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Stories of Hope by Black Emerging Adults: a Narrative Inquiry

by

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Abstract

This exploratory qualitative study was guided by the broad research question “How is hope storied or narrated by black South African emerging adults?” Three participants’ narratives of hope were collected and analysed through narrative inquiry (NI). These three narratives were contextualised within Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional NI space of temporality, sociality and place. The contextualisation included the public narratives (such as apartheid) that shaped each participant’s narrative. The participants’ narratives of hope revealed that, for them, hope is a multifaceted experience. Finally, this research also outlined four main themes of the participants’ experience of hope: Defining Hope, Sources of Hope, Threats to Hope and Cultural Narratives.

The participants’ stories revealed two salient definitions of hope. Firstly, hope is the light at the end of the tunnel. This definition aligns with the literature that views hope as a psychological strength and protective factor against the adverse effects of stressors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Hope thus empowers a person to be resilient and face challenges. Secondly, hope is the motivation that gets you up and going again (the will to persevere). This definition corresponds to Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory, which centralises a motivational component to hope.

This study also set out to discover how sources of hope were storied in the participants’ narratives. Belief in a higher power; the achievement of goals; and supportive relationships were all sources of hope for the participants. All three participants hoped to achieve two main goals: tertiary education and to be employed. Supportive relationships included a strong attachment to their mother; good sibling relationships; and encouraging relationships outside of the family. These sources not only gave the participants hope but also sustained the participants’ hope when they were faced with obstacles.

A further aim of this study was to ascertain how the participants storied threats to their hope. Such threats included discouraging relationships (such as familial conflict and intimate partner violence) and financial constraints. Financial constraints were particularly poignant considering the high tuition fees for tertiary education.

The three cultural narratives that were uncovered exist as public narratives and either hindered or bolstered the participants’ levels of hope. The first cultural narrative is that of black tax as a means of reaching hopes. In this narrative, an adult child earning a salary is expected to
financially support their family. Within this narrative, black tax was a means for some of the participants to share hope and help family to also achieve their goals. The second cultural narrative that emerged from the participants is that of *incompetent until proven competent*. This narrative is based on the prejudice that people of colour and/or female staff are incompetent by default. This then requires them to work harder than white peers and/or male colleagues to disprove this bias. Though this narrative could potentially extinguish hope, the participants found that it motivated them to break down these societal barriers and defeat the stereotypes. The third cultural narrative was that of *I hope to be a brave woman*. This narrative often characterises black women as superheroes able to face any challenge life presents them. However, this narrative detrimentally affects the well-being of black women. As they aspire to be a pillar of strength, they are less likely to utilise mental healthcare - even when they desperately need it.

*Key words: Positive psychology, emerging adulthood, hope, narrative inquiry, South Africa*
Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to my grandmother, Carol Irene Redelinghuys, the best storyteller I know.
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Abbreviations

BIS: Bachelors of Information Science

EA: Emerging Adulthood

NI: Narrative Inquiry

UNISA: The University of South Africa

UP: University of Pretoria
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Problem Statement

A growing movement in the study of psychology has highlighted the need to focus not only on the traditional medical model of psychology (based on disease and psychopathology) but also on the positive aspects of the human psyche (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This movement falls under the umbrella of positive psychology - a field of psychological study that uncovers: how processes and conditions support optimal functioning; what makes life worth living; and what practices can lead to flourishing (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Thus, while both traditional psychology and the main diagnostic tool of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) centralise and problematise mental illness as pathology, positive psychology emphasises mental wellness and optimal human potential.

Within the field of positive psychology, the topic of character strengths and virtues has garnered much attention. Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggested that people possess 24 character strengths. They argued that if these character strengths are fully utilised in a person’s life, that person can achieve a meaningful life and optimal functioning. One of these character strengths is hope. Hope as a construct has attracted much research from a variety of psychological paradigms over the years (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004; Bernardo, 2010; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder, 2000). Although hope is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been defined and understood in various distinct ways, most definitions of hope agree that it is the expectation of a positive future and the attainment of goals (Snyder, 2000a). According to Magyar-Moe, Owens and Conoley (2015), hope can contribute to success in the professional-, personal-, interpersonal- and intrapersonal domains of functioning. It is an integral aspect of well-being and an element that protects against everyday stressors (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). Hope is thus an important construct to understand, as high levels of hope lead to positive outcomes for individuals.

An individual’s level of hope can be affected by external circumstances (Bolland, Lian, & Formichella, 2005; Landis et al., 2007; Stoddard, Henly, Sieving, & John, 2011). This may be particularly relevant in the South African context within a precarious 2019 socio-political climate. Racial division, a failing education system, drought (and its aftermath), political turmoil, inequality, high crime rates and the State Capture Inquiry (to name but a few) make it easy to lose hope in the Rainbow Nation that was promised 25-odd years ago (Chikane, 2018). Everyday stressors have increased exponentially due to the delayed realisation of the Rainbow Nation’s goals and ideals. A
visible effect of these stressors is ‘brain drain’ (the emigration of skilled and educated citizens); something on which South African news media often reports (Nzelenzele, 2017; Watts, 2019). The high emigration numbers of South African professionals have also been academically studied and highlighted (Andrucki, 2017; Crush & Pendleton, 2011; Gaillard, Gaillard, & Krishna, 2015; Van Rooyen, 2000). At the heart of the decision to emigrate is people’s hope that their families will have a better future outside of South Africa. This therefore raises the question of whether South Africans are experiencing hopelessness.

In the global arena, Krafft and Walker (2018) noted that over the past 30 years mass media in German-speaking countries has emphasised hopeless situations. Fears, worries and anxiety have been spotlighted rather than more positive stories (Krafft & Walker, 2018). This created the narrative that the zeitgeist of these countries is predominantly negative in focus. It was out of this preoccupation with the negative that the Hope-Barometer was created as a research endeavour in 2009. The Hope-Barometer research found that research on hope can be of both academic- and practical value. Krafft and Walker (2018) asserted that the Hope-Barometer research was a source of hope for those who read its results. Therefore, at this precarious time in South African history - when it can be argued that South African citizens need greater psychological strengths to help them through challenges, stressors and daily obstacles - it is important to investigate hope (and how it is conceptualised).

Research on hope illuminates its relevance in the meaning-making processes of individuals. Peterson and Seligman (2004) state that hope is a trait that fulfils, energises and keeps people positive despite existential dread. Consequently hope can become a way to create meaning in the human condition. Historically hope research focused on Western populations (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Scioli & Scioli, 2004; Snyder, 2000a; Stotland, 1969). This study will thus add value to the field of psychology by growing understanding of the process of meaning-making in a black South African population. People construct meaning of experience in a number of ways - one of these being through the narratives they live and tell (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative Inquiry (NI) gathers and analyses these storied experiences. Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) work on NI is epistemologically rooted in Deweyan theory of inquiry. NI creates knowledge through contextualised narratives of experience and storied lives. This contextualisation is based on a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: temporality (past, present and future); sociality (personal- and social aspects); and place (location of the inquiry). As a research approach, NI respects and acknowledges the centrality of the participant in the creation of knowledge. NI is a relational methodology wherein, “stories are co-composed in the spaces between
us as inquirers and participants” (Clandinin, 2013, p.24). Li and Larsen (2012) asserted that using NI allows the researcher to uncover intricate interplay between a participant’s experiences and milieu. As NI is such a personal approach to understanding experience, the authors advised against making generalisations about findings. In this research, NI enables an exposition of how individuals story their experiences of hope.

As hope is associated with positive outcomes for the individual, it is important to understand how people experience hope - especially at the beginning of their adult lives. This particular need for understanding stems from the fact that hope may have implications for optimal functioning later in life (Wood et al., 2018). It is, therefore, relevant to examine hope during emerging adulthood (EA). EA is a modern conceptualisation of the transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood: roughly between the ages of 18-25 (Arnett, 2000). According to Arnett (2017), there are five unique features of EA: identity exploration; the age of instability; the self-focused age; the age of feeling in-between; and the age of possibilities. EA allows a person a variety of options and the freedom to experience and eventually settle into an adult identity. An emerging adult’s focus on the future may add another dimension to their experience of hope. As times have changed so have the way people develop into adulthood - currently, the way a person develops into adulthood differs vastly from in the 1970s (Arnett, 2000). This life stage is somewhat under-researched, especially for populations from a diverse background (Syed & Mitchell, 2013). Thus, the concept of “emerging adulthood” is still novel and much is to be uncovered on how it is experienced and expressed across cultures.

While South Africa’s present and future prospects may seem hopeless for some, its apartheid legacy is a tragic history for the majority of South African citizens (Worden, 2012). In the context of this study, it is crucial to understand the effects of apartheid on South Africans as it had (and still has) implications for psychological research and practice in this country (Duncan, Stevens, & Bowman, 2013). Apartheid legalised racial division that classified and ranked people according to their race. It should be acknowledged that referring to a person of colour from African descent as ‘black’ is not a neutral label - it carries both historical and political undertones. Although the term ‘black’ is used as a racial category in this study, great care was taken to not perpetuate racist stereotypes. This study aligns with the understanding that being a black South African is a particular and unique experience with unique stressors and challenges. As black emerging adults have been historically overlooked in research, it becomes vital to illuminate their lived and narrated experiences of hope. Duncan, Stevens and Bowman (2013) found that apartheid’s legacy in psychological practice and research was social asymmetry. Psychological research in South Africa
historically focused on understanding white experiences while totally negating the significance of black experiences. This research thus focuses on and amplifies the stories of South African citizens who were previously silenced.

1.2. Rationale

The purpose of this study is to understand how young black South Africans narrate their experiences of hope. An understanding of such hope narratives may have ramifications for psychological research and practice. Various studies associate hope with an array of positive implications for an individual’s psychological and physical functioning (Krafft, Martin-Krumm, & Fenouillet, 2017; Magyar-Moe, Owens, & Conoley, 2015; Valle et al., 2006). These studies found that hope can be a protective factor during adverse situations and can aid individuals in attaining success in various facets of their lives. Moreover, hope has been recognised, for some time, as a vital change agent within the therapeutic process (Menninger, 1959). The way in which hope and its functions are understood does, however, differ from paradigm to paradigm (Cheavens & Ritschel, 2014). There is no one-size-fits-all approach to introducing hope into the therapeutic process and instilling hope in individuals. It is thus imperative that this psychological strength be studied and understood through the subjective lens of personal experience.

Further motivation for this study was that the literature review revealed a gap in research on understanding hope during EA in diverse populations - particularly from a qualitative perspective. Extensive research has been done to quantitatively understand hope (Feldman & Dreher, 2012; Guse & Shaw, 2018; Herth, 1992; Krafft, Martin-Krumm, & Fenouillet, 2017; Scioli & Scioli, 2004; Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand, & Feldman, 2003; Valle et al., 2006). Although hope has, to some extent, been qualitatively researched (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004; Guthrie, 2011; Li & Larsen, 2012; Nalkur, 2009), in South Africa, it has not been researched in depth. Qualitative research on hope in South Africa was undertaken by Cherrington and De Lange (2016) and focused on primary school children from rural contexts. A more recent study by Cherrington (2018) undertook a critical transformative study with a group of second-year education students at a South African university to uncover the possibilities of research as an intervention in bolstering hope. These studies have initiated a movement towards qualitative approaches when investigating hope in South Africa. Muwanga-Zake (2010) appealed to researchers working within African contexts to not rely solely on quantitative research. While the author acknowledged the value of quantitative research, he also suggested that African knowledge systems are significant in scientific endeavours. To this end, Muwanga-Zake (2010) advocated for the use of NI in African populations, as NI
advances an epistemological agenda that supports Afrocentric perspectives. The need to use a qualitative design, specifically NI, is therefore evident. Looking at Averill and Sundararajan’s (2004) research on the dissimilarity between Eastern and Western constructions of hope, one can deduce that hope is culturally construed. As such, it is worth investigating how young black South Africans construct meaning pertaining to hope. The small sample size of this research means that it does not answer the question of what a South African construction of hope may be. It does, however, start to uncover individuals’ cultural understandings of hope. This information can then serve as a starting point to generate more research on a bigger scale.

Hope is a major component of motivation and academic success (Siu, Bakker, & Jiang, 2013). Emerging adults lay the foundation for their life by making choices and undergoing training to establish their career. Motivation is essential in ensuring that the emerging adult makes a success of this developmental task. For this reason, it is crucial to understand hope during EA. This is also a critical period in a person’s development, as decisions made during this phase have lasting implications for the rest of the individual’s life (Wood et al., 2018). The development of personal mechanisms to improve one’s level of hope during EA may thus have positive outcomes over an individual’s lifespan.

Historically, hope research has focused mostly on Western populations. The use of NI allows the cross-cultural alignment of research, as NI privileges the participant as the expert on their own narrative. This research was limited to black participants not only to allow for an Afrocentric perspective on the meaning of hope but also to create a better understanding of EA in diverse populations. As his initial research on EA was done on white middle- to upper-class Americans, Arnett (2000) recommended that more extensive research be done on EA in diverse populations. Though there has been a surge in research on EA in countries outside of America, Syed and Mitchell (2013) argued that there is still much to be uncovered. Thus, if the narratives of black South Africans emerging adults are researched, the outcomes will contribute to growing the body of cross-cultural research. Consequently, this research could start to illuminate an African perspective on the experience of hope and lay the groundwork for further research.

1.3. Aim of the Study

The broad research question guiding this study is “How is hope storied or narrated by black South African emerging adults?” To this end, narratives of hope were collected and analysed using NI. This study contextualises the participants’ narratives within a three-dimensional narrative
inquiry space, which is an important aspect of NI (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The following specific aims were developed:

1. To re-story the participants’ narratives to highlight the central theme of hope.
2. To understand how the participants define hope in their stories.
3. To discover how the sources of hope are storied in the participants’ narratives.
4. To ascertain how the participants storied threats to their hope.
5. To uncover any cultural narratives that may be evident in the participants’ stories.

1.4. Chapter Overview

The current chapter serves as introduction to this study. It presents background to and context on the topic of hope. It provides a rationale that motivates the necessity of this study. This chapter also provides the research question and aims. Lastly, it briefly outlines the rest of the study.

Chapter Two is the literature review that focuses on the three core concepts of the study. First, EA is defined as conceptualised by Arnett (2000, 2015, 2017). Critiques of EA are explored and empirical studies that highlight EA populations are examined. Second, the chapter contains a thorough exposition of the various perspectives of hope that stem from a variety of paradigms. Hope during EA is also explored. Third, NI is positioned as the theoretical framework that underpins the current study. NI is defined as conceptualised by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology. The study’s research question; qualitative research design; and NI methodology are described in this section. It also details how the methodology was specifically tailored and used in this study. A discussion of the participants and sampling is provided, and an identity portrait of each participant is submitted. Further, Chapter Three explains the subjective role of the researcher in NI and provides the researcher’s identity portrait. Thereafter follow details on the research procedure; data analysis; and the steps taken to ensure that the research is of good quality, trustworthy and ethically sound.

In Chapter Four the findings and analysis thereof are discussed. The data is contextualised according to Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional NI space. An in-depth discussion of the three dimensions contextualises the themes noted in the narratives. Four themes were extracted from the three narratives and are discussed.
Chapter Five concludes the study. This section summarises the insights gained into how hope is conceptualised and storied by the respondents. The reflections, challenges and limitations of the study are highlighted. Directions for future research are offered and concluding remarks bring this study to a close.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature pertaining to this study. The research aims to illuminate the narratives that some emerging adults construct about hope. This is done through an understanding of knowledge construction, which is theoretically underpinned by narrative inquiry. These three concepts - emerging adulthood (EA), hope, and narrative inquiry (NI) - are therefore the cornerstones of this research and are discussed in this literature review. First, EA is defined as a developmental stage as conceptualised by Arnett (2000). Arnett’s conceptualisation is critiqued and counterarguments against these critiques are provided. A summary of previous empirical studies done on an EA population is also provided. Second, this chapter outlines various perspectives on hope. These perspectives include hope as a psychological strength; Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory; locus of hope; perceived hope; and cultural constructions of hope. A summary is given of empirical studies on hope during EA. Last, this chapter presents an examination of NI as a theoretical underpinning to this study.

2.2. Emerging Adulthood (EA)

2.2.1 Defining emerging adulthood.

Emerging adulthood (EA) is a contemporary conceptualisation of the transitional phase between a person being an adolescent and an adult. It lies roughly between the ages of 18-25 (Arnett, 2000). As the leading researcher in the field of EA, Arnett formulated how this in-between phase has changed from being merely a crossover from one phase to the next to being a unique developmental period with identifiable characteristics. One of the most salient characteristics of this period being the individual’s ability to explore various possible life directions. Arnett’s (2017, 2016, 2000) writing suggests that the experience of being a late adolescent/early adult has changed along with what society expects of young people. He (2000) suggested that emerging adults are settling into a career and family much later than previous generations did. Arnett proposes that the emerging adult has much more agency and means to shape their lived experience than previous generations of young adults. Their lives are characterised by instability. This is particularly evident in how often emerging adults change their place of employment, change romantic partners, and make changes in tertiary education and in where they reside. Arnett attributed these constant changes to the exploratory and experimental nature of this developmental phase.
Arnett identified five unique features of this phase (Munsey, 2006). One of the main features being *identity formation*. Arnett (2000) explained how this is especially true for individuals’ formation of career identity, as this is often when people enter tertiary education. In order to establish their identity as an adult, the emerging adult may explore a variety of possibilities. Arnett (2017) suggested that during this process an individual develops an enduring grasp of who they are, their values, abilities, and place in society.

During this phase, a person also goes through a period of *instability* (Arnett, 2017). This is especially true for relationships and professional changes (vocation and training). An emerging adult may try out a variety of options in careers or relationships until they find what suits them best. Arnett noted that this instability seems to end with the establishment of a family. It should be noted that the term family not only refers to the traditional heteronormative and cisgender theory of husband, wife and children but can also be reflective of the diversity in society. The emerging adult will ultimately decide how their family is put together. Ordinarily, by this time, the emerging adult would have decided on the structure of their lives required to accomplish the developmental tasks of adulthood. For example, this may include whether they want to be committed to a partner with whom they will raise their children. They have often also settled into a career as a means to support their own and their family’s financial and survival needs.

A *focus on the self* is the third hallmark of this phase (Arnett, 2017). The emerging adult starts to become more independent from their parents and their parents’ way of household management. As such, the emerging adult focuses on developing themselves to be equipped for adult life. This is possible because this is a phase of increased social and financial autonomy, which allows the emerging adult to make the choices that suit them best (Brown, 2015).

The fourth feature of this phase is *feeling in-between* adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2017). Emerging adults have much more responsibility for their own lives, but do not yet fully take on the identity of an adult. Often when an emerging adult is asked whether they feel like they have reached adulthood, they respond with an ambiguous answer. This suggests that they feel they are in a transitional space.

Lastly, EA is characterised as a phase of life wherein the individual may feel that there are many *possibilities* for life ahead (Arnett, 2017). Emerging adults are very optimistic and believe that their lives will have positive outcomes. These characteristics were initially observed in Arnett’s
(2000) early research on American youth. However, he later stated that these features may differ somewhat in other cultures, as determined by social and economic circumstances (Arnett, 2016).

Arnett (2000) explained that EA is a contemporary developmental theory of people. Consequently, contemporary forces influence its presentation. Globalisation and reliance on technology are major contributors to the prolonging of this transitional phase (Bynner, 2005). Another major historical shift, as highlighted by Arnett (2000), is the fact that high school attendance in the United States rose dramatically between 1900 (10% attendance) to 1985 (95% attendance). The emphasis on the necessity of a high school education developed out of the change from an industrialised economy to one more focused on information creation and acquisition (Wood et al., 2018). Prior to high school attendance becoming a normalised aspect of adolescence, certain expectations were placed on the adolescent, such as financially contributing to the family. Whereas previous generations were settling down to marriage and parenthood at a younger age, the age at which people today become parents has been postponed to later in life (Ferri, Bynner, & Wadsworth, 2003). Previously, people were expected to transition into their adult roles and responsibilities faster. Those pressures are no longer on young people.

2.2.2 Critiques of emerging adulthood and responses to the critiques.

Despite burgeoning research on EA (Arnett, 2015; Bynner, 2005; Dwivedi & Rastogi, 2016; Ferguson & Adams, 2016; Munsey, 2006; Wood et al., 2018) there is also some criticism directed at it. Syed (2015) identified six main criticisms. Firstly, that the notion of EA may not be a new idea, as it was also explored in sociology (Côte, 2014; Hartmann & Swartz, 2006; Waters, Carr, Kefalas, & Holdaway, 2011). In response, it must be noted that Arnett’s approach to understanding this developmental phase is different from the sociological understanding. Arnett’s theory is much more integrated - it considers what is unique about this phase’s characteristics. Sociologically, EA is considered a transitional phase, emphasis is thus on that which comes afterwards for the person, namely adulthood. Furthermore, Arnett’s theory focuses more on the psychological processes and experiences as compared to the sociological approach to this phase (Syed, 2015).

The second common criticism is that EA is rooted in the current historical setting and is a product of this point in time (Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Contemporary societal trends and structures therefore promote the emerging adult’s behaviour. Syed (2015) explained that this in itself is not a reasonable criticism, as the past 100 years have brought about major societal changes. For this reason, it is essential that new ways of conceptualising human development be explored. As an
example, adolescence as we understand it in contemporary terms is a relatively new concept, yet it is widely accepted by academia (Syed, 2015). The fact that EA is based within and brought about by the current milieu makes it relevant to the current understanding of human development.

One of the five core features of EA is that it is an age of possibilities. As such, Arnett (2017, 2000) framed EA as a positive time in a person’s life - a time characterised by a positive future orientation. Critics of Arnett’s theory do not agree that this life phase is only positive. Bynner (2005), for example, was critical of Arnett’s description of EA as a positive and expected condition for young people, when the realities that many young people face are not ideal. Bynner used Ferri et al.’s (2003) cohort study in Britain to illustrate the various challenges faced by young people, such as increased incarceration; lower levels of education; lower levels of employment (especially in the unskilled labour market); a broadening gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged and social exclusion of those without resources. According to Bynner (2005), Arnett’s (2000) theory does not adequately address these aspects of the lived experience of young people. Bynner (2005) also argued that Arnett did not consider how societal and structural factors may impact a young person’s development. He explained that EA, “fails to recognise adequately that the huge diversity of individual experience is constrained by location in the social structure” (2005, p. 378). Rather than a developmental model, Bynner recommended a life-course understanding of a person that considers the holistic person as well as their context. Syed’s (2015) found that this criticism does not discredit Arnett’s theory, but rather expands EA. This expansion creates more harmony between a positive outlook and the reality of the individual’s situation. It is, thus, imperative for research to keep a more balanced view of the emerging adult and to be sensitive to the realities of context.

A fourth criticism: EA is based on stages, while there are other more contemporary ways of understanding human development (Syed, 2015). Traditional psychology theorists, such as Freud, Piaget, and Erickson, described human development through grand theories (Syed, 2015). These grand theories are based on the idea that human development happens in set stages - with an individual moving from one stage to the next. The less traditional view of human development is to see it as continuous. In this school of thought, life course theory; life span theory; developmental contextualism; and dynamic systems theories explain the continuous process of human development (Syed, 2015). Although Arnett’s approach seems to lean more towards the traditional phase thinking of developmental psychology, it does acknowledge contextual influences on the individual. Arnett (2015) explained that a modern context requires new ways for EA to conceptualise this period in an individual’s life. Thus, Arnett incorporated both the old and new ways of conceptualising human development.
A fifth common criticism is that EA is not a good quality theory. Hendry and Kloep (2010) were especially outspoken against Arnett in this regard. They argued that theories of development should be more explanatory and not just describe a phenomenon. They set out to show that EA is only one trajectory for young adults and how it only describes those young adults’ experiences. They argued that a theory cannot claim to be representative of an entire cohort if it only applies to a small segment of that population. Côte (2014) also remarked on the quality of Arnett’s EA theory. He commented on how the term EA is sometimes used as merely a description of a certain age grouping, while at other times the term ‘emerging adult’ refers to Arnett’s formulation. This has created vagueness and misunderstanding in the use of the term “emerging adulthood” as either a neutral term referring to an age delimitation or as a specific developmental phase as Arnett envisioned it. It is therefore important to clearly operationalise the term when undertaking research. Côte (2014) further remarked that Arnett’s theory does not “withstand logical and scientific scrutiny” (p. 178). He stated that there are less ambiguous ways of describing this life stage - using traditional terms such as late adolescence or early adulthood. These can be sufficient if it is acknowledged that this period is longer now than it was in the past. In terms of Arnett’s formulation, Côte suggests that rather than seeing it as a developmental theory, it is more appropriate to describe it as a metanarrative. Thus, according to Côte (2014), EA is a metanarrative comprised of the stories of Arnett’s research participants.

In response to Côte’s recommendation, Arnett (2016) explained that adolescence is a life stage clearly demarcated by the onset and completion of puberty. In his view, the life stage after puberty cannot be called ‘late adolescence’ as that developmental process is complete. There are also major differences in the manner of social engagement in individuals between 18-25 years of age and adolescents. Adolescents rely on their parents; are legally viewed as minors; and should still attend school. There are also considerable discrepancies between 18-25 year olds and individuals in their 30’s and 40’s (Arnett, 2016). In traditional psychology ‘young adulthood’ refers to the developmental period of an individual between the ages of 19-40 years old (Erikson, 1968). For these reasons, Arnett viewed EA as a much better description than the terms suggested by Côte.

Lastly, perhaps the most common criticism of Arnett’s theory was that it is not an inclusive model, but rather a developmental model based on research with white middle- to upper-class American students (Hendry & Kloep, 2010). In their research with Welsh youth, Hendry and Kloep (2010) found that participants’ lived experiences were very different from what Arnett’s theory suggests. This was in view of the fact that many of these young people took on adult responsibilities and roles. Côte (2014) was also very outspoken against Arnett’s theory in terms of its exclusion of
disadvantaged youth. He noted that Arnett’s theory is used to inform policy involving 18-25-year-olds, which is problematic if it does not represent the entire age group.

Syed and Mitchell (2013) explained that this criticism (that the EA theory only applies to white middle- to upper-class Americans) does not refute the legitimacy of the theory, but rather problematises its inclusivity. In his first paper, Arnett (2000) was transparent about the delimitations of his theory. He stipulated that it seems to apply mainly to Western cultures in industrial and post-industrial countries. In reaction to critiques of the EA model, Arnett’s (2016) research has since expanded to show its applicability across class divides in the United States. He also emphasised that his initial study is a call to researchers to invest more scholarly attention in the “forgotten half” (p.227). He defined the forgotten half as emerging adults who are not enrolled in tertiary education.

In his later research, Arnett (2015, 2016) has shown how class differences may affect the outcomes of emerging adults once they enter adulthood. Arnett’s (2016) findings suggest that there are no significant differences between the social classes regarding the applicability of the five defining features of EA. Factors that do influence the life trajectory of the emerging adult include: tertiary education (or the lack thereof); single parenting; and marriage. These factors differ depending on the social class of the emerging adult and should not be overlooked (Arnett, 2016).

There are further differences between the classes in other aspects of their lived experiences (Arnett, 2016). For example, emerging adults from a lower socio-economic class have a more negative experience of their emotional lives as compared to those from a higher class. Despite this, emerging adults overall still view this period of their lives as predominantly positive (Arnett, 2016). In terms of their attitudes to work and education it seems as if, across class divides, emerging adults share many common ideas. One notable difference was that the participants from the lower-class group were more likely to believe that they would not have the financial means to support further training and education. Additionally, although statistical information suggests a much higher occurrence of single parenting in people from a lower-class, Arnett’s (2016) research found that emerging adults’ attitudes to and perceptions of love, sex and marriage do not significantly differ across class divides. For this reason, Arnett (2016) concluded that his theory is applicable across class divides in America. He did, however, suggest further investigation into EA’s more universal application.
The development of a new theory or explanatory model elicits criticism from academia. This is good practice as it ensures rigorous and responsible research. Arnett’s (2000) EA theory is no different and the critiquing thereof plays an important role in fine-tuning the details of this developmental theory. The criticisms of EA are in the process of being addressed by subsequent research. Arnett and his peers have shown continuous commitment to refining the theory (Arnett, 2016; Syed & Mitchell, 2013). The section below highlights how researchers have taken up Arnett’s call for further research into EA in diverse settings.

2.2.3 Empirical studies on emerging adulthood.

Arnett’s first paper was published in 2000. Since then, considerable research has been done in other parts of the world to suggest that his theory is more universally applicable than previously believed. Much of this research was done in university- and middle class populations in India, China, Latin America, Argentina and Japan (Dwivedi & Rastogi, 2017; Facio, Resett, Micocci, & Mistrorigo, 2007; Galambos & Martinez, 2007; Nelson & Chen, 2007; Rosenberger, 2007; Syed & Mitchell, 2013; Tanner & Arnett, 2009). However, very little has been written on how race and ethnicity intersect with EA (if at all). The question of who is included or excluded from the EA phase is somewhat complex (Syed & Mitchell, 2013).

Certain factors within EA theory seem to align more with a Western and individualist philosophy. These include independence from others; lack of family obligatory behaviours; and privilege (the privilege of having the time and resources to be able to explore identity). On grounds of these factors, Syed and Mitchell (2013) suggested that EA is applicable to diverse races and ethnic groups but may present slightly differently. This is especially evident when considering the five features of EA. Instability (one of the five features) is much more pronounced in racially- or ethnically diverse populations than in Western emerging adults. This instability particularly presents in residential changes and familial conflict (Bahassa, Syed, Su, & Lee, 2011). Although emerging adults from racially- and ethnically diverse populations report more barriers to reaching their goals, they are as positive and optimistic as their Western peers (age of possibility) (Arnett & Tanner, 2011). Syed and Mitchell (2013) explained that “rather than accepting these barriers and taking a dim view of the future, many emerging adults use the challenges they face as motivation to succeed” (p. 87). One way in which the diverse group of emerging adults negotiates this paradox is to adjust their aspirations to factor in how societal barriers may hinder the full realisation of their dreams (Cooper, 2011). Racially- and ethnically diverse emerging adults engage in social activism and career choices that may break down societal barriers. This is done in a bid to overcome that
which holds them (and future generations) back. In terms of identity exploration, other schools of developmental psychology acknowledge the importance of young adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Although some research has been done to better understand ethnic identities (Phinney, 1990; Quintana, 2007), there is still a lack of research into the identity formation of populations from diverse racial- and ethnic backgrounds (Syed & Mitchell, 2013). Syed and Mitchell (2013) defined ethnic identities as “the degree to which individuals identify with their ethnic group” (p.89). The age of self-focus and the age of feeling in-between have both been inadequately researched to either refute or confirm whether they apply to emerging adults from a variety of racial- and ethnic backgrounds. The age of self-focus, in particular, has been criticised as being based on individualist cultures. As such, it does not seem to be a good fit for emerging adults from a more traditional, non-Western population.

Having established that, Ferguson and Adams’ (2016) research in South Africa found that EA as a developmental model is applicable to the South African context. They argued that globalisation has led to an Americanisation (through remote acculturation) of South African emerging adults. As such, many of the features Arnett (2017, 2000, 2016) identified in American emerging adults can also be identified in South Africans of the same age who are from a diversity of races and ethnicities. Ferguson and Adams (2016) highlighted that research among Indian, Inuit and Jamaican youth showed similar trends: changes in attitudes and behaviours that seem to mirror American emerging adults and their culture (Condon, 1988; Jensen, 2003; Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). Ferguson and Adams’ (2016) referred to a bicultural identity (Arnett, 2002) to explain their findings. A bicultural identity is a phenomenon whereby a person engages and identifies with both a local as well as an international culture. Ferguson and Adams’ (2016) found that Americanisation was prevalent across all ethnic and racial divides in their sample of 370 participants. However, black South Africans identify more with African-American culture than European-American culture. Ferguson and Adams (2016) suggested that this may be because “South African youth, from the black group in particular, may resonate with African Americans’ racial struggles and hard-won civil rights successes and may desire to incorporate elements of this counterculture in their self-designed identity” (p.113). In addition, the African-American community may represent positive role models (identity formation) and fulfil a need for cultural affiliation. Due to South Africa’s historical injustices, an affiliation with a culture geographically far removed may be a means to distance oneself from the pain of the past (Ferguson & Adams, 2016).
Various empirical studies have provided evidence that EA is not only a distinct life stage but also a pivotal period in an individual’s life course (Tanner & Arnett, 2009). As such, EA may determine later outcomes in an individual’s life (Tanner & Arnett, 2009). Wood et al. (2018) view EA as a critical stage in the life course, especially as it pertains to health and biological development. They pointed out the important neuroanatomical changes that occur during EA – changes which are second only to those that occur during infancy. Many decisions made during EA have lasting effects on a person’s health into adulthood and eventually old age. Wood et al. (2018) referred to this process as a positive health development trajectory. A good fit between the emerging adult and their environment is more likely to lead to a positive health trajectory. If there is a good fit between the emerging adult and their environment they are more likely to experience a positive health trajectory. The opposite holds true when there is a mismatch between the emerging adult and environmental challenges. During EA, a feeling of mastery and support when facing a challenge may lead to positive self-esteem and mental health development. On the other hand, feelings of failure and isolation may have adverse effects on the individual across their lifespan.

Grob, Krings and Bangerter (2001) analysed biographical narratives of participants in three cohorts (with one of the cohorts falling in EA). Across the three cohorts, the participants indicated that their most significant life events happened during the period where they were 20-29 years old. For many individuals, these significant life markers become the building blocks the rest of their lives and identities are built on. Tanner (2006) argued that a recentering process occurs during EA; whereby an individual develops both their independence and identity. If interventions and coping skills are implemented during this period, the individual can amalgamate these with their receningtering process and merge them with their individual identity. Considering how pivotal this period is in human development it becomes clear why it is important to focus research endeavours on this cohort. Having a better understanding of EA may have positive implications for not only this developmental period but also subsequent life stages.

2.2.4 Conclusion.

Emerging adulthood (EA) is a more recent conceptualisation of the transitional period between adolescence and adulthood. It occurs approximately between the ages of 18-25 (Arnett, 2000). Arnett identified five distinct features that differentiate EA from other developmental periods in a life course. The features: it’s the age of identity explorations; the age of instability; the self-focused age; the age of feeling in-between; and the age of possibilities. EA developed out of society’s changing expectations of young people; historical shifts; and advances in technology.
There are some critiques of EA, especially that it only applies to middle- to upper class white Americans (Côte, 2014; Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Subsequent research has addressed much of the criticism and it seems that EA is applicable to diverse populations. Members of racially- and ethnically diverse populations may have nuanced differences in how the five features of EA apply to them. EA seems to be applicable to diverse populations due to the phenomena of Americanisation and bicultural identities adopted by many emerging adults. EA is identified as a critical period of change that has lasting effects on not only a person’s health but also their vocational-, social- and psychological trajectories. If the right personal- and professional decisions are made and useful skills are learnt during this period, an individual may enjoy positive outcomes in later life.

Bearing this in mind, hope can play a very powerful role in an emerging adult’s life. Hope has been shown to buffer an individual from mental health risks and everyday stressors (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). The next section is an exposition of the literature on hope and what hope is understood to be. The interplay between hope and EA is also discussed and its relevancy to the current study is shown.

2.3. Perspectives on Hope

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (Hope, n.d.), the lay definition of hope is “to want something to happen or to be true, and usually have a good reason to think that it might.” Hope as a construct has, however, been defined and redefined by various schools of thought throughout history (Cheavens & Ritschel, 2014). Scholars have framed hope as a positive construct that raises morale or, conversely, a negative construct that makes people entertain falsehoods. Snyder (2000a) highlighted that to Judeo-Christian thinking hope is virtuous - equal in importance to faith, charity and love. However, in various Ancient Greek texts, hope was described as a fool’s pursuit – an opinion echoed by Nietzsche, Benjamin Franklin and Shakespeare (Snyder, 2000a).

Cheavens and Ritschel (2014) suggest that Karl Menninger’s (1959) academic lecture about hope may have been the catalyst for hope to be studied with more scientific rigour as both outcome and process. Menninger (1959) called on psychiatrists to consider hope as playing a fundamental role in how they work with their patients. He suggested that hope could set therapeutic changes in motion: it could foster patients’ readiness to learn and support their well-being. Menninger was still rooted within the disease model, which was the predominant model at the time (Srinivasan, 2015). As such, he saw hope as a resource to help with the treatment of psychopathology.
Since Menninger’s (1959) seminal lecture, hope has been explored in several different paradigms. These include psychoanalysis (Melges & Bowlby, 1969), existentialism (Frankl, 1997), cognitive psychology (Beck, Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974; Stotland, 1969) and positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). When defining hope, one can consider various perspectives to get a holistic view of the construct. Psychologists and psychiatrists were the earliest movement to try and define hope as a positive anticipation for reaching a goal (Snyder, 2000a). Medical practitioners started seeing the connection between hope and health when they uncovered links between disease, stress and coping. By the mid-1970s, this had evolved into a focus on hope within health psychology. Within this framework, hope was seen as both a means to curb illness and a facet of well-being. An example of this approach to patient care is Libman-Sokołowska and Nasierowski’s (2013) emphasis on the importance of making hope a therapeutic goal when working with people suffering from schizophrenia.

Martin Seligman and his contemporaries brought about the fourth wave of psychology by introducing the concept of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This way of conceptualising and working with people contrasted with the traditional disease focus of psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Srinivasan, 2015). Positive psychology suggested a shift towards well-being and thriving rather than the treatment of psychopathology. This school of psychology brought hope and optimism to the forefront of phenomena worth studying. Thus, while Menninger (1959) may have initiated research on hope, the field of positive psychology stimulated such research.

Various perspectives on hope were put forward over time. In this section, hope is discussed according to positive psychology (hope as a psychological strength); cognitive psychology (Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory); perceived hope; cultural constructions of hope; and; locus of hope. This section also includes a summary of empirical studies on hope during EA, which shows the applicability of hope research to this population.

2.3.1. **Hope as a psychological strength.**

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), one of the main aims of positive psychology is to strengthen and reinforce qualities that may allow individuals to lead a more fulfilling existence. Hope can bolster well-being and protect against mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It could, thus, be seen as psychological strength. In fact, Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified hope as one of the core 24 character strengths. According to this
conceptualisation, hope is “Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 30). Peterson and Seligman (2004) explained that hope is part of the core virtue of transcendence. Hope is, therefore, rooted in the attempt to create meaning by connecting to a greater reality outside oneself. Peterson and Seligman (2004) argued that hope combats feelings of helplessness when an individual must endure undesired- or bad events.

Valle, Huebner and Suldo (2006) found that hope can indeed be considered a psychological strength. They conducted a longitudinal study to ascertain whether hope in adolescence could remain stable over a one-year period. They also explored the mediating role of hope during stressful life events. They found that hope scores remained constant over a year, which suggests that hope has some trait-like qualities. Furthermore, those adolescents who initially had higher levels of hope also displayed higher levels of overall life satisfaction. This illustrates that hope scores may be an indicator of future life satisfaction. Lastly, this study’s findings support the theory that hopeful thinking is a buffer against the adverse effects of life stressors on adolescents’ emotional- and psychological wellbeing. Thus, Valle et al.’s (2006) results suggest that hope can act as a psychological strength in adolescence.

2.3.2. Snyder’s (2000) Hope Theory.

When considered from a Behaviourist and Cognitive Theory of Motivation perspective (Cheavens & Ritschel, 2014; The Psychology Notes HQ, 2013), hope as an emotion underlies behaviour that is guided by expectations. In one of the first conceptualisations of hope from a cognitive goal perspective, hope was seen as “a shorthand term for an expectation of goal achievement” (Stotland, 1969, p.2). Expectation is based on two processes. The first process is gaining information through the senses and the second process is tapping into past experience. Past experience gives a guideline of appropriate responses to the information at hand. Thus, a person may have an experience of which they become aware through their senses. This may trigger memories of a past experience wherein a favourable outcome was achieved. The person then has the expectation of a similarly positive outcome happening again. As the expectation becomes the person’s goal, they adjust their behaviour to elicit the positive outcome.

Snyder was perhaps one of the theorists most instrumental in developing a conceptual understanding of hope from a cognitive perspective. His Hope Theory is based on three factors: goals, pathways, and agency (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Snyder (2000b) proposed that hope brings
about goal-directed thinking wherein an individual regards the realisation of the goal as a possibility. He argued that the goal should be high value with some uncertainty about whether it will be reached. Without such uncertainty, hope would be unnecessary. Once the goal is established, a mental pathway or route to get to that goal is devised. The ability to perform pathway thinking enables a person to map out a way to attain their goal. The individual then needs the motivation to move along (or act upon) their mapped out pathways. For this purpose, agency thinking is implemented (Snyder, 2000b). Agency prompts movement on the path towards the goal, as it gives the person the impression or belief that they are capable of starting and persevering on the route. Both pathway thinking and agency thinking are necessary for the individual to attain their goals or the outcome they hope for.

In keeping with Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory, obstacles to the goal are met with much the same process (as described above), since an individual will often create more than one route to attain the goal. Snyder (2000b) stated that high levels of hope correlate with more pathway options or alternate routes. Various emotional responses may be elicited due to the individual’s perception of their goal pursuit. Although blocked goals may lead to negative emotional responses, these responses seem to manifest differently in individuals with higher levels of hope than those with lower levels of hope. People with higher hope levels are able to create new or alternative pathways, therefore, their emotional reaction may be more adaptive than their low-hope counterparts. Additionally, agency thinking seems to be more effective in individuals who have more hope. Snyder (2000b) concluded that “hopeful thinking not only should facilitate success during unimpeded goal pursuits, but it should be especially helpful in the face of impediments” (p.11).

Guse & Shaw (2018) identified three of the main criticisms of Snyder’s Hope Theory. Firstly, Hope Theory does not consider a personal and individualistic experience of hope (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Tong, Lim, Fredrickson, & Chang, 2010). Secondly, there are too many overlaps between hope, optimism and self-efficacy. Lastly, it negates the importance some people place on their spirituality in terms of their understanding of hope (Krafft, Martin-Krumm, & Fenouillet, 2017).

2.3.3. Perceived hope.

Krafft, Martin-Krumm and Fenouillet (2017) asserted that previous researchers’ (especially Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory) conception of hope had left room for vagueness and misperceptions. The authors argued that Snyder’s conceptualisation of hope was too similar to
definitions of other psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, coping and resilience. Furthermore, the influence of an individual’s spirituality on their experience of hope was excluded from Hope Theory. Krafft et al. (2017) formulated an explanation of hope based on how people experience, feel and understand hope from a personal perspective. Thus, their definition consists of not only dispositional or cognitive hope but also spiritual, religious and altruistic components. Krafft and Walker (2018) summarised their working definition of perceived hope as follows:

We understand hope as the general belief, trust and confidence, that specific things, objectives and circumstances, which we desire because they are important to us and which we wish to attain, will develop the way which is right and good for us and for our social environment, regardless of the adversities and obstacles as well as possible negative expectancies and seemingly opposing objective facts, so that it remains worthwhile to persevere and keep involved. (p.12)

Krafft, Perrig-Chiello and Walker (2018) explained that the conceptualisation of perceived hope and the Hope Project came about as a reaction to the overwhelming negativity of the media and society in general. Krafft et al.’s (2017) goal was to create a psychometrically sound instrument that could measure perceived hope levels. This was a means to create a Hope Barometer, which could be used both in research and societal endeavours. The Hope Barometer has become an annual survey and has stimulated much further research. Research on perceived hope revealed that it has positive implications in an individual’s functioning (Krafft et al., 2017). Some of the effects associated with perceived hope are harmony in life; psychological health; meaning in life; positive relationships; happiness; a connection to something greater than the self; and a buffer from anxiety and depression in painful situations (Krafft et al., 2018). Krafft et al.’s (2018) instrument, the Perceived Hope Scale, is able to measure experienced hope regardless of the test taker’s demographic background or belief system. As the Hope Project has global participation, a multinational approach to the conceptual definition of hope is used. As a result, allowance is made for differences in cultural understandings of hope (Krafft et al., 2018). Perceived hope can thus be seen as an appropriate conceptualisation of hope when doing research with participants of diverse backgrounds. Perceived hope champions the individual’s experience of hope and seems to align well with NI.

2.3.4. Cultural constructions of hope through narrative.

Hope may be culturally constructed and embedded. As such, an individual’s demographic background is vital to understanding their experience of hope. In a study on how hope is reflected in
cultural narratives and how this construction differs between Eastern and Western cultures, Averill and Sundararajan (2004) suggested that there are two assumptions that can be made about hope. Firstly, hope is seen as a creative emotional experience (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004). For an emotional experience to be described as creative, it needs to adhere to three prerequisites: it needs to be novel, authentic, and effective. The authors distinguished between how Eastern cultures view hope, as an inward process that is authenticity-focused, and how Western cultures direct hope outwardly as a novelty-focused process. Secondly, Averill and Sundararajan (2004) described the rhetorical value of hope - hope has narrative power. They explained that a story (and an emotion) comprises of both thematic elements and a narrative structure. Averill and Sundararajan (2004) explained the importance of this:

The narrative structure of hope interweaves three thematic elements, namely, (a) a wish for an outcome, the occurrence of which is uncertain; (b) coping responses undertaken to achieve the outcome, in spite of the uncertainty; and (c) a belief system we will call faith. (We use the term “faith” to refer to any belief system that makes a desired outcome seem possible even when empirical evidence or logical argument might suggest otherwise.) When these three elements are integrated into a narrative structure, the result is a positive outlook, an emergent feeling of hopefulness. (p. 130)

The stories of hope Averill and Sundararajan (2004) analysed were deeply iconic and embedded within a cultural construction of meaning. They identified three types of stories: wish-based, coping-based, and faith-based (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004). Each of these narratives has its own unique attitude. A wish-based narrative is characterised by an idealistic leaning - it describes hope for a different outcome than the current situation. Narratives from The Analects of Confucius are examples of wish-based narratives (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004). In contrast, coping-based narratives have a realistic attitude. They chronicle realistically appraised situations wherein good coping skills occur. An example of a coping-based narrative is the Greek myth of Pandora’s Box. Wish-based and coping-based hope narratives can also be divided along cultural line. Wish-based narratives occur more frequently in Eastern cultures and coping-based narratives occur more frequently in Western cultures.

Drawing from the earlier works of Fauconnier, Averill and Sundararajan (2004) described the faith-based narrative of hope as a “blended space.” A space where coping and wishing come together and interact on the grounds of what they have in common and in what aspects they are divergent. This coming together gives rise to a new space: the blended space. Faith-based hope is thus more than a narrative of either wishing or coping. It includes a paradoxical view that although
there seems to be no logical, guaranteed positive outcome, the protagonist has the ungrounded certainty of a positive outcome (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004). The biblical story of Abraham is an example of a faith-based narrative. In the narrative, despite the overwhelming evidence that Abraham would have to sacrifice his son, he held on to the belief that for God all things are possible. The authors made it clear that faith-based narratives do not implicitly mean the narratives are based on religious systems. Rather, the word “faith” refers to the belief in impossible outcomes. Averill and Sundararajan (2004) made distinctions based on cultural groups (mentioned above) following their analysis of various narratives on hope. They gave clear examples of how narratives sculpt the way a person thinks about hope.

2.3.5. Locus of hope.

Building on Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory, Bernardo (2010) included a locus-of-hope dimension to broaden Snyder’s definition. Within this conceptualisation, hope can be driven by both internal- and external factors (Bernardo, 2010). The Hope Theory accounts for internal sources of hope such as an individual’s belief in their own ability to attain a goal. Bernardo asserted, however, that Hope Theory does not articulate the effects of social connection and encouragement on an individual’s level of hope. He postulated that external involvement, from family and community and belief in a higher power may be necessary to successfully navigate the pathways to goal attainment. This extension of the Hope Theory suggests that pathway thinking may also be generated by an external agent. In a recent study, Munoz, Quinton, Worley and Hellman (2018) found consistency with Bernardo’s (2010) locus-of-hope dimension. Their research included adolescents from diverse backgrounds in an American population. The results suggest that the adolescents’ caregivers were an important driver of hope. The study also emphasised the importance of the child’s perception that their parents are committed to helping them achieve their goals (Munoz et al., 2018).

2.3.6. Empirical studies on hope during emerging adulthood.

Due to the impact of EA on outcomes in subsequent life stages, researchers have identified this developmental stage as needing thorough investigation (Wood et al., 2018). As mentioned, psychological strengths that are bolstered during EA have positive future implications. The focus of research has therefore shifted to hope during EA, especially in diverse populations (Madrazo, 2014). A study by Siu, Bakker, & Jiang (2013) investigated psychological capital among university students in Hong Kong. They wanted to determine the effects of positive psychological capacities on study engagement. Hope was one of the variables measured in the study as it is an antecedent of
study engagement (which is an antecedent of study success). A reciprocal relationship was identified between psychological capacities and study engagement (Siu et al., 2013). Hope is thus an important factor in motivation. Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib and Finch (2009) found motivation towards finding purpose to be evident in both adolescence and EA. The participants of this study were from three developmental stages: adolescence, EA and adulthood. It was found that when the participants (from all three cohorts) had purpose, they were hopeful and motivated to work towards reaching that purpose. Bronk et al.’s (2009) research suggested that hope has positive implications for greater life satisfaction. A study undertaken by Dwivedi & Rastogi (2017) also considered the relationship between hope and life satisfaction during EA. Though their methods differed, their results concur with those of Bronk et al. (2009) - hope is a significant predictor of life satisfaction. A study by Kimball, Shumway, Austin-Robillard and Harris-Wilkes (2017) investigated hope as a protective factor for emerging adults during recovery from addiction. They reported that their participants found the recovery narratives of others and belief in a higher power to be sources of hope. They also observed that building hope in individuals recovering from addiction has a mitigating effect on cravings and increases the will to change (Kimball et al., 2017). Though Kimball et al.’s (2017) definition of hope was based on hope within recovery, their findings seem to echo Bernardo’s (2010) locus-of-hope theory that external factors play a significant role in bolstering hope.

Looking specifically at how perceived hope may bolster the well-being of university students in South Africa, Guse and Shaw (2018) investigated the link between hope, meaning in life, and well-being. They concluded that despite the challenges faced by South African university students, the students’ scored relatively high on the measures used. This means that among South African university students there is a tendency to higher levels of hope, meaning in life, and well-being. Guse and Shaw’s (2018) research also revealed that the relationship between hope and well-being is mediated by meaning in life. They concluded that “It is thus plausible that, through experiencing a sense of purpose and a connection with something greater than the self, perceived hope provides meaning in life” (pp. 72-73).

2.3.7. Conclusion

Hope has been associated with various positive outcomes in an individual’s functioning and is thus an important construct to understand. Perspectives on hope are expansive and many psychological paradigms have defined hope within their explanatory models. Health psychology, psychoanalysis, existentialism, cognitive psychology, positive psychology, cross-cultural studies,
and a personal experience perspective (to name but a few) have all described hope. To communicate a more holistic and integrated definition of hope, this section presents an overall exposition of the major theories on hope. At its core, hope is the expectation of a positive future and the attainment of goals. Positive psychology asserts that hope can be a psychological strength that buffers an individual from the negative effects of life stressors and increases well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Hope can be driven by internal and dispositional factors. As posited by Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory, hope can lead to the creation of goals (goal-directed thinking); to thinking about how to achieve these goals (pathway thinking); and to the motivation to carry out the plan (agency thinking). The perceived hope perspective argues that hope can be a personal experience with links to spirituality and altruistic factors (Kraft & Walker, 2018). The experience of individuals with higher levels of perceived hope may include harmony in life; psychological health; meaning in life; positive relationships; happiness; a connection to something greater than the self; and a buffer from anxiety and depression in painful situations. Hope can be shaped by cultural traditions and narratives (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004). The locus-of-hope perspective suggests that external factors, such as family, community, and a belief in a higher power, may help an individual navigate towards their goals.

Research has shown that hope holds a plethora of benefits to mental- and physical health. As mentioned, hope is a protective factor in painful situations; it promotes well-being; and helps set therapeutic change in motion. Hope can bolster motivation to move towards a goal and is an important component in finding purpose and meaning in life. Building hope during EA is especially critical, as it has positive implications for the rest of an individual’s life. For this reason, it is important to study how emerging adults may conceptualise hope in their own lives. Theorists assert that through narratives the inner thoughts and experiences of an individual can be known (Esin, 2011). This study adopts a narrative approach to uncover emerging adults’ personal definitions of hope. The next section looks at the theory behind NI.

2.4. Narrative Inquiry as Theoretical Framework

This discussion on Narrative Inquiry (NI) does not detail the technical aspects of the methodology but rather considers its ontological and theoretical underpinnings. Past research based on hope or EA that uses NI is highlighted. This served as a guide for the current research.
2.4.1. Defining Narrative Inquiry.

The first distinction that should be made to define NI is the difference between narrative research and NI. Narrative research is the umbrella term for research designs which use narratives in some form or other for research purposes. NI is a specific methodology conceptualised by Clandinin & Connelly (2000) which falls within the bounds of narrative research. Clandinin (2013) defined NI as “an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honouring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (p.17). NI makes the ontological assumption that the meaning of experience can be known through narratives (Esin, 2011). It gives us a means to uncover the participant’s inner thought world; outer behavioural response; and construction of their own reality. NI thus takes a relativist approach by acknowledging multiple truths. Clandinin explained that NI is more than just a research methodology (2013). The narrative in itself becomes the phenomenon under investigation. Narratives are composed between the participant and the inquirer as they live alongside each other during the research process.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) initially developed NI for research in educational settings. It was developed as a means to inform policy by allowing individuals to voice their experience within the education system. NI uses stories as research material and data (Clandinin, 2013). It also requires the researcher to acknowledge that the participant’s narrative is created relationally. As such, the narrative under investigation has elements of both the sender (participant) and receiver (researcher). NI seeks to align itself with a process (narrative) that is at the core of human experience. It does so by acknowledging the very personal accounts people give of their lives and experiences (Clandinin, 2013). Stories - the narrating and the living of those stories - form part of the human condition (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). They give meaning to experiences and are a means of engaging with others. There is a lack of clarity in terms of research that constitutes NI and research that merely uses narratives as data. It is, therefore, important to arrive at a clear definition.

Murray (2015) defined a narrative as a string of events that can be organised into a beginning, middle and end. According to McAdams (as cited in Silver, 2013), a narrative needs six components: setting, characters, initiating events, attempts, consequences and reactions. Narratives thus have characters who have agency and exist within a space or setting. An initiating event is the catalyst that propels the characters toward their goal or, in the case of this research, toward their hopes. This attempt to reach the goal may lead to certain consequences, which in turn causes the characters to react to the consequences. Thus, cause and effect can be seen in how the events pan out.
Clandinin (2013) explained that NI attempts to understand experience through narrative. Thus, a person’s reality can be known through the stories they tell (Esin, 2011). Stories are, therefore, a way for people to order and organise their experiences (Silver, 2013). It must be noted that narratives are a product of not only the storyteller’s inner world but also their external reality (Esin, 2011). As such, narratives are also mediated by public narratives or narratives that spring from cultural and societal affiliations. Narrative research has its roots in postmodern ontology and acknowledges the importance of multiple subjectivities in narrative creation (Esin, 2011).

Two epistemological approaches are applicable to narrative research. This is dependent on how the researcher asks the research questions. First is the naturalist approach, which “use[s] rich descriptions of people in their natural habitats”. From this perspective, the researcher seeks answers to ‘what’ questions. The second epistemological approach is social constructionism, which suggests that reality can be constructed through interaction and discourse. A researcher guided by social constructionism seeks answers to ‘how’ questions. For this research, a naturalistic approach was taken.

NI places a narrative in three dimensions (or commonplaces): temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013). Firstly, the temporal commonplace of NI considers a participant’s past, present and future. A participant is situated within their own temporality. As such, their narratives are a product of their history, present experience, and imagined future. Secondly, NI validates and acknowledges a participant’s social and personal conditions. Personal conditions refer to the participant and researcher’s intrapersonal or psychological states, functioning, and personal attitudes. Social conditions are the social reality in which the participant and researcher find themselves (the milieu). As Clandinin (2013, p. 40) articulated, “cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives” all affect the creation of the participant’s narratives. Lastly, the place dimension refers to the physical location of the participant. Thus, a research participant’s narrative must be understood within their own context.

2.4.2. Critiques of Narrative Inquiry.

There are certain critiques and aspects of which researchers must be cautious when undertaking an NI study (Trahar, 2009). First, Ellis and Bochner (2000) warned that some narrative researchers do not prioritise the aim of collecting information during interviews. Their interviews are then more therapeutic than an analytic in nature. To counter this, Trahar (2009) suggested that
the researcher focus on being the story analyst and make this their main objective. Trahar also noted that the stories told and the act of storytelling may nevertheless have therapeutic value.

Second, Atkinson and Delamont (2007) argued that scientific rigour can be lost if a researcher places too high a value on personal narratives as an absolute account of objective reality. The researcher should be very mindful of the fact that narratives are still subjective perceptions (Atkinson & Delamont, 2007). They suggested that researchers may ascribe a moral quality to the narratives they collect and forget that the researcher’s main goal is to analyse. The researcher can ensure validity in NI by not only reproducing the participant’s narrative as is but also integrating supporting evidence into the re-storied account (Polkinghorne, 2007).

Lastly, Fox (2008) warned that the researcher must be sensitive to cultural difference and power dynamics when doing narrative research in a postcolonial context. If the researcher is not cognisant of the lens through which they view and retell a narrative, they may perpetuate colonial and oppressive narratives. Furthermore, the researcher must reflect on who has the right to tell the narratives of marginalised people. A researcher, speaking from a dominant position, may be at risk of recreating narratives that ‘other’ and depict people as victims of their cultures. This creates a degrading space wherein the dominant researcher sees themselves as saving their inferior participant through their research. The possibility of this happening is greater in NI as a reader may assume that the narrative presented is approved by the participant because it is in their own words. An example of this degradation unfolding in South African quantitative research is the research done by Nieuwoudt, Dickie, Coetsee, Engelbrecht and Terblanche (2019) wherein the researchers (all from a dominant culture) positioned their participants (women from a marginalised group) as victims of their culture.

For Fox (2008) NI should “create new meanings from our history… restore meaning to lost or colonised identities” (p.336). Fox argued that it is essential to understand both the context in which a narrative takes place and the power discrepancy between the teller of the narrative and their audience. Without this awareness, NI research runs the risk of having little validity and perpetuating othering (Spivak, 1990). This conceptualisation was vital to the current study as the researcher is a white person whereas the participants are people of colour. Furthermore, the research for this study took place in South Africa, a country with a legacy of colonialism and racial discrimination. Within this context, both the researcher and participants must guard against allowing historical power dynamics to dictate their engagement. Both researcher and participant must also be open to reflect on the possibility of an unequal dynamic unfolding during their interaction.
2.4.3. Narrative Inquiry in context of the current study.

Muwanga-Zake (2010) strongly advocated for the use of narrative research in African populations in order to produce research from an Afrocentric perspective. Muwanga-Zake encouraged the use of the Ubuntu narrative in research that aims to expand on African indigenous knowledge systems. Ubuntu as a cultural narrative is an example of an African philosophy and a paradigm that is gaining prominence in the research of indigenous knowledge (Muwanga-Zake, 2010). Ubuntu is an Afrocentric guideline for social conduct in some indigenous African cultures. It is a collectivist connection between people that guides them to treat each other in a humane and kind manner (Muwanga-Zake, 2010). It is based on the mantra “I am because you are.” Ubuntu is thus a philosophy that creates and upholds community life. From this perspective, the participant and researcher are interrelated and the subject-researcher dichotomy is rejected. According to Muwanga-Zake (2010), the process of knowledge creation then becomes a collectivist process. In narrative research the Ubuntu mantra may therefore be ‘I know because you know.’

Though not of African descent, Weingarten (2000) compared her own experience and conceptualisation of hope to Ubuntu. She stated that a community that shares in hope is able to get their members through adverse experiences. Thus, she saw her hope experience in terms of community. Weingarten (2000) exemplified this by divulging her narrative of hope during illness despite the possibility of death. She explained that for her (on her road to recovery) hope was a verb: an action that required participation. Hope was experienced through the body and soul. It was, for a single individual, too much to bear in the face of seemingly hopeless circumstances. By sharing her anguish, she was able to cope and so hope became a community responsibility.

McLean and Pratt’s (2006) research with emerging adults dealt with the connection between EA and NI. They compared two approaches to understanding identity development: identity status and the narrative life story. According to McLean and Pratt (2006, p. 714), “The status approach focuses on circumscribed life domains and patterns of decisions about those topics, whereas the narrative approach focuses on subjective evaluations and the storying of past experience.” They found that emerging adults who are nearer to adolescence have less meaning-making in their narratives than emerging adults who are closer to adulthood (McLean & Pratt, 2006). The authors thus suggested that meaning-making is an action that occurs as a person’s maturity level increases. In their research, McLean and Pratt (2006) further found that the telling of redemptive stories seemed to have more meaning to their participants. A redemptive sequence of events in a narrative is “when bad turns to good in stories, which may be one process by which negative events are reconstructed to contain meaning” (McLean & Pratt, 2006, p. 716). Their research also suggested
that personality elements affect the types of narratives participants tell. A more optimistic person is thus likely to tell a more hopeful story. Furthermore, a highly optimistic person’s narratives shows greater sophistication in terms of meaning-making by the time the participant is 23.

The final study presented in this section weaves all three the core concepts together, without explicitly discussing EA. The hope narratives of two Chinese students living in Canada were analysed according to the NI methodology of Clandinin and Connelly (Li & Larsen, 2012). Both participants were over 18 years in age and reflected on their past experiences as high school students. Li and Larsen (2012) investigated the two students’ experiences of their Canadian high school education. They wanted to uncover not only the challenges faced by the students but also what facilitated their learning of English. Li and Larsen (2012) hoped that their research would help to identify how teachers and schools can assist foreign language students to better adapt to the demands of English education. The two students’ narratives revealed that teachers’ encouragement helped them to nurture their own hopes of succeeding in their studies. This echoes Bernardo’s (2010) conceptualisation of an external locus of hope. Li and Larsen’s (2012) research seems to show that, through the research process, the two students became more focused on hope and possibilities. Li and Larsen (2012) explained,

Despair rather than hope characterized much of their initial story in Canada. When given the opportunity to tell their stories and to reflect intentionally on their experiences of hope, participants began to identify significant experiences that sustained their hopes for a Canadian education and a good future (p.56).

The studies presented in this section justify NI as an appropriate theoretical framework and methodology for this study. Muwanga-Zake (2010) and Weingarten (2000) showed how cultural narratives shape an individual’s experience. Muwanga-Zake (2010) also appealed to researchers working with African populations to use research methods that develop indigenous knowledge systems. NI is deemed an appropriate methodology for culturally sensitive research (Muwanga-Zake, 2010). Both McLean and Pratt (2006) and Li and Larsen (2012) conducted NI studies with emerging adults. Li and Larsen’s (2012) research served as an example of how to present research results on hope during emerging adulthood when doing an NI study.

2.4.4. Consolidation of the core concepts of the current study.

The current research was conceptualised with this understanding of EA, hope, and NI in mind. Firstly, the participants were the characters in their narratives, they were 18-25 year olds who
were exploring a variety of options in the hope of creating a coherent identity by the time they settled into adulthood. The participants were set in post-apartheid, post-recession, post-Fees-Must-Fall-protests South Africa and at a time of disillusionment with the idea of Nelson Mandela’s Rainbow Nation (Chikane, 2018). As they were emerging adults, all the participants were born after 1994. They were thus born after South Africa had become a democratic country, yet they still experience the aftermath and consequences of the apartheid regime. As Chikane (2018) explained, he grew up believing in the Rainbow Nation and the unity that it promised. This may be considered a hope that was instilled in South Africans. According to Chikane, this hope, however, was not delivered and the end goal not reached. Inequality and a lack of opportunities are still obstacles for black emerging adults in South Africa. Each participant shared their own experience of what it means to be a black emerging adult and this also influenced their internal states differently.

Each participant’s experience of hope also differed greatly. For this reason, the current research does not ascribe to a certain theory of hope, such as Snyder’s (2000a) conceptualisation. This study considers hope as a lived experience that is culturally embedded and that may have an external locus-of-hope (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004; Bernardo, 2010; Krafft & Walker, 2018). Just as NI focuses on the context of the participant, so too did this research give weight to the participants’ context and descriptions when investigating hope.

Additionally, the participants had different narratives in which they live. Some participants live in the institutional narratives of the university, while others live in the narratives of the corporate culture of the company that employs them. The initiating event of each of the participant’s stories of hope varied, as did their reactions to the initiating event. Some participants took up the call to action, while others avoided it.

Lastly, as narratives are created relationally, it is imperative for the researcher to be reflexive. The researcher must, therefore, identify how their own temporal-, social- and place commonplaces may influence the participant’s narrative. The way in which the researcher and participant relate to each other, links directly to the narratives that the participant shares or withholds. The researcher must thus be cognisant of the dynamics and biases between them and the participant.
2.4.5. Conclusion.

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) conceptualisation of NI views narratives as not only a source of data but also a way of engaging with and honouring lived experiences. NI provides a means of knowing reality through experience. In NI, the relationship between the researcher and participant is pivotal and forms part of the process of creating information. NI places a narrative in three dimensions (commonplaces): temporality, sociality and place (Clandinin, 2013). External narratives, such as public narratives, also affect individual narratives. Critics of NI argue that it runs the risk of being therapeutic rather than analytic (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). And, unless additional sources are integrated into the final research write-up, NI may lose some scientific rigour (Atkinson & Delamont, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2007). It can also lack cultural sensitivity and perpetuate colonial narratives if researchers are not reflexive to the power dynamics between researcher and participant (Spivak, 1990). NI studies based on EA and hope are sparse (Li & Larsen, 2012) and none have been done in South Africa. Yet, there is a strong call for NI in African populations as it is an appropriate method for Afrocentric research (Muwanga-Zake, 2010).

2.5. Evaluative Summary

EA is a contemporary developmental period that, in recent years, has gained interest as a topic of study (Arnett, 2000). It refers to individuals of the age group between 18-25. EA has five unique features that differentiate it from other developmental periods. Research has shown that EA is a critical period in human development (Wood et al., 2018). The decisions made and psychological strengths bolstered during EA have implications for subsequent years. As such, it is an important period to study.

This study focused on hope as an important aspect of EA. Hope has many definitions, but the positive psychology perspective asserts that it is a psychological strength that can protect an individual from mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Hope can also be defined from a cognitive perspective - the Hope Theory (Snyder, 2000a). Hope can, furthermore, be seen as perceived hope - a more personal experience with spiritual and altruistic aspects (Krafft & Walker, 2018). Hope is driven by both internal- and external factors (Bernardo, 2010). The way an individual experiences and thinks about hope may be shaped by their cultural narratives (Averill & Sundararajan, 2004). Research suggests that hope is beneficial to many aspects of human functioning (Krafft & Walker, 2018). For this reason, it is important to understand how to build hope during EA, as it can lead to positive outcomes throughout an individual’s life course.
Although Clandinin and Connelly (2000) developed NI as a research methodology, it is also a way of understanding the world through narratives. NI is rooted in postmodern thinking. It strongly emphasises the subjectivity of the researcher and asserts that knowledge is created in the relationship between the researcher and participant. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), public narratives inform personal narratives. When understanding and analysing a narrative, three commonplaces are important in NI: place (context), temporal (past, present and future) and personal (social and psychological factors) commonplaces. NI was originally developed for research to inform policy in educational settings. There has been little research done on EA using the NI approach.

Qualitative research on hope in EA is limited in South Africa and often centres on resilience after trauma. The literature highlighted in this chapter supports the need for research on hope during EA from the perspective of the emerging adult. NI is a method to gain an insider perspective. This study may start to lay the groundwork towards understanding narratives and the experience of hope in a South African context, particularly as relating to emerging adults.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research method and research questions and aims of the study. The research design and its implications for the study are also highlighted. The participants, settings and data collection are described and the method of data analysis is explained. In addition, the quality of research and trustworthiness as pertaining to this study are examined. Finally, this chapter addresses the ethical concerns taken into consideration during this study.

3.2. Research Question

The broad research question guiding this study is “How is hope storied or narrated by black South African emerging adults?” To answer this question, the specific aims were: to re-story the participants’ narratives to highlight the central theme of hope; to understand how the participants define hope in their stories; to discover how the sources of hope are storied in the participants’ narratives; to ascertain how the participants storied threats to their hope; and to uncover any cultural narratives that may be evident in the participants’ stories.

3.3. Research Design

This study is situated within the ambit of qualitative research. Within this approach, I implemented narrative research. Narrative research came about due to the increased need to understand psychological phenomena from a humanist perspective (Esin, 2011). Thus, psychological research moved away from a reliance only on quantitative and positivistic research methods (Silver, 2013). This development in research methodologies brought the individual’s experience to the forefront of that which was considered worthy of study. The linguistic turn in research methodologies acknowledges the importance of language in the way it shapes a person’s perception of their experience (Henning, van Rensburg, & Smit, 2013). Social constructivism and a shift in research methodologies towards the acceptance of multiple subjectivities (as postulated by post-modern thinking) have also gained ground as viable paradigms for research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Social constructivism is, therefore, an appropriate paradigm for this study, as it investigates people’s personal narratives of their lives and experiences. From a social constructivist perspective, the focus of the research should thus be the subjective meaning that the participants create through their narratives.
This research specifically considered participants’ narratives of hope during emerging adulthood (EA). The main purpose of using a narrative approach in this study was to understand how respondents give meaning to experience (Esin, 2011). Using narratives as data allowed for a conceptualisation of the respondents’ perception of their reality in the context of their external world. This is an ontological assumption made by narrative analysis. Furthermore, Esin (2011, p.94) suggested that narrative analysis is appropriate when researching “individual experiences of psychological processes.”

A variety of methods fall within the narrative research approach. This study used Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) method. As described in the literature review, NI is a qualitative research method that seeks to explore the unique narratives that participants live and tell of their experiences. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the role of the researcher is to become the collector of narratives and field texts (data on the research participants and their surroundings). The researcher must then contextualise these narratives, analyse them and finally ‘re-story’ them. ‘Re-storying’ means that the researcher retells the deconstructed initial narrative (shared by the participant) in the final study. Aspects of the researcher will invariably be amalgamated with the participant’s story, as the participant’s narrative is presented through the researcher’s lens. It is essential that researchers collaborate with their participants throughout the process. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) called this process walking alongside the participants.

The researcher as an integrated aspect of the participant’s narrative is a more contemporary approach to research. As opposed to traditional research that advocated an objective researcher. For this reason, the study is exploratory in nature. Furthermore, not much is known of the intersection of narratives of hope and EA, especially within the black South African population. To uncover information that is exploratory or breaks new ground, Stebbins (2012) recommended that researchers become closely familiar with their research subject matter. NI fits Stebbins’ suggestion as it requires the researcher to gain first-hand experience of the participants’ world to understand their narratives. Stebbins described this process as living alongside the participants. Exploratory researchers must be flexible and creative in their approach as there is the possibility for their research to yield unexpected outcomes (Miller, 2011). During the research process, I adopted a pragmatic attitude that helped me adapt my procedure as required. This was especially necessary during the interview phase where participants responded to questions in unexpected ways.

NI considers not only the participant’s and researcher’s narratives but also broader social, historical and institutional narratives and how they shape the narrative of the individual (Clandin
The researcher must thus consider their participants’ context. In this study, it was important to consider the unique context in which young black South African adults live.

3.4. Participants and Setting

I obtained the sample through purposive non-probability sampling, as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018) for narrative research. This granted me access to rich, detailed narratives (Esin, 2011). The inclusion criteria for participants were that they be black South Africans between 18-25 years of age and willing to participate in the study. The age criterion ensured that participants were emerging adults as per Arnett’s (2000) definition. Lastly, it was important that the participants be able to express themselves adequately in English. There are two reasons for the language proficiency criterion. Firstly, NI is a research methodology that is based on storytelling and language. As such a participant should be able to express themselves adequately enough to be able to create a coherent story. A participant who has an expressive language difficulty would not be suited to NI research. Secondly, I (as the researcher) am only proficient in Afrikaans and English. Because of the importance of understanding nuanced meaning in NI it was important that no meaning is lost during translation. There were no other exclusion criteria. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that in narrative research there can be as few as two participants if the data is rich and textured. This study included three participants to ensure richness of data.

Once the inclusion criteria was established I recruited the sample through convenience sampling by approaching gatekeepers with access to emerging adults who fit the selection criteria. The three gatekeepers were each in a managerial position at their respective companies with younger employees under their management. The locations of these companies were easily accessible to me. It should be noted that the managers put no pressure on the participants to take part in this research. The participants shared their narratives out of their own volition. I asked the gatekeepers some questions, such as the potential participant’s age, history and ethnicity, to determine adherence to the inclusion criteria. I then emailed the research information sheet (Appendix A) to the gatekeepers who presented the information to the participants. I contacted the participants after the gatekeepers had established their availability and willingness to engage with the research process. I elaborated on the research aims and what was expected of them. In the initial meeting, I also discussed informed consent and their rights as participants (Appendix B). Esin (2011) stated that transparency of research aims is vital when recruiting participants for narrative research. The use of the three gatekeepers provided additional background information on the participants. This enabled me to gauge their suitability for the study. Esin (2011) asserted that a
participant in narrative research must be able to provide information relevant to the research topic. It was, therefore, essential to ensure that the participants were appropriate to the study. For narrative research, the population should also be easily accessible to the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using gatekeepers allowed me contact with such a population.

The participants were two females (both 25 years old) and one male (23 years old). All three participants were busy completing tertiary education. The participants identified with an ethnic group that speaks a language (Isizulu, Sepedi and Sesotho) recognised as one of the official South African languages. I interviewed each of the participants in a location they felt communicated something personal about them. This was done to ensure that Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) suggested process of living alongside the participants took place. I made observations on the settings, which served as field notes for further analysis. Based on aspects of their stories and home language, pseudonyms were cooperatively chosen for each participant. A short description of each participant (using their pseudonym) and their setting is given below.

3.4.1. **Identity portrait of Thabiso (joy bringer).**

Thabiso is a 23-year-old male who speaks isiZulu and Sepedi. He resides in an affluent suburb in Pretoria. He is one of two children to his mother and has a younger sister. Thabiso is completing a diploma in musical theatre and dance. He is a drama teacher; a musician in a band; and a freelance performer. At the time of the first interview, he was in a committed relationship. Thabiso dreams of his band becoming a successful musical group that is well-supported and recognised.

The setting of Thabiso’s interview was a pub, where his band performed after the interview. He explained that the pub was significant for him as they had employed him as barman prior to his musical career. It was also in this pub that his band had had their first performance. The pub had a diverse clientele of mostly emerging adults. The atmosphere was relaxed, social and bustling. People sat in big groups at tables. The pub played rock ‘n’ roll and heavy metal and the décor of the establishment matched the genre of the music.

3.4.2. **Identity portrait of Nqobile (one who has come up victorious in a hopeless situation).**

Nqobile is a 25-year-old, isiZulu-speaking female. She resides in an informal settlement. At the time of the interview, Nqobile had been married for two months and was working as lay
counsellor. She had put her auxiliary social work studies on hold to collect the money necessary for her study fees. Nqobile wants to complete her studies to make a success of a career in social work. She hopes that this will provide her economic stability and the opportunity to help people.

Nqobile’s interview took place in a community centre in an informal settlement. The community centre offers a preschool; counselling services; a clinic (on certain days of the week); school aftercare; and an open school for undocumented children (who cannot be enrolled in a mainstream South African school). The centre has no electricity or running water. The community serviced by the centre experiences abject poverty and many community members make a living of picking through the rubbish heaps next to the settlement. Many of the community members are undocumented foreign nationals with poor employment prospects. The community centre relies fully on donations and sponsorships, as community members cannot pay any fees for the services offered.

3.4.3. **Identity portrait of Lesedi (light).**

Lesedi is a 25-year-old Sepedi-speaking female. She lives in a middle-class suburb. At the time of the interview, she was working as a graphic designer. Lesedi is the last born of six children and explained that she is from big families on both her mother and father’s side. She is enrolled at UNISA to complete a Bachelors in Information Science specialising in multimedia (BIS multimedia). Lesedi is enthusiastic about brand development and has a passion for visual design. She articulated that one of her biggest hopes for her future is that she may be a mother and have a nuclear family with a strong bond.

Lesedi’s interview took place in a conference room at her workplace. The conference room was well-equipped with state-of-the-art technology and lighting. It was an affluent corporate environment; however, the specific corporate brand communicated a fun, vibrant and playful image. Lesedi works in is an open-plan layout with constant movement and noise. The employees of the company seemed diverse and lively. The location gave the impression of a successful company that provided well for their employees. The building was clean and strict security measures controlled entrance to it.

3.4.4. **Researcher as co-creator.**

NI uncovers information created in the relational space between the researcher and the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As mentioned, the narratives of the participants are
invariably imbued with the researcher’s own experiences. Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) argued that the researcher’s life experience, interests and choice of words when interviewing the participant move the narrative into a specific direction. In NI, the researcher must acknowledge their own subjectivities and influence on the research process. Researchers using NI should be reflexive about how the research process will change them (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013). The centrality of the relationship between the researcher and the participant is therefore important to acknowledge. Figure 3.1 is a visual depiction of how the participant and researcher’s subjectivities and characteristics interact when NI is conducted.

Figure 3.1. The relational space in NI. A visual representation of how the narrative elements within each party interact.

3.4.5. Identity portrait of Aliza (joyful).

With this in mind, I include an autobiographical narrative of myself, the researcher. The aim is to acknowledge both how my own experiences shaped this research process and the information I gained from it. I am a white South African female born in the late 1980s. I did not understand apartheid, but was invariably part of it and benefitted from the ruling ideology. I remember the end of the oppressive apartheid system and the excitement at the birth of the Rainbow Nation.

My family nurtured me and told me I could be anything I wanted to be. I was free to choose as I pleased. They raised me with the hopeful outlook that things will always get better (an outlook also advocated by the concept of the Rainbow Nation). As I became more mature, disillusionment followed. Following my dreams seemed a fool’s pursuit. This process was mirrored by the political and social climate in South Africa – the country became disillusioned with the myth of the Rainbow Nation (Chikane, 2018). When I was between the ages of 18-25 years old, I fit neatly into Arnett’s
My journey towards what I would consider the adult version of myself was filled with change and was, at times, tumultuous. At the same time South Africa’s democracy was trying to find its new national identity in a very unstable period. Some South African citizens felt (and perhaps still do) that change was happening too slowly (Chikane, 2018; Malema, 2014), while others felt it was happening too fast (Kriel, n.d.).

Young South Africans of colour were questioning the Rainbow Nation’s legitimacy (Chikane, 2018) and I was also riddled with questions. What did it mean for me to be a young white South African? Should I feel guilty over the apartheid system from which I unavoidably benefitted? Should I try to make amends based on this guilt? Should I feel resentment over my perception of being forced to feel guilty for a system I had no hand in creating? Should I ‘give back the land’ and leave South Africa? The loop of endless questions seemed to extinguish any hope that politically things would get better. This kind of rhetoric was not unique to me and these questions were woven into the social narratives of many young white South Africans (Kriek, 2019; Zeeman, 2019).

My deep-seated belief that life always gets better would not allow me to accept that such hopeless questions, which elicit anxiety and despair, were the only questions. I started asking new questions. What needs to change for the current sociopolitical situation to get better? What does it mean for me as a white South African female to be part of that change? What do I need to learn to be an ally of change? These were my motivation to study psychology, which I started when I was 25 years old. Since starting my psychology studies, I have had to take inventory of my own biases and perceptions - I found myself wanting. Only understanding the human psyche through Western perspectives of psychology put me at a great disadvantage to do meaningful work in my field in South Africa. I have since been driven to expand my horizons and to understand the perspectives of the people I work with even when they are different from me in many aspects.

My work as a counselling psychology student and then an intern introduced me to the centrality of hope in the therapeutic space. It is often one of the therapeutic goals to bolster a client’s hope reserves. I worked in a Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) modality. In SFBT, hope and the reinforcement of various opportunities and different outcomes are pivotal (de Shazer et al., 2007). SFBT acknowledges the client’s subjective experience and is based on social constructivism and post-modern thinking. This modality uses the way therapists ask questions as a change agent. Working in this modality also shaped my language use and the way I ask questions. Implementing the practical aspects of the Masters’ degree in counselling psychology, I understood why a therapist should be able to encourage hopefulness in their clients. The client base a therapist
can see in South Africa is very diverse. Thus, understanding how hope functions and what hope means to young black South Africans may make therapy more effective. This was my personal motivator in undertaking this specific research topic.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Higher Degrees Committee and the Humanities Research Ethics Committee, University of Johannesburg, before the research commenced (Appendix C). The data collected was narrative interviews. These were conducted with three participants who were invited to partake in the telling of their stories of hope (as described above). The narrative interview is similar to a semi-structured interview as it is open-ended, in-depth, and not restrictive (Esin, 2011). Collaborative meaning-making is another hallmark of this interview method. Participants responded to seven semi-structured questions about their stories of hope (Appendix D). The interview protocol was loosely based on Clandinin’s (2013) three commonplaces of NI - temporality (past, present future), place, and sociality. The questions were structured to encourage the telling of personal narratives. They also required the participants to give their subjective meaning of hope. After I developed an initial list of questions the list was reviewed by three reviewers. Firstly, a colleague who also did a qualitative study with interviews reviewed the questions. After I incorporated her suggestions, an expert in the field of NI checked that the questions align with the NI methodology. Lastly, my research supervisor gave her input. From the three reviewer’s suggestions seven questions were finalised. Each participant was asked all seven questions developed through this process, and I asked the participants to elaborate on many of their answers. Esin (2011) advised researchers to base follow-up questions on the participant’s responses in narrative interviews. The researcher’s questioning should encourage an unpacking of the layers of meaning. For this study, it meant that each of the interviews had unique aspects and a variety of topics that did not overlap with the other interviews. A key question in the narrative interview is, “And then what happened?” (Esin, 2011). I utilised this question to encourage a rich telling of a story. Another question, based more on SFBT principles, asked to uncover the participants’ sociality commonplace was, “What is it about you that led to this outcome?” This question allowed the participants to communicate their personal traits and strengths, which concurs with Positive Psychology’s assertion that hope is a strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Audio of the interviews was audio recorded and field notes of observations were made. A transcriptionist (who signed a confidentiality agreement) transcribed the data verbatim and the participants chose their pseudonyms for the transcription.
My field notes also formed part of data collection. I made non-participant observations on the interview settings. Non-participant observations are made when the researcher does not directly engage with the setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is important to note Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) argument that the researcher invariably experiences the setting through their own subjectivities, consequently observations cannot be purely objective. The observations were made on an adaptation of a contact summary sheet developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The contact summary included observations on the actors, place, activities and reflections. Reflections on future questions to ask or observations to make were also included in the contact summary.

3.6. Data Analysis

Once transcriptions of the interviews were complete, data analysis of both the interviews and field notes commenced. Esin (2011) recommended a four-stage data analysis. These four stages are subtext selection; thematic category creation (coding); sorting material into categories; and drawing conclusions. The selection of coding methods must be guided by the researcher’s notes on their subjectivities; their level of participation; research design; and the type of data collected (Saldaña, 2013). Saldaña (2013) noted that the uniqueness of each research endeavour makes it possible for a researcher to take an eclectic approach to coding. According to Saldaña (2013), an eclectic approach is similar to Strauss and Corbin’s (1997) Open Coding, as it uses various First Cycle coding techniques from grammatical, elemental and exploratory coding methods. This allows the researcher to extract themes and codes that answer the research question and aims.

For this study, I used four of the 32 coding methods outlined by Saldaña (2013). Firstly, holistic coding was used in the exploratory phase to extract some basic themes from the data. Holistic coding does not consider the data line by line, it looks at bigger units of data to derive their themes (Dey, 1993). Saldaña (2013) suggested this technique as a first step to chunk the basic topics and themes in the data. After this surface-level coding, a more detailed, line-by-line approach was taken. I employed in vivo coding during the elemental phase of coding. As a participant’s subjective experience in their own words is central to NI, in vivo coding was an appropriate first cycle technique. In vivo coding uses direct quotes from the participants as codes (Corbin, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Next, descriptive coding was applied to the field notes to identify the topics that arose in the interviews (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Wolcott, 1994). Finally, value coding highlighted the participant’s values, attitudes and beliefs (Gable & Wolf, 1993; Miles et al., 2014). Value coding is an affective method of coding (Saldaña, 2013). The data was organised so that each participant’s narrative could be coded separately during the first cycle of coding. As mentioned
above, I used an eclectic approach during coding. An eclectic approach also guides the researcher in their second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013). During the second cycle of coding the three participants’ codes were integrated and repeating themes noted.

From these observations, I created broader categories and divided each of the codes into these categories. The categories were amalgamated into four main themes, namely Defining Hope, Sources of Hope, Threats to Hope and Cultural Narratives. Throughout the coding process there was constant communication with the participants, which served as member checks. Member checks ensure that the extracted information stays as close as possible to the participant’s narratives and intensions (Pitney, 2004). Henning (2013) advised that the researcher identify patterns of shared meaning between participant narratives during the data analysis phase. These patterns should have regularity, rhythm and cohesion so that the meaning making of the participants becomes clear. NI’s three-dimensional narrative space of temporality, sociality and place formed the framework onto which the participants’ stories were re-storied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Within the three-dimensional NI space, each of the main themes was discussed in detail - subthemes, salient codes and quotes were interpreted and discussed. The approach to data analysis was both inductive and deductive. The process started deductively because it went from an already conceptualised method of narrative data analysis (Reichertz, 2014). The analysis was based on extracting themes of hope within the three-dimensional narrative space. In the process of coding certain themes seemed to mirror the themes of Li and Larsen’s (2012) study. Thus these already formulated themes were used to refine the coding and were ultimately used as the main themes. The exception is the main theme Cultural Narratives which was extracted by inductive analysis. Thus the data guided the creation of this theme (Reichertz, 2014). The subthemes were created by inductive analysis as they emerged from the data.

3.7. Quality of Research and Trustworthiness

Quality of research and trustworthiness are important aspects of qualitative studies. To ensure good quality research, the research method must correspond to the research question (Henning et al., 2013). To create coherence in this study, I used NI to answer the research question on the narratives people create about hope in their lives.

Pitney (2004) proposed member checks to ensure the credibility of qualitative research. Thus, the participants were given the data and findings to verify the accuracy of the captured narratives. Member checks are also a means to provide dependability in qualitative research.
Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended prolonged engagement with the participants so that they can verify the accuracy of the interpretations. For this reason, I contacted the participants of this study after each step - data collection, analysis and final write-up. Through their input, I could ensure that their subjective experiences were communicated in the findings. I did not use an independent co-coder in this study. The reason for this is that as described in section 3.4.4. Researcher as co-creator, my interpretations of the participants’ narratives (and by extension my coding) were part of the process of creating the final narrative. Thus, by introducing an external coder their subjectivities would colour their interpretation of the data in a different way. However, Pitney (2004) recommended having NI research peer reviewed by an expert in the field. An expert in the field of NI (as conceptualised by Clandinin and Connelly) checked this study during the data collection and analysis phases to ensure that the procedure was in line with the methodology. The role of the expert during data collection was firstly to review the interview schedule to confirm whether the questions aligned with Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) conceptualisation of NI. Secondly, the expert looked over all aspects of the study’s methodology to ensure that it is sound and follows Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) prescriptions. Lastly, the expert reviewed the transcriptions of each of the interviews and verbally communicated her initial responses to the data. Throughout this process the expert’s suggestions were incorporated where applicable. These inclusions were discussed with her and where I decided not to include her suggestions I motivated my decision. During data analysis the expert reviewed my coding and the final results and discussion chapter. She did a critical reading of the results to ensure that there were no aspects of the results that were vague or ambiguous. She indicated where she felt that I needed to clarify my argument. If the ambiguity stemmed from my participant’s narratives I would contact them to clarify their meaning and intentions. Subsequently changes were made to ensure trustworthiness and quality of the research. Reflexivity and the acknowledgement of researcher bias throughout the research project is another way to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I therefore made clear not only the position from which I came but also how that might influence the results. For this reason, Chapter Five includes a section on my biases and subjectivities that may have coloured the results.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

As the research involved interviews, ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee. The ethical considerations of this study were based on the suggestions of Strydom (2011) and Leedy and Ormrod (2014). Thus, I adhered to the four broad categories of ethical behaviour when conducting psychological research. These categories are
protecting participants from harm; voluntary and informed participation; a participant’s right to privacy; and honesty when reporting findings. This research also adhered to the ethical guidelines for psychologists as set out by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA, 2006). I obtained written informed consent from each participant for both the interview and the recording thereof. I also made the participants aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

The study posed no foreseeable risk to the participants, as they were merely asked to share their stories and experiences of hope. However, I had anticipated that it may be difficult for a participant to speak of hope without referring to hopeless situations. For this reason, after the interviews, I asked each participant how they had experienced the interview process. This was done to ascertain whether the interview process had elicited any negative feelings. The two female participants both shared that some of their memories of hope were an emotional experience, as they had both recalled difficult memories to explain how their hope helped them in those dark times. I gave contact details of mental health service providers to both women. I also followed up with them post-interview to ensure that they had no further negative emotions as a result of the interviews.

Ethical considerations unique to NI are rooted in the relational nature of data collection (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Josselson, 2007). The narrative researcher is encouraged to be very mindful and ethical in how they present a participant’s narrative. Honouring and protecting the participant is central in narrative research and requires an ethical attitude from the researcher. This may include the researcher’s commitment to using neutral language and not lead a participant towards a desired answer. The participant’s voice and opinions should be accepted as their perception of their reality. They are the expert in their life narrative. Thus, if a participant explains that they had a particular reaction to a particular circumstance this should be accepted, even if it seems against the norm. Josselson (2007) also highlighted the importance of an ethical ending to the narrative interview. One way of doing this is to ensure that the participant is contained and has returned to a less emotionally saturated psychological state. I used the reflection after the interview as a technique to ensure that the participants could debrief. Another potential ethical dilemma of narrative interviews is that the intense and personal contact with the researcher may kindle a desire in the participant to continue contact after the interview. It is, consequently, essential that the researcher be sensitive to this and clearly define the boundaries of the researcher/participant relationship. In this study, there were no ethical dilemmas in terms of boundary violations.
Prior to the interview, I presented the participants with an information sheet that outlined the purpose of the study and their ethical rights as participants. There was no need for deception, so it clarified all aspects of the study. The participants were also informed that their real names would not be used in the interview. This was to prevent even the transcriptionist from identifying them. The transcriptionist of the interviews is also a psychologist who adheres to the ethical regulations of the HPCSA. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement to protect the privacy of the participants. The interview data and transcriptions were stored on cloud storage (Google Drive) that is password protected and to which only I have access. Once the transcription and coding were complete, I deleted the audio recordings.

The participants’ rights were honoured in terms of their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Strydom, 2011). In the write-up of the research findings, the participants are identified by pseudonyms to protect their identities. Any identifying information was also omitted from the final dissertation. The final dissertation was sent to the participants to review and confirm that sufficient precaution to protect their identifying details had been taken.

3.9. Summary

This chapter gives an account of the research method, design and approach employed in this study. The research aims and questions are stipulated. A description of the participants, settings and data is provided. The chapter then highlights the method behind data analysis. Strategies are addressed to ensure not only the quality of research and trustworthiness but also the ethical concerns of this study. Chapter Four analyses, interprets and re-stories the data described in this chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, interpretation and discussion of the study. The main aim of the study was to examine how black South African emerging adults narrate stories of hope. As such, this chapter re-stories the participants’ narratives to highlight their central themes of hope. The narrative of each participant is coloured by their experience. To reflect this, each participant’s voice and manner of expression have been preserved where possible. The narratives are framed in Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, which includes dimensions of sociality, temporality and place. The interview questions were based on these dimensions, and the interviews were coded using holistic-, in vivo-, value- and descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013). Based on the literature and these codes (Li & Larsen, 2012), four main themes were identified: Defining Hope, Sources of Hope, Threats to Hope and Cultural Narratives. Within each theme are subthemes that are presented as an integrated metanarrative of the three participants.

4.2. Re-Storying the Participants’ Narratives to Highlight the Central Theme of Hope

Clandinin and Connelly (1990) suggested three ways to analyse and present the data in an NI study: broadening, burrowing and re-storying. Broadening refers to a general observation about a person or event and how it unfolds. It answers the questions, “What sort of person are you? and “What kind of society is this?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). In this study, broadening was utilised to contextualise the three participant narratives. Contextualisation in the form of general comments on the participants’ characters and milieu provides the reader perspective through which to construe participant narratives. The term burrowing refers to focusing on a specific event to ascertain “the event’s emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities; we then ask why the event is associated with these feelings and what their origins might be” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). To this end, value coding was used to elicit information on the participants’ values, attitudes and beliefs (Gable & Wolf, 1993; Miles et al., 2014). The participant’s point of view of an event is central to the burrowing approach. Re-storying expands on the burrowing approach by considering present and future meanings that participants ascribe to past events. Past events are re-storied to fit into the person’s larger life narrative or the life story they are trying to live. When reporting research findings the three approaches can be mutually exclusive or be used in an integrated manner. All three approaches were utilised in this study.
4.2.1. Thabiso's story of hope – Opportunities.

Thabiso was born in a South African township to a single mother. He has a younger sister for whom he feels responsible. He described his relationship with his mother and sister as close and supportive. When he was a toddler, they moved out of the township to a suburb. At school, he participated in cultural and sport activities. Thabiso excelled in the opportunities presented to him. He often found himself in leadership positions, which opened many doors for him. Thabiso suffered several concussions during his rugby career, which caused him to develop epilepsy. In Grade 11, he stopped playing rugby. This motivated him to pour all his energy into developing a career in the arts.

Thabiso had several options for tertiary education, which included political sciences, law and the arts at South African and international universities. Against his mother’s wishes, he decided to pursue a career in the arts - studying for a musical theatre diploma. In his second year of studies Thabiso was suspended as he could not pay his tuition fees. He explained that this had a detrimental effect on his mental health: he felt as if his dreams were thwarted. Thabiso had built up a support base amongst his friends. So when they heard of his predicament, they rallied behind him. They convinced his lecturers to allow him to keep attending class. Within eight weeks of his return to class, an anonymous donor paid his outstanding fees. In his third year, he took up various jobs to pay for tuition, but struggled to balance academic and work life demands. His mother took a second job to help him pay the third year fees. At the time of the interview, he had to finish a few more projects before completion of his qualification.

On stepping into the job market, Thabiso found that there were limited opportunities for actors in South Africa. His mother expected him to contribute and cover his own costs, so he started working as a barman. He found, however, that this position increased his use of alcohol to a point where he felt that he was overindulging. He wanted to pursue a more meaningful life. Thabiso started putting practices in place to ensure that he could build a career in the entertainment industry. He contracted an acting agency to represent him and attended auditions. He found the pace of attending auditions and working in the bar exhausting: it did not seem sustainable.

Three months after signing with the acting agency, Thabiso participated in an open mic event at the bar where he worked. This afforded him the opportunity to show case his singing ability. He assembled a band, which had some short-lived success until his band members moved. This experience motivated Thabiso to pursue a more stable career in the music industry. Experience
had taught him that this could offer him opportunities and that he could excel at such an endeavour. During this time he also started a career as a drama teacher.

Thabiso created a new band built on a brand of hybridity - catering to music lovers of many genres and diverse cultures. He regards the band as his main project and has seen it generate numerous opportunities for growth for him. In telling the story of his history, Thabiso highlighted the importance of his bicultural identity. He feels that this is the foundation of the band and the reason that they stand out. Arnett (2003) and Ferguson and Adams (2016) identified bicultural identities in their research on EA in diverse populations. ‘Bicultural identity’ refers to the emerging adult as embracing not only aspects of their own culture (such as family responsibilities) but also individualistic aspirations embedded in Western cultures. Thabiso describes his experience of a bicultural identity as follows:

I was this privileged boy. I was that coconut kid, or that kid that everyone called a coconut, but I knew where I was from. I knew I could speak my own language. I knew I could speak vernacular, and I understood my culture. So, I lived the best of both worlds, which I think other people don’t actually get today.

Thabiso’s current band has performed at a number of festivals and shared the stage with established artists. He admitted that at times he becomes lax, but he has found that wanting the band to succeed motivates him to continuously develop his skills to be a better performer. Thabiso has faith that his journey with his current band will afford him a bright future and open the right doors to allow him to establish himself in the entertainment industry.

For Thabiso, hope is a motivator. It makes a person continue on their journey to the achievement of their goals despite the challenges they face. Thabiso recounted that whenever he felt that he was at the bottom of the barrel and ready to give up, he held on to the hope that performance and the stage would never let him down. He stated that hope was not something set in stone - hope could be whatever a person needed at a certain point in their lives to get them out of a dark place. Thabiso’s narrative revealed that for him hope often originates from important relationships in his life. These relationships provide him the encouragement he needs. His passion for theatre and performance also fuels his hope and keeps him committed to making a success of his chosen career.

4.2.2. Nqobile's story of hope – I’m a Survivor.

Nqobile’s story starts in a township where she lived with her mother and younger brother. She described her younger, school-going self as diligent and compliant to her mother’s wishes. She
explained that while she was growing up her family had a strategy they used whenever they were faced with uncertainty or challenges. They would profess “God will provide”. This strategy fortified their hope for a favourable outcome. Nqobile says that this tradition, which was initiated by her brother, has helped them cope with many difficult situations.

After matriculating, Nqobile started exploring her own identity apart from her family. She thoroughly enjoyed engaging in social interaction, which included attending parties. This did not always sit well with her mother and they would often be at odds about Nqobile’s lifestyle choices. While her school days were uncomplicated and carefree, Nqobile explained that after school she went through a stage of stubbornness and entitlement. She felt that since she had completed matric, she no longer needed a parent’s guidance. However, the reality of unemployment forced her to start thinking of her future. As Nqobile’s grandmother was living alone in another township, Nqobile decided to live with her and help her.

One of Nqobile’s biggest traumas was being in an abusive relationship. At first, she denied the seriousness of her situation. People appealed to her mother to intervene and discourage Nqobile from the relationship, but her mother knew that it was a decision Nqobile had to make for herself. Financial security was her biggest motivator for remaining in the relationship. Nqobile hoped that her staying in the toxic relationship would leave her family be better off. Her mother assured her that they would manage without the abusive boyfriend’s money, but Nqobile only left him once she no longer loved him: once she felt that enough was enough.

Nqobile took a long time to recover from this relationship. She found it difficult to get romantically involved again and needed distance from men. Nqobile decided to find herself. She eventually learnt that she was a brave woman. She also drew lessons from the abusive relationship, which she feels helped prepare her for future relationships. At the time of my first meeting with Nqobile she had been married for two months. She was finding her feet in her new identity as a wife.

Nqobile stated that she was the author of her own story and, as such, hoped God would provide her two things, a “lovely partner and a lovely job”. She explained that with luck she could have both. For Nqobile, worthy employment would allow her to live comfortably enough to provide for her family and give her purpose. Nqobile had chosen to study social work as she felt it would give her the opportunity to help people. She started her studies in auxiliary social work and soon realised that paying for tertiary education would place a big financial burden on her family. Her
mother helped pay some of the registration fees and her younger brother used some of his bursary money to pay the rest.

As part of her studies, she had to gain practical experience. Through a faith-based organisation, she was placed in counselling centres in two informal settlements and at a police station’s victim empowerment programme. When she realised that she could not afford to continue her studies, she approached the director of the faith-based organisation. Nqobile informed the director that she would have to drop out of the programme. Her hopes of attaining her goals were thwarted. The director, who was also Nqobile’s mentor, felt strongly that Nqobile should complete her studies, so she paid Nqobile’s outstanding fees. She also offered her a paid position as a social auxiliary worker within the organisation. Working for this organisation was an eye-opener for Nqobile: it taught her to appreciate the opportunities she’d been given.

Nqobile’s hopes for the future are to not only be successful and a good provider for her family but to also be brave. For her, success means helping people; owning a home and a car; and having a job that makes her feel excited and fulfilled. She sees hope as playing a part in the realisation of this future. She believes in the power of hope and says it inspires her to pursue her goals. She feels that hope helps a person be kind to others and good in your work- and family roles. For Nqobile, her religious convictions play a prominent role in how hopeful she is. As mentioned, her family’s strategy for coping in adverse situations is to believe that “God will provide”.

4.2.3. Lesedi’s story of hope – A Light at the End of the Tunnel.

Being the last born of six children, Lesedi comes from a big family. She grew up in a township, but later moved to the suburbs to be closer to work. She has a close relationship with her mother who she feels is her safe haven and who understands her needs. Lesedi explained that her older siblings have always supported and guided her. She had also learnt about herself by observing them while growing up. Her siblings were a source of hope during a particularly difficult time in her life: when Lesedi was seven, her parents had a custody battle over her. Her siblings’ continued assurance that the situation would improve gave her hope at the time. Lesedi said that their support was like the light at the end of a tunnel. Life seemed to return to normal after the matter of custody was settled. A dark cloud, however, was cast on her relationship with her father.

As a child, Lesedi discovered a passion for technology and design. At home, she was often the one tasked with discovering how new gadgets worked. This developed into a love of gaming.
Having seen the consequences of her older siblings’ party habits, Lesedi preferred to keep herself busy with indoor activities, which included gaming. Gaming also became a means of emotional regulation, as it provided a safe space to vent her aggression and hyperactivity and ease her anxiety. Although gaming was a safe distraction, Lesedi noticed that her male gaming friends would underestimate her because she was a girl. For her, this was motivation to prove her worth and ability.

Working in a male-dominated department, Lesedi still feels underestimated by co-workers. Lesedi has thus ensured that she delivers high-quality work to prove that she is capable. She is in the process of completing a degree in multimedia: Lesedi is training to become a digital designer. Her love for design stems from a fascination with the impact of design on people - whether it is to open people’s minds to new information or to grab their attention. Lesedi is passionate about design.

One of the biggest challenges Lesedi has faced was connected to her goal of earning a degree. She said that during that phase of her life, “dark clouds came with thunder”. Lesedi described a number of obstacles that led to her putting her studies on hold for some time. Financial difficulties, depression and other unexpected events made Lesedi realise that she needed an alternative route to achieving her goal of graduating (and making her mother proud). Despite this being a painful experience for Lesedi she has shown resilience and is completing her degree through UNISA. Lesedi’s second goal for the future is to have children of her own with whom to have a strong bond. Other than that, she sees her future as a blank page, as she has realised that things do not always go as planned. She has thus decided to take the future as it comes and to plan for the things that she can control.

Lesedi’s conceptualisation of hope is that it is the light at the end of the tunnel. She believes that we grab on to hope to get us through dark and difficult times. Even when a situation feels pointless or a person feels lost, hope is the glimmer of positivity that guides one back to their goals. Lesedi explains that as one gets closer to achieving their goal, their hope that the goal is achievable increases. For her, hope is a motivating force. She describes herself as a goal-driven person who enjoys the accomplishment of progressing towards achieving her objectives. At the end of each year, she undertakes a reflective process to gauge how she can improve in the year ahead.
4.3. **Contextual Setting of the Narratives**

This section provides a socio-political context in which the narratives are embedded. This enables a holistic understanding of the discussion of the themes and subthemes of hope that have been extrapolated from the participants’ narratives. Clandinin (2013) argued that we all live not only in our own stories but also in interconnected stories outside of ourselves. Familial, cultural, temporal, institutional, gendered and public stories all impact the stories we tell and how we interpret others’ stories. Though the three participants have dissimilar histories and temperaments, there is some overlap – which is noted in this section. Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional NI space is also evidenced in this section. Direct quotes are indicated as follows: A specifies Aliza (myself); T designates Thabiso; N stands for Nqobile; and L indicates Lesedi as the speaker. This reflects the relational nature of knowledge creation in NI. It also draws attention to the fact that I (the researcher) co-created the narratives through my responses.

4.3.1. **Past, present and future.**

Temporality refers to the transitioning of time that occurs within the narratives of the participant (Clandinin, 2013). Accordingly, past, present and future narratives are important in this dimension.

A historical narrative that the three participants have in common is apartheid. Apartheid was an oppressive system of segregation based on racial divides, which was the hegemony in South Africa from 1948-1994. Laws such as the Population Registration Act of 1950 and the Reservation of the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 caused racial discrimination to become an institutionalised and political narrative in the lives of South Africans. This institutionalised narrative of racism stated that white people were superior to other races and thus deserved better opportunities. This narrative was also the basis and justification for the segregation of people of different races and ethnicities. It is important to note that in the apartheid narrative the participants’ families were the oppressed characters. Thus, their nuclear families were directly affected by the trauma inflicted by the apartheid regime.

If the implications from such a derogatory narrative are not scrutinised, they can seriously impact on identity formation. In turn, identity formation is one of the developmental tasks of EA. Mkhize (2013) used Bakhtin’s (1981) theory of dialogism or the dialogical self to explain how an African self or African identity arises. A dialogical self means that an identity is created through dialogue with the other (different to the self) and through interaction with the social environment.
Mkhize (2013) argued that, with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, a dialogical self seems to be an organic way of conceptualising selfhood from an Afrocentric perspective. However, if one of the loudest voices in a social environment tells a person that, because of their race, they do not deserve the same as a white peer, this can internalise a destructive narrative. Thabiso and Lesedi both highlighted a present-day experience of this institutionalised narrative affecting their lives. They explained their frustration with feeling that they constantly need to prove their worth because of their race. This is interpreted in more detail in Section 4.4.4.2 below.

The apartheid narrative is not only significant for the historical understanding of the participants but also impacts on their present experience. The three participants in this study are part of the Born Free Generation. Chikane (2018) explained that Born Frees are South Africans born after the liberation from apartheid in 1994. Although this generation has no lived experience of apartheid, they are living through its aftermath. Njiokiktjien (2019), a photographer, dedicated an entire photo series to South Africans of this generation and made a documentary about their lived experience. Her photo series is called “Mandela's Generation of Hope” - Born Frees are a product of old-president Nelson Mandela’s legacy. The title is also significant in that most of her participants were hopeful their futures would be positive. Njiokiktjien’s work is a pictorial study of the Born Free experience, whilst this research studied Born Free narratives. As with the subjects in Njiokiktjien’s portraits, the participants in this study also reported having high hopes for their futures. This aligns with Arnett’s (2000) assertion that EA is an age of possibilities. Arnett argued that emerging adults are optimistic about their current- and future prospects.

On the other hand, Chikane (2018) contended that Mandela’s legacy has only served to pacify Born Frees into not playing an active role in politics. Chikane argued that Born Frees were raised to believe in the narrative of the Rainbow Nation: that South Africans of all racial diversities could be united. For Chikane and many other South Africans, however, the post-apartheid years have not delivered what had been promised (Mottiar & Bond, 2012). Continued socio-economic structural inequalities shattered what Chikane (2018) called the myth of the Rainbow Nation. From this dissatisfaction erupted the #FeesMustFall movement, which featured prominently in the media and on social media in 2015. #FeesMustFall was not only a protest against high university fees and institutional racism but also a movement towards the decolonisation of tertiary education (Chikane, 2018). Though none of the participants in this study spoke directly about the #FeesMustFall movement, all three had been personally affected by the high cost of tertiary education. All three of the participants nearly failed to complete their studies due to the inability to pay their fees. I was an Honours student at the University of Pretoria during the first protests. Being emerging adults at the
time, our proximity to such an important event undoubtedly coloured the discussion of this theme in Section 4.4.3.2. below.

Regarding the future dimension, all three participants reported a strong hope for security and stability. They communicated the desire to have their basic needs met and to lead a comfortable life. Interestingly, two of the participants noted that financial security does not imply abundance. For these participants, financial security means not having to worry about paying for the basics that contribute to quality of life. Thabiso explained it as follows:

You know, people have these preconceived ideas that you have to be rich one day and have an abundance of money. But, if you are an actor and you drive your little Ford Chico and you’re happy with your Chico and you have the most amazing man that loves you and you love your job, you’ve made it. You’ve made it in life.

Emerging adults from racially- and ethnically diverse populations may experience more barriers to goal attainment than their Western peers (Arnett & Tanner, 2011). It has been found, however, that this does not extinguish their hopes for a bright future. Instead, these emerging adults adjust their expectations to factor in societal barriers (Cooper, 2011).

Being part of their community and having strong family bonds were also emphasised in the participants’ narratives and hopes for the future. Social connection was thus a fundamental hope they had for their futures. The discussion below is also relevant to the sociality dimension discussed in Section 4.3.3. In Lesedi’s words:

Honestly, I can’t wait to be a mom. [Laughs] I know it’s weird, but now I think about kids and I’m just like, “Hmmm, no.” But when I look into the future, actually, I would hope to have a family of my own one day. That’s the biggest thing. Apart from having the career and all the material things that you could want in the world. But that bond of family is something I will hold.

For Thabiso and Nqobile it was important to be pioneers and set an example for those who would follow in their footsteps. They both feel a responsibility to develop others and make life easier for others. Some racially- and ethnically diverse emerging adults make it their mission to improve conditions for themselves and for future generations (Cooper, 2011). They do this through social activism and career choices that empower them to break down societal barriers. Thabiso clarified his future hope of inspiring others:
And through that, my biggest thing is that, I wanna inspire people. I want people who might not have had the same opportunities as me to say, “Well, I will make my own opportunities.”

Thabiso similarly motivates others in the way he hopes to develop his brand:

I believe entrepreneurship is, “How do I develop my surroundings and my community, and uplift my community, while making money?”

Nqobile echoed this desire to inspire others:

My future is ah, to be a successful woman. Even if I’m not rich, but to bring a successful woman, or a wild woman. Which is I can, I can, help people you know? I can help people.

Nqobile further explained the value of having strong black female role models in her life. She hopes to one day be what she called a “brave woman” and an inspiration to others:

A brave woman. It plays a role - that when I see people that are inspiring me, especially womans, it gives me that thing that one day I could be in that certain situation; that I can reach that point: to be a brave woman.

The narratives highlighted in this section each describe the participants’ past and present experience as well as their future hopes. These temporal narratives colour how the participants see the world and themselves in it and the types of narratives the participants shared during the interviews. They also have influence how the participants understand hope. It is therefore important to hold these narratives in mind when reading Section 4.4 Where Three Lives Meet - A Collective Narrative.

4.3.2. Place

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) described the place dimension as the concrete, physical location in which the inquiry and narratives take place. The location where a person exists shapes both who they are and who they are becoming (Clandinin, 2013). As described in Chapter Three, this was the motivation for interviewing the participants in a place of their choosing (not at a neutral location). This section contains more than a description of each participant’s place. It interprets the significance of the place of the interview and the places the participants described. In all three
narratives two places were prominent: the township location and their individual places of employment.

In all three participant narratives the township location was mentioned, especially as a place of origin. In South Africa, townships are located on the periphery of urban centres in areas allocated for the accommodation of people of colour during the apartheid era (in accordance with the Group Areas Act of 1950) (Salo, 2018). Townships are places of ambivalence. On the one hand, they serve residents as a painful reminder of having been forcibly removed from their city centre homes in the 1960s. Townships thus became places of dispossession, exclusion and separation. Furthermore, the dominant media narrative about townships often negatively connotes them with places of violence, poverty and crime (Salo, 2018). Residents may feel ashamed and inferior as their identities of people residing in a township are linked to poverty. On the other hand, townships can also be celebrated spaces: seen as “the embodiment of its people’s feisty survival in the face of, and in resistance to, the iron laws of apartheid…” (Salo, 2018, p.4). Soweto, South Africa’s biggest township, has become an iconic reminder of the victories in the struggle for freedom (Gauteng Tourism Authority, 2019). Today, Soweto is a popular tourist attraction that features vibrant cultural activities. Salo (2018) asserted that post-apartheid township residents are reconstructing positive alternatives to the narratives imposed on them. These new ways of creating meaning positively affect how township residents understand their personhood (Salo, 2018).

Both Lesedi and Thabiso spoke of moving from their township of origin to a suburb. Thabiso was very young when his family moved out of the township. He perceives this relocation as an upward social movement. The private suburban school he attended offered plenty of opportunities and activities and he tried his hand at a variety of extramural activities. In order to communicate the affluence of the school he attended, he mimicked a posh English accent when describing it. For Thabiso, suburbia - the opportunities it offered and the social interactions in which he engaged - was a good fit. He did emphasise, however, that his identity remains grounded in his cultural narrative, which includes knowing where his roots are. A main thread of Thabiso’s narrative was his bicultural identity. Thabiso explained:

I was this privileged boy. I was that coconut kid, or that kid that everyone called a coconut, but I knew where I was from. I knew I could speak my own language. I knew I could speak vernacular, and I understood my culture. So, I lived the best of both worlds, which I think other people don’t actually get today.
Lesedi’s relationship with the township is more complex. She moved to the suburbs for convenience - choosing accommodation close to her place of employment. However, she still refers to her mother’s house in the township as home. Throughout the interview it was clear that home and closeness to her mother is a safe space for Lesedi. Despite this, her experience of home is somewhat tainted due to strained relationships with those who remained in the township, such as her neighbours. She described the relationship as tense and explained:

L: They set you out in the world in hopes that you fail and come back and sit down and be quiet.

A: Okay.

L: Hmmm.

A: What’s it like, what’s your experience like, to know that there is that pressure?

L: Maybe that’s why I keep away from, esp… I know when I go home it’s simply to see my mom. Yes, my nieces and my sister and my brother stay with my mom.

A: Okay.

L: But, it’s more of, when I’m with them, there is always that thing of they’re still at home, but I’m staying by myself. I am working, I… I am away from that. There is always that… tension.

Lesedi candidly explained how her neighbours have vocalised their expectations of receiving financial gifts from her. This irritated her immensely.

The setting of Nqobile’s narrative and interview had an immense emotional effect on her. Nqobile had lived in informal settlements before and at the time of the interview resided in a township near her place of employment. Her place of employment is, however, characterised by abject poverty. Nqobile had found it difficult to come to terms with the residents’ plight as it was something she had no experience of in her living environment. Driving into the area, my own experience was of an isolated community removed from the city centre. The area was impoverished with no services and poor access to amenities. The residents’ housing bordered a rubbish dump and the majority of the residents’ income was from sorting through the rubbish for recycling. Nqobile expressed her distress as follows:

N: It was a trauma for me, especially when I come here to [this township]. Usually I growing up in an informal settlement like this, but it was not same as this one.

A: Okay.

N: Ya. These people from this community they are suffering and the worst thing is they don’t have documents, they cannot go anywhere (inaudible).

A: So that was quite a hectic thing?
N: Ya!
A: For you to see…
N: It was a trauma for me and I started to see. Especially, there is the one for open school, the ones that they don’t have documents at all. They are struggling.

Each of the participants had been affected by their place of employment, these thus feature prominently in their narratives. As described above, Nqobile experienced her place of employment as eye-opening. Although the community site where she is employed started off as purely distressing, it led her to re-evaluate the way in which she relates to the world. She expressed that exposure to such difficult living conditions made her deeply grateful for what she had.

Lesedi also felt that her place of employment had changed the way she relates to the world. When asked when she would feel ready to call herself an adult, she initially replied, “I’ll never be ready.” Yet, upon some reflection, she explained that adulthood entailed being responsible for another, and that she was already doing this in her place of employment:

L: I guess now I have started my adulting.
A: Okay.
L: Cause I have to be like, conscious about people at work’s feelings and work ethic and patterns and whatever. So, I have to merge those with mine to find a happy medium.

For Thabiso the bar where he worked had become more than a place of employment. It not only provided a source of income but also embodied what he saw as his biggest achievement. It was the place of origin for his band and a platform for them to grow their fanbase. The bar also symbolises a major part of his identity: being social. At the time of the interview, Thabiso spent most of his free time there and coordinated some of their events. When Thabiso described his memories of the bar, the impression was that he was describing his home or a place he felt he could fully be himself. Nonetheless, he also mentioned that being around alcohol presents certain challenges. While it encourages enjoyment and celebration, he saw it as one of his biggest obstacles:

T: Alcohol, like… [laughs] Interestingly enough my band, we have… a lot of our ethos is let’s drink, let’s get fucked up, let’s have a party, but at the same time we needa realize that it’s good to have fun. You need to have fun, but you also need to work. Work hard, play hard… It’s, it’s the abuse...
A: Okay.
T: … of alcohol. When you start drinking four nights in a row during the week and you’re okay with that. I mean there was a time when I was working for [my boss] and I would drink six nights a week. Wake up in the morning hungover as fuck but still go and still be able to do it. But now, now that I’ve been doing it, I’ve done it for six months or whatever, a couple of months, and now I’m like I can’t do it anymore.

Each participant is embedded in a specific location that plays a part in the narrative they tell and live (Clandinin, 2013). Two locations were highlighted in the participants’ stories: the township and each participant’s place of employment. These places become more than just a physical location in which their stories take place. They have a history and a culture. As such, the place dimension shapes participant narratives. The participants’ identities and ways of relating to others are interwoven with the places in which they exist.

4.3.3. Sociality.

The sociality dimension has two facets: personal and social experiences of the participant (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Personal experiences refer to intrapersonal qualities such as feelings, psychological states, hopes, desires, and moral disposition. Social experiences refer to a participant’s milieu, context and interpersonal relationships (Clandinin, 2013). As such, cultural, social, institutional, familial and linguistic narratives are significant. As much of this dimension is integrated in the discussion in Section 4.4. (Where Three Lives Meet - A Collective Narrative), this section only provides a surface level analysis of these two facets.

4.3.3.1. Personal experiences.

During the interviews I would often ask the question: “What is it about you that led to this outcome?” This question aimed to elicit each participant’s perception of their own personal traits, strengths and characteristics.

Thabiso comes across as gregarious and extroverted. He enjoys being in leadership positions and appreciates acknowledgement of his achievements. He often expressed how important enjoyment and happiness are in his life. Thabiso has a deep-seated belief that he should know his worth. He is also certain of his ability to achieve his dream. Thabiso is therefore very driven and believes that he must be an active participant in his own life. In Thabiso’s words, “We need to see every situation as there is an opportunity.”
Nqobile sees herself as a survivor. She had overcome many adverse conditions in her life and pronounced her future self a brave woman. She described herself as kind; a peacemaker; non-judgemental; accommodating; and someone who easily shows her emotional state. She explained that at times people think she is too sensitive, as strong emotions, such as anger and fear, physically affect her. Her faith in a higher power outside of herself is a very important aspect of her identity. Her faith often serves as a source of hope. She admitted that she used to be ungrateful, but declared that, through her career as an auxiliary social worker, she has learnt to show gratitude. Nqobile revealed that she can be stubborn - she needs to make up her own mind about difficult decisions. Nqobile prefers to be around people as she struggles to regulate her emotions when she feels isolated.

Lesedi sees herself as a goal-driven person who manages her goals through precise planning. She also revealed that she is an introvert. Thus, after spending time with groups of people, she needs some alone time to energise herself. Lesedi mentioned that she suffers from depression but finds that her family’s support is her biggest protective factor against it. During our interview she was at times overcome with emotion and would cry. Lesedi explained that many of the memories she shared triggered sadness. Lesedi has worked through a lot of anger, much of which originated from her strained relationship with her father. Lesedi uses gaming to regulate her emotions: she finds playing video games cathartic. She also controls those aspects of her life that she can control, for example, the organisation of her life and surroundings. Though she never mentioned it, my perception was that humour is another mechanism that Lesedi uses to deal with distressing situations. She often candidly described difficult circumstances. Our interaction was punctuated with laughter from both me and her.

The participants’ personal conditions vary greatly. This was evident not only in how they experience and describe themselves but also in how they came across to me. Each participant’s unique intrapersonal reality moulds the type of narrative they tell and its content. Furthermore, each participant’s personal experience also influences their perception of events. Each participant’s view of the world therefore adds different perspectives to their understanding of hope. Despite these differences, there were points of overlap and a shared understanding and also shared experiences of hope. The unique personal experiences highlighted in this section add perspective and an additional layer of meaning to the discussion in Section 4.4 Where Three Lives Meet - A Collective Narrative.
4.3.3.2. Social experiences.

Social connection was a feature in all three participant narratives. As mentioned above, social connection played a significant role in the future hopes of each participant. The relationships of social connection are explored in Section 4.4 of the discussion. What is significant here is how each participant engages with their social surroundings. In Thabiso’s narrative, social interaction took up a lot of space. The interview was punctuated by various intrusions of people who wanted to speak to him, which reflects his more extroverted nature. For Nqobile, social engagement is a means to escape certain realities in her life. After breaking up with her abusive boyfriend, she reached out to her social circles for support. She needed to find who she was apart from that discouraging relationship. During the reflection at the end of our interview she said:

N:  Ah, I feel better, because usually when I’m alone I’m thinking everything, especially what I’m going through you know.
A:  Hmmm.
N:  When I’m with people…
A:  Okay.
N:  Yes, I feel better.

Lesedi stated that she prefers minimal social interaction. She explained that this was one of the reasons why she chose design as a career. Her designs would stand in place of her, so that she would not be in the spotlight herself. She described her interest in design as follows:

L:  That challenge of grabbing people’s attention. Cause I don’t like attention for myself.
A:  Okay.
L:  So it’s like a mechanism - don’t look at me, look at this.

Nevertheless, Lesedi’s family play an integral role in her functioning and in her life. Engaging with them makes her feel comfortable, safe and motivated to persist even in adverse situations.

This section highlighted the personal and social experiences of the participants. Each participant’s personal attributes are discussed and the importance of their social connections is brought to the forefront. The participants’ personal and social dimensions sculpted not only the content of their narratives but also how they were conveyed. I observed each participant’s unique personality through the words they used to describe themselves and their manner of delivery. It is essential to mark how the participants interact with their inner experience and outer social connections. This understanding provides a lens through which to read their narratives in Section 4.4 Where Three Lives Meet - A Collective Narrative.
The discussion above presents each participant in three-dimensional NI space as postulated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Describing the participants along the dimensions of temporality, place and sociality gives the reader a richer understanding of the participants’ experience of their world. Furthermore, deeper insight into the participants’ contexts provides a lens through which to view their stories of hope. Contextualising a participant is thus essential in a comprehensive NI study (Clandinin, 2013). Personal, contextual, social and historical (to name but a few) influences on the participants had moulded and modified the types of stories they shared about hope. For the reader to fully comprehend the participants’ stories of hope from an NI perspective – the participants must be viewed holistically and within their milieu.


Thabiso, Nqobile and Lesedi each have unique histories and ways of being in the world. Thabiso has been privileged throughout his life and has used this privilege to his advantage. When life does not meet Thabiso’s expectations, he reflects and re-evaluates to find an opportunity through which to bolster himself. Nqobile has found a deep passion for working with people in crisis. She survived her own trauma and, in many ways, she has become the brave woman she idolises. Lesedi has worked her way towards creating stability and a secure future for herself in a field that she is passionate about. Despite facing numerous obstacles, she has shown resilience. The participants’ passions, personalities, hopes and motivations vary greatly and all affect how the participants experience hope. Their narratives did, however, suggested some overlap of experiences. Four themes were identified through deductive and inductive analysis. These themes are discussed below and grounded in literature (where applicable). Table 4.1 below presents the four main themes highlighted in the participants’ narratives.

Table 4.1 Narrative Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining Hope</td>
<td>Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hope is the motivation that gets you up and going again</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources of Hope</td>
<td>A hopeful strategy - God will provide</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Achieving goals helps me feel more hopeful</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hope is found in supportive relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threats to Hope</td>
<td>Discouraging relationships extinguish hope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial constraints make it difficult to stay hopeful

| Cultural Narratives | Black tax as a means of reaching hopes  
|                     | “Incompetent until proven competent” - a narrative that diminishes hope  
|                     | I hope to be a brave woman |

### 4.4.1. Defining hope.

#### 4.4.1.1. Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel.

Throughout Lesedi’s narrative there is interplay between hope (symbolised by light) and hopelessness (symbolised by darkness). She sees hope as “the light at the end of the tunnel.” For Lesedi, hope does not exist in a vacuum. Rather one becomes aware of hope because of adverse, difficult situations. Hope, even just a glimmer of it, anchors Lesedi and guides her out of confusion and helplessness. It gives her direction when she is feeling lost or overwhelmed. Thabiso echoed Lesedi’s symbolic representation of hope:

Hope… is when everything has gone wrong and you’re at the bottom of the barrel, you’re scraping that bottom of the barrel, and you’re ready to give up, but there’s that one thing in your life that has never given up on you and that has never let you down.

Both Lesedi and Thabiso’s understanding of hope is that it has a steadfast, reliable quality. This is comparable to Krafft and Walker’s (2018) definition of hope as the certainty that everything will work out for the better. Hope is thus something both these participants count on to help them overcome obstacles. Like a light flickering on in a dark room, hope then becomes the point of focus rather than the stifling darkness of uncertainty. This definition relates to the idea of hope as a psychological strength that can serve as a protective factor during stressful life events (Valle et al., 2006). In this definition of hope, the participants storied hope as a light to hold onto in times of trouble; direction when feeling lost; and protection against threatening situations.

#### 4.4.1.2. Hope is the motivation that gets you up and going again.

Motivation is a crucial element in Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory. This theory asserts that hopeful thinking occurs when a person believes they can conceptualise a pathway to the goal they want to achieve (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). This motivates them to embark on a pathway and persist until their goal is reached. Within this conceptualisation of hope, motivation is a person’s perception that they have the agency or the capacity to use their pathways to accomplish their goal.
All three participants agreed that hope was a motivating force in their lives. It helped them not only to move towards an end goal but also to keep believing in the goals they had set for themselves. Nqobile said that hope was encouragement. Thabiso highlighted the power of hope as follows:

Hope is that little thing that will always get you up and going again, whether it be the stage, whether it be your family… Whatever it is at that point. And your hope can change. Hope is whatever is gonna get you out of that dark place and we need to hold onto those things, and we needa identify those things in our lives. To be like, kay right now this is the thing that’s going right in my life and I needa hold onto it and I needa push it.

Thabiso’s explanation above is true to his nature of harnessing useful opportunities. It aligns with his intrapersonal qualities as set out in Section 4.3.3.1. (Personal experiences within the sociality dimension). Thabiso sees hope as a positive influence in his life - as an asset to help him achieve his dreams. Thus, he encourages himself to invest in and grab hold of the objects around him that inspire hope.

Lesedi explained that hope is the force that helps her persevere in difficult situations to achieve the goals she set for herself. Her conceptualisation of hope hence includes an element of will and the expectation of achieving a goal. She explained as follows:

But with that hope it’s just like you see a little glimpse of light and as you push through it gets bigger and bigger to a point where you reach whatever goal that you set and then you were just like yeah without all that positive, that small positive idea that you had in your mind of finishing something.

Her strategy is to map out a mental pathway of the steps she deems necessary to reach her goal. She closely monitors her progress and reflects on any changes needed to achieve her desired outcome. Thus, past successes play a pivotal role in how she envisions the path to future success. Her sociality dimension (Section 4.3.3.1.) provides an understanding of who Lesedi is and why she ascribes to this specific definition of hope. As mentioned above, she describes herself as someone who likes to plan. As such, this cognitive and structured understanding of hope makes sense to her. Lesedi’s definition of hope includes a cognitive-motivational dimension (Snyder, 2000a) and a relational dimension (Bernardo, 2010). Lesedi’s strategy and use of hope seems to corroborate Snyder’s (2000b) Hope Theory. There is, however, another aspect to how she conceptualises hope. For Lesedi, her family is a significant source of hope – something that does not factor in Snyder’s Hope Theory. Thus, although her internal processes reflect a cognitive theory of motivation and hope, she also has an external locus of hope as proposed by Bernardo (2010).
The participants’ narratives of hope revealed that hope is a multifaceted experience for them. While these emerging adults’ narratives of hope agree with certain theories on hope found in literature, these theories in isolation do not capture the full experience of what hope is to the participants. Therefore, hope seems to be a more integrated concept that includes aspects of psychological strength; motivation towards goals; cognitive pathways; and interpersonal relationships.

4.4.2. Sources of hope.

4.4.2.1. A hopeful strategy - God will provide.

Unlike the other two participants, Nqobile expressed that she relies heavily on her faith as a source of hope. Although it is possible that Thabiso and Lesedi share this view, it was not offered during our interactions. When asked what hope is for her, Nqobile said, “I think hope is something that you believe in.” I speculated whether her faith was not also her definition of hope. Krafft and Walker (2018) asserted that in Christian theology God is the ultimate source of hope. Nqobile belongs to a Christian faith - as such, her internal narratives are mediated by her belief system. The narrative of a higher power being the source of all good things in her life stems from both her familial narrative and her religious (institutionalised) narrative. Nqobile’s sociality and place dimensions are essential in understanding her conceptualisation of hope. An aspect of township life, which forms part of the place dimension, is religious affiliation and practices. The sociality dimension highlighted Nqobile’s connection to a faith-based community (the congregants of the church to which she belongs). As mentioned in her background story, the saying that “God will provide” has been a meaningful coping mechanism for her family. Nqobile pertinent explained that it was the strategy her family employed in challenging situations. Most of her examples were of times when her family experienced financial difficulties. Despite a lack of evidence that there would be a positive outcome, her perception is that when her family held on to the belief that God would provide, there often was a positive outcome. When I asked Nqobile how this worked in her family, she described it as follows:

N: It works for us, usually, ya... It’s the same for us... my mom can complain, “I wonder ah at night what are we going to eat” and then me or my brother will just take it that randomly that “God will provide”.

A: Okay.

N: And then normally at night something come up.
A: Okay, okay.
N: Yes.

A: So that’s something you guys, in your family, you really use it.

N: Yes! Yes, that’s what we use. Even if my mom, she will say “you know what on Friday I have to do this and this, but I don’t have money.” After some few minutes she will say “God will provide” and then a miracle will come.

Nqobile’s opinion on how hope functions in her life is reminiscent of Averill and Sundararajan’s (2004) description of the construction of faith-based narratives – both incorporate the belief in an impossible outcome. Further, Bernardo’s (2010) conceptualisation of an external locus of hope also emphasises the importance of a higher power as a source of hope. Perceived hope therefore includes a central element of belief, which can be directed at a spiritual or religious higher power (Krafft & Walker, 2018). Nqobile’s main source of hope in trying times is thus her faith.

4.4.2.2. Achieving goals helps me feel more hopeful.

Another source of hope for the participants was either the attainment of a goal or the proximity to achieving a goal. As goals precede human activity, there can be no inspiration for activity without an objective (Snyder et al., 2002). Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory details how hope is guided by expectations of goal achievement. These expectations are often based on memories of previous successes. According to Snyder (2000a), hope can also be raised by the assessment (through the senses) that conditions are favourable for a positive outcome. Thus, getting closer to achieving a goal may bolster an individual’s hope for success.

Lesedi stated that as she gets closer to a goal, she becomes more hopeful that it is possible to achieve. Her ritual of retrospection also reminds her of what she has achieved:

I need to set a goal to see that there’s a certain level of progress. That okay, I have accomplished this today, I have accomplished this this week and then be able to… When it’s time to reflect, then it’s easier for me to see, “Okay, this is where you started and this is where you are now.”

As a high school pupil Thabiso directed a play and took it to the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. For Thabiso, this was a great source of hope. It gave him hope that a career in the performing arts was the right fit for him. Prior to him embarking on the Grahamstown trip, his rugby career had ended. Directing the play reassured him that there were opportunities available to him in other avenues in which he had talent. Thabiso also noted that the closer he got to a goal the more he would engage in behaviour to help him attain that goal. Such behaviour developed into
mechanisms to bolster his hope. The belief that he is an active participant in the realisation of his hopes was a golden thread throughout our discussion. Thabiso does not wait for success to happen to him, but rather makes calculated efforts to reach his goals. He illustrated this by explaining that when success for his band (and by extension a successful career) entered his sights he changed his behaviour to facilitate that success. His changes in behaviour include humidifying his voice and vocal warm-ups, both things he hadn’t done before. In his words, “…then you realize that you need to do that to impress. You need to do certain things to get a support base.” Guthrie’s (2011) study investigated the role hope plays for disadvantaged African American youth. The participants in this study also described hope as being action oriented. Guthrie (2011) reported that the youth felt they had to invest in the realisation of their hopes. Thus, they had to play active roles in making better lives for themselves. Lesedi and Thabiso, too, performed active roles in creating circumstances that made them feel more hopeful for a positive outcome.

For the participants in this study, tertiary education was a goal to which they all aspired. All three participants realised the need to empower themselves through education. The importance of education in securing a better future was also reported by Brannen and Nilsen (2002). Their participants ranged between the ages of 18 to 30 and were from diverse cultures, classes, training, higher education backgrounds and employment. Brannen and Nilsen aimed to uncover their participants’ views on combining employment and family responsibility. Their participants saw higher education as a means to uplift themselves: to afford them better options than their parents had had. Brannen and Nilsen (2002) also noted on their participants’ belief that higher education would provide them access to their choice of opportunities. Higher education was, therefore, a source of hope for a better future. Li and Larsen (2012), using an NI approach, also found academia a source of hope, as it allows participants to measure their own progress. Participants’ achieved goals became visible through their grades and completion of modules, which then provided a sense of accomplishment. Similarly, the participants in this study also tracked their academic progress and accomplishments, which fuelled their hope that they could complete their courses.

As mentioned, all three participants in this study saw the need to obtain higher education. A contributing factor to this decision was that they had all three chosen vocations that require very specific skills. Nqobile would not be allowed to practice her profession without further education. For Lesedi and Thabiso, tertiary education places them at an advantage in their chosen careers – it greatly contributes towards achieving success. Thus, the attainment of the qualification provides hope for the future they envisioned for themselves. A future for which their hopes are that education would lead to upward mobility and well-paying careers. Notably, this also means that the
participants had chosen their career fields, they are not just doing a job for the sake of making a living. A further aspect of obtaining higher education is the pride the participants (and their families) felt in their hard work and dedication. All three participants had experienced moments of hopelessness on the journey to qualification. When Thabiso thought he would have to drop out of his programme he felt depressed and hopeless. Lesedi explained that the difficulties in attaining her qualification had forced her to look for another source of hope:

L: Sho! When it comes to school my hope is running low!
A: Okay.
L: Running low because there were incidences that happened with school last year that has delayed my graduation, delayed my degree.
A: Okay.
L: And then, now I have to take alternative routes. Where my, all of my, degree has been a whole struggle.
A: Okay.
L: So now it’s just me having that, I wanna do this for my mom. That’s the little hope that…
A: Okay.
L: …I’m keeping with me that, ya, she needs to see me graduate, so that is a type of motivation for me.

Employment was a further goal that helped the participants remain hopeful, especially for a better future. This calls to mind the place dimension, which showed how each participant’s place of employment became an important location for the telling of their stories of hope. Other studies focusing on youth and hope also identified employment as an imperative hope for this age group (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002; Bryant & Ellard, 2015; Guthrie, 2011). Employment plays a big role, as the establishment of a career is a key developmental task in early adulthood. Nqobile said that before being employed as an auxiliary social worker, she had felt unsure of whether she could meet the job demands. However, the experience of being employed has shown her that she is capable of acting professionally and effectively in the position. She elaborated:

In terms of work, I can say I didn’t know that if I got a job, I can manage a lot of things, like especially in job. I was even that thing that, ah, I don’t have experience, doubting myself, having low self-esteem. But at the end, I realised that, “No, I can do that thing.” This can, in turn, positively impact her self-confidence and hope for a successful career, as she has proven to herself that she can be professional. Nqobile also feels that she gives hope to others
through her employment at the faith-based organisation and the work she does in the community. She explained:

I could say when I’m here in [the informal settlement], I hope that things will change [here]. The one that are unemployed, they will get jobs. The ones who are surviving from sickness, they will get healed. Those things, I am having the hope even those, the ones that are coming for counselling when they go out, they will be having some encouragement in life.

As the attainment of goals or proximity to goal achievement is a source of hope, Lesedi uses the attainment of smaller goals to track her progress toward achieving her bigger goals. Thabiso and Lesedi both took active roles in working towards their goals, which has made them feel more hopeful that they will succeed. Achievement (or proximous achievement) of the goals of tertiary education and fulfilling employment thus gave the participants hope for a better future.

4.4.2.3. Hope is found in supportive relationships.

Relationships were paramount in encouraging and intensifying the participants’ hope. This finding supports Bernardo’s (2010) locus of hope theory, which proposes that hope is not only an individual pursuit, but that individuals can utilise external agents to bolster their hope (Bernardo, 2010; Munoz et al., 2018). Such external agents are often an individual’s supportive family. Scioli and Biller (2003) also remarked on the importance of relationships and attachment in the experience of hope. Trust, developed in a secure attachment to the mother, becomes and imperative foundation for hope and has long-term positive outcomes. Thus, good familial relationships and positive connections to a support base are vital for hope creation. Similarly, Li and Larsen (2012) found that relationships and a connection to family and a community were crucial in fostering hope. They asserted that in interpersonal connection, stories of hope and struggle can be shared. This shared experience was then a way in which their participants became aware of their own hope.

Each participant in this study had clear memories and stories of family and friends who had given them hope in hopeless situations. In all three narratives, the participants’ mothers, in particular, served as a main source of hope. The mother in each narrative was portrayed almost as a wise sage to whom the participants often turned. Thabiso and his mother did not always agree on his decisions, but she was always his fiercest supporter. She took on more work to pay for his tuition and was described as sacrificial in the way she tried to uplift her children. Thabiso explained that his mother had instilled in him his sense of worth:
It’s just the environment I’ve grown in. It’s a thing of my mother has always taught me to not let anyone see lower of me. Know your worth.

All three participants experienced their relationships with their mothers as a safe space. Furthermore, each participant acknowledged that their mother is one of the people who knows them best. This is in line with Scioli and Biller’s (2003) argument for the necessity of a secure attachment to the mother in hope creation. It is also consistent with Li and Larsen’s (2012) assertion that parents can hope with and for their children. Lesedi described her relationship with her mother as pressure-free. She added that they are mutually caring and concerned for each other’s well-being:

L: She doesn’t put pressure on me about school or kids or marriage or whatever. She doesn’t put, she just asks me, “How you doing?”

A: Hmmm.

L: And then, in that, she advises me. Yeah.

Similarly, Nqobile characterised her relationship with her mother as supportive and encouraging:

N: No, now my mom, she’s like a sister to me. She was even saying that she will support me wherever decision I am taking, as long as I am not going to regret on that. But at first, she will give me two options.

A: Okay.

N: So, just encourage me, encouraging me by two options, which when I’m alone I will start to match it, which one can I go for.

Both these anecdotes describe a mother who allows her children to explore their own identity. Neither of these mothers forced their will on their daughters and both Lesedi and Nqobile feel that they have their mothers’ full support. This mother-child dynamic is reminiscent of the identity formation that occurs through the dialogical self. Thus, the emerging adult understands themself because of the relationship (and by extension the conversations) they have with their mother. The narratives the participants shared about their mothers illustrated a secure attachment. Each participant’s relationship with their mother thus forms the foundation for the creation and reinforcement of hope.

Siblings were another source of hope for the participants. Scioli and Biller (2003) referred to the protective quality of group membership as a means to bolster hope. Being part of a sibling grouping can have very positive effects on a person’s perceived social support, which then encourages higher levels of hope, as the person doesn’t feel isolated. All three participants shared examples of hope inspired by their siblings. As previously mentioned, it was Nqobile’s brother who initiated their family strategy of saying “God will provide.” Thabiso revealed that his sister and
band members (whom he sees as siblings) are part of the hope that pushes him forward. Lesedi’s experience of the support offered by her siblings in her darkest hours has been a formidable cache of hope throughout her life. Lesedi was distraught after the custody battle between her mother and father. Her family, however, all drew near to each other, which gave her hope that the sadness would end:

L: I was very devastated, but the fact that my family was there with me and they encouraging words like, “No, we will get through this.” How we all had our differences, but in that moment we could come together to support our mother. That gave me assurance.

A: Hmmm.

L: That everything was gonna work out.

A: Hmmm.

L: So in that moment I stopped being all depressed and had, like, a little bit of hope that this dark times will pass.

The fact that Lesedi and her siblings have a shared family trauma also makes her feel less lonely and overwhelmed. She explained that being the last born of six, there is always a sibling checking on her well-being. This is a source of comfort for her.

Encouraging relationships outside of the nuclear family were also discussed. Thabiso believes friends and supporters are an essential aspect of what keeps him hopeful for his future:

But I think what’s a lot, what’s a big part of my work, is the people that are behind me and the people that believe in me and say, “Look dude, I see you guys.” Thabiso’s narrative of encouraging relationships was also evident during his suspension of study (due to unpaid fees). During his suspension, he felt he was “at the bottom of the barrel.” It was his friends and lecturers’ encouragement and steadfast belief in him that gave him the hope to persist. Thabiso confirmed:

That, like, hope is always there. And I, it always, like, sometimes it’s not... Sometimes it’s not something you have to see in yourself, sometimes it takes a friend to be like, “Hey dude, get your ass up, get going.” Where there is a will there is a way.

Nqobile had a similar experience when her mentor would not accept that she was giving up on her dream of becoming an auxiliary social worker. My impression of both these stories was that these supportive people were, in essence, telling the participants that they had not lost hope. Their supporters’ consistent hope for the participants’ goal attainment, therefore, ignited a spark of hope in Nqobile’s and Thabiso’s respective psyches. Guthrie’s (2011) findings rendered similar results:
social interaction with hopeful people helps to boost hope and sustain hope when one is feeling discouraged.

Parallel to supportive relationships are interpersonal relationships that underestimate a person – as these can also serve as a motivator to success. Guthrie (2011) found that participants were intent on disproving those who disparaged their ability to succeed. Both Thabiso and Lesedi found that discouraging relationships could serve as motivation to work harder. To some degree, then, their hope was to prove their naysayers wrong. Lesedi clarified:

L: …there was a sort of um… an underestimation of me ‘cause I was a girl.
A: Ya.
L: But that just made me want to prove myself even more. Just like in my department now, it’s male, like in my team I am the only woman, except for my TM.
A: Ya.
L: You see. And also in the whole of the design part of it, I am the only female. So it also gives me that push where I still need to prove myself.

Judgemental people particularly irritate Thabiso. He feels strongly that he should teach people how to treat him. Thabiso has remained hopeful in his pursuit of his future goals by deciding not to tolerate discouraging opinions from others:

I’ve never been able to take that, and I’ve always stood up for myself in that sense and… And I think that’s the only way it will change. When you teach someone to say, “Respect me for who I am, don’t respect me for what you see.”

Thabiso hopes for people to treat him with respect, regardless of his appearance. Furthermore, he hopes that his actions will encourage people to be less judgemental of him. He explained that sometimes he meets a person who previously did not believe he could make a success of his career. When they acknowledge his progress and that they enjoyed the band’s performance it can be valuable assurance that he is still on the right path.

The sources of hope described by the participants centre on three main connections: connection to a higher power; connection to personal goals; and connection to supportive others. These three connections sustain and improve the participants’ levels of hope even during life stressors and unforeseen challenges. Interestingly, some discouraging relationships also served as sources of hope for the participants. The participants hope to prove those wrong who do not believe in their ability to succeed. Thus, such discouraging relationships gave them the motivation to persevere. The participants’ narratives about their sources of hope seem to mirror Snyder’s (2000a)
Hope Theory and Bernardo’s (2010) conceptualisation of an external locus of hope. The narratives also reveal how each participant’s sources function in their lives and how they utilise it. The participant narratives thus document a deeply personal engagement with these sources.

4.4.3. Threats to hope.

4.4.3.1. Discouraging relationships extinguish hope.

While supportive and encouraging relationships have been immense sources of hope for the participants, discouraging relationships have, at times, extinguished their hope. Numerous studies have found that familial conflict can adversely affect a young person’s mental health (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Greenberger & Chen, 1996; Syed & Mitchell, 2013). Research by Bahrassa, Syed, Su and Lee (2011) further suggested that familial conflict can have negative outcomes for the academic performance of undergraduate students. Discouraging relationships thus affect an individual’s inner processes and external outputs. As illustrated in the narratives below, hope can also be negatively affected.

Lesedi’s relationship with her father was a particularly triggering narrative. Although she has set rigid boundaries between her and her father, the memories of her experiences as a child are still painful. Her parents’ custody battle created a rift between Lesedi and her father. She has found it difficult to have a meaningful relationship with him. Lesedi explained her feelings:

I was angry for a while because it was just like, “You’re a dad, you are supposed to protect my mom and us from all this, but how come you are the bad guy? You are the villain in our story.”

At the time of our interview, it did not seem that she had hope for a better relationship with her father. She disclosed that it had not been her father’s reassurance, but rather her siblings’ support that had helped her deal with her sadness after the custody battle. During the telling of this narrative, Lesedi first mentioned her struggle with depression. Throughout her narratives, depression is one of her biggest adversaries. It has led to impaired functioning in both Lesedi’s internal processes and external outputs (such as the interruption in her studies).

The negative effects of intimate partner violence on physical and mental well-being are well documented in research (Breiding et al., 2015; Campbell, 2002; Matthews et al., 2017). A further negative impact may be financial control by the abuser, which makes it difficult for the victim to leave the relationship. Nqobile revealed that the chapter in her life characterised by her abusive
relationship was a particularly hopeless one. She had felt compelled to stay in the relationship, as he was providing her family financial support:

N: The first thing that, things that makes me lose hope and think that nothing will come along, being abusive by a boyfriend.

A: Okay.

N: Hmm. And why I was staying in that relationship? Because he was a provider for us.

A: Okay.

N: And yena he was taking advantage that he knows that I cannot go anywhere…

A: Okay.

N: …without him. He was supporting my family.

As mentioned before, Nqobile’s mother had made it clear that they would find another way to survive. Nqobile, though, had to reach the point where she felt that enough was enough: where she had no hope that her relationship could be meaningful and healthy. She noted that a young woman only realises what kind of relationship she is in when she is in a hopeless state. She added that such relationships erode the woman’s confidence. Nqobile also feels that young women sometimes enter into romantic relationships for the wrong reasons: not for love but for social comparison and financial gain. Thus, the woman places her hope for a better future in an abusive relationship because of the financial stability the relationship offers.

4.4.3.2. **Financial constraints make it difficult to stay hopeful.**

Financial barriers and a lack of resources significantly suppressed hope for the participants. As discussed in the temporal dimension of the participant narratives, tertiary education was for each participant the flame of hope for a better life. Therefore, the threat that this could be taken away due to financial difficulties was very distressing. Arnett and Schwab’s (2012) research among a diverse group of emerging adults revealed that those from non-Western ethnicities, especially African Americans, were more likely to have inadequate financial support for further education. And although these emerging adults were optimistic, they remained acutely aware of the barriers to their educational goals. Syed and Mitchell (2013) argued that this can create dissonance between an individual’s aspirations and experience. Tertiary education is particularly important during EA, as it directly influences future occupation and social class (Arnett, 2016). Thus, the threat of losing this positive future trajectory can have distressing effects. The narratives of the participants in this study highlighted how hopeless they had felt when financial constraints threatened their educational goals.
The majority of Thabiso’s interview was light-hearted and jovial. However, the mood of the narrative changed dramatically when he described his anguish for the duration when he could not pay his tuition. None of the other challenges he recounted evoked such a reaction from him. He described that time in his life, “I sat five weeks and I was in this massive depression, I didn’t know who I was, I didn’t know what I was doing.” During that time Thabiso felt completely hopeless. The following year Thabiso was highly motivated not to repeat that setback – he took on extra work in an endeavour to pay for his final year tuition. This also affected him negatively. Eventually, his mother intervened by telling him that working as he was would lead to him having a breakdown. She then took on extra work and with the additional income they could cover his tuition fees. Thus, the idea of having to cease his studies due to a lack of finances posed a major threat to Thabiso’s hopefulness about his future. It stymied him to a point where he could not think of ways to overcome the financial barrier and reach his goal of completing his studies.

Lesedi’s financial difficulties led to her studies being suspended for a while. This, already challenging, situation was exacerbated by her struggle with depression. On her return to university, she found it tough to adapt to and reintegrate into student life. Like Thabiso, Lesedi was also particularly affected by the sharing of this narrative. I understood this to be an emotional reaction to the defeat both had felt at the seeming baulking of such an important hope:

L: And then came financial struggles, so I had to take some time off…
A: Okay.
L: …of school until we got our financial standings. And then going back to school, getting back into… The day-to-day school life again, the studying, that was hard. And then I was dealing with depression.

All three participants found it challenging to describe threats to their sources of hope. I observed that recounting those memories affected them deeply: their narratives coloured by the pain and desperation they had felt at the time of the life stressor. The threats identified in the participants’ narratives impact on two dimensions of the three-dimensional NI space. Firstly, the sociality dimension is affected negatively by discouraging interpersonal relationships (social experiences), which leads to negative internal states (personal experiences). Secondly, the temporal dimension (including present and future experiences) is affected: the participants experience anxiety and distress when the threats occur as their hopes for the future are jeopardised.
4.4.4. Cultural narratives evident in the participants’ stories.

4.4.4.1. Black tax as a means of reaching hopes.

Black tax is the societal expectation that black individuals financially support their aging parents, siblings and extended family once they start earning a salary (Khanyile, 2019; Ngoma, 2015). This duty often falls on the shoulders of black professionals and the black middle class. Ngoma (2015) suggested that this practice is based on the notion that, “I cannot be middle class and leave my mom in poverty” (p. 50). Komako argued that black tax can be an emotional and financial burden that can halt the realisation of a young black person’s hopes (as cited in Khanyile, 2019). Yet, black tax is also an expression of Ubuntu and many black people feel that it is an important cultural responsibility. In terms of this study, black tax can also be regarded as a way in which family members can help each other reach their hopes and dreams.

In Thabiso’s initial narrative, he shared that his sister also hoped for a tertiary education. They had sat down as a family to decide how they could help her realise this hope, as their mother could not afford the tuition fees. Although Thabiso was only at the start of his career, he gave a large sum of money towards his sister’s studies. Thabiso expects of himself to help and support his family, as his mom had sacrificed so much for them. In follow-up communication with Thabiso, I asked him to clarify his motivation for giving his sister such a large sum of money when it would considerably affect the realisation of his goals. Thabiso explained that he feels obliged to help since his mother raised him single-handedly, “She has done everything to help us and I need to help her.” He is the older brother - a position that he feels also carries certain responsibilities. He admitted that the practice does hold him back financially, but it is also something he does not hesitate to do. Furthermore, he sees it as an opportunity for personal growth:

As much as it [black tax] is a cultural narrative that can impact your life negatively… At the same time, family is everything to me, so I get it. And you know, it’s something I have seen a lot more, than my sort of white friends that don’t have that responsibility. I feel like it teaches you a great responsibility from a very young age.

In Thabiso’s case, black tax is a means for him to help realise the collective family goal of bettering and uplifting themselves. Firstly, his contribution can help his sister realise her hopes of gaining further education. Secondly, it helps his mother realise her hopes of empowering her children. Lastly, it contributes to his hopes of developing into a responsible adult who provides for his family.

In Nqobile’s narrative she is the recipient of her sibling’s black tax. Her brother used his own bursary fees to pay for her registration. I understood this example as showing how Nqobile’s
brother became a source of hope for her. Through his financial support he removed an obstacle that could have thwarted her hopes of becoming a social auxiliary worker. Thus, his sacrifice uplifts them as a family. This is an embodiment of Ubuntu.

4.4.4.2. “Incompetent until proven competent” - a narrative that diminishes hope.

Within the professional world there seems to be a common, biased and bigoted narrative that female and/or black employees are incompetent until proven competent (Chima, 1999; Gill, 2018). In contrast, white male employees are accepted as competent until proven otherwise. Gill (2018) specified that in an environment where this narrative plays out, a woman in a leadership position will, for example, be thought of as lucky rather than deserving of her position. A similar narrative exits with people of colour. For women and people of colour, failure is proof of incompetence. This public narrative makes it necessary for a young black South African to work that much harder to prove that they can do the job. For the participants in this study, this narrative also diminished their hopes of being perceived as professional and capable.

When asked what hope means in the context of being a young black South African, Lesedi and Thabiso mentioned this narrative of perceived incompetence as a factor that diminishes hopefulness. In their experience, being black affects how people perceive them. It can be daunting at times to still have hope in the light of these perceived biases. Lesedi explained as follows:

L: It's tough to find [hope], to be taken seriously, one as a female and two as being black.
A: Ya.
L: So, I feel like black women have the shortest, are holding the shortest end of the stick.
A: Okay.
L: So now we have to work four times as hard.

Lesedi went on to say that people use her race and gender as a reason when she fails. This distresses her, as she feels that as a black woman, she is not allowed any space for failure. She feels pressure due to this bias - it does not give her hope nor does it motivate her to prove anyone wrong:

L: When you fail as a woman in wanting to be in a man’s world...
A: Okay.
L: Um you, you get labelled, right. You get labelled and then they just see you as a person who is supposed to be at home, having kids.

Lesedi prefers that her gender and race not be the basis on which she is judged at work.
Thabiso also experiences this bias. Although it angers him, it also motivates him to prove people’s prejudices wrong:

My view as a black person, as a young black man in South Africa, when someone views you, whether black, white or whatever, they view you as incompetent until proven otherwise. And as a young white South African, I feel you are viewed as competent until proven otherwise and, it’s something that me and my band and my friends have sought to change… And our whole dream was to bring South Africa together.

In this narrative (that Thabiso often tells himself), I identified hope. Thabiso hopes for a future that no longer stereotypes people and is not prejudiced based on people’s demographics. Cooper (2011) noted that racially and ethnically diverse emerging adults are driven to change the status quo for the better. Cooper (2011) added that emerging adults from racially and ethnically diverse populations choose careers in order to break down societal barriers for them and their peers. Throughout Thabiso’s narrative, I heard examples of what motivates him to pursue his band: he hopes his band will be a change agent to bridge the divides between South Africans.

From the participants’ narratives, it seems that incompetence bias is much more prevalent in spaces dominated by white people. The theme of “incompetent until proven competent” is present in Lesedi and Thabiso’s narratives as a source of frustration and a narrative that diminishes hope. Lesedi finds that it puts a lot of undue pressure on her, while Thabiso uses it as a motivation to change perceptions.

4.4.4.3. I hope to be a brave woman.

A theme that emerged from Nqobile and Lesedi’s narratives is that of the strong black woman. The black superwoman or strong black woman is a construct based on the narrative that black women have to be incessantly resilient and able to handle any challenges (Abrams, Hill, & Maxwell, 2019). This narrative is born from the intersectional burden of racism and sexism placed on black women. This cultural expectation has resulted in many black women masking their trauma and fragility with a show of strength (Abrams et al., 2019). The stoic endurance of pain therefore becomes an idealised expression of black womanhood. This cultural ideal has detrimental effects on the mental and physical health of black women, as they are unlikely to utilise mental healthcare resources (Donovan & West, 2015). Donovan and West’s findings further suggest that women who endorse this identity are more vulnerable to depressive symptoms associated with stress. When faced with psychological challenges, these women then do not put their hope in the mental healthcare system or supportive relationships. Instead, all their hope is pinned on their inner
strength to get them out of a hopeless situation. This, however, seems counterproductive as it leaves them in a hopeless, isolated and depressive state.

When I asked Nqobile how her hope relates to her culture and ethnicity, she explained that hope encourages her to be a brave woman and inspire others. Nqobile’s way of relating to this persona reflects the literature on the construct of the strong black woman (Abrams et al., 2019; Donovan & West, 2015). She calls this persona the brave woman and aspires to be this character - thus endorsing what the character embodies. This was especially evident in her narrative of being abused. Though she acknowledged the physical and emotional pain of the abuse, she also explained that she had realised the severity of it too late. Her mother and witnesses to the abuse had wanted her to end the relationship, but Nqobile endured. When asked what she had learnt about herself after having ended the relationship she said, “He makes me a brave woman.” It is significant that Nqobile’s narrative is titled “survivor”. Furthermore, the alias we chose for her means “one who has come up victorious in a hopeless situation.” This perpetuates the idea of her enduring serious adversities - of being a warrior. At the close of interview, Nqobile mentioned that she was having some personal problems and that speaking to me was a nice distraction from her worries. After the interview, I reached out to Nqobile to ascertain whether she needed additional assistance to process the triggering narratives she had shared. She turned the offer down - saying that even though she was confused by her emotions, she preferred dealing with them by herself.

Lesedi has an ambiguous relationship with the brave woman persona. On the one hand, she rejects it as it puts undue pressure on her. She clarified that once society views one as a strong black woman, it seems as if obstacles and stressors are directed at the woman. There exists the expectation that a black woman must endure hardships:

L: We are seen as, they give us all these names, like, yeah, super woman…
A: Okay.
L: And, ah, healer and survivor, because they are already labelling us that, okay, this person needs to go through a struggle first.
A: Okay, I hear what you’re saying, ya.
L: Which I find absolutely ridiculous.
A: Ya.
L: So that’s the one part which I feel is the biggest struggle and it’s not like you can change a person. Once a person thinks of you as “no they are strong,” then… Now the world is just supposed to give you obstacles.
A: Okay.
L: So that you live up to that name.

On the other hand, as a closing remark, she expressed gratitude for her struggles. She noted that although she hates the label that says she must endure obstacles, she does see a purpose in struggling:

L: I am thankful for my struggles.
R: Okay.
L: Because even though I hate labels.
R: Hmm.
L: They do tie in to strength.
R: Okay.
L: And survival and hope.

Thus, a struggle can facilitate strength, survival and hope. The pressures she endured became opportunities for growth.

Regardless of the cultural and racial demographic of a person, certain public narratives are imposed on them - that then shape their personal narratives about hope (Clandinin, 2013). Participants from racially and culturally diverse populations have unique cultural narratives that impact on them. Bhaktin’s (1981) conceptualisation of the dialogical self, as discussed in the temporal dimension, explains the process through which personal identity forms - based on what is said (or not said) about that person and their culture. Some cultural narratives gave the participants in this study hope, or were a means to give their families hope, such as the narrative of black tax. Some of the narratives such as incompetent until proven competent had a more ambiguous effect on the participants. While it frustrated them and diminished their hope, it was also a motivator to be an agent of change in society. Lastly, the cultural narrative of becoming a brave woman is a hope for one of the female participants, while the other is more suspicious of this narrative. The three cultural narratives highlighted in the participants’ narratives were not chosen by them, but they clearly felt the effects of these narratives on their hopes, their lives and their identities.

4.5. Conclusion

Chapter 4 is a report and discussion of the findings of this study. In this chapter, the participants’ life stories were re-storied through my perspective. I also contextualised their narratives using the three dimensions of NI: temporality (past, present, and future); place; and sociality. In terms of temporality, the narratives of apartheid; the Born Free generation; and positive future hopes were examined. Townships and places of employment were explored in the place
dimension. The sociality dimension illuminates the social and personal experiences of each participant, which then provides the reader with background and a lens through which to view the participants’ narratives. Based on Li & Larsen’s (2012) study and the participants’ narratives, four themes were identified. These themes (Defining Hope; Sources of Hope; Threats to Hope; and Cultural Narratives) are discussed in this chapter. Inductive analysis was used to identify ten subthemes, which are illustrated through the participants’ narratives. The participants defined hope as the light at the end of the tunnel and motivation. They storied religious faith, goal achievement and supportive relationships as sources of hope. Threats to the participants’ hopes include discouraging relationships and financial constraints. Lastly, cultural narratives pertaining to hope (from the participants’ narratives) include black tax as a means of reaching hopes; incompetent until proven competent; and a brave woman. Where applicable, the themes and subthemes were grounded in previous literature and research. Following this exposition, Chapter 5 provides an integrated discussion of the significance of the four themes in relation to the research aims. Chapter 5 clarifies the limitations and challenges of this study and contains my reflections. It also contains concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter consolidates and summarises the research findings on the stories of hope by black emerging adults. The findings are framed within the specific research aims: to re-story the participants’ narratives to highlight the central theme of hope; to understand how the participants define hope in their stories; to discover how the sources of hope are storied in the participants’ narratives; to ascertain how the participants storied threats to their hope; and to uncover any cultural narratives that may be evident in the participants’ stories. This chapter also elaborates on the limitations of and the challenges faced during the research process. Where appropriate, I suggest how these challenges can be overcome. Thereafter, directions for future research and recommendations for practice based on these research findings are provided. As participant in the narrative process, I reflect on how the research has changed me and on my contributions to the creation of knowledge. Finally, this chapter offers concluding remarks.

5.2. Summary of Findings

This research is an exploratory qualitative study. It was guided by the broad research question “How is hope storied or narrated by black South African emerging adults?” Three participants’ narratives of hope were collected and analysed through narrative inquiry (NI). These three narratives were contextualised within Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional NI space of temporality, sociality and place. The contextualisation included the public narratives (such as apartheid) that shaped each participant narrative. Following this, four main themes were identified through the literature (Li & Larsen, 2012) and participants’ narratives: 

Defining Hope, Sources of Hope, Threats to Hope and Cultural Narratives.

As prescribed by NI methodology, the participants’ stories were re-storied to highlight aspects pertinent to the study. This was done to emphasize the central theme of hope. Re-storying therefore provided an understanding of how the participants define hope in their stories. Although the definition of hope is subjective, aspects of hope detailed in previous literature could be incorporated. The participants’ stories revealed two salient definitions of hope. Firstly, hope is the light at the end of the tunnel. This definition aligns with the literature that views hope as a psychological strength and protective factor against the adverse effects of stressors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Hope thus empowers a person to be resilient and face challenges. Secondly, hope is the motivation that gets you up and going again (the will to persevere). This definition
corresponds to Snyder’s (2000a) Hope Theory, which centralises a motivational component to hope. Though there was overlap between the participant narratives and the literature on hope, the narratives provided a much richer description of experienced hope.

This study also set out to illuminate unique experiences and conceptualisations of hope: to discover how sources of hope were storied in the participants’ narratives. Belief in a higher power; the achievement of goals; and supportive relationships were all sources of hope for the participants. All three participants hoped to achieve two main goals: tertiary education and to be employed. Supportive relationships included a strong attachment to their mother; good sibling relationships; and encouraging relationships outside of the family. These sources not only gave the participants hope but also sustained the participants’ hope when they were faced with obstacles.

A further aim of this study was to ascertain how the participants storied threats to their hope. Such threats included discouraging relationships (such as familial conflict and intimate partner violence) and financial constraints. Financial constraints were particularly poignant considering the high tuition fees for tertiary education. Although previous studies have also highlighted sources and threats to hope (Guthrie, 2011; Li & Larsen, 2012), their focus was adolescents or participants recounting their experience during adolescence. No literature could be found on experiences of hope during EA as a developmental period.

Another aim of this research was to uncover cultural narratives evident in the participants’ stories. Though this study cannot be generalised as a voice for all South Africans, it does start to illuminate certain cultural narratives and values pertaining to hope. The three cultural narratives that were uncovered exist as public narratives and either hindered or bolstered the participants’ levels of hope. The first cultural narrative is that of black tax as a means of reaching hopes. In this narrative, an adult child earning a salary is expected to financially support their family. Within this narrative, black tax was a means for some of the participants to share hope and help family to also achieve their goals. The second cultural narrative that emerged from the participants is that of incompetent until proven competent. This narrative is based on the prejudice that people of colour and/or female staff are incompetent by default. This then requires them to work harder than white peers and/or male colleagues to disprove this bias. Though this narrative could potentially extinguish hope, the participants found that it motivated them to break down these societal barriers and defeat the stereotypes. The third cultural narrative was that of I hope to be a brave woman. This narrative often characterises black women as superheroes able to face any challenge life presents them. However, this narrative detrimentally affects the well-being of black women. As they aspire to be a
pillar of strength, they are less likely to utilise mental healthcare - even when they desperately need it.

Achieving the five aims of this research provided an answer to the broader research question, “How is hope storied or narrated by black South African emerging adults?” Each of the aims was attended to through an NI study of the three participant narratives. The participants’ narratives of hope revealed that, for them, hope is a multifaceted experience. Finally, this research also outlined four main themes of the participants’ experience of hope.

5.3. Limitations and Challenges

5.3.1. Small sample size.

As highlighted in chapter two, there are certain critiques against NI (Trahar, 2009). In this study, the small sample size is a limitation which is a typical drawback of NI. This current research looks at the very unique experiences of the participants. Furthermore, though the three participants were black South Africans and from the same cohort, they did not really share other homogenous qualities. Gender, socioeconomic status, marital status and ethnicities are all demographical differences of the participants. These differences all contribute in different ways to their narrative. The three participants can by no means be considered the voice for all emerging adults, or all black South Africans or even all people who share their ethnicity. It may have been useful to include a focus group with the three participants to see if there is a more shared experience of the topics covered in the interview protocol. However, the nature of this research is to start creating ways to describe the experiences of young people which may inform future research (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002).

5.3.2. Language.

One of the selection criteria for the participants was the ability to adequately express themselves in English. This was done so that I, an English-speaking researcher, could undertake this endeavour. This is, however, not ideal. Producing narratives in their home language, or possibly a combination of English and their vernacular, would allow participants a much wider scope for expression. Telling a story in the participant’s language of choice, rather than in the researcher’s, would allow the participants to provide more authentic accounts. It could allow the participant to fully express what they mean by removing an obstacle to expression. An obstacle to expression is, for example, difficulty in finding the right word to express nuanced meaning. In a previous NI study
on hope (Li & Larsen 2012), the participants spoke Mandarin Chinese (their first language) for their ease of expression.

5.3.3. Time.

NI requires quite an extensive immersion in the participants’ lives. Clandinin (2013) requires the researcher to live alongside the participants to fully understand their narratives. The researcher therefore needs many contact sessions with and observations of the participants. Ideally, these contact sessions should occur in the participant’s daily life and environment. This is manageable when the topic under investigation is a classroom or in an education setting: observation is a common, acceptable experience for a teacher. In a more corporate environment, such as Lesedi’s workplace, this is not necessarily suitable. For this study, one official interview with each participant was followed by contact over the phone or via email. That said, the participants form part of a cohort that is very comfortable with digital communication. Therefore, communicating via cell phone did not seem to hinder the process.

5.3.4. Race of the researcher.

Research endeavours that are sensitive to cultural nuances require reflection on (conscious or subconscious) power dynamics, which may be present in the interaction between the researcher and the participant. As this research was undertaken in South Africa, with its historical legacy of oppressing people of colour, I, the researcher, (as a white South African) am historically positioned as the oppressor. This could, consciously or unconsciously, have created a power imbalance between me and the participants. My race may have influenced the extent to which the participants were willing to share, especially about their cultural experiences. The research questions directly asked them for an account of their experiences as black South Africans. It is possible that the participants felt that I cannot begin to understand their experience. They may thus have withheld information. They may also have felt frustrated with my lack of understanding but did not raise this with me. This was an aspect that I reflected on constantly throughout the research project. I regularly employed member checks to ensure that I was still aligned with the participants’ intensions. To build trust between myself and the participants, I sent them those parts of the final report which pertained to each of them. In that way, the participants had a direct influence over what the final report contains.

Due to the nature of this research, it adds to the body of research based on non-Western knowledge systems. This then raises the question of what right I have, as a white researcher, to re-
story the narratives of black participants (Fox, 2008). NI makes it clear that the narratives are reframed through the lens of the researcher (Clandinin, 2013). As such, this study ran the risk of merely reinforcing the colonial idea that black experience can only be viewed through the white gaze or white values (Hook, 2013). Again, I used reflexivity to ensure that I was not merely perpetuating oppressive and discriminatory narratives. Peer review was also employed in an effort to ensure quality and fairness in the final report. Spivak (1990) argued that awareness of racial dynamics and power struggles already makes a considerable difference in the researcher’s approach. Awareness and reflection can then be employed in the pursuit of fair and just research into people of diverse backgrounds. Fox (2008) asserted that by its very nature, narrative research accepts a multiplicity of meanings. The participant’s experience, however, must be championed. As such, the researcher must be mindful to position the participant’s experience at the core of the research. Fox’s call for researchers to become more mindful in their process also means that they should be more self-aware and present in the moment with the participants. Even though all precautions were taken against creating research that subordinates and others the participants, the question of whether a white researcher has the right to speak about the experiences of people of colour may not have a clear answer.

5.4. Directions for Future Research

The limitations and challenges highlighted above suggest some direction for future research. Firstly, it is recommended to conduct a similar study in the participants’ mother tongue. This may be more conducive to eliciting narratives. Although the participants in this study’s socioeconomic statuses varied greatly, they had all received tertiary education. Arnett (2000) called upon researchers to do research with a diverse range of emerging adults who do not have training beyond basic schooling (whom he calls the “forgotten-half”). In South Africa, the number of tertiary education graduates is far lower than the number of people who do not or cannot pursue higher education. Such research is thus pertinent to the South African context. Secondly, a distinct theme in the participants’ narratives was the importance of family as a source of hope. Further research should therefore explore the connection between emerging adults and their family of origin.

5.4.1. Recommendations for practice.

The above-mentioned research recommendation to focus on family also has implications for practice. In traditionally Western-oriented psychotherapy, such as a therapist working in a psychodynamic discipline, the client is seen individually. Even in psychological modalities that work with the family, the term *enmeshment* is often used to describe a family without clear
boundaries - where a lack of differentiation between family members exists (Hoffman, 1975). However, the research findings of this study suggest that it may be useful for mental health practitioners to critically consider whether this applies to clients from African populations, as an Afrocentric perspective, such as Ubuntu, emphasises social connection (Muwanga-Zake, 2010). Furthermore, this research has highlighted the participants’ families as a crucial source of hope. Thus, clients from a black South African population may find therapeutic benefit, were important relationships to be included in the therapy room. It is essential that mental health practitioners probe this inclusion with their clients to find the best practice in individual cases.

5.5. Reflections

Clandinin (2013) asserted that reflection and self-awareness are integral to NI. The inquirer must not only acknowledge their effect on the research, they must also note how the process changed and affected them. My position as a white, middle-class female who can only speak Afrikaans and English has shaped the research process. As mentioned above, both language and race may have limited the information the participants shared with me. Weiner-Levy and Abu Rabia Queder (2012) highlighted that an insider researcher (a researcher belonging to the population that forms a part of the study) may be aware of both written and unwritten codes that an outsider researcher may not understand. The authors also asserted that an insider researcher would be familiar with the marginality experience specific to the population to which they also belong (Weiner-Levy & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012). However, they also noted that the insider researcher may not be the more conducive positionality, as an outsider position offers certain research benefits. My positionality as an outsider may have facilitated (consciously or unconsciously) open discussion with and full descriptions by the participants. Weiner-Levy and Abu Rabia Queder (2012) suggested that the outsider researcher can clarify and question aspects of their participants’ lived experiences with which the researcher is unfamiliar. The participants may also offer fuller descriptions, as they assume the outsider researcher is unfamiliar with that aspect of their experience. Conversely, an insider researcher may take certain experiences for granted and not try to illuminate the participant’s unique experiences. Similarly, participants may assume that an insider researcher understands an experience and, as such, may not offer their unique perspective. Because of my outsider positionality, I could assure the participants that they were the experts on their experience. Therefore, for the participants there were no right or wrong answers – the correct answer being that which was true for them.
An aspect of the research process that particularly highlighted the insider/outsider positionality featured in the face-to-face interviews with the participants. I asked each of the participants to share their stories of the interaction between hope and their experience of being a black emerging adult. At this point, in all three interviews, there was a moment of pause and reflection. Nqobile required clarification of the question. Lesedi spoke of her experience as a black woman but did not bring hope into her description. Thabiso exclaimed, “Yoh! That’s a loaded question.” Of all the questions on the interview schedule, I also found this question the most difficult to ask, as it required trust between the participants and me. As Thabiso expressed, it was a loaded question that, because of the difference between me and my participants, elicited complex answers and evoked intricate emotions. This complexity was exacerbated by the public narratives highlighted in Chapters One and Four. I found this a difficult question to ask, because I was grappling with the issue of whether I had any right to speak about the experiences of a person of colour. My academic journey marked a deep personal struggle to interrogate and overcome the biases with which a middle-class white South African is raised. This interrogation led me down a difficult, and at times uncomfortable, path with myself. I felt pressure to honour the participants’ stories and lives and wanted to ensure that my research was honest and remained true to their experiences.

The quality of the relationship between the researcher and participant is paramount in honest research (Weiner-Levy & Abu Rabia Queder, 2012). A good relationship includes an affinity between researcher and participant; levels of trust; and understanding. I clearly communicated my intentions and empathy to the participants, which assured them of my trustworthiness. I also found it easy to connect with all three participants. They trusted me with their most intimate hopes and fears and with their life stories. I, in turn, treated them and the information they gave me with respect and dignity. When I did not understand, I asked for clarification and did not assume anything. Their trust in me affected me profoundly. Not only was it very humbling, it also renewed my determination to produce a study that fairly reflects their narratives.

While there were points of difference between the participants and me, there were also points of similarity. Thabiso and I shared an affinity for theatre - I understood what motivated him to pursue a career in the arts. With both Lesedi and Nqobile I shared the experience of being a woman and understood how that shaped their narratives. However, the most salient similarity was our experience of being emerging adults. The classic definition of EA strongly resonated with my own developmental trajectory. It was interesting to reflect on my developmental journey of EA while embarking on a research journey with the participants. This was undoubtedly a personal
aspect that coloured how I understood and re-storied their narratives. This study was also a bitter-sweet undertaking, as this dissertation marks the end of me being an emerging adult. It marks a point in my life where I have settled into a professional career and familial structure. To some extent this research became the final chapter in my book about my adventure during EA; a goodbye to EA and a welcoming of the new chapter in my life, adulthood.

5.6. Concluding Remarks

This research endeavoured to illuminate the narratives of hope of black South African emerging adults. This study therefore adds to the body of positive psychology and cross-cultural research. This study presents hope as a complex and multifaceted construct that is affected by both internal and external sources. While literature emphasises the positive outcomes associated with higher levels of hope, the findings of this study also show how the participants used hope as a protective factor and motivation to pursue further goals. Their narratives revealed that even during challenging life events they were able to identify sources of hope. This allowed the participants to cope with and endure the life stressor they faced. This research also increases awareness of what hope means to people in this age group. It may also help psychologists conceptualise how to bolster hope in this cohort. Though this study is not generalisable, it offers value in illuminating themes and experiences that may resonate with other black South African emerging adults. Thus, highlighting the participants’ sources of and threats to hope can be used in practice to help establish positive outcomes that can lastingly affect a person’s life. Even though this research is similar in approach to Li and Larsen’s (2012) study, it is the first study to look specifically at a black experience of hope in a South African population through the lens of NI. This population is under-researched, and this study was in response to the recommendation to expand the existing knowledge of EA in diverse populations (Arnett, 2000; Syed & Mitchell, 2013). Using NI allowed the participants to be the experts in their own experiences. This study also stresses some cultural understandings of hope by individuals. The findings of this study can thus be used as a starting point to generate more research on what a South African construction of hope may be. Lastly, the participants generously shared their perspectives and experiences with me. My hope for this research is that it presents their narratives and lives with dignity and honesty.
References


Silver, J. (2013). Narrative Psychology. In C. Willig (Ed.), *Introducing Qualitative Research in*


Strydom, H. (2011). Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human service


Dear Prospective Participant,

This form details the purpose of my study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

**Title of study:** Stories of Hope by Black Emerging Adults: a Narrative Inquiry

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to understand how young South Africans understand and narrate their experience of hope.

**Your Participation:** You will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview with me about how hope has played a part in your life. I will ask you a set of questions about hope and also request that you tell me how you experience and understand hope in different scenarios. The interview will take between 45 minutes to an hour and a half depending on the stories that you chose to share. If needed, I might request a second interview to ensure that you are satisfied with my understanding of your narratives. You are not obligated to the researcher or the study and are free to withdraw at any time. Any information you have given will then be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** Keeping your identifying information confidential is of utmost importance to me. All recordings will be stored on a password protected storage device. I will be making use of a fellow psychologist to help me transcribe the interviews. They will also sign a confidentiality agreement and they are also bound by ethical practice as stipulated by the HPCSA. Once I finish transcribing the recorded answers, I will delete the audio files. You can also choose a pseudonym (a false name) which will be used in the final dissertation to ensure that you cannot be identified through the research findings. It is possible that the findings from the study will be published in an academic journal and thus used for academic purposes, but no identifying information will be used. All information received from you will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to any third party, besides the research supervisor and transcriber.

Should you have any questions, please contact me, the researcher, Aliza Graham (0827798908 or alizaknafo1@gmail.com) or my supervisor Prof. T. Guse (tharina.guse@up.ac.za).
B. Informed Consent Form

Department of Psychology  25 February 2019

I (full name), ____________________________________ agree to participate in the research project conducted by Aliza Graham as part of her Masters Degree dissertation.

1. I have read and understood the information given to me about this research. I have had opportunities to ask questions and have received all the information I need.

2. I understand that I will not receive any compensation for participating.

3. I also understand that I may withdraw at any time without any penalties.

4. I agree to be interviewed (please mark all applicable boxes)

    |   |   |
    |---|---|
    | A | Individually |
    | B | For the interview to be recorded |
    | C | For transcription of the interview by a psychologist |

5. I understand that I can ask the researcher for help if the research project causes me any distress.

Print Name of Participant_____________________________

Signature  _________________________

Date _____________________________

Print Name of Researcher _____________________________

Signature  _________________________

Date _____________________________
C. Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY
JOHANNESBURG

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

06 June 2018

<table>
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<th>Ethical Clearance Number</th>
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<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Knafo A</td>
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<td>Title of Research Project</td>
<td>Stories of Hope by Black Emerging Adults: a Narrative Inquiry</td>
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<td>Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor/S</td>
<td>Professor T. Guse</td>
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Dear Knafo A,

The Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee has scrutinised your research proposal and confirm that it complies with the approved ethical standards of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg. We have made some recommendations, set out below, for consideration in consultation with your supervisors.

- please provide justification for the use of UJ Students;
- even though the last paragraph in the introduction somewhat captures the study objectives please state these in a way that not only indicates what will be found but also how the research question will be unpacked;

Yours sincerely,

Prof Grace Khunou
Chair: Faculty of Humanities REC
Tel: 011 559 3346
Email: gracek@uj.ac.za
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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| 1 | **Can you tell me more about yourself, your life, your family and your friends?**  
Rationale - This question can be used as an ice-breaker as well as providing useful contextual information. Furthermore it will fall within Clandinin’s sociality commonplace |
| 2 | **Tell me a story about how you understand hope / How would you define hope in your own life?**  
Rationale - This question sheds light on how the participant conceptualises hope |
| 3 | **Tell me a story about how hope occurred in your past.**  
Rationale - This question links to Clandinin’s concept of temporality. Thus the participant’s past experience is elicited |
| 4 | **Tell me a story about hope and how you experience it currently/ What role does hope play in your current life?**  
Rationale - This question links to Clandinin’s concept of temporality. Thus the participant’s present experience is elicited |
| 5 | **What role do you imagine hope will play in your future?**  
Rationale - This question links to Clandinin’s concept of temporality. Thus the participant’s future experience is elicited |
| 6 | **What does hope mean to you in the context of being a young black South African?**  
Rationale - This question will elicit the participant’s reflections on their ethnicity as well as how that intersects with their emerging adulthood and hope. This question also relates to Clandinin’s commonplace of place. |
| 7 | **Is there anything else you’d like to talk about or add?**  
Rationale - This question will allow the participant to add information that they deem to be an important aspect of their experience. |