water
Transportation
Organizations
Messages to the government
Poverty/Resources
Violence/Post Election Violence
Drugs/Chang'aa
Health

**Attempt 2:**

| Concerns | Needs | Strengths |
|---|---|---|
| Violence/PEV | Better housing | Unity |
| Messages to the government | Better sanitation | Education |
| Poverty | Better healthcare | Family |
| Drugs/Chang'aa | Better schools | God/Religion |
| | More jobs | Work/Jobs |
| | Water | Leisure |
| | Address Poverty | Sanitation improving |
| | | Food abundance |
| | | Attitude |
| | | Water |
| | | Organizations |
| | | Other resources |

Possible Organizing Themes: Attitudes/Mindset, Community Resources
Possible Global Themes: Resilience, I can live here but you cannot

**Attempt 3:**
**(These became basic themes)**

Resourcefulness

Neighbors

Ban tribalism

Chang'aa

Sense of place

Respect

Home

Grateful

Have resources on wouldn't expect

Life as usual

Sense of purpose

Mathare people are not just Mathare people

Attitude

Unity

Brothers and sisters

Family

Talent

Rich vs. poor

Free

Concept of good

Generational pride

Collaboration

It could be worse

Little money

Children should help out at home

The same way you have it, the same way we want it

It doesn't matter where you come from it matters where you are going in the future

Resilience

Hardworking vs. lazy

Sense of community

Creativity

Education is the way up

Measures of success

Mindset/Mind frame

My ghetto home

I can live here but you cannot

Chance, good fortune

We are human beings too

Pride (in themselves and community)

It's not only....(insert bad thing here)

Struggle as positive

Jobs prevent bad things

Desire to help

Not resentful of those that have more

Daily meal

Insightful

Love

It's not my fault

Business sense

Affordability

Recycling

**Attempt 4:**

| Resourceful | Sense of place | Sense of purpose | Gratitude | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jobs | Community | Faith | Freedom/Free | Organizations |
| Hardworking | Home | God/Religion | Could be worse | Education |
| Creative Unity | | | | Technology |
| Talent | Pride | | | |
| Recycling | "Brothers" | | | |
| | Generations | | | |
| | Family | | | |
| | My ghetto home | | | |
| | Business sense | | | |

Desire for Change

Mathare people are not just Mathare people

It doesn't matter where you come from it matters where you're going in the future

We are human beings too, The same way you have it the same way we want it

**Attempt 5:**
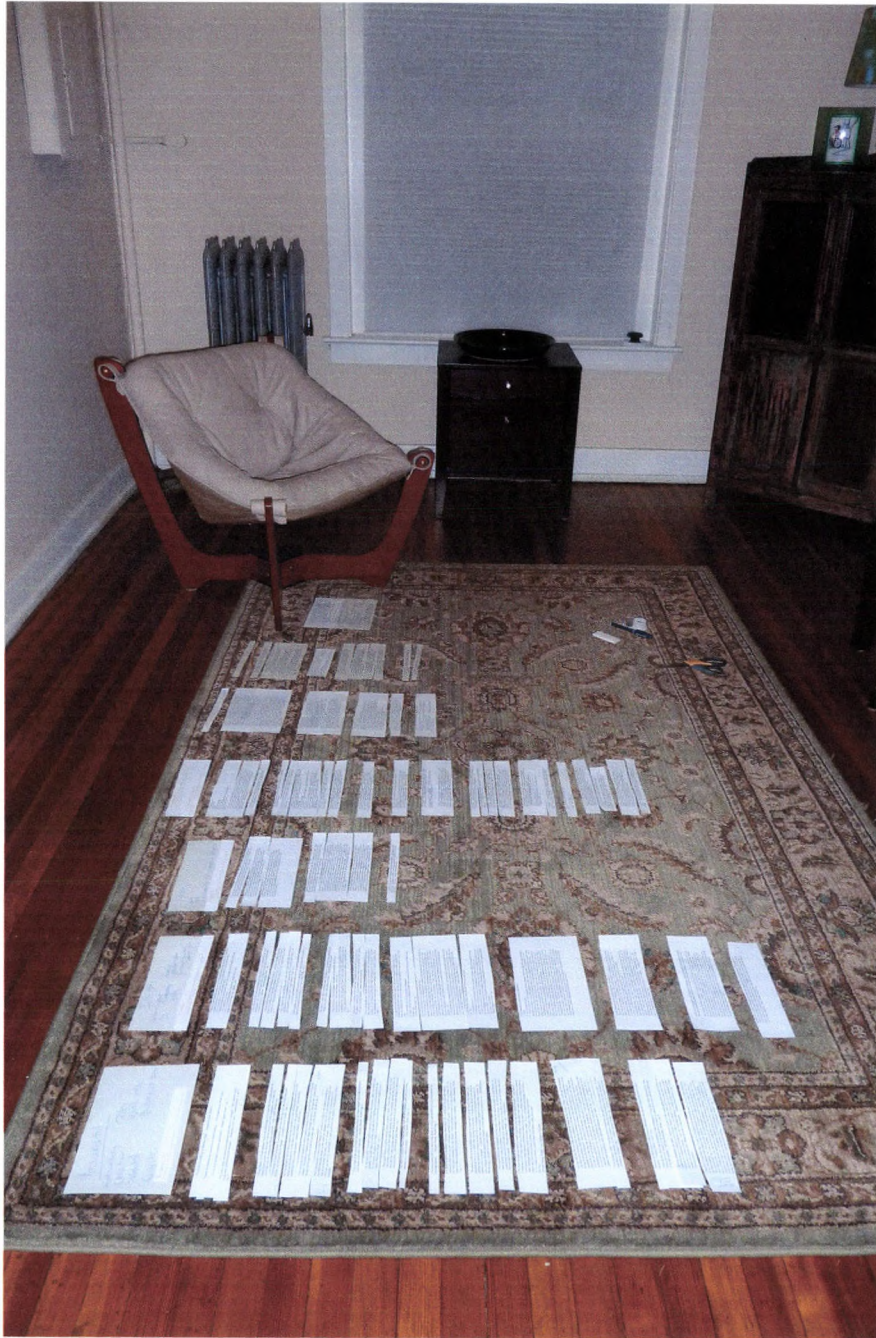


**Organizing themes:** Resourcefulness, Identity, Purpose, Community Resources/Opportunities

**Global Themes:** Resilience, Social Action, Empowerment