EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY AS A YOUTH IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

A CASE STUDY OF ST PETER'S YOUTH CHURCH (SPYC)

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For S P Y C

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background of study

Active participation in the life and mission of a congregation by all its members is a notable challenge faced by myriad congregations; and it could arise either out of how they shape their theology or even how they relate to one another. Young people in the quest of finding who they are have at times left their congregations for other churches and those that did not find a place in any other church, chose to stay at home. The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) has in the recent past experienced this phenomenon, where young people who have been active in church participation while in Junior Sunday School (JSS) fluctuate in attendance when they reach adolescence and/or fade away completely. As may be expected, blame has been apportioned severally on how youth ministry is done, with some members noting that the church ministers may not be doing enough to keep young people in church. There has been the perception also, that if the church can hire a youth pastor, then everything else would fall into place. Over time congregations that chose to do so may realise that it did not work, at least not as expected. It is notable that many congregations lack adult volunteers to assist in youth ministry, and this has left care to the young people mostly in the hands of an over-stretched church minister and youth leaders who are adolescents[1] themselves.

My ideal kind of youth ministry is one where the entire congregation participates in ministering to young people. It would be characterised by a good balance between fun events and bringing young people to a deeper knowledge of God. Participation from other members of the congregation creates the environment where the youth minister is freed from being the church's program director and instead focuses on leading a ministry team. In so doing young people get to experience and grow in faith in the midst of a community. In this study I sought to find out how young people experience community in MCK.

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[1] The terms adolescent, youth and young people are used in this thesis to refer to members of MYK and members of SPYC including those over the age of 25.

1.2 Context of Study

1.2.1 History and organisation of Methodist Youth in Kenya (MYK)

Maiko[2] traces the inception of the MYK to 1967 when the MCK became autonomous from the Methodist Church of Great Britain. It became one of the four[3] recognised church fellowships that keep the church's commitment to mission alive. It is notable that since gaining autonomy, "the church has spent a lot of money to train pastors for effective church ministry but not specifically in youth ministry"[4]. I agree with Maiko that there is need for "church to re-think, re-define, re-capture and re-prioritize its theology"[5] in order to effectively tackle challenges[6] of youth ministry in the postmodern world.

The definition and purpose[7] of youth ministry in the Standing Orders (SO)[8] makes it difficult to appropriate effective youth ministry especially in as far as development is concerned. This may be further complicated by African cultural practices, that is,

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2 Saneta Maiko, *Youth, Faith & Culture Contemporary Theories and Practices of Youth Ministry* (United Kingdom: Author House, 2007), 82;

3 ibid

4 Ibid., 83.

5 ibid

6 These challenges include such things as the influence of culture, globalization, individualism, consumerism and so on.

7 SO 147(1) Definition: The Methodist Youth in Kenya (M.Y.K.) is the youth organization of the Methodist Church, including Sunday Schools, Uniformed Organizations and Youth Groups. SO 147(5) Purpose of Methodist Youth in Kenya: The purpose of M.Y.K. shall be to seek to develop body, mind and spirit according to the will of God as shown to us in Jesus Christ, in those young people, from childhood to 25 years of age who are entrusted to our care. To this end M.Y.K through the Youth Committee of the Church, shall; (a) Strengthen existing youth work by encouraging high standards and providing training and advice for youth leaders. (b) Encourage the development of new youth work wherever there is opportunity for it. (c) Provide opportunities for young people to meet at Circuit, Synod and country-wide levels, by such means as rallies, conferences, camps and competitions.

8 The term 'Standing Orders' abbreviated SO, refers to the rules and regulations that govern the staff, groups and interactions within the MCK.

initiation rites[9].   Although the SO[10] puts the upper age limit at 25 years, in practise any unmarried youth in the church is expected to be part of the church youth, so that in some churches you will find people over 30 years old and still active members of the youth[11]. In its current form it then becomes a gargantuan task for the minister to effectively create programs that will encompass all youth in youth ministry.

MYK is organized[12] at several levels, from the local church to the Conference[13] office. At the Conference office there is an officer charged with the responsibility of coordinating youth programs in the church. This office rolls out various activities in an annual calendar and they are trickled down through the ranks[14], right to the local congregation[15].   The position of Youth Minister is not slated in the organizational structure of the church though a local congregation may hire a youth minister to serve its youth congregation. Otherwise youth ministry is generally guided by the minister incharge of the congregation, who may at the same time be incharge of several congregations.

1.2.2   St Peters Methodist Church

This specific study is conducted at St Peter's Methodist Church, Langata (SPMC), a church located in an upper middle class suburb in Nairobi. It is what would be called a family church since it is mostly made up of families though it also draws membership from the residential areas in its environs. Being a Methodist congregation it enjoys ministry to

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9 A point of reference is the time when boys undergo initiation as part of the cultural rites of passage into 'adulthood' and is deemed qualified to be part of the church youth. Some of these as Maiko notes are as young as eight years old. Maiko, Youth Faith and Culture, 82

10 SO., 129.

11 Maiko, Youth Faith and Culture, 83.

12 SO., 128.

13 The Conference refers to the national office

14 From the Conference office (national office) MYK has leaders at the Synod level, that is the jurisdiction of the Synod Bishop, at the Circuit level, that is the jurisdiction of the Superintendent Minister and then at the local congregation level under the Circuit Minister.

15 Some local congregations have a youth minister while others don't.

members through such societies as Methodist Women Fellowship (MWF), Methodist Men Fellowship (MMF), Junior Sunday School (JSS) and MYK.

The youth group in this church operates under the name St Peters Youth Church (SPYC) and draws a larger part of its membership from young people who graduate out of JSS within the same church and others who join in from other places. The age bracket in this group is rather wide, ranging from teenagers to others about 30 years.

SPYC is organized in what Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster[16] call "The one-eared mickey mouse model of youth ministry"[17]. The group has its own worship service every Sunday morning and seldom has much contact with the adult congregation save during the Youth Sunday, annual family service or when there is a church activity involving the entire congregation. Although not exactly organised as Dean and Foster put it, the underlying principle is the same. The SPYC worship service is slated for 8.30am and the order of service is remotely similar to that of the adult service that meets at 11.00am. This service is tailor-made to 'fit' young people, with fun activities such as games, brain teasers and a tip of the week. Methodist hymns which are sung in the adult worship service are not popular with young people who instead prefer a more contemporary style of music[18]. The mood in the youth service, unlike in the adult service, is mostly sombre and has to be lightened up, to keep those present 'here' and awake. Once the service is over at 10.30am, the young people take a little time to socialize outside the church building and then they leave. This happens when the congregants of the adult service are now coming to church and beginning to settle for their eleven o'clock service. It eventually creates an environment in which young people are isolated, like "an ear on top of Mickey's head"[19] especially since the group has marginal contact with the rest of the church. Though a

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16 Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, *The God Bearing Life The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry,* (Nashville: Upper Room Book, 1998)

17 Dean and Foster, "The God Bearing Life," 31-33

18 These songs are deemed youthful while hymns are said to be boring and archaic.

19 Dean and Foster, "The God Bearing Life," 31-33

service has been allocated to them, these young people have continued to lose interest in church activity with their only remaining meeting being once a week.

1.3   Research Design

Academically, this study is situated within Practical Theology, more specifically in Youth Ministry. In this study, I use the practical theology model by John Swinton and Harriet Mowat[20], as a framework for the whole study. This model has four stages beginning from (1) identifying a situation that requires reflection and change, (2) the application of qualitative research methods in asking questions that when finally answered would lead to new practices, (3) a critical reflection on the practices of the church in light of scripture and tradition, and finally (4) creating a revised form of faithful practice.

This model allows me to challenge what Swinton and Mowat term 'false consciousness'[21] and develop an approach towards youth ministry with 'critical faithfulness'[22]. Based on this model, I developed an emerging model that I present hereinafter[23]. The first step looks at the current practice that requires challenging and changing as is necessary. In this study, the current practice is one where the youth ministry is detached from the adult congregation and is characterised by the flight of young people. The second step uses tools of qualitative research and extant theory in order to seek to understand the current practice[24]. The third step is a "critical reflection on

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20 John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research, (*London: SCM Press, 2006), 95

21 Ibid., 93

22 "acknowledge the divine givenness of scripture and the genuine working of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of what is given, while at the same time taking seriously the interpretative dimensions of the process of understanding revelation and ensuring faithful practices of individuals and communities." ibid

23 The model presented by Swinton and Mowat is circular. However I have used a more elongated model in order to be more elaborate based on my study. I have used arrows to illustrate how I move from the first step to the fourth step. Ibid., 95

24 Since no similar research had been done previously on this location, a partly grounded theory is applied at the beginning. Analysis via coding was done at several levels to establish themes and memos written out of reflections made thereof. These themes are illustrated below Analysis. Interpretation was done using extant theories.

current practice in the light of scripture and tradition"[25] using *the four voices of theology*[26] to ascertain un/faithfulness of current practise in our youth ministry. The fourth step is to formulate revised form(s) of faithful practice and hence answer the fourth sub-question. Using this model, I intend to describe how the young people interpret their experience of community at SPMC.

The following diagram is my research design modelled after the practical theology model by Swinton and Mowat[27].

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25 Ibid., 95

26 See section 2.3

27 Swinton and Mowat, "Practical Theology model, 95

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Step 1 : Identifying a │
                    │  situation requiring change. │
                    │       CURRENT           │
                    └─────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Step 2: using tools of qualitative research I will seek to understand the current practice │
│ MAIN QN:  HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY IN THE METHODIST │
│                        CHURCH IN KENYA?                                  │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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| SUB QN1: How is the organisation of SPYC a means of experiencing | SUB QN2: How has the interaction between the adult congregation and SPYC been a means | SUB QN3: How does a young person's search for autonomy and identity contribute to | SUB QN4: How can transformed practice that promotes the young people's experience of |

ANALYSIS (via

| WHO AM I? | CAN THIS CHURCH BE FAMILY? | WHY GO TO CHURCH? |

INTERPRETATION
(Family Systems Theory)

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┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Step 3: DISCUSSION: Critical           │
│ reflection on practices of the church in │
│ light of scripture and tradition – (Four │
│ Voices of Theology)                     │
└──────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────┐
│        Step 4:           │
│    CHANGED PRACTICE       │
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Diagram 1: Research design

The research strategy in my work is abduction[28] which allows me to use a mixed method approach of analysis. Its point of departure is in empirical data while at the same time allowing me to use extant theory to interpret data and discuss themes arising out of my analysis of data[29]. It also enables me to construct theory to "explain the individual case"[30]. Out of this back and forth between data and extant theory[31], it is my hope that new practice that is faithful to the mission[32] of MCK will be developed.

1.4 Data establishment, analysis and thesis writing:

Data was established via focus group interviews[33]. I considered focus groups helpful in elucidating a wide variety of views by people who are experiencing the same reality. In the ensuing discussion participants brought issues that they especially deemed important and significant. In focus groups also, the discussion shapes the thoughts of participants, and in this case helped to refine their contributions thus ending with a more realistic account of reality under study. They made a fine way for me to also study how the participants collectively make sense of a reality and how they construct meanings around it[34].

This focus group was made up of nine people, six males and three females. My target had been ten people, with one half male and the other female though it was not possible to get the ideal mix of participants as originally intended. At the time of the study, youth in high school are still in session and many of them are in boarding schools. Although I did

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28 Alvesson and Skoldberg, "Reflexive Methodology", 4-6

29 "the research process, alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other" ibid., 4

30 Ibid., 5

31 Modified theories will be used to interpret data established and analysed. These are modifications of role and social identity theory, family systems theory, value systems theory and communication competence theory.

32 The mission of the Methodist Church in Kenya is "To respond to the divine call of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to proclaim the holistic Gospel in word and deed and in the power of God's Holy Spirit." See www.methodistchurchinkenya.org

33 For more on the focus group and interviews see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3

34 Bryman, "Social Research Methods", 503-504

not manage to constitute the kind of group I would have intended, those present did not shy away from active participation in the discussion[35].   Given the time frame involved in gathering data, three in-depth sessions were conducted.

1.5   Literature Review

1.5.1   Available literature

In this paper I attempt to make an argument for the identity of young people today based on how they experience community, issues surrounding their developmental milestones and their implication for youth ministry. I look at the role of family and the adult congregation in the lives of the young people in church. In this regard I will make use of relevant literature[36] available to discuss the issues coming out of interviews and data established via analysis and interpretation.

Within the Kenyan context, I seldom found literature on Youth Ministry as an academic discipline. That which is available, touches on issues to do with young people and falls in any of the categories I have listed below. These titles can be classified as manuals and guidelines for parents, teachers and pastors on how to deal with adolescent issues or Christian spirituals on how to lead an effective Christian life as a young person.

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35 See section 4.3.2

36 Borgman, Dean (1997): *When Kumbaya is not enough a Practical Theology for Youth Ministry,* Massachussets: Hendrickson Publishers;   Clark, Chap (2001): "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development", in Kenda C Dean, Chap Clark & Dave Rahn, (ed.), *Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry Starting Right,* (p. 41-64), Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House; Clark, Chap & Dee Clark (2007): *Disconnected Parenting Teens in a MySpace World,* Michigan: Baker Books; Dean, Kenda Creasy & Ron Foster (1998): *The God Bearing Life The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry,* Nashville: Upper Room Books; DeVries, Mark (2001): "Focusing Youth Ministry through the Family", in Kenda C Dean, Chap Clark & Dave Rahn, (ed.), *Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry Starting Right,* (p. 141-153), Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House; DeVries, Mark (1994): *Family Based Youth Ministry Reaching the Been-there, Done-that Generation,* Illinois: InterVarsity Press;   DeVries, Mark (2008): *Sustainable Youth Ministry Why Most Youth Ministry doesn't last and what your Church can do about it,* Illinois: IVP Books;   Jacober, Amy (2014): "Adolescent Identity Development", in Sally Nash and Jo Whitehead, (ed.), *Christian Youth Work in Theory and Practice,* (p. 97 – 112), London: SCM Press; Root, Andrew (2011): "Youth Ministry as Fundamentally Theological", in Andrew Root & Kenda Creasy Dean, *The Theological Turn in Youth Ministry,* (p. 37 – 47), Illinois: Inter Varsity Press; Root, Andrew (2007): *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry,* Illinois: IVP Books

I classify them as follows:- (1) Manhood and the void left by lack of 'real fathers'[37] (2) Sexuality and sexual purity, (3) Personal growth and fulfilment, (4) Child abuse, (5) Nurturing character, (6) Guidance and counselling handbook and manual, (7) Substance abuse, and (8) Leadership skills These titles[38] are authored by Christian writers, mostly church ministers, school teachers and a counselling psychologist who write from their experiences in dealing with young people. However, none touches directly on how to do youth ministry within the church.

1.5.2 Young people and Youth Ministry

Young people are to be found in a wide range of ages in adolescence and this can be seen in how this period is defined. Chap Clark[39] notes that biologically this period is defined as the start of puberty with boys and girls enter making a debut at different ages. Also notable is the change in the debut age into adolescence over the years[40]. Maiko defines adolescence in African cultures as the "time when teens achieve new societal roles through special rites of passage"[41]. He argues that adolescence for the African youth is a

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37 I use the term real fathers because we have many young men who have grown up with absentee fathers.

38 Kaniah, Peter K (2013): *Real Fatherhood in a Fatherless Generation,* Nairobi: Diamond Quill Publishers; Mbevi, Simon (2010): *Boyz 2 Men Turning Boys into Real Men,* Nairobi: Ascent Limited; Wamboye, Ernest (2014): *Lust in the City A Guide on Sexual Purity,* Printed in Kenya; Okoronkwo, Stella (2005): *Facts About Sex for Youth Choosing to Chill,* Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House; Moloney, Michael (2000): *Teenagers Love and Sex,* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa; Waweru, David (2013): *Champion Win the Fight, Live Your Dream,* Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers; Mwiti, Gladys K (1997): *Child Abuse Detection, Prevention and Counselling,* Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House; Mwiti, Gladys K (1997): *Young Lives at Risk,* Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House; M'Mutungi, Daniel Muriithi (2008): *Character Building Learning from the Book of Daniel,* Nairobi: Daystar University; Mbaya, Margaret (2009): *Bringing Up Positive Teenagers in a Negative World,* Nairobi: Flame Keepers Publishing Company; Wanda, Pamela Kavoki (2010): *Educating your Child for Life,* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa; Lutomia, George A & Sikolia, Laban W (1999): *Guidance & Counselling for Schools and Colleges,* Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House; Mwiti, Gladys (2005): *Moving on Towards Maturity A Manual for Youth Counseling,* Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House; Ndirangu, Julius Mwai (2000): *Youth in Danger A Handbook for Teachers, Students, Parents, Pastors and Community Workers,* Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House; Kiriro, David Kimani (2013): Youth Leadership A 21st Century African Perspective, Nairobi: Aura Publishers

39 Chap Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," in *Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry Starting Right,* ed. Kenda C Dean, Chap Clark & Dave Rahn, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 41-64

40 Clark, "Changing face of Adplescence", 51-54

41 Maiko, "Youth Faith and Culture", 33

time when new societal roles are achieved through special rites of passage[42]. This is the "golden stage of development where youths readjust to societal prospects by utilizing their talents and skills in performing roles in the church, family and social life as an indication of healthy growth, development and maturity"[43].

Clark introduces the term individuation[44] in the discussion surrounding the changing face of adolescence. He defines it as "becoming one's own person"[45]. Accordingly this is "the process of breaking away from the role of child in the ecology of the family system *and* the young person intuitively recognizes that she yearns to leave the relative safety and comfort of the child's role and become an interdependent, autonomous person"[46]. The concept of individuation, which bears the connotation of separation from others, has an implication on the Christian understanding of self, knowing that humans are created in the image of God who is Triune in relationship and we gather as one interconnected body of Christ[47].

Individuation carries with it three tasks as Clark notes. These are identity[48], autonomy[49] and reconnection[50]. During individuation, a young person goes through a process of self-reflection which acts as an internal mechanism to develop confidence in the answers that emerge from questions raised. It is important to note at the outset of adolescence, identity

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42 "Every culture has its own way of practicing this initiation ceremony which also shows how much the family and society appreciated and esteems this young person". Ibid., 34

43 ibid

44 Clark, "Changing face of Adplescence", 47

45 ibid

46 Ibid

47 Ibid., 48

48 The task of discovering one's identity answers the question 'who am I'? ibid., 55

49 The task of accepting responsibility over one's life or gaining autonomy answers the question 'do I matter'? ibid

50 The task of reconnecting in appropriate ways to other members of the community answers the question 'how do I relate to others'? ibid

is still firmly fixed in the family context and the young adolescent is seen to struggle to gain a new identity[51]. The mid-adolescent may not be as clingy to familial support as young adolescents, but he will be looking out for parental affirmation[52]. Older adolescents are on the threshold of taking on adult responsibilities in society but need tutelage to make this role as responsible and independent individuals[53].

Several terms have been used to describe the recipients of youth ministry. These are adolescent[54], youth, teenager, student and occasionally young adult. These have had fluid meanings over the years even as various theorists have sought to define the beginning and journey of people found within this developmental stage[55].

Youth ministry is "the call to declare (God's) power to the next generation, (God's) might to all who are to come"[56]. This declaration happens in different ever-changing environments and "Jesus Christ {God} is and will always be the only relevant and redeeming presence that a person could ever experience"[57]. For this reason the church community is therefore called "to relationally pass on (this) gospel to adolescents in any cultural or environmental setting"[58]. Accordingly and in this definition, is the

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51 Clark gives the example of the teen that is happy-go-lucky in one week and moody in the next, or a bully on Sunday and a shy convert on Wednesday. These need support and love to navigate this process. Ibid., 56

52 Though they may not seem to desire family fellowship much, they are pleased to know that parents will be at hand when needed. They seek to be independent but in their bid to please others they constantly find themselves needing much support. Ibid

53 This is however dependent on various environmental factors such as educational system, media, parents that are unwilling to let go and so on. In a modern culture that encourages sloth, more late adolescents are unwilling to leave adolescence until much later in life, even in later 20s. Ibid., 57

54 "anyone who has reached puberty but who has not yet made the vocational, ideological or relational commitments of young adulthood" ibid

55 Ibid., 42

56 ibid

57 ibid

58 ibid

understanding that though our message remains unchanged, our methods of expressing care and reaching out to future generations ought to change.

1.5.3 Role of family in Youth Ministry

Mark Devries[59] defines his approach to youth ministry as "using the position of youth ministry to access, empower and connect students to the most effective sources of faith formation, namely the nuclear family and the extended family of the church"[60]. While making an argument for youth ministry within the family, DeVries also speaks of crisis in youth ministry. He argues that this crisis has been created by the "failure to lead children to mature Christian adulthood"[61]. He points at the way culture followed by the church has "systematically isolated young people from the very relationships that are most likely to lead them to maturity"[62] and says that the "privilege of being left alone has created a wholesale epidemic of adult neglect of the next generation"[63]. To remedy this situation Devries argues that for young people to grow into mature Christians, they need to be around people who have that maturity themselves[64].

Devries argues for parental involvement in youth ministry asserting that "no one has more long-term interest in students than their parents"[65]. He sees "parents and the extended Christian family of adults partnering together for the sake of the spiritual formation of the next generation"[66] as a possible solution for the crisis in youth ministry. Accordingly two scripture texts act as guides to this cause. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 God's people are "commanded to take responsibility for naturally and repeatedly passing on the

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59 Mark DeVries, "Focusing Youth Ministry through the Family", in *Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry Starting Right,* Kenda C Dean, Chap Clark & Dave Rahn, ed. (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 141-153

60 DeVries, "Focusing Youth Ministry through the Family", 150

61 Ibid., 143

62 ibid

63 ibid

64 ibid

65 Ibid., 146

66 Ibid., 148

faith to the next generation"[67], and Hebrew 12:1 reminds us that we are surrounded by others who by faith obeyed God[68]. Although this model would only work with families in which Christian maturity is found, a combination with the youth ministry model which prioritizes a shift to "building an intergenerational faith-nurturing community for teenagers"[69] is beneficial.

1.5.4   Role of the adult congregation in Youth Ministry

The adult congregation has the unique position of role modeling in the church community.   This is especially so noting that not all youth in the church will be accompanied by biological parents.   The church has the role to fill this gap by accepting Christ's call to be *extended* family.   In this regard, Mark Yaconelli[70] makes the plea for youth ministry to be done in the context of a worshipping community.   This is because "Christianity is practised as a communal faith and in this way all spiritual practices are corporate practices"[71]. The notion here is that response of the call of God on a young person should be understood as a call to be part of a worshipping community.   In communal worship practices of faith are shaped and articulated – in the reading of scripture, prayer, and proclamation of the gospel and so on. It is also "in the worshipping community that we can experience the presence of God's Spirit"[72].

Yaconelli notes that

> for youth to learn the way of Christ, they cannot and must not be segregated or
> isolated from the worshipping community.   Youth ministry cannot be practised with
> its own particular activities and methods unless they are grounded in the rhythms

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67 Ibid., 149

68 Ibid., 150

69 ibid

70 Mark Yaconelli, "Focusing Youth Ministry through Christian Practices", in *Thinking Theologically about Youth Ministry Starting Right,* Dean, Kenda Creasy, Chap Clark & Dave Rahn, ed., (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 155 – 165

71 Yaconelli, "Focusing Youth Ministry through Christian Practices", 160

72 Ibid., 161

and presence of the community before God. This means youth (and children) must be physically recognised as equal partners in the worship of God[73].

Thus he makes a plea for the physical presence of youth within a worshipping community where their gifts are recognised and welcomed for use in the worship of God.

1.6   Benefits of Study

As one aware of the challenges experienced in youth ministry, I hope this study will contribute to youth ministry in the Kenyan context in several ways. First, the participants will gain from having an 'outsider' present their views to church leaders for further consideration and possible implementation. This I hope will keep them from continual flight. Secondly, I hope to add my voice to the already existing but subtle discussion on the present condition of youth ministry in MCK, and, encourage a more productive discussion tending towards creating more faithful practice in the church. It is good to note that the current youth ministry was thought out for the young people, yet as primary beneficiaries, they were not involved in its formulation. Lastly, with this study I hope to contribute to youth ministry research, which in my context, I have found to have a huge lacuna.

1.7   Research Question

1.5.1 indicates a lack of relevant research based literature in youth ministry within my context. Out of books within reach[74], I would like to note that Maiko has attempted captured the face of youth ministry in Kenya and Africa. He states that

> The main purpose of this book is to attempt to answer the question 'how do adults offer a health spiritual, social and developmental care to youth that does not degrade their potential for growth'. {Thus} providing theological, practical and

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73 ibid

74 I searched for relevant published work locally, that is, in the major book stores in Nairobi, Mombasa and Meru towns. I finally found and bought the title by Saneta Maiko online at Adlibris.no

experiential components, this work attempts to give a holistic approach to effective care and nurture of the youth in whichever context[75].

Maiko takes a developmental approach to youth ministry. He explores adolescent psychology {and} discusses the psychological, social and spiritual effects of drug abuse, divorce, HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa and calls the church to account in the face of such challenges for youth in Africa[76]. This notwithstanding, there has not been any study done on how young people experience community in MCK and specifically at SPMC and therefore, it is the lacuna I will attempt to fill with this study.

Section 1.1 attempts to give a picture of the current state of youth ministry in MCK. Upon a casual inquiry, many times, young people point to the church being boring as the reason for disinterest. However even among those who stay, there seems to be a lack lustre youth ministry in place. In this regard, I took interest to study a youth group in an urban church which had what would be termed 'components of a thriving youth ministry' in my context, that is, a youth worship service, a youth minister, a budget and members. With the first three components in place the question in many people's minds was why the young people chose to stay away from the church. My first hunch was that probably there was something the church was not doing right hence the flight. The following questions were posed in an attempt to find out.

The overall question in this study is: 'How do young people experience community in the Methodist Church in Kenya?' My interview protocol was based a set of research sub-questions. I arrived at these sub-questions knowing that experience is an abstract thing that cannot be measured. However, it is possible to know about an experience as relayed through activity, interaction with other people and/or in the choices made. Taking the assertion in 1.5.4[77] into action, the following sub-questions were raised to guide the study.

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75 Maiko, "Youth Faith and Culture", 1

76 Ibid., vii

77 "for youth to learn the way of Christ, they cannot and must not be segregated or isolated from the worshipping community. Youth ministry cannot be practised with its own particular activities and methods unless they are grounded in the rhythms and presence of the community before God. This means youth

The first sub-question was, 'How is the organisation of SPYC a means of experiencing community?' It is important to note that like all other youth groups in MCK, SPYC operates under the auspices of MYK. The Standing Order that guides the organisation of groups in MYK allows groups room to create their own activities still in tandem with the purpose of MYK[78]. Through this question I sought to understand how SPYC has organised itself and how its activities as a group act as a means of experiencing community.

The second sub-question is, "How has the interaction between the adult congregation and SPYC been a means of experiencing community? I sought to understand out what manner of interaction there was between members of SPYC and the adult congregation. An intriguing part of this interaction is in knowing that the adult congregation at SPMC is largely made up of parents and adult relatives of these young people. I seek to understand how this in the family and in SPMC as an entire congregation is a means of experiencing community.

The third sub-question was, "How does a young person's search for autonomy and identity contribute to his/her experience of community?" The search for autonomy and identity is identified as tasks of individuation[79]. This bears on the responsibility of the young person in his own experience of community, that is, the role the young person plays in his own experience of community out of choices made, and how he understands that role.

Community as a concept has to do with how people relate to one another. Youth ministry is an avenue to experience the community of young people while at the same time experience a larger community which is the whole congregation. The fourth sub-question

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(and children) must be physically recognised as equal partners in the worship of God". Yaconelli, "Focusing Youth Ministry through Christian Practices", 161

78 See MCK SO 147 (5) (c)

79 Clark, "Changing Face of Adolescence", 47

sought to find out "How can a transformed youth ministry that promotes the young people's experience of community can be described?" This last question is focused onproposing change to the current practice to more faithful practice.

1.8 Outline of Study

This study is organized as follows. Chapter one is an introduction to the entire study. It lays out a background to the study, research design, data establishment, a review of literature, both in researcher's context and also other relevant literature, benefits of study, research question, outline of study and the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter two presents theoretical perspectives I use to interpret data established and in the discussion. These are Bowen family systems theory and four voices of theology respectively.

Chapter three is the methodological reflections chapter. In it, I present my reflections throughout the process of data establishment. These are reflections on personal reflexivity, establishment of data, sampling, the focus group, interviews and recording and transcription, description, data analysis and interpretation, validity, generalizability and reliability of data established, limitation of study and finally the conclusion.

Chapters four, five and six presents detailed descriptions of established data, as related by participants. Data from each subsequent question is organized and presented as a chapter for coherence and ease of reading and reference.

Chapter seven, eight and nine is Interpretation of findings via the extant theory. It is organized in three distinct chapters for coherence and ease of reading.

Chapter ten is Discussion using the Four Voices of Theology[80] to critically reflect[81] on current practice and propose revised forms of practice[82].

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80 See section 2.3

81 Swinton and Mowat, "Practical Theology", 96

82 Ibid

Finally is given a conclusion of the whole study. It is followed by a list of references and appendices.

1.9 Conclusion and reflection

This chapter has made an introduction of the whole thesis paper. It is a brief of what the reader would expect to find in the rest of the pages in this paper. I will now proceed on to the theoretical perspectives chapter.

2   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1   Introduction

One way of experiencing community is through relationships and these can be experienced either as differentiated or fused persons.   In this paper I will use the Bowen Family Systems Theory as operationalized by Ronald W Richardson[83] to interpret findings.   I will consider the four functional styles of congregational lifestyle, and triangulation in an attempt to understand how participants experience community. In the discussion, I will use the Four Voices of Theology as a working tool to juxtapose my findings against the *four voices* in order to propose new and faithful practice. I set out both theories in this chapter.

2.2   Bowen Family Systems Theory

2.2.1   The four functional styles of congregational lifestyle

Richardson notes that people experience community either in 'togetherness'[84] or 'individuality'[85]. These two forces are not at opposite ends of a continuum so that one can be experienced without the other; instead, they co-exist in us at varying levels of intensity and at different points in time. In this experience, there is also distance and conflict or closeness and cooperation in between as members of a community deal with challenge or with each other.

He uses the words fusion[86] and differentiation[87] to express emotional processes that lead to either more or less emotional maturity[88].   All of these will be seen at play in the

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83 Ronald W Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996)

84 "Each person gets some of his or her identity from the 'togetherness' of belonging to a number of groups at particular levels of society. To belong, the individual person has to be willing to go along with the group, to fit in and be a team player, and to fulfil the expectations of the group – at least to a certain extent". Ibid., 57

85 "Our sense of self is also based on our own personal uniqueness or specialness. This is the individuality force. It is not about setting out to be different as a way of becoming distinctive; it is about thinking things through for ourselves and arriving at beliefs and understandings of our life and the world that make sense to us". Ibid

86 "Internally, the degree to which a person can separate thinking and feeling, and bring greater objectivity to his or her own inevitable subjective stance". Ibid., 81

functional styles of congregational lifestyle, each influencing how people experience community, whether as individuals and/or groups. They are as represented here below.

The first style is *enmeshed fusion*[89] where those operating in this style "have trouble knowing where one person's boundaries stop and those of others start. The self of each is so fused with the other that people….. think, feel and speak for each other"[90]. An illustration of this is as seen in the following diagram[91].

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Closeness                                              Distance
          -------------:---------------------------------------
              Enmeshed :
                       :
```
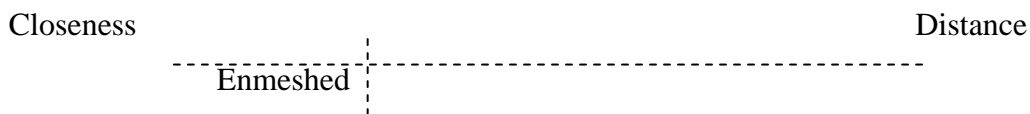
 Diagram 2: Enmeshed fusion

A characteristic of enmeshed fused people is fear and as such would do anything, "including giving up major parts of self to avoid this outcome"[92]. They express a deep desire to be "loved, accepted, approved of and guided by others or conversely provide this for others"[93]. Independent functioning here is seen as selfish and uncaring and "in the lowest levels of this quadrant there is practically no capacity of autonomous functioning"[94].

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87 "Interpersonally, the degree to which a person can be clear or more objective about the emotional separateness between self and other, knowing what is self and self's responsibility, and what is not". Ibid

88"they are about the degree of emotional merging and emotional separateness in our relationships with one another". ibid., 80

89 Ibid., 102

90 ibid

91 ibid

92 Ibid., 103

93 ibid

94 ibid

The second style is *isolated fusion*[95]. People operating in this style are "reactive to closeness"[96] and those around them learn to keep distance. Richardson notes that "the immature management of the life forces leads to a sense of individuality that excludes others or that sees others as the enemy of self"[97]. Unlike the *enmeshed fused* types, these leave when they deem a relationship has become 'too intense' as a way of hanging on to the self[98].

Closeness - | - - - - - - - - -   Distance
Isolated
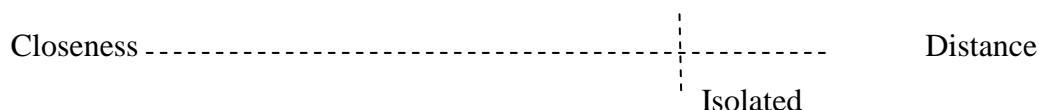
Diagram 3: Isolated Fusion

People operating in this quadrant will have weak and tenuous connections to other people in a community.

The third style is *differentiated connected*[99]. People in this quadrant "develop a sense of connection, unity, intimacy and mutual understanding without the loss of self for either party. The togetherness life force is experienced as an attraction to and an interest in others rather than a deep yearning neediness for others"[100]. Such connections allow people to enjoy one another and celebrate gains in each other's lives. A key factor here is "the ability to maintain a sense of self while still in close emotional contact with others"[101]. Such emotional maturity enables members of community to think through and make appropriate decisions as to challenges and difficulties within the group.

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95 Ibid., 105

96 Ibid., 106

97 ibid

98 ibid

99 Ibid., 107

100 Ibid., 108

101 ibid

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                    connected
Closeness-------------┆-------------------------------------              Distance
                      ┆
                      ┆
```
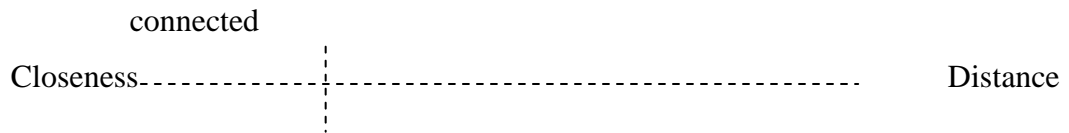
Diagram 4: Differentiated connected

The fourth style is *diffentiated alone*[102]. People in this quadrant have a

well-differentiated sense of their own individuality {and} have the ability, and, especially, the courage to stand alone, without any emotional support from others and without needing praise or recognition for what they do. They do not fear criticism or shy away from it; neither do they seek approval or support for whatever positions they take[103].

They do not need support to be themselves. Though they do not set out to be alone, it emanates from their actions.

```
                                                      ┆alone
Closeness--------------------------------------------┆--------Distance
                                                      ┆
```
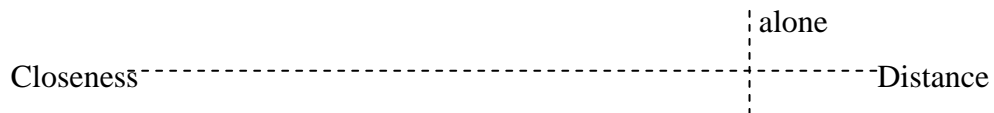
Diagram 5: Differentiated alone

"When necessary they are able to step back and regain the more objective view and think situations through"[104].

The following diagram represents all the four quadrants.

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102 Ibid., 109

103 Ibid., 110

104 Ibid., 111

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                                                    I
              T          Differentiation            N
              O      Connected          Alone       D
              G                                      I
              E                                      V
closeness --- T - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - I ---- distance
              H                                      D
              E                                      U
              R      Enmeshed         Isolated       A
              N                                      L
              E                                      I
              S                                      T
              S          Fusion                     Y
```
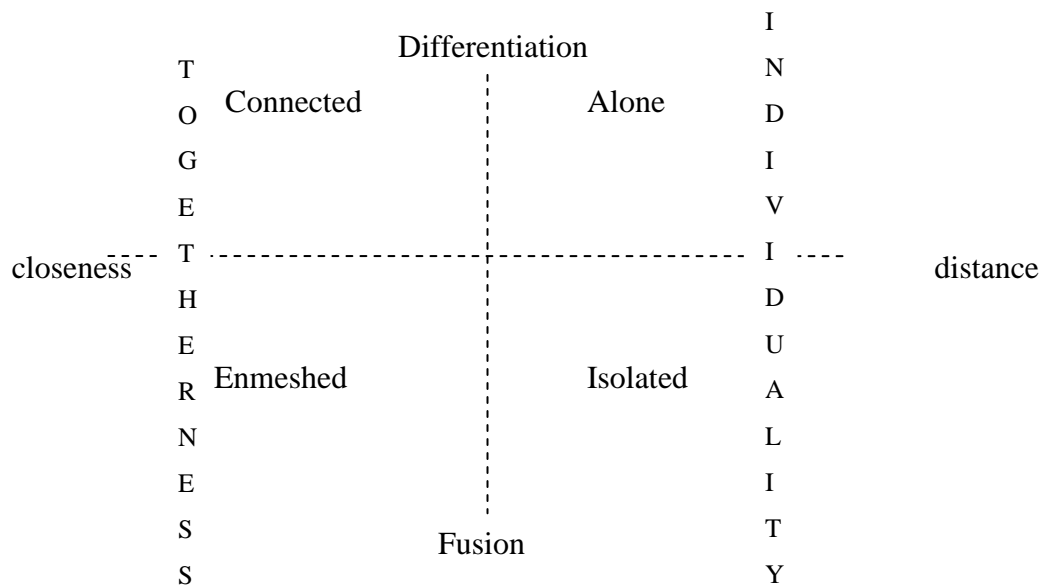
Diagram 6: Functional Style Graph[105]

2.2.2   Triangulation

Richardson uses Triangles, "one of the eight concepts that are part of Bowen Family Systems Theory"[106] to illustrate how the four functional congregational lifestyles are appropriated in relationships. He notes that an

> Individual self is always part of several larger wholes. The self does not exist alone……individual identity is nearly always derived in part from what he or she belongs to whether it is occupations, places, families, or tribes. The larger context helps to define the individual. The individual is often a particular expression of the larger corporate group[107].

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105 Ibid., 101

106 Ronald W Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life", in *Review and Expositor,* Vol 102, (Summer 2005):380

107 Ibid., 381

This theory "describes how people operate in relationships; it offers directions for how growth can happen"[108]. Our relationships in a community or group are seen it terms of triangles. In this theory is the understanding that a change in one part of the triangle would bring a change in another part of the triangle. It should however be understood that the end hoped for is not to get the other party to do what one wants but this is about "a caring way to be closely connected with others that allows us at the same time to be true to our own beliefs and values"[109].

Richardson notes that no relationship involves just two people, and "the two-person relationships operate within a network of other relationships"[110]. He asserts that

> the more differentiated {people} are, the longer two people can maintain a one-to-one relationship with each other, even in conflict, without distancing or bringing in a third party. But as anxiety[111] increases, a one-to-one relationship is harder to maintain[112]

and thus a third party is brought in, creating a triangle. "Generally two corners in a triangle represent the 'close insider' position and the third is the 'outsider' position. Who is 'in' or 'out' is fluid and can shift about"[113].

Like many other groups in MYK, SPYC initially did not have a youth pastor and the church leadership was set to get them one. The normative practice in MCK is to post ministers to the churches from the Conference Office. However in the interest of her own youth group, SPMC leaders accepted to hire the youth pastor that SPYC requested for. In

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108 Ibid

109 Ibid., 382

110 Richardson, "Creating a Healthier Church", 115

111 The word *anxiety* here refers to situations in relationships where people may not agree over issues and over time would need a third party to come in and bring resolution between any two parties. "When anxiety increases as more significant differences are exposed between them; either of the people in the closer two some might become uncomfortable. The person who becomes the most uncomfortable first will make a move toward a third person". Ibid., 116

112 ibid

113 Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life", 383

this relationship, SPYC is part of the larger SPMC family which in turn is part of the larger MCK family. In this matter of getting a youth pastor for SPYC there are several triangular relationships involved. The first triangle is that of MCK, SPMC and a youth pastor in the MCK system (P1).

MCK

P1
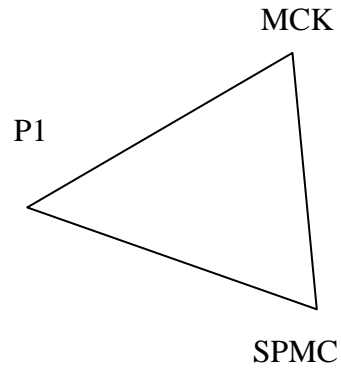
SPMC

Diagram 7: Triangular relationship between MCK, SPMC and P1

The second triangle is that of SPMC, SPYC and a youth pastor not in the MCK system (P2).

SPMC

P2
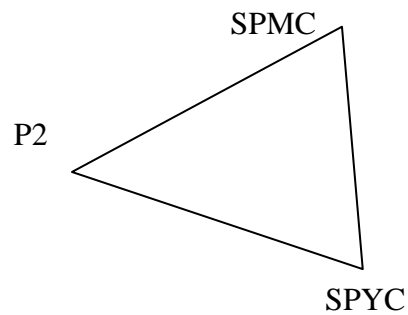
SPYC

Diagram 8: Triangular relationship between SPYC, SPMC and P2

Both youth pastors were to come in as a solution to the challenge of ministering to members of SPYC, but the young people chose the one that had worked with them before; and this brings in another factor in triangulation, that of distance.

A third triangle in this relationship is that of SPYC, SPMC and P1. SPYC stays close to SPMC and both distance themselves from the P1[114].
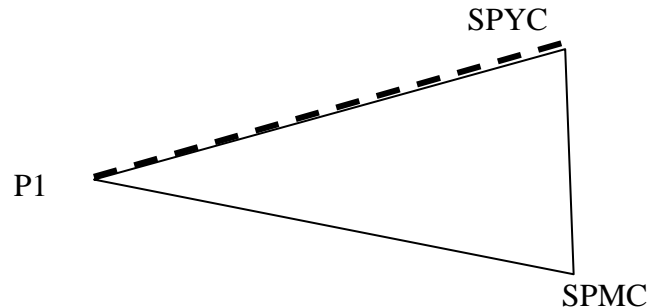
Diagram 9: Triangular relationship between SPYC, SPMC and P1[115]

Distance comes in handy when one party decides to not be part of the conflict/challenge but be part of the solution. SPMC had been trying to get a lasting solution to the challenge of youth ministry in their church; members of SPYC knew they could not influence the choice of P1 and hence they distanced themselves from that corner of the triangle and instead lobbied with their own church. Richardson calls this *repositioning*[116].

> The basic principle here is that one person cannot change the relationship between any two other people; efforts to do so usually only make things worse. If you are the person C in the triangle, you can only manage your own relationship with either A or B. You cannot do anything about the relationship between A and B. As soon as you take sides in a triangle {…} you automatically become part of the problem[117]

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114 I use the heavy dotted line to indicate the discomfort SPYC has with the prospect of getting P1 as youth pastor.

115 Broken line shows the relationship between two parties that are not in agreement

116 Richardson, "Creating a Healthier Church", 122

117 Ibid., 123

A fourth kind of relationship is created between the different parties and situations that the young people would choose. Sometimes young people in this congregation would choose to distance themselves from church activities if they realise that their needs are not being adequately met. A case in point would be relationship between these young people and the preacher and the sermons preached to them. R9 noted that "We are struggling with real issues, but preachers will not see them because they are domesticated and blind to this". One likely reaction arising from the kind preaching done would be for the young people to choose not to attend worship service. Thus both preacher and sermon find themselves in an 'outsider' position of the triangle and staying away from church gets an 'insider' position as is shown in the diagram below.
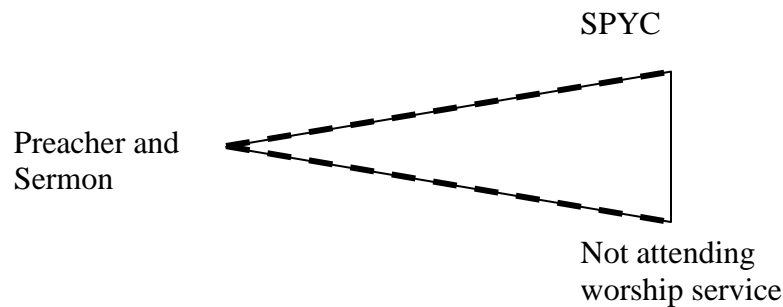
Diagram 10: Triangular relationship between Preacher and Sermon, SPYC and not attending worship service[118]

2.3 The Four Voices of Theology

Cameron et al[119] recognize practical theology and action research methodology[120] as significant and important responses to the difficulty of speaking about God in practice. The

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118 Broken line shows the relationship between two parties that are not in agreement

119 Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice Theological Action Research and Practical Theology,* (London: SCM Press, 2010)

120 The proponents of this theory agree with the practical model of Swinton and Mowat, which is the research design guiding this study. Theological action research follows a familiar pattern of reflection similar to that used by Swinton and Mowat. They begin from Experience, into Reflection, Learning and finally Action. Action becomes the new Experience which goes through the same reflection cycle to ensure faithfulness of practice. Cameron et al, "Talking about God in Practice", 49-51

former makes connections between theology and faith practice and between Christian tradition and the present. The latter brings to the problem processes and skills by which practice itself can be spoken of, and its significance reflected on[121].

The four voices of theology is a tool that recognises "both the explicit and implicit ways in which Christian practices are theology of themselves"[122]. The conviction that Christian practice is *faith seeking understanding*, leads to a properly complex view of theology as such. The naming of faith-full actions as a theological voice draws practice into a dynamic set of other theologies which are often more recognised as such"[123]. These are represented in the following diagram.

NORMATIVE THEOLOGY Scriptures The Creeds Official Church teaching Liturgies		FORMAL THEOLOGY The theology of theologians Dialogue with other disciplines
ESPOUSED THEOLOGY The theology embedded within a group's articulation of its beliefs		OPERANT THEOLOGY The theology embedded within the actual practices of the group
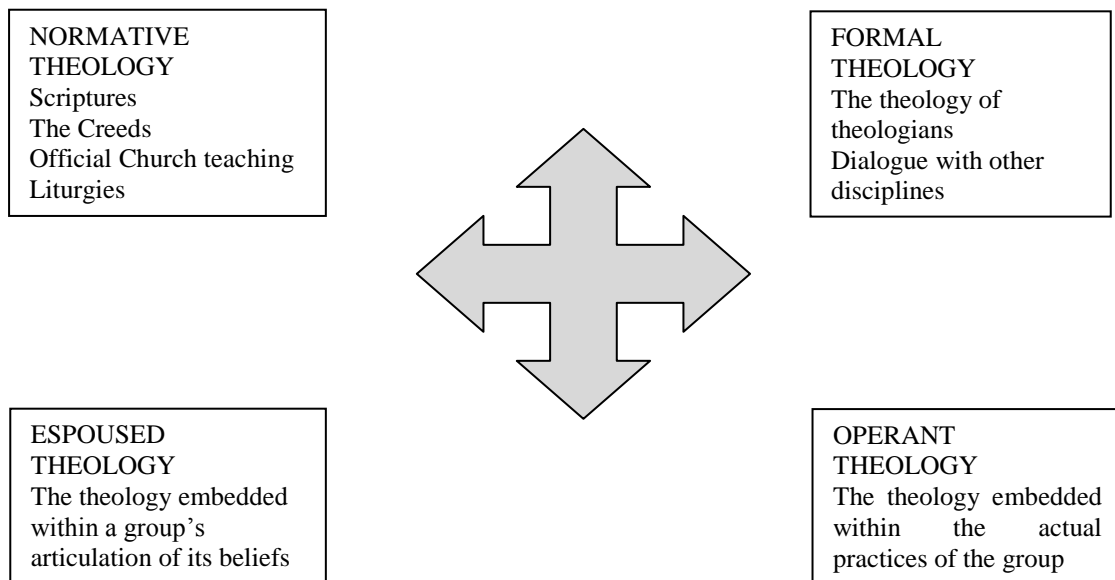
Diagram 11: The Four Voices of Theology[124]

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121 Ibid., 49

122 Ibid., 53

123 ibid

124 Ibid., 54

Proponents of this theory note that "this device is used to make the complexity of speaking about God "manageable as a heuristic and hermeneutic framework"[125]. None of the voices stands alone or separate from the others, that is, "we can never hear one voice without there being echoes of the other three. According to Cameron et al, the normative voice describes what the church community describes as its theological authority. This is an authority that can even stand to correct as well as inform the operant and espoused theologies. As such the normative is often related to the ecclesial identities and relationships of the group[126]. This is dependent on the practitioner community, and in this case will be drawn largely from Methodism and the published works of John Wesley[127]. The formal voice, the voice of the academy is recognizable in the espoused and operant theologies. It however is distinct in that it

> offers a specifically intellectual articulation of faith seeking understanding through practising a form of thought which engages in critical and historically and philosophically informed enquiry regarding the ways in which faith is, and has been expressed.{…}it shines a light on practice and on accepted authorities (locally espoused, or more ecclesially normative)[128].

This study done in practical theology is a tool using formal theology to look at the gaps in what the community espouses as their theology versus what they actually do. New faithful practice will be proposed with the normative voice standing to correct both espoused and operant theology. Of particular interest will be to see how time and context will inform new practice, because whereas Scriptures, Creeds and Liturgies may remain

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125 ibid

126 Ibid., 54

127 "Is concerned with what the practising group names as its theological authority – an authority which may even stand to correct, as well as inform operant and espoused theologies. As such the normative is often related to the ecclesial identities and relationships of the group. The acceptance of a theological voice as normative will be conditioned by the nature of the practitioner group". Ibid

128 Ibid., 55

constant, some of the teachings of the church were written many years ago in 16th century England, while the study was done in the 21st Century Kenya.

3 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will reflect on various issues beginning with my own reflexivity in the study. That is from the choice and inception of the study, creating a tool for data establishment, actual establishing of data through focus group interviews, description, analysis and interpretation. I will look at issues concerning validity, generalizability and reliability, limitation to the study and then conclude.

3.2 Personal reflexivity

I came into this project with experience as a youth worker and I realised that I had deeply held values and hunches which if not well placed would have had the propensity to interfere with the study. This past knowledge had the potential to interfere with my reflexivity by altering the questions asked and hence the answers given so that it would appear as though I just found out what I already knew. I therefore tried as much as possible to be careful to take a fresh look at the reality being examined.

Alvesson and Kaj define *personal reflexivity* as "interpretation of interpretation"[129]. This is because attention is

> turned 'inwards towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in research context[130].

This gives a "systematic reflection {which when} applied on different levels can endow the interpretation with a quality that makes empirical research of value"[131].

Coming into this project as an insider held both advantages and disadvantages. The best advantage was that I was familiar with operations in MCK, St Peters Church and

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129 Alvesson and Skoldberg, "Reflexive Methodology", 9

130 Ibid

131 Ibid. (Words in brackets mine added for coherence of sentence)

SPYC. In our discussions therefore we were all treading on common ground. I did not require to be brought up to speed, say with the language used. The bigger disadvantage was that being a minister with the MCK, there was the temptation to want to rationalise the position of the church in its favour. Generally in the discussion, I was put in an 'us' versus 'you' position, almost put on my defences. An example of the participant's being brush with the pastor is as follows:-

R1: "Especially if the pastor is there doing the bare minimum and expecting a salary at the end of the month not because he has a heart for the people; just to meet his bills. The pastor should have a heart for the people and thus be versatile enough to care for special needs in the congregation like single mothers. Youth have easy access to pornography and such things….the digital generation. If you have a heart for the people, you will find ways of meeting their need."

I realised that my deep convictions and pre-understanding were standing in the way and I had to back-off to let the participants speak up.

Reflexivity called upon me as the researcher to be removed from what I already knew and interpret what is the interpreted reality of participants in this study[132]. During the description, analysis and interpretation of codes and themes I was keen to so do from what the participants said and not from what I had pre-conceived and finally in conversation with what others have written about similar lived realities.

3.3   Establishing Data

3.3.1   Sampling
This study was conducted at St Peters Methodist Church, Langata Circuit, Nairobi Synod. It is a purposive sample[133] chosen out of keen interest in how young people in this congregation experience community. I noted that this site was endowed with what it would take to have a thriving youth ministry, yet it could not be said to be thriving, at least

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132 Ibid

133 Bryman, "Social Research Methods", 418

not as expected. The group sampled is found within an urban setting, has its own worship service, a youth minister and a budgetary allocation. The particular focus group[134] is comprised of both SPYC leaders and members, male and female between the ages 20 - 30 years.

3.3.2 The Focus Group

I engaged a Focus Group to answer semi-structured questions. My intention in choosing to use the focus group was to "gather qualitative data from individuals who have experienced a particular concrete situation"[135], and this formed the focus of the interview. The use of focus group interviewing accorded the following benefits[136]. (1) Using a focus group allowed participants to probe each other's contributions. Within the discussions, participants would agree or disagree on some positions. They posed questions to each other in follow-up to an answer given or positions held. (2) The focus group interview enabled participants to bring forth what they deemed important and significant. Using focus group interviews thus ensured my ending up with a more realistic view of how members of SPYC experienced God within their youth ministry. (3) This form of interviewing also gave me the opportunity to see how the group constructed meaning of their reality, which also formed my interview agenda.

3.3.3 The Interviews

The participants in this process were well informed of why and how they would be involved in this project. They were at ease to discuss issues that would come up in the interview. I took them verbally through what the project was all about, that is, for my thesis paper and also allowed them to ask me questions to clarify their position. They were at liberty to withdraw from the exercise even before we begun[137].

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134 See section 1.4

135 David W Stewart, Prem N Shamdasani and Dennis W Rook, *Focus Groups Theory and Practice,* 2[nd] ed, (London: SAGE, 2007)

136 Bryman, "Social Research Methods", 501-518

137 Kvale, *Interviews An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing,* (United Kingdom: SAGE, 1996), 153-154;

I had made a set of interview questions before I met my focus group. These were drawn out of the subsequent research questions arrived at from the main research question. The position I held on the current practice that needed a challenge was informed by my own pre-understanding. This was borne out of my experiences growing up in MCK and my experiences as a youth worker with groups in MCK and elsewhere. This can for instance be seen in the very first question in my set[138].

In the ensuing discussion for example I was pushed to be more open in the manner I asked questions. That is, not necessarily following the script but now tending towards mooting questions in a conceptual manner and allowing the discussion to flow[139]. I realised that participants would often be drawn to a certain direction that pointed to what they held dear, either as individuals or as a group. This was either through a follow up question or by allowing a participant to go on until the point in my judgement he was touching on something not directly linked to the question at hand. I allowed myself a certain level of involvement that saw me guide the discussions[140]. This was also to avoid having what would be considered a "within group"[141] survey. Instead I wanted participants to have an interactive discussion sharing thoughts on their common reality.

Being the first interview of its kind to be held at this location and I was looking forward to having the participants engage in the manner of discussion that would let me in on how their youth ministry fostered their experience of community. Notably participants did not answer questions in a manner to suggest they were being led in a particular direction.

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138 "How does the SPYC mission and vision enhance young fellowship as young people"? In my pre-understanding, mission and vision statements are two important things that hold together and guide activity in any organised group towards a desired end. The dialogue that ensued gave me a new understanding on what had really enhanced SPYC fellowship, something beyond a mission and vision statement. My new understanding of the participants' world influenced how I posed the other questions.

139 During the interview I provided "a fairly structured setting for the extraction of their views and perspectives" See Bryman "Social Research Methods", 501

140 Since the discussion was semi-structured, I was careful that they did not unnecessarily go off tangent, though based on my discretion I allowed discussion that I felt dug deeper into what they found important and significant and at the same time in line with the discussion.

141 See Stewart et al, "*Focus Groups Theory and Practice",* 11

Their answers were rather open and frank, if the mood[142] during interviews was anything to go by. There was much laughter shared and participants agreed to disagree at certain times and this was done respectfully and amicably. They appreciated the depth of the matter at hand and gave reflective insights and examples to explain their thoughts.

As a researcher, I was careful to help bring out salient issues that I thought the group was shying away from. This was not a big challenge in this group as they were sort of relieved that I was engaging them in this exercise, giving them the opportunity to bare feelings and thoughts they had longed to bring to the fore. I was also keen to observe instances of great excitement, when several participants seemed to speak at the same time. In other times a word that had an 'ascribed' meaning would be used and leave the whole team in stitches. Such moments indicated how much they flowed with what was being said. When they didn't seem to agree or when they faltered, or when I nuanced a "red light"[143] in a contribution, I took the opportunity to push a point until I realised that it was seemingly exhausted. Statements made by participants before we officially began interviewing, such as, "let me talk" or "I came because I want to talk" were some pointers of how much participants were willing to share.

At the end of the interviews, I thanked participants for coming and for contributing. I reiterated especially that the findings in the project would be instrumental to begin a conversation on how the youth ministry in the church could be revitalised. I assured them that their identities would be anonymized.

3.3.4 Recording and Transcription
I used a voice recorder to make a recording of interviews. This was really instrumental especially because the focus group interview is characterised by a continuous and spontaneous discussion and there were times when several participants spoke at the same time. I therefore could not stop the discussion in order to make a note[144].

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142 There was a lot of laughter shared in the sessions

143 Kvale, "Interviews", 133

144 "I was able to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview". Ibid., 160

Transcription was interesting though tedious. Participants spoke not in pure English, but in a code-switch between English, Swahili and Sheng[145]. Spoken language[146] can be quite a challenge during transcription and on several occasions I re-constructed code-switched sentences for coherence. Translating thought forms from one language to another was quite a challenge. Therefore I begun by making a verbatim transcription and then re-organised where necessary into more grammatical English language. There were also instances when a participant would chip into another person's sentence and I had to disentangle such statements. Sometimes there was such a raucous that muffled a voice and we had to repeat a question. At other times several participants spoke at the same time[147] thus making it a bit difficult to know what is said. Since I had the privilege to work with participants familiar to me, I didn't have the challenge of knowing which voice belonged to whom.

3.4 Description, Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.4.1 Description

Description was carried out under the three questions subsequent to the main research question. I wrote memos to help me in the final descriptions of what was said by participants. Towards the end of the description phase, I realised that there were memos that bore certain similarities or patterns though different questions had been asked. This was of great help as I begun to form codes at various levels and put similar material under one code.

Description would be tricky sometimes, especially where participants mumbled or grunted in agreement or approval or disapproval, or even where they spoke at the same time and didn't say anything in particular. Here instead of memoing what was said necessarily, I looked out for the mood as it would be instrumental in the correct description

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145 Chege Githiora, "Sheng: peer language, Swahili dialect or emerging Creole?", in *Journal of African Cultural Studies,* Vol 15, Number 2, (2002): 159-181

146 Words such as '*as in*' and which may not have a particular meaning, were repeated several times during the interview.

147 Bryman, "Social Research Methods", 518

of what was said and hence the use of phrases such as "participants agreed" or "participants did not seem to agree on".

3.4.2 Coding process

I didn't use any computer based analysis program. On several occasions I went through complete rigorous exercises of listening to recording, reading transcriptions and memos and coding on three levels to establish codes for categorization.

The diagram below shows the coding process used to analyse data established. The three levels of coding are *open coding*[148], *axial coding*[149] and *selective coding*[150]. Selective coding bears the *core category*[151] and at the end of the coding process the following core categories were established. (1) Who am I? (2) Can this Church be Family? and (3) Why go to Church?

Diagram 12 below shows the analysis process via coding.

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148 I examined data established line by line in a process to breakdown, examine, compare, conceptualize and categorize into *initial codes*. Established data at this point is still in thick descriptions out of transcription. Ibid., 569

149 codes established at open coding were examined and categorised again linking them to "contexts, to consequences, to patterns of interaction and to causes". Ibid

150 a "procedure of selecting the core category, systematically relating to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development". Ibid

151 "central issue or focus around which all other categories are integrated". Ibid
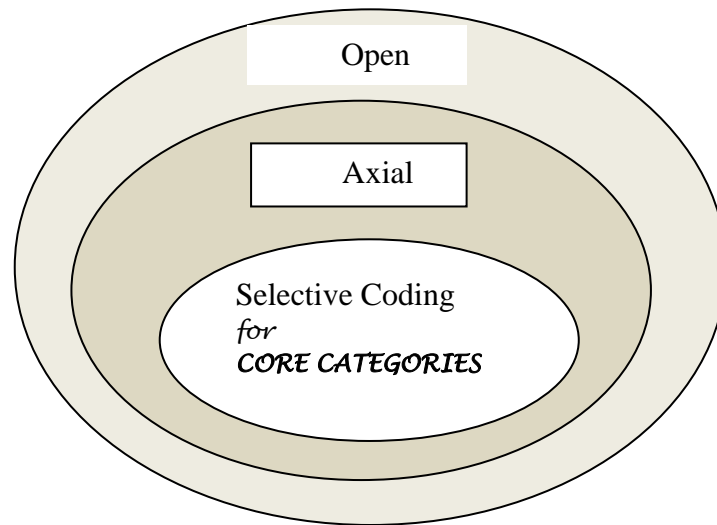
Diagram 12: Coding process

3.4.3 Interpretation

Interpretation was done using Bowen Family Theory and I was fascinated by how some codes were in tension[152] against each other. For instance, while considering the code 'identity ascribed by parents' as a code, I was perplexed by how Christian parents seemed to want to uphold the perfect image of family, while at the same time hurting their sons and daughters (members of SPYC) who are themselves a part of this 'perfect family'. Another quite perplexing code 'church image' showed how the church seemed to work hard at portraying a good image yet at the same time stifling the youth who are members of the church, as the body of Christ.

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152 Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory, 2nd ed,*. (London: SAGE, 2014), 15

The interpretation process is as presented in diagram 13 below.
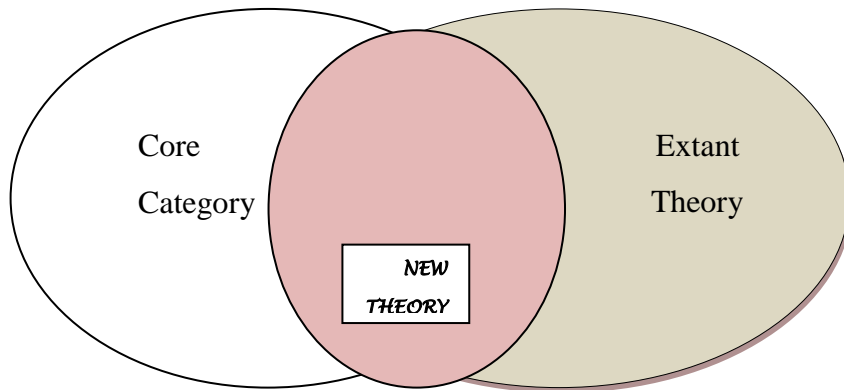
Diagram 13: Interpretation process

This newly established theory will go through the process of critical reflection using the four voices of theology[153] to propose changed practice bearing critical faithfulness[154].
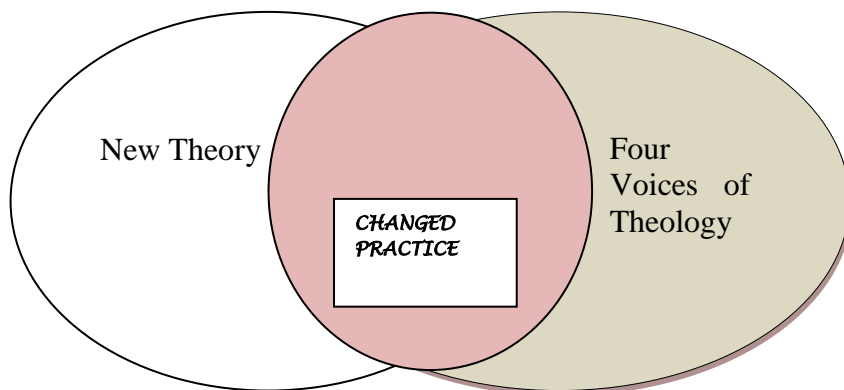
Figure 14: Process of Critical Reflection

This use of data and theory as depicted in this here represents *abductive reasoning[155]*.

153Cameron et al, "Speaking about God in Practice", 53

154 Swinton and Mowat, "*Practical Theology and Qualitative Research"*, 93

155 Bryman, "Social Research Methods", 401

3.5   Validity, Generalizability and Reliability

External Validity has to do with "whether the results of a study can be generalised beyond the specific research context"[156]. This is to ask whether doing this study with one group, SPYC, would speak for all the youth groups within the MCK. I would like to note that generalizability in this case will not be out of statistical data but from possible theory generated out of data established[157]. Robert Yin[158] calls this "analytical generalization"[159]. Yin notes that in using analytical generalization one can go beyond a specific context and the lessons learned thereof can be a "working hypothesis"[160] to be applied in the re-interpretation of existing studies or to define new research with a focus on yet additional concrete situations.

Reliability means "dependability and consistency"[161]. Due to the narrative form of data established in this study, it is not possible to think of reliability like data in numerical form. Therefore instead of looking out for sameness of results, one would rather look out for dependability and consistency in the process to gather data. The purpose here is not to attain same results but to agree that based on the process involved, findings obtained are consistent and dependable.

3.6   Limitation of study

When I set out to do this study, I had hoped to be able to interview those who left the church. However on reaching the site I realized that it was not possible and hence did not get to hear firsthand experiences of those who left. Not much was said by their peers either about where they were at the time of interview. I also realized in the interest of the duration set aside for the field work, I didn't have ample time to try to find where they

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156 Ibid., 47

157 Ibid., 406

158 Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods,* 5th ed, (London: SAGE, 2014)

159 It is the opportunity "to shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principles". Ibid., 40

160 ibid

161 Lawrence W Neuman, *Basics of Social Research Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches,* 2[nd] ed. (Boston: PEARSON AB, 2007)

actually were and make contact with them. With this in mind I opted to interview those who remained in church community. My focus now changed to what would make any young person want to leave their church community and what participants thought could be done to ensure that young people remained within this community of faith.

3.7   Conclusion

This chapter gave me the opportunity to reflect on methodology used from the time the idea of this study was conceived to the point of analysis, interpretation of data and discussion. Chief in this process was the question of personal reflexivity, especially knowing that I was coming in as an insider. This was the first of such interviews in this location and I looked forward to unearthing whatever gaps existed and had precipitated the current position in youth ministry in this church community. It is my hope that I handled the entire process responsibly.

I will now turn to look at Description and Analysis of data established.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents thick descriptions and analysis of data established. It is presented in three distinct chapters, with each taking into consideration data established in answer to the sub-questions raised under the main research question. Each chapter is organised according to selective codes from the coding process.

4 HOW IS THE ORGANISATION OF SPYC A MEANS OF EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY?

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents thick codes describing how the organisation of SPYC as a youth group is a means of experiencing community. While noting that the national office creates some programs for youth groups in MCK, it leaves room for particular groups to create their own other programs[162]. This chapter focuses on how members of SPYC experience community through activities and relationships.

4.2 Identity

This code considers two different identities, that is, identity ascribed by the Pastor and identity ascribed by group.

4.2.1 Identity ascribed by Pastor

The group seemed not to have an identity of its own without a Pastor. It is as though the group felt more visible when they had a Pastor incharge of them. The group had requested for a pastor and this request had been honoured with them getting the Pastor of choice. The presence of a youth Pastor, especially one that members of SPYC approved of seemed to give this group a good boost. It also signified the willingness of the adult congregation to listen and grant their wish with the hope that now a youth Pastor was on board, SPYC would have a good turn around.

> Kamau: "We then requested for a Pastor. We rooted for Pastor Wema instead of another one that was already in the MCK structure (*Pastor Wema was not*). Pastor Wema had interacted so much with us and so we requested to have him on board. After much

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162 See MCK SO 147 (5) 1996:149

communication and dialogue with the church leaders, Pastor Wema came on board."

Events following showed a group ready to hit the road running. They were not laid back waiting for the Pastor to do everything but joined him to create the group they had envisioned. The youth leadership then assisted to identify possible strengths within the group and other activity that would see the group begin to grow. I understand the act of being allowed to choose a Pastor and sitting with him to organise the group, as one that no doubt gave the group identity.

Kamau: "We sat with him as the youth leadership and identified strengths that SPYC has. We also came up with the SPYC logo and it has been handed down from one leadership generation to the next."

SPYC as a group had a strong identity for as long as the Pastor was with them. When he left the group seemed to be stuck. The mission, vision and motto statements they had put together even before the Pastor came on board seemed to get lost somewhere in between. While he was there, the Pastor had served to remind the group of what their identity was. When he left, nothing was said of the statements anymore. These participants expressed their sentiments on the same in these nostalgic expressions.

Omosh: "I think we stopped receiving word about them when Pastor Wema left. He is the one who kept emphasizing on the SPYC vision/mission/motto. He is the only one."
Kamau: "After Pastor Wema left, there was pretty not much about it."

4.2.2 Identity ascribed by group
I was interested in finding out what brings and binds this group together. I found out that though they had a mission statement that clearly outlined the purpose of SPYC; they considered *buying into the community*[163] more important. With no visual imprint and lack of consistent information on the same, when the Pastor left existing members could not

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163 Members of SPYC understood *buying into a community* as identifying with a group. That is before anyone can belong to any group, she must want to identify with that particular group.

recall and new ones didn't learn it by heart either. This led me to question whether even when the Pastor was present, members had internalised it at all, or they just recited it because they were asked to.

Kamau: "……There is no visual imprint like you see the church has the visible printed vision/mission. You go to other congregations, maybe every Sunday they say……..'This is my Bible' so it is inculcated in them….so whether you are a new member you will come and fit into the vision. There hasn't been that consistent information in terms of this vision, this is where we stand, these are our values, these are the four development points that you can fit in. Perhaps the only time it has been mentioned is during our anniversaries, which is coming up now in August. So there is no direct, very clear concise vision which is actually being utilized."

I found this quite perplexing that not even those in leadership were keen to learn and internalise these statements.

John: "When I joined the community I didn't know all those things (*referring to the group mission and vision statements*). Even now I still don't know them and yet am in leadership? I only know them in part……."

For me this raised the question of what was the ideal that joined them together in an organised group. One participant correctly noted that mission and vision statements gave identity just like university students chanted statements that helped identify with each other say during a riot. She used the term 'family thing' to show just how tight a relationship this identity formed for those chanting and identifying with it.

Kendi: "the way university students chant 'comrade power…..", as a "family thing…."
Omosh: "Over time you find it is a culture you cannot destroy"

Omosh above agrees with Kendi, that there is a strong bond of identity formed amongst people who accept and internalise a mission or vision statement. It was therefore surprising that, John mentioned above, would be comfortable not knowing the mission and vision

statements, and still find an identity within the youth group. This was an indicator that there could be something else, beyond just knowing and internalising the mission or vision statements of a group, that bound a group together with one identity.

An interesting thought from Lucy reminded us that when guided most people could recite them even though many didn't pose to think about it. Could that be the reason why they had not internalised it? According to her the coming together of the group went beyond the recitation.

Lucy: "By now I know if guided, most people can say it. But how many times do you pose to think about what you are saying? I don't think knowing the motto would necessarily make you feel like you belong. It is part of it, but not entirely"

Kamau brought in another interesting twist, that is, the possibility of a new member buying into a community even before he knew what its mission or vision was. This would then mean that such a member was looking to identify with a group regardless of what it stood for or believed in. Thus buying into the community and buying into its mission or vision meant two different things. This is like saying that the mission or vision statement which identified the group to the outside world was not the lifeblood of the group. New comers actually want to see what the group does and not just what it says it does.

Kamau: "I think before you come into any community, you first buy into it before you buy into the motto. Someone can have the flashiest motto, elaborate them, hang them up and so on……but if I haven't bought into the community, I will not buy into the vision. First let me buy into the community and then tell me the vision. Having the motto alone is not enough. You want the people coming in to see the activation of that vision. They then buy into the community and hence the vision."

Now that knowing the motto didn't seem to be what held the group together, we tried to interrogate what did. The act of buying in was said to be what happened in gangs or drug cartels. In these, new members found a new home, a place where they felt accepted and

had a sense of belonging. Once the sense of 'home' set in, the new comers did not need to be tutored much into what the group was all about.

Mwatate: "It is a human behaviour that happens in gangs, drug cartels etc. When one feels like 'this is my place, I feel I can come in, I can fit in, this is the place I can be myself, I can laugh, I can fit in the particular equation'. As long as you are in that particular situation, you will contribute; you will feel that you belong. For instance you will not want to be reminded that the service begins at 9am, you will run to be there because you want to be there. When you can't make it you will call because you feel that 'my contribution is needed, I need this place and I fit in'

Out of this description I found that the sense of being at home in the group was a key component of buying into the group. Every group member who had the sense of being at home in the group did not need to be reminded of his or her position in the group.

The term '*Plug into community*[164]' attempted to resolve the conflict created above by John. He observed that personal values play a part in the decision to plug into a community. For Bea, it was personal initiative that propelled her to plug into this community.

John: "……I am here because I understood that I have to plug-in. Everyone has their own values and can only buy into another entity that correlates with your values."

Bea: "For me it was a personal initiative. Like John said, you have to know what brings you to church. Cliques or no, you have to be your own person. It is your duty to introduce yourself and not to wait for anyone to do it for you. Do something to make them remember you."

Both participants expressed what part a new comer has to play in order to cut a niche in the community she was to belong to.

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164 Participants understood the term *plug* in to be the act of a new comer accepting to join a group

4.3 Social class and cliques

Like any other community, members of SPYC bear similarities and differences. People tend to come together based on something they identify in each other. SPYC is made up of mostly young people in high school and college, with some beyond college years. John cautions that they should not allow social class to be a hindrance to interaction and sense of belonging.

John: "…..In the youth service we are all the same social-economic class. At your age even if you have money, it belongs to your parents so you have nothing to boast about."

The congregation here was made up of people predominantly from one ethnic community. This meant that they spoke the same vernacular. Therefore after the church service there was tendency to congregate in smaller groups and the lingua franca there would be mostly Kimeru. John mentioned language as the reason he thought plugging into the adult service was more difficult. However Lucy felt that the issue of language was a matter of perception because even then conversations happened between acquaintances.

John: "The number one reason is Kimeru is used after the adult service. So if you don't know the language you won't fit in the after-service conversations".

Lucy: "I think that is just a perception. In the youth service, if you are not good in either English or Swahili, it still can be very intimidating. People still tend to hold conversation with those they know, and greet the others in passing. We seem to have cliques."

The presence of cliques was noted not to be new in any community. John had an interesting thought on how cliques could be used to the advantage of a community. According to him they could be used to bring in more people.

John: "Cliques are there the world over. They are there for a reason. You can't break a clique. They are bad to those in the outside, but good in keeping those who join stayed on the inside. Those on the inside feel the warmth. Instead of trying to break the clique, open more channels for people to enter and feel the warmth."

John's thought would be an interesting thought to keep in mind especially in a community that was quickly losing many members.

4.4 Recognition

During this interview it emerged that there were members of the youth group that had left because they no longer had responsibilities in the group. Here responsibility seemed to be tied to recognition.

> John: "Looking at those who left, they had a kind of 'job description'. You know the reason why you are here, like 'if I don't come this Sunday, either things will not happen or I could call someone to sort me out'….. the people had such responsibilities"

This kind of a job description had stated what their duties and responsibilities in the group were. Some had been diligent to delegate their duties to other members in the event they had failed to come to church for service. The job description that gave them recognition for what they did, whether in executive or lower rungs of leadership. Then there was another group that came only seasonally. They seemed intent on some things and after a short while, they left even though there was still some kind of activity going on.

> John: "The people who actually leave are the ones who come for some reason, they get very comfortable. They come when we have events and after say three months they leave. Over time you realize they are missing in action because we have had like two events and they are missing. You realize they were available when the playing field was wide and seemingly had no rules. So they just occupied the next field.

This quest for recognition, took me back to the question of buying into and plugging into community. It brings into perspective a reason why or why not a young person could buy into or plug into a group. Ekwe intimated that recognition, not just by the members of the group but also of the adult congregation served as a boost to some young people, especially those who loved getting lost in the crowd.

Ekwe: "At that time I was given a role but I was still shy to tell people *to do* something. (*Once I succeeded)* At that point I learnt *when* you are given a certain responsibility you feel you that fit in that group. I take it that the role we have to bring the youths to church is lesser compared to our parents. As in our parents should play a greater role in bringing youths to the church. A parent would know for certain that his daughter was to attend the youth service and did not and probably the reason why. So I feel like they have a greater role to woo the youths in the church than we do.

When he was asked by an adult to do something with the other youth in the church, he had felt the urge to agree out of respect. He brought to focus the role of adults in ensuring that young people came to church.

4.5   Time, activities and relationships

The discussion around this category begun with participants not really sure exactly how many times they met in a week for SPYC activity and for how long.

Atieno: Once on Sunday, unless there is a leaders meeting.

Omosh: Once………once…

Kamau: Outside the church?

Bea: Once, unless there is an outing

Many voices: Sunday!!

Omosh: No. It is Sunday from 9.00am – 10.30am specifically. When you say Sunday it   sounds like it is the whole day.

John: It is from 8.30am

Omosh: No. It is from 9.00am

Participants went on to draw a link around time, activities and relationships in the group and this seemed important. The way this group was organised at the time of interview hardly provided time to forge relationships. They mostly met once a week during the worship service and this was for a maximum of two hours. There was a general understanding amongst the participants that their lack of regular and longer meeting times was depriving them of meaningful relationships. One participant posed this question to show the gravity of the matter.

> John: "Imagine if you were to meet your girlfriend once a week, or if you were to see your mom or dad once a week?"

There seemed to be agreement that if they would plan more activities; they would have more times of meeting and doing things together, something that Omosh disagreed with. According to him, lack of participation is what caused the SPYC leadership to stop organising group events. The question of activity versus participation became quite contentious in the discussion.

> Ekwe: "I feel we need to have more time and more activity. If we can plan for more activities then probably we could have more time together."
>
> Omosh: "We stopped developing activities when people failed to show up for what is already planned."

While we were still thinking about how time and activity influenced each other, the question of what activities and how they should be organised came up. The general feeling was that when activities were not properly organised, they did not necessarily translate to spending time together. Yet spending time together as a group seemed to be the underlying reason for organising activities in the first place. In this debate, some members felt that the reason why attendance was poor was because the activities were organised rather small and hence had minimal impact. While making reference to the Totally Sold Out concert[165] Omosh discounted that claim.

> Omosh: "Since we are starting out……we cannot have that magnitude of organization, great hype with banners and all. It all begins with small activities, then people come. The more people participate, the more hype it gets"

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165 The 'Totally Sold Out' (TSO) concert is an outdoor activity graced by Kenyan gospel artistes that happens in the capital on New Year's Eve. It brings together mainly young people from all walks of life being a free event and also in the spirit of ushering in the New Year. It is a highly hyped event that draws sponsorship from media houses and corporate institutions.

The participant introduced the question of *hype* in the discussion. There was no certainty on whether it would translate to more participation from members. They observed that there were activities that would not draw such hype anyhow, that is, Bible Study and prayer.

> Lucy: "There is the mentality that a youth event must have a lot of hype, lots of music, jumping up and down. So when you call people for bible study or prayers…………..people come up with excuses."

This now brings me to the question of relevance and consistency of activities in order to create lasting relationships over time. Here hype was mentioned as relevant for purposes of attracting attention, though with an age caveat.

> Omosh: "Yeah. For someone in high school it would be fairly in order to have much hype."
>
> Lucy: "Yeah. If it is to catch their attention"

One participant put a twist to this discussion by reminding the group that in the past, SPYC activities were not only relevant to the group but also the community around the church. They may not have been so hyped, yet still people showed up. This in a way discounted the claim that only hyped activities attract large crowds. Participation in the past also had to do with consistency. When the activities were regular they attracted quite a following, especially from those who didn't belong at this church.

> Kamau: "Yes it is a personal thing. Of course hype is good because it gets people's attention. In the past we organised events like 'Hard Talk', 'Night of Light' and so on. Today people in the estate ask me 'what happened to SPYC?' We used those events to bring out talent, to minister to the community. These activities used to be very clean and were packed. Yet there was minimal publicity. We actually photocopied posters on luminous paper and put them up. And people showed up………"

This appeared to have been a good way to reach out to the community because activities planned brought from the neighbouring community youth who yearned to either be in church or in a church that organised such events.

4.6   Young people showing leadership

Members of SPYC saw a need in the adult congregation, that is in leading praise and worship, and went on to fill it up.   As these two participants noted it was possible for young people to take up responsibility within the church community.

Mwatate: "Praise and worship meetings were at first for SPYC but now, it is also for the second (*adult*) service."

Mawira: "There was no worship team for both services and due to the fact of flexibility, we thus came together to fill the void.   We saw the need and organised ourselves."

These sentiments illustrated that these young people wanted to participate in their community by taking up responsibility as need arose.

4.7   Methodist versus youthful

The understanding here is that there is a tension between the traditional worship service and the youthful service.   In making this distinction here, the participant connotes that there should be a noticeable difference between the youth and adult services.   The notion here seems to be that the Methodist service is boring while the youth service should be livelier since young people were in attendance.

John: "There are times you feel like it is a very Methodist service.   Then there are days you feel it was youthful.   Then there are days you feel like the only youthful thing about it was those in attendance ……."

Ekwe: "I think you can change the way we try to pass the message to the youths and use things that are entertaining but still we can learn from.   The way speakers (*preachers*) approach the youth does not really reach out to the youths as they (youth) would like.   It seems like the speakers are addressing the adults.   The service is so dull.   The youths expect at least something funny to make them laugh.   The speaker should bring out some

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> humour so that the service is not so dull."

Ekwe adds the point that preachers should also preach with a different demeanour when in a youth service. There seems to be a way in which young people want preachers to reach out to them and that was not forthcoming[166].

One participant explains the difference between a traditional service and youth service in the following example out of an experience from a church they visited. He realised that there was more to a 'youthful' service than the hype involved.

> John: "…………..We once visited another church in the city, one with seemingly a better youth church than ours and their service was livelier. But there was a big difference between those attending the service and those running the service. Those running the service were enthusiastically serving God, while those attending were busy doing their own things. It looked like the congregation came to church to be entertained. They mostly didn't look like they understood why they were in church. They were busy in the social media, texting about 'rave last night' and such things. Now you could tell that the organisers put lots of work into putting the service together, but the congregation was not interested. They seemed to be in the youth church as a way to wait for their parents who were in the main sanctuary. Now, compared with St Peters where we are two or three………where two or three are gathered……..their service had much hype but it didn't matter to those inside."

From this contribution, the young people in the congregation were far removed from what was happening around them even though it was their service; they were in attendance and then there were those running the service.

4.8 Organisation of service

We looked at the current order of SPYC service and what it meant to them. One thing that came out very strongly is the understanding that every worshipper is ministered to by a different component of the worship service. Hence the need to give what JOHN termed

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166 See section 4.10

"'A' service". Participants agreed that it was not possible to measure the experience of worship, as it was personal and unique to each participant. When participants compared notes after the service, they discovered that when one found the service particularly fulfilling, another didn't share the same sentiments. The discussion below by these two participants in particular attempts to explain how they experienced the worship service.

Bea: "I think you can't equate experiencing God with the organization of a service. The way I experience God is not the same way Mwatate will experience God. You can't equate the two"

Ekwe: "Sometimes I leave feeling…. 'yes, today the worship service was awesome'… but Bea feels the exact opposite"

Bea: "We always have differences when we go out of church"

Ekwe: "I think it is personal, it is not so much about the structure. If praise and worship team has practiced on Saturday then the service is awesome, you know."

Bea: Even for those in the congregation. It is all about the message you come out with at the end of the service"

Together with the above, good music was particularly mentioned as a great component of a youthful service. This group included contemporary music in their worship while moving away from hymns. The organisation of their service broke away from what was traditionally mainstream and gave them some kind of identity as young people.

The role of the leader of service was mentioned as crucial to the service. As Kamau noted, even though there was God's help, her demeanour too influenced how the service flowed.

Kamau: "……. I think the service takes the form of the leader. Of course with God's help, however how the leader carries the service it is pretty much how it goes. The leader must be aware of the influence she wields in the service."

Participants also intimated that they enjoyed a good sermon and were keen on preachers' content. They noted that preachers allocated to preach in the two different

services preached the same way in both. This way a preacher ended up only ministering to one group and leaving out the other[167]. The following is an example of a comparison of reaction to the same preacher in both services.

> Lucy: "Take for example last Sunday's sermon in our service. People looked at him with the expectation of him to finish very quickly. They were not enthusiastic because they could not get the message. In the second service the same sermon was preached and had everyone happy and appreciating………"
>
> Atieno: "I even got calls…..'did you record the sermon'? That has never happened before."
>
> Lucy: Those in the first service gave a few nods during the sermon. It was tailor-made for the second service

When asked about how age of the preacher impacts them, they noted that age really didn't matter to them, only the sermon delivery had to be well done.

> Many voices: "I think it does not really matter"
>
> Kamau: "I think it is the delivery and content"
>
> Kendi: "There are older people who are also fun."
>
> Kamau: "Like Rev M"
>
> Kendi: "We love her. There is also this lady preacher who preached about ……..*giving the best*…….she was young, good, and funny……..though she over-emphasized the topic.
>
> Omosh: "It helps if the preacher can be aware of the group he/she is preaching to. Preaching to youth; be youthful in your approach. Delivery is key."

As far as delivery was concerned, the young people were concerned that preachers allocated to them seemed to preach messages that only fit a certain mould. In the words of one participant, Mawira, preachers have been domesticated[168].

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167 See section 4.10

168 Ibid

Together with good preaching one participant added that learning should be fun. It alludes to hype and fun as used by young people to describe any activity they engage in. Where an activity is not fun or hyped, it becomes less attractive.

Ekwe: "….The way preachers approach the youth also matters. Let it be fun but a point of learning at the same time."

One item with fun learning in the youth service is the 'tip of the week' in which information on a cross section of things affecting the lives as young people was shared. A focus on fun learning would mean that the preachers allocated to the SPYC service had to be creative and innovative in their style and break away from the traditional sermon delivery style.

4.9   Missionary versus missional
There seemed to be a mixed understanding of what being missionary and missional was.

Kendi: "Visiting children's homes is part of our mission I think….going out ……with the word of God"

Bea: "When I hear people say they are going for mission, it means they are out of their normal church setting and going somewhere else…….to worship……..like when we go to visit children's homes is a form of mission….. I think it is moving out of your normal setting and going to worship with other people."

Kamau: "……..When Pastor Wema was still here, there were a lot of mission activities in high schools, consistently almost every month.   SPYC enjoyed it. We would go out there and the high schoolers would admire us, one of us would give the sermon and members were really active……."

Mwatate: "Yeah. It is something I feel even as an individual I can do at my own pleasure. For instance, I have been to a children's home and donated food stuff and bonded with the children. The children I have bonded with know they can call on me and I

meet them. The question here is, do we feel like we have an obligation to go for mission, especially to those who are not saved[169]?

Mawira: "Let us understand the meaning of missions. I take it to be evangelism or sharing and showing the love of Christ. It is not just community service. If in the long run you do not show the love of Christ, then it is not Mission but an outdoor activity…...

They seemed to agree that mission was about going out and spending time with the less fortunate like in a children's home and Mwatate and Mawira add a voice for evangelism. However from their contributions there doesn't seem to be one concrete understanding of what mission is about.

Kamau noted that they had difficulty in the area of missions because it was not modelled from the mother church which according to him it was inward looking.

Kamau: "I think it begins with the mother church itself not being missionary oriented. *She* is so internal thinking and minded. Our resources go inside, our times goes inside, our *internal* engagements. We used to have a budget for hospital visits and *it was* not used. I think we need to start in Jerusalem then Judea and then Samaria. The question is …..'Is our Jerusalem fixed?' And if we think it is, let us go out there and minister to people not because we want them to come in, but just because we love them. Whether in the hospitals, our neighbours in the estates, drunkards ………opportunities are endless. The question however that remains is how we can stop looking inwards so much, always addressing the inward issues and yet the world outside is dying waiting for us."

We noted that they were not really prepared to undertake any mission because their mother church didn't model that. This was an indication that they looked up to the adult congregation as a role model in practising faith.

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169 The phrase 'those who are not saved' points out to people who have not made a conscious public confession of Jesus as Lord in their lives. In this context, this may include people who do not subscribe to the Christian faith. It could also include baptised Christians who have not confessed Christ knowingly.

4.10 Domesticating preachers

Mawira introduced the term 'domesticating preachers' to this discussion. He used this term to describe the general expectation that a preacher must conform to a certain mould[170].

> Mawira: "..Now the church here has a way of domesticating preachers. Though they may be dynamic in their nature, they are domesticated to fit a certain mould and concentrate on a certain focus……….our laws, our constitution. St Peters is St Peters. When preachers are domesticated and tamed, even those they minister to are tamed. Now even the whole team from the leadership, because we focus on ourselves, we have become selfish as a church. "When you find yourself in an institution that is inward looking, you also become selfish. Whether in sharing Christ…….in evangelism…..we are being effectively metamorphosed into a people that are self-centred. There is no way of passing the baton and telling the youth that this is a selfless institution, when all the while they focus on internal development, and everything is about 'we'. The notion is that I am here to deal with my issues……you then become a selfish person and in the long run you can't evangelise."

Mawira seems to make a connection between the position of the preacher and mission and evangelism. That the preacher had become domesticated had precipitated the missionary position in this church. By being confined to a certain mould the preacher had not challenged the position of the church and hence people had become self centered and this failed to evangelise.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented codes describing how the relationship and activity within SPYC as an organised youth group is a means of experiencing community.   I will now turn to consider how interaction between adults and young people at SPMC is a means of experiencing community.

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170 See section 4.2.8

5 HOW HAS THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ADULT CONGREGATION AND SPYC BEEN A MEANS OF EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents thick codes describing how interaction between adults and young people at SPMC is a means of experiencing community. These codes describe how both groups hold their ground based on values and how that action affects the other and how the young people think that gap can be mediated.

5.2 Transitions

This code centered on how the members of the congregation moved from one society[171] to another. Bea notes that MCK is organised in a way that mature youth do not conventionally fit in the traditional church groups[172].

> Bea: "I think there is really a huge gap. The church is organised in a way you move from Sunday school, through to the teens and then youth. There is no room for young adults. You are then expected to go to MMF or MWF. You cannot fall in between…."

There seems to be a quiet understanding that everyone must find a place in one of the conventional groups.

5.3 Family versus familiar

As mentioned earlier SPMC is largely a family church. I have used this code to show Bea's understanding of how the adult members of the congregation treat the young people in the church.

> Bea: "The other gap is in how we perceive people. Being a church made up of relatives, the adults are warm to the youth they know and don't take time to find out who the rest are. It doesn't matter what it is they do in the church."

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171 This refers to MMF, MWF, MYK and JSS

172 As pointed out earlier, the term youth as used in MCK is very general. It loosely identifies anyone who is not in the JSS, MMF or MWF. In this regard therefore, people above the age of say twenty five and are not married, find themselves without a conventional society to belong to.

According to her, the adult congregation did not seem to take time to know the young people who did not belong to any family within the congregation or familiar in any other way; regardless of what service they offered the church.

5.4   Labels

In the discussion one of the things that came up a couple of times was labels that the adults placed on the youth. These labels tell of how the adult congregation sees the young people.   They were said to have killed meaningful relationships between the two groups and created an 'us versus them' kind of scenario as Kendi notes below.

> Kendi: "…There was a time praise & worship was dealt a blow during a mothers & daughters seminar. The older women said something that the young people took personally……..like……'so this is how they think about us when we stand in front of the church'. They resigned their membership in praise & worship. They no longer felt appreciated or welcome.   They felt there was no love coming from the adult congregation."

And then Kamau added his thoughts on how he felt labelled as a young man.

> Kamau: "I think the adults want.. 'you come to us'; 'you rise up to us'; 'show us you can make it'; 'show us you can do this'; 'if you are a man enough, come close'

Both the young men and women expressed superficiality in relationships they saw acted out in church. Superficiality creates the kind of relationships that appear to keep the fellowship in church going, but not real. In view of the labels, Omosh expresses the need for real relationships as young men especially their fathers.

> Omosh: "I think, this should be two ways. The youth should show the initiative and step up and also the adult congregation to come on board. The 'Fathers & Sons' outing once a year will not solve this issue. Waiting till the next year to meet and ask, 'so how are you my son' and yet you have not called me son for a whole year. I will answer, 'I am good papa', then we are done. We eat roast meat and we will be back the following year.

This relationship is so event oriented, yet we can cultivate it by both the youth and adults playing their part."

The 'fathers & sons' outing was a fantastic idea that would have been an avenue to build real relationships as was expressed by the young men. However as Omosh notes it seemed to be so event oriented that no real bonds were created. A disappointed John noted that not even promises made were followed through. He seems to have longed for a relationship that would grow into mentorship but that was not forthcoming.

John: "Apart from good food and knowing who is whose father and son, I don't think there is anything else. Fathers speak and give such wonderful promises. They make you feel like you will see them again and have a chance to talk as 'mentor and mentee'. And that is all there is, till the next year".

Omosh: "I share the sentiments. Other than food, it is a good setting for surgical skills training since you learn how to slaughter a goat.   Two years ago, there was one such meet where they wanted to kick start a mentorship program. We even wrote our names and they promised to follow up and we thought our prayers had finally been answered. This was especially to mentor those young men who didn't have active father figures. Well,that was it. Todate there has been no follow up. So even if they were to strike if off, it would have no impact on character formation in St Peters."

Omosh joins in and still notes a failure on the part of fathers to keep their promise. To him this initiative failed to fulfil what he needed and as an activity it had no impact on the character formation of the young men in SPMC. For lack of follow-up, the event became counterproductive.

Atieno tied the lack of follow up to what he saw as a lack of consistency at SPMC. There seemed to be great ideas streaming from members of the church, but there was lack of both follow up and consistency. Thus inaction and procrastination had caused stagnation in programs mooted. She compares the inaction in this church with appropriate action in churches where things were seen to work.

> Atieno: "I think one challenge that is very interesting in *this church*, is lack of consistency. We begin something and two months down the line, the fire dies out. We have had many good suggestions to come up with things like 'young adults', better programs in 'children's ministry', but then there is no follow up……..either on the leaders, Pastors or even the parties themselves. This is what separates us from those congregations we look at and admire how they do things. I believe once they say something, they follow it through, because they mean it. Can we…….do we have the same consistency to follow through the many ideas we actually have?"

This contribution by Atieno could also be understood to indicate that probably SPYC was not doing poorly for lack of ideas, but may have fallen into the same trap of inconsistency that seemed to bog down the whole congregation.

5.5 Generation gap

This term refers to the difference in attitude between young people and the adults that causes lack of understanding[173]. The young people felt misunderstood by the adults and this seemed to bring about mis-communication[174]. Mawira points out that this was not just in relationships within the church, but also in the society they lived in. According to him the church was being affected by the same challenge faced by society.

> Mawira: "Now we will not talk about the church without talking about the society. There is a detachment of the youth from the society generally. Formation of sub-societies is due to the fact that whether you like it or not, there are views that you know your mother or father will brush them off, just like that. Like John mentioned earlier, each generation is holding to its values. Now the older generation is asking us 'to man up'. They make you feel like they look down upon you. What is happening out there has denied the church a central ground."

Generation gap issues were attributed to each generation holding on to values it holds dear and refusing to cede ground. Bea brought out an interesting twist to this by alluding

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173 Oxford Advanced Learners Online Dictionary 2015

174 See section 5.8

that each group held onto a different set of values that painted the picture of 'us versus them' between the adults and young people.

Bea: "…The same way Mawira mentioned earlier. In their time, they had a way of doing things. They had their values and stuck to them. So when you come with the values you have grown up with, they don't get it."

Ekwe: "you have a problem? 'man-up'; deal with it. Don't keep talking to other people. Deal with your issues."

The language used here is terse and leaves those seeking help with very little option. Maturity was perceived to be one of the values held by the older generation. However there seemed to be a misunderstanding on how it should be expressed. As noted above dealing with issues in silence seemed to be the way the adults wanted it done, however for the young people it was different as Mwatate notes below.

Mwatate: "I always asked my sister', if they don't understand, what do you do? Do you stay there mad, pissed off……going through life so angry that they don't understand'? They don't know much better probably or they just don't want to understand what these 'small creatures' are going through."

Mwatate seems to expresses the anger of going through life with help nearby and yet not forthcoming. He would rather verbalize whatever issues he had rather than remain silent.

Miscommunication between the two generations seemed to be a thorny issue and as Kendi noted, something was said during a 'mothers and daughters' seminar that tipped the young women over[175]. Though she doesn't say exactly what was said it was bad enough to create an almost lasting impression on the young women. Instead of feeling affirmed the young women left feeling grossly misunderstood and judged. My prodding to find out

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175 5.4

what really happened got this response from John, "next question please"; they didn't want to talk about it.

Kamau gave a glimpse of how he understood the seemingly unspoken message from the fathers. Fathers seemed to be standing on a pedestal and were calling upon the young men who felt they were 'of age' to climb up towards them[176]. The disappointment here seems to stem from the assumption that the young men knew how to get where the fathers were[177]; especially being asked to act without the right skills on how to. Omosh expressed what he felt was the result of their quest to get closer to the fathers, "I think what we get is plastic".

Participants expressed their desire to have the adults and church leaders take them more seriously especially when they presented their issues.

Omosh: On the question of whether or not the church embraces us, I would say it depends on who is implementing things first of all. This will determine the reception and amount of airtime you get when this thing finally rolls out. It depends much on whether you will be supported by people who push agendas in the community….. Though nothing good comes easy, nothing has ever been fulfilled as requested. Even Pastor Wema[178] had to struggle. As youth leaders we sit and write up the project and present it, but the people you present it to don't receive it warmly, because there is no perfect relationship ever…. And so it is in the church, we have to force our way, insist and make them see. The louder you are the better. So even with this 'young adults' thing, we have to shout very loudly and push the agenda.

Omosh highlights how they have encountered church politics while trying to be heard. He is aware that it is not just them but also made reference to their former pastor. Though he makes mention to there being no perfect relationship ever, one is left to wonder whether

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176 ibid

177 See section 5.5

178 Referring to their pastor who left

or not it cannot be made more bearable. His use of the words "shout loudly and push this agenda" indicated how much effort they must use to have a youth program approved by church leaders.

Adding to the challenge also faced by their pastors, Bea pointed to the confusion young people were engulfed in when their pastor is also not taken seriously.

Bea: "There is also challenge to those given the work of guiding the youth. For instance, we were given something about football as a way of reaching out to the people outside. This was met with resistance because of the whole vision thing. So we were left wondering, if it can happen to them, what about us. That was demoralising. It shows that we are supposed to do things how they have always been done. So in a sense get done with the program as it is, don't add anything new".

This was demoralising to young people and it also points to domestication[179]. While it may not have featured directly in our discussion it was evident that inaction from the church leaders was hurting the young people. Kamau noted that they could try using ingenious methods to get their way. Instead of speaking directly to the leaders they could resort to raising their issues before the congregation.

Kamau: "I however think that it is relatively easy to win affection of the adult congregation if you learn them well, if you really are clever...of course we know if you make suggestion behind closed doors, you may incur a lot of politics. But we may do it in the open, say as an announcement in front of the congregation and it is easy to win their hearts...especially when you have a consistent relationship, not just showing up when you need something".

Though it looks like arm-twisting the leaders, he adds a different twist to this by mentioning that there was need for consistent relationship between both sides. According

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179 See sections 4.10, 5.7

to him, a more consistent relationship and not showing up when they needed something would make it easier for them to get what they want.

On a more conciliatory note Mwatate added, "I think this should be both ways. The youth should show initiative and step up and also the adult congregation to come on board. The fathers and sons outing once a year will not solve issue". He points to a more spontaneous kind of relationship that should not be event oriented.

5.6   The role of church as family

During this discussion, the role of church as family came under sharp scrutiny. Now, it emerged that the role to provide love, care and comfort to all had not been as the young people expected as seen in the lack of emotional support for those in need of it. In the contribution below, Kendi relates how cold treatment of an 'offender' brings to the fore the lack of nurture of young people suffering brokenness and in distress.

> Kendi: "I know a girl who got pregnant. The cold treatment she received here makes her not want to return. She felt unwelcome, looked down upon, judged. Even the Pastoral committee was like 'what is happening to our girls? The youth are just getting pregnant anyhow.' And the person you are talking about is sitting right there. She felt unloved and closed up, sadly she lost the baby a few hours after birth. We encouraged her to come to church again. After the cold treatment once again she left. Question is how many are going through such phases? The sad thing is that as a congregation, we have left care and love to the Pastor and they are getting strained. We all talk to the Pastor. Now, tragedy is coming to the place where the Pastor knows all my issues, not because I feel I belong to the congregation. The Pastor alone is focusing on many people's issues and so may not attend to them with the gravity they need. What about the people around me? They are so cold. The ideal situation is where we know love and can cover each other in love. Not just laying all the burdens on the Pastor. We will stick together because I can call another within the congregation and they will reach out and support.

Kendi seems to be aware that there could be many people in the congregation going through challenges that needed genuine love and support, but instead got superficial love and support. The task of love and care for the young people was solely left to the minister

who with time got strained and was not able to offer much support to those in need. This participant notes that there was need to come in as a congregation and offer love and support to each other in times of weakness.

5.7   Domestication

The question of domestication[180] was raised again this time pointing to the Pastors. The Pastor found herself constrained to act in a particular way under the weight of many issues requiring her attention all the time and with little support. The following conversation mirrors that.

Mawira: "Now even the Pastor is also programmed to take your issues in a certain way. The approach is within certain lenses that the church uses and dares not be different."

Atieno: "Or else he is in for it."

Kamau: "Especially if the Pastor is there doing the bare minimum and expecting a salary at the end of the month not because he has a heart for the people..........just to meet his bills. The Pastor should have a heart for the people.......and thus be versatile enough to care for special needs in the congregation.......like single mothers.... Youth have easy access to pornography and such things........the digital generation....... If you have a heart for the people, you will find ways of meeting their need."

This conversation is understood as bringing out the between the 'mould' and congregational needs and expectation, with the Pastor caught in between. It was rather interesting to note that even though a Pastor was ready to go the extra mile, domestication became a hindrance. It portrayed the picture of a congregation presenting its needs to the Pastor and at the same time prescribing to her how they were to be met.

5.8   Conclusion

In this chapter I considered how the interaction between the adults and young people in the SPMC community was a means of experiencing community. I now turn to look at how the young people's search for autonomy and identity is also a means of experiencing community.

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180 See section 4.10

6 "HOW DOES A YOUNG PERSON'S SEARCH FOR AUTONOMY AND IDENTITY CONTRIBUTE TO HIS/HER EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY?"

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents thick codes describing how the young people's search for autonomy and identity affects their experience of community. These codes attempt to illustrate the images[181] that influenced choices they made in whether or not to stay away from church. That is what voices they heard, what images they saw and who or what they chose to follow, what they found attractive and why?

6.2 What is the value of going to church?

Parental influence was singled out by participants as the main reason why they went to church. As the young people grew up, this influence was anything from coercion to the use of force to make them come to church. However, at a certain age when they were now going into college especially and no longer stayed at home, they begun interrogating the reasons why they went to church. Atieno notes that when they left home, they also explored reasons to not go to church.

> Atieno: "There are many reasons why people come to church. For instance, those who are made by their parents to come to church. When they leave home they may choose not to come to church so as to prove a point to their parents. There are those who want to experiment ….'What would happen if I didn't go to church?' Then there are those who are driven by adventure to find out what happens in other churches.. 'So what happens in other churches'? The TV church works for the lazy ones and so on. There are many choices and no one to guide on what is the best and why"

Atieno notes several reasons why young people may or may not go to church. The position of parents seems to be prominent in why they may choose to stay away from church in later years. It presents two identities, that is, on the one hand the identity ascribed by parents as church goers and on the other hand trying to find an identity as an autonomous person. This brings to focus the question of what identity a young person

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181 These could be the images of God, church and family or motifs in society they could particularly find interesting.

wears when she is not in the family home and how she navigates her new status as a 'free' person.

Still on the question of seeking autonomy, Mawira noted that parents ascribed the identity of the perfect child to the young people. According to him this was exasperating and created a superficial identity in the young person involved and consequently led to rebellion. This is because an unreal identity caused the young person to want to break free and rebel provided the avenue.

Mawira: "Identity is very important to everyone. In a society whereby families use their children as a way to say 'see my family is going places' or 'my son is at the top…' another family feels like 'my son should also be like….'. At the end of the day the son has to get it. We (*youth)* have become marionettes, dancing to this tune and finally you ask yourself the question 'what have I become, where do I belong?' Rebellion makes you seek an identity and you will run away from church. It may not be the only place to express rebellion, but the right place, because it is the place parents come to express their excellence in raising kids, and that is immoral. A young person sees the parent trying to be what they are not and so he lets out his real self. He has been suffocating under the parent's weight, trying to create a perfect son, kind of, 'you brought me here to a holy place to offer me as a sacrifice'

Kamau tied the question of church attendance for young people to value. That is, what value did coming to church add to their lives or was it for the sake of it.

Kamau: "I think it is tied down to value. If I see Carnivore as having value I will go there every weekend. If I see that hanging out with a certain lady is the cool thing, I will date her every day of the week. If I see value in a certain congregation, I will get there. I think as much as we want youth in the church, we ought not to be in church for the sake of it. I have gone through a lot of sermons already. If I am going somewhere, let it be for a higher experience, more experience, more learning and perhaps doing more. I have a friend who doesn't go to church even though she is a believer. She says there is a lot of inward looking politics in church. So, she would rather go out and meet other people and

> do great things for God without all that drama in church. How many are there like her?"

He noted that young people are led in action by the value they attached to that action. Thus if they valued the church or Carnivore[182], they made time to be there. According to him at that age he didn't want to come to church just because it was Sunday, but because of how much value the church would add in his life, that is, for the higher experience. He also brings out the question of the image that young people are keen to keep. This is understood to be that he will only be found where he is valued as a person.

> Kamau: "When I am grown I have an image to protect, there is the risk of embarrassment and rejection. Imagine if I went to a particular congregation, 'I am here, flashy young guy, neat and I don't fit in. I am rejected'. The chances of me staying are slim. If it is about growing in God, one can do so in the comfort of his living room. So I can decide I don't want to go to church."

Omosh raised another reason for reluctance in church attendance as the raised awareness of the position of the church on matters affecting society. According to him the silence of the Kenyan church was said to be deafening while at the same time it has become a place for Pastors to grow rich quickly. Thus the church cuts the image of an institution that is comfortably silent in the face of suffering in society.

> Kamu: ".. I want to go to church to grow and have fellowship. But the church in Kenya is silent about many things. So many people feel like this is a place for Pastors to get rich quickly yet there is so much degradation in the nation. It is like the only active people are politicians; the church is very silent. Things are going wrong, left right and centre and we are busy in our denominations. This is a huge turn-off for anyone thinking that he wants *to partner with God, and change things*. So am looking for a place where I can find that….no wonder many young people admire tele-evangelists like Joel Osteen and TD Jakes who are far away. Looking at them you can tell what in Jesus they are doing. Am sure if they had churches in Kenya, the young generation would go there".

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182 Carnivore is an entertainment club in Nairobi

He expressed the idea of partnering with those whom he felt were out to help in society. A contradictory twist here is seen in the perception of the Kenyan church versus tele-evangelists like Osteen and Jakes. This is because the get-rich-quick pastors in the Kenyan church were ascribing to the same prosperity gospel preached by the other two mentioned. This pointed to the understanding of the Methodist theology vis a vis the glamour young people may have seen on television.

6.3   Conviction versus Convenience

This code brought to the fore the role of parents in teaching/instructing the young people. John argued that teaching should be done from a point of conviction and not just out of convenience. He noted that instruction should be from what parents believe and not that which only gives them a good standing.

John: "Proverbs 22:6 '*Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.'* Your parents telling you to go to church is the right thing to do. But it should be followed by a reason, from a point of conviction not a point of convenience. This is so that, not when their friends see me in church…….they force their son or daughter to come to church. They should use a dynamic conviction to get their children to come to church. You cannot use the same argument you used when a child was five years old. There has to be truth in it too. Not one blind person leading another. I think the issue should not be that past some age, it is up to you to worship or not to worship God, but before that age guidance (Prov 22:6) should have been done. The person doing the guiding should be the right person, one convinced about the reason why one needs to go to church. Then when one is a young adult, you can make the right choice according to what your parents taught you.

John makes an important note that there should not be an age where young people 'graduate' from church. It is not about gaining the majority age, but more so reaching an age where they feel able to make decisions and choices. He is aware that having prior knowledge will enable young people make appropriate decisions. Therefore inculcating Christian teaching and instruction before they reach majority age is of benefit to them and they don't have to opt out of their particular congregation or by extension, the church.

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John seems to acknowledge the place of parents in giving Christian instruction. However he would also appreciate if parents were to do it out of conviction. They would then make choices based on knowledge and not out of rebellion.

6.4   Christian foundations

Atieno put an interesting twist in this discussion was she owned up to not knowing what makes one a Christian. This was found to be interesting since she has been in church for as long as she could remember. She made this confession.

Atieno: "I would say that most of our generation are not raised with what being a church member is or being a Christian is all about. *Is it* praying or reading the bible? Basically it is summed up *in* coming to church, that makes you a Christian, which is not the truth…"

In her contribution she raised fundamental questions on what young people did as Christians and why. In her words, she didn't seem sure whether it was prayer, reading the Bible or coming to church that made one a Christian. She also took exception to the kind of music Christian youth listened to, which she terms as 'good entertainment for church'.

Atieno: "People don't have the drive to read the bible or pray. Look at the music we love listening to. While it is not bad per se, it just doesn't fill you spiritually in any way. Some of the music people are calling gospel music; in my opinion has no gospel in it. It is just good entertainment appropriate for church. It is not really edifying or growing you, and so when there is no one there to psyche you about the church, for example when you go to university and meet people who have not heard about God and stuff like that, if there is no one to encourage you, if there is no internal drive to go to church or read the bible or pray, you forget yourself. We are not clear on the foundations of Christianity. Like you (*researcher)* asked about mission, how many know that Christ commands us to be mission oriented, and that is one of the many commands.

Still on the question of whether or not one is a Christian, this respondent raised the question of what happens when a young person finds himself in a situation where no one

reminds him to go to church. The notion here seemed to be that if one was truly a Christian, he should not need anyone to remind him to go to church.

The question of parental instruction featured again and this time Atieno seems to understand that the position parents had taken on Christian teaching was a generational affair. They handed over their children to the Sunday school teacher to be taught how to become Christian. In turn their children would hand over their children also to the Sunday school teacher and the cycle would go on.

> Atieno: I will say that our parents are not also trained to raise kids in a Christian manner. So they try….go to church….go to Sunday school, and very few know what happens in the Sunday school. There is the attitude that the Sunday school teacher will figure it out… When you tell a kid that going to Sunday school makes her a Christian, she will go to Sunday school. When she no longer is a child and has ideas from all over, you cannot convince her that what you told her in the first place is really the correct thing to do. This is a problem that goes from a parent to a child. It is a generational thing.

This respondent notes a lack of clear progression of christian teaching after Sunday school. She sees this lack of progression from Sunday school likely to leave a vacuum that a child would fill with other things as she grew up. Then when she is grown up, it would become difficult to convince her to remain to remain in the same church.

6.5   The perfect child

The notion of the 'perfect child' was quite a thorny issue because participants felt that their parents wanted only their good side exposed and the rest kept under wraps. In presenting this perfect picture they felt frustrated because they had tension in their lives with parental expectations on one side, and their own struggles on the other side, leaving them helpless. The following conversation notes that.

> Atieno: "They just want to know the good things about you. 'Oh she excelled in exams and is getting a degree'. That is what people should know. The rest of the family….if they know… *it* should be under wraps."

> Kendi: "And when you have issues they don't deal with them because……'you can't say my child is seeing a psychiatrist'…….how? They hide that challenge"
>
> Kamau: "I failed as a parent
>
> Bea: "They don't feel us. As Kamau says, they feel like they have failed as parents because I think even their parents didn't take them through that and it somehow worked for them."
>
> Kamau: "….so they expect………"
>
> Bea: "They expect the same to happen. Find your way. I sorted myself out and here I am. It worked for me, so sort yourself out."
>
> Kendi: "Which I don't know if it will ever work"
>
> Bea: "So I don't know…………."

This notion of the perfect son or daughter was quite unsettling because it seemed to leave behind a lot of mental and emotional distress. From this discussion, it seems that Christian parents in this context will do anything to maintain a good image in society even if it left the young people hurting. There is the realization that the adults seemed to wear two different hats. As parents, they seem to have chosen to not do anything that jeopardises the family image while as adult members of the congregation they had expected the church to figure out how to Christianize the children.

Participants though struggling to maintain the perfect child image, seemed to find a saving grace in the image of God as one who accepts them the way they are. Kamau, offered very insightful thoughts on the same much to the relief of the group.   According to him, God cut the image of one who cares about the real issues that people go through without the 'perfect child/family' attitude. For Him there is no superficial relationship or 'perfect child'. He accepts those who come to Him[183] impartially.

> Kamau: "I think number one, God is attractive the way he is. As we don't need to come in so much colour….that said God is also God of real issues, he cares about everything. From your sexuality, your emotions, your social life, financial and every

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183 The person of God in this context is mostly referred to as male gender, hence the repeated use of the same.

> single thing. We focus too much on the spiritual side of people that we forget that, and I think we have allowed ourselves to be boxed."

The image of the church came under scrutiny in this discussion. Participants deemed the image of the church as skewed thus making herself less attractive to them. The traditional church seemed to have a pseudo image that is in conflict with the image of the church as the body of Christ. It was like the church was protecting its 'own' image so much so that the authentic image of the church as the body of Christ is marred.

> Kamau: "……. Even the name itself, *church*…… 'in itself does not mean a place where you go every single Sunday and then talk about tomatoes'. Church is you when you are at work. It is you when you are in a *matatu (*public transport). It is you being part of the body of Christ. Even the term *gospel music* boxes us. Once you are doing gospel music, if *you* had the intention of reaching out to people, there are those *you* can't get to because they will run away from *your* music because it is gospel music. So it be like, 'you people sing in your corner and we in the world will continue singing where we are and you gospel singers will sing in your own corner'. So it is with church, we say we are going to church and yet church is us already….wherever we are. And so we are supposed to take care, meet the issues, and deal with these particular things, be real, be raw………..these are things people are going through. I believe *by* doing that, the number of people will be more……… Instead of boxing ourselves like…church and staying there in a physical place and do your thing over there and yeah. There is so much happening out there. Our voice is being lost more and more as day go by."

Kamau seems to perceive that there were many people out there who did not find the church attractive because of how the church conducted herself. According to him, the church had cit the image of a perfect body that was keen on maintaining her image more than go out there and minster to need in society. This image was making her less efficient in society.

6.6   Conclusion

In this chapter I considered how the young people's search for autonomy and identity is also a means of experiencing community. I now turn to Interpretation of data established.

INTERPRETATION

This section chapter presents an interpretation of data established and analysed above. Interpretation is presented as distinct chapters under the categories - 'Who am I?', 'Can this Church be Family' and 'Why go to church?' The Bowen Family Systems Theory[184] will be applied as has been operationalized by Ronald W. Richardson, to establish how members of SPYC experience community at SPMC.

7 WHO AM I?

Adolescents as 'Who am I?' while seeking to establish their identity. It is one of the tasks of *individuation* as the adolescent "begins the process of breaking away from the role of a child in the ecology of the family system"[185] and becomes a "interdependent, autonomous person"[186]. Quoting Marcia, Amy Jacober[187] notes that, "identity development takes place in the tension between identity resolution and identity confusion"[188]. Identity resolution is therefore necessary to avoid confusion.

> One may not explore the tension whatsoever, living the so-called unreflective life. This is known as *diffusion*. One may explore other options without commitment. This is known as *moratorium*. One may completely ignore available identities and accept the identity given by parents/context. This is known as *foreclosure*. One may commit to an identity after a period of exploration. This is known as *achievement[189]*.

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184 See section 2.2

185 Clark, "Changing Face of Adolescence", 47

186 ibid

187 Amy Jacober, "Adolescent Identity Development", in Sally Nash and Jo Whitehead, ed., *Christian Youth Work in Theory and Practice,* London:SCM Press, 2014) 97 – 112

188 Jacober, "Adolescent Identity Development", 98

189 ibid

In this section, I will look at the question of identity under categories of ascribed identity by pastor, parents, church and group. The term *ascribed* is used to indicate that this is not an identity that participants chose for themselves, rather it was chosen for them by those around them and thus creating conflict. The conflict here is created when one is trying to find out who she really is while at the same time she is said to be who she does not see herself as. Two ways of identity resolution, that is, *foreclosure* and *moratorium* are key concepts used here.

7.1   Identity ascribed by pastor

When members of SPYC took to reorganising their group, one of the things that they did was to request the church leadership for a youth pastor[190]. The relationship is represented in Fig: 15
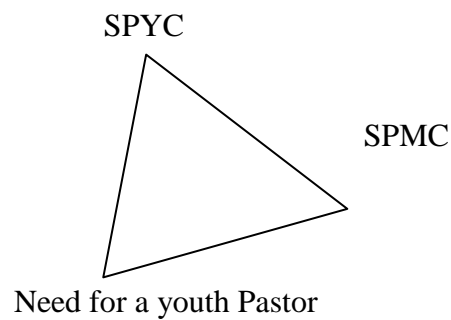

SPYC

SPMC

Need for a youth Pastor

Diagram 15

SPMC leaders sought a youth minister for SPYC but the young people were not keen on getting one in the MCK structure (P1). This conflict is represented by the broken line between SPYC and P1 and the overall distance with SPYC and SPMC on one side and P1 on the other on diagram 16.
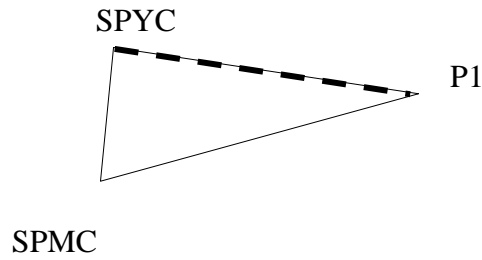
---

190 4.2.1

SPYC

P1

SPMC

Diagram 16

They however preferred P2[191] with whom they had interacted before. Both pastors were solutions sought to address the conflict of lack of youth pastor at SPMC. However SPYC chose to distance themselves from P1 in favour of P2 as shown in diagram 17.
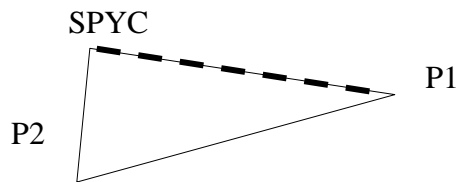

SPYC

P1

P2

Diagram 17

They were active participants in the process of choosing their pastor indicating that they were not a foreclosed group.

The pastor and youth leaders, did some impressive things that have been handed down through the leadership generations[192] ever since, such as the creation of a mission statement and motto and logo for the group. These were aimed at creating stronger bonds within the group and giving them a sense of collective identity. This is seen in the almost balanced triangle 18. The motto was recited in SPYC meets and became some kind of chant that gave the group identity. The pastor had led the members in reciting it to keepin touch with the ethos of the group.

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191 Pastor Wema

192 The phrase *leadership generations* as used here refers to the different sets of youth leadership teams that have been in existence ever since. A new team of leaders takes office every two years.
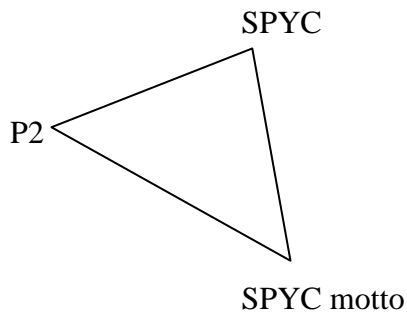
SPYC

P2

SPYC motto

Diagram 18

A conflict developed when P2 left SPMC and with his leaving some things were not done anymore, for instance, the recitation of the SPYC motto. With a hint of nostalgia Kendi noted that "We have them. They were well thought out. They are filed somewhere. They are not said. I don't think we have said them this year". Omosh echoed her words[193]. Kamau also noted very importantly that,

> There hasn't been that consistent information in terms of this vision, this is where we stand, these are our values, these are the four development points that you can fit in. Perhaps the only time it has been mentioned is during our anniversaries, which is coming up now in August. So there is no direct, very clear concise vision which is actually being utilized.
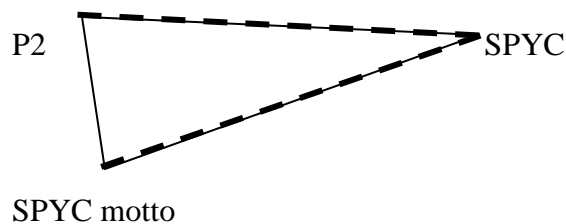
P2   SPYC

SPYC motto

Diagram 19

---

193 4.2.1

P2 had played a pivotal role in the new life of SPYC and when he left a conflict was created on two fronts, that is, the gap left when he exited and the lack of recitation of the group motto. The group identity seems to have been lost especially because the person who had reminded the group of their common identity was no longer there. This is represented in diagram 19 by the two broken lines between SPYC, P2 and motto. In this conflict P2 and the SPYC motto are close to each other with distance between them and SPYC.

Notably P2 had played an instrumental role in bringing SPYC together and the group was stuck in their past even though other ministers had been posted to work with their group. DeVries[194] observes that churches that have stuck youth ministries seem to thrive on great ideas. The church under study seemed to have picked the idea that getting a youth "pastor who understands youth ministry"[195] was really the way to go. The process they undertook to have P2 come on board is seen to have been done in all sincerity, out of need and probably after observing what was happening in churches with thriving youth ministries.

A very important aspect was seemingly missed even though they finally got a youth pastor. The missing link was that "until structures are in place for great ideas to be implemented, even the best of them will wind up on a treadmill that may speed up or slow down but will go nowhere"[196]. There was need to not just envision great youth ministry now that SPYC had a pastor, but also to create a new structure so that the new entrant was not just an appendage to what already was. This is because creating a new role was going to affect how the whole structure functioned.

An interesting twist appeared when P2 departed. At the beginning the group seemed to not be foreclosed when they chose to stand with their choice of pastor. However this is seen to change when P2 left. Events following showed that the group that had settled for

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194 See DeVries 2008:21-22

195 See Devries 2008:22

196 ibid

the new identity created by the pastor. Being a new phenomenon to them and probably in trying to look as good as the other youth groups they may have admired, they did not interrogate their own identities as individuals and as a group and hence the sense of loss at the departure of P2. They fell victim of what DeVries calls "the easy button"[197]. The easy button refers to the "search for easy answers" and in the case of SPMC it was the belief that by getting a youth pastor, youth ministry in the church would be transformed in the short-run. He asserts that "sustainable youth ministries are found in churches that give up the search for easy answers and, practice a 'long obedience in the same direction'"[198].

7.2   Identity ascribed by parents

The 'perfect child' identity was said to be the identity that parents ascribed to the young people. Pursuant to this identity the young people were to act in a certain manner that distinguished them from what parents did not agree with. A M Berman et al[199] term this the *normative style* of identity[200], parents do not expect their children to act otherwise but in a manner as prescribed by them. Such parents expect the relationship with their adolescents to be as represented in diagram 20.

Parent

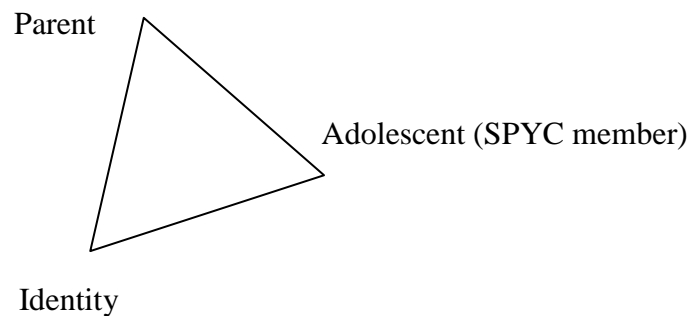Adolescent (SPYC member)

Identity

Diagram 20

---

197 See DeVries 2008:29-30

198 See DeVries 2008:30

199 See Berman et al 2001:514

200 foreclosed adolescents display little exploration of alternatives and conform to social and familial expectations

One ascribed identity which seemed to come up several times in the interview was 'faithfulness in church attendance'. It appeared that parents in this congregation looked at regular church attendance by their adolescent children as a great achievement as it bore a good name and status for them as parents. While parents got accolades when their adolescent children attended church, it created conflict for the adolescents. This identity seemed to be worn only for a while till the young people matured enough to leave home for college or university and then they would wear their real identities. They expressed moratorium at this stage by experimenting with what it would feel like to not go to church at all or to go to a church different from where their parents went[201]. Coercing adolescents to go to church so that parents would appear perfect in the eyes of society did not sit well with them[202]. This is presented in diagram 21.

Parents

SPYC

Ascribed identity

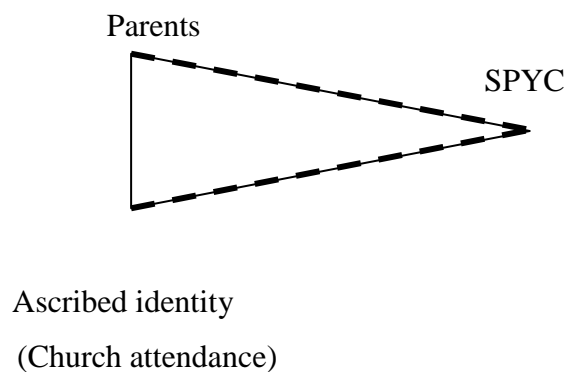(Church attendance)

Diagram 21

A second way of acting the perfect child identity was presented by Bea in the note below.

Bea: "The status quo remains. You go to school, get great marks, join and finish high school, go to university and finish, get married to a rich husband, get children. There is no room for extras. Yet people make mistakes in life".

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201 See section 6.4

202 See section 6.3

This identity put a great strain on adolescents to be at their best all the time; in a competitive society it required them to be at the very top always. Parents were said to put up an act that was quite stifling forgetting that the adolescent could tell the difference between an act and the real thing. This was not only disappointing to the young person who was trying to forge an identity, but potentially had the ability to drive them into rebellion as Ekwe asserted in this comment.

Ekwe: "Rebellion makes you seek an identity and you will run away from church. It may not be the only place to express rebellion, but the right place, because it is the place parents come to express their excellence in raising kids, and that is immoral. A young person sees the parent trying to be what they are not and so he lets out his real self. He has been suffocating under the parent's weight, trying to create a perfect son, kind of 'you brought me here to a holy place to offer me as a sacrifice."

In the face of rebellion by the adolescent, the conflict is represented by broken lines between the parent and adolescent and rebellion as in diagram 22. The distance between adolescent and rebellion is shorter than between the adolescent and parent showing the preference of the adolescent.

Adolescent

Parent

Rebellion
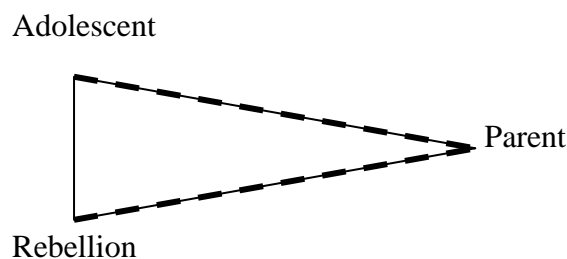
Diagram 22

7.3 Identity ascribed by group

4.2.1 illustrates that the mission statement and motto created at the reorganisation of SPYC were passed on through the various leadership generations. Therefore subsequent groups were expected to adopt and use them appropriately to maintain a group identity. However during the interviews it became apparent that more than any creed that young

people would recite, there was something else that held this group together[203]. The diagram below represents the relationship between SPYC and the mission statement and motto.
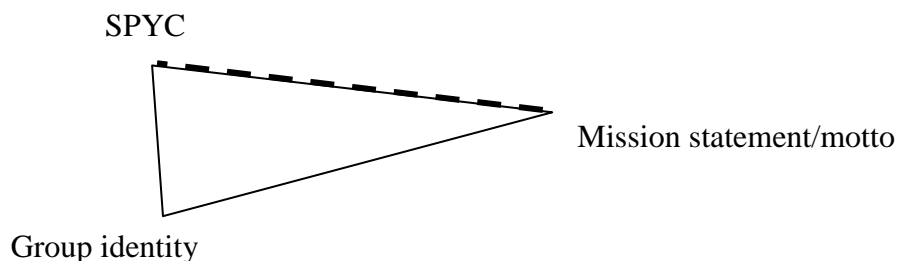
SPYC

Mission statement/motto

Group identity

Diagram 23

The unbroken line between group identity and mission statement/motto in diagram 23 indicates that it gave the group some kind of group identity. However, it may not have been a very strong identity as indicated by the broken line between SPYC and mission statement/motto

A possible explanation would be found in the terms '*buy into community* '[204] and *plug into community* '[205]. 'Buy into community' referred to the act of a new member identifying with the ethos of a group and wanting to belong to that group. These ethos may not necessarily be what members of the group say they do, but more so in what they are seen to do. In 4.2.2 Kamau notes that he preferred to first buy into a group even before he knew what their mission or vision was. 'Plug into community' on the other hand referred to the act of becoming a member of the group, which comes with a sense of belonging in the group. The actual plugging is a personal choice as expressed by John and Bea in 4.2.2. This relationship is expressed in the diagram below.

203 See section 4.2.2

204 Accepting to belong to a group

205 Actually belonging to the group
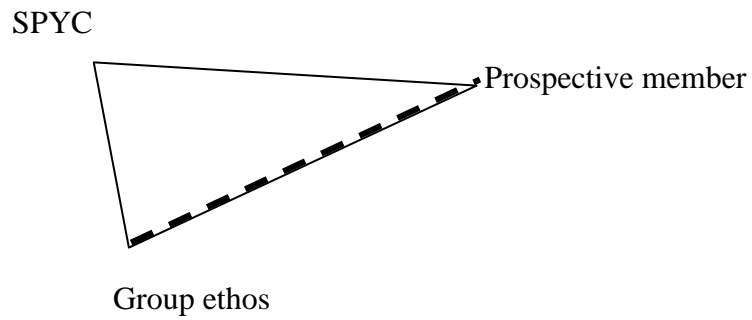
SPYC

Prospective member

Group ethos

Diagram 24

The diagram 24 illustrates a broken line between the prospective member and group ethos; and also distance between SPYC and ethos on one side and prospective member on the other side. This is because a prospective member in any group needs to 'buy into' the group practices before she can decide whether or not to 'plug into' the group.

While noting that prospective members are attracted by what they see happening in a group, it was interesting to hear what participants had to say about those who deserted the group. In 4.4, John attempts to give his perspective as to why they actually left. There may have been the possibility that some members bought and plugged into the group because they perceived it to be a fun group hence they may have expected to have fun filled activities all the time. The conflict created here was that of a perception of fun filled activities all the time versus an actual down time of few or no fun filled activities. However, when there were no more activities to excite them, they moved on. This conflict is represented by the diagram below.
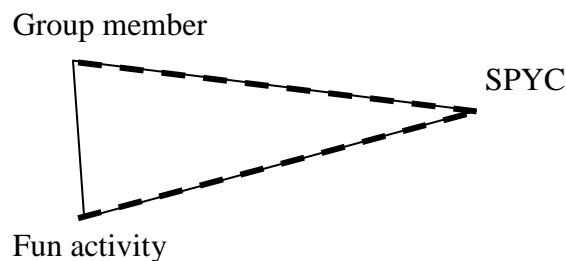
Group member

SPYC

Fun activity

Diagram 25

92

In diagram 25 group member and fun activity are close to each other while SPYC is presented a longer distance away. The two dotted lines represent the conflict relationship between SPYC and the other two. The group member is seen as in conflict with SPYC probably now that the member is no longer as fulfilled in the group like before; fun activity is also seen in conflict with SPYC because there are downtimes when the group does not have fun activities.

Their departure may be explained in two possible ways. (1) They may have been exploring options without making a commitment, that is, moratorium. SPYC therefore was just another pit-stop for them before their journey continued. (2) SPYC was to them a *cloak room communitiy*[206]. Bauman notes that,

> Cloak room communities need a spectacle which appeals to similar interests dormant in otherwise disparate individuals and so bring them all together for a stretch of time when other interests – those which divide them instead of uniting them – are temporarily laid aside, put on a slow burner or silenced all together. Spectacles as the occasion for the brief existence of a cloakroom community do not fuse and blend individual concerns into 'group interest'; by being added up, the concerns in question do not acquire a new quality and the illusion of sharing which the spectacle may generate would not last much longer than the excitement of the performance[207]

Notably, such brief meetings did not promote SPYC's interest as a group because only a few members were at hand to take up tasks during the worship service and the rest of them seemed to have become spectators.

SPYC had experienced community in activities they had organised and executed together. For some of the participants, it was activity that had and could hold the group together and attract more members. However they could also not agree as the conversation

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206 Zygmut Bauman, *Liquid Modernity,* (United Kingdom: Polity, 2000), 200

207 ibid

between Omosh and Ekwe in 4.5 illustrates. While Ekwe thought more time together would translate to more activity, Omosh thought in the exact opposite. At the time of interview, the Sunday worship service was their only regular activity.

This prompted a debate on how to plan activities and what manner of activities ought to be planned in order for members to be actively involved. There was also the discussion around whether or not commitment from members ought to come before any activities can be planned and how much hype should be involved[208]. This is presented in the diagram 26.
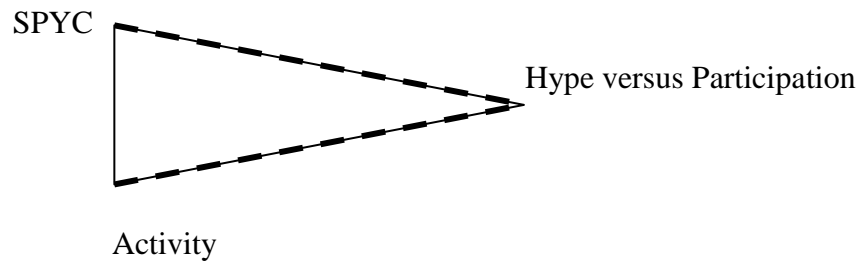
SPYC

Hype versus Participation

Activity

Diagram 26

In this discussion, hype versus participation seemed to take centre stage. In trying to resolve this conflict we went back in time to look at some activities planned by SPYC in earlier times and how well or poorly they faired. Bible study, 'the night of light', praise and worship practice and ministry and 'hard talk' were offered as examples of SPYC activity. In two of these activities that is bible study and praise and worship practice, the participation was reported to have been low key as only a few members showed interest. The other two activities, that is, 'the night of light' and 'hard talk' attracted a lot of interest from within and without the church.

Lucy[209] argued that the reason why bible study did not have a good following was that, "there is the mentality that a youth event must have a lot of hype, lots of music, jumping up and down. So when you call people for bible study or prayers, people come up with

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208 See section 4.5

209 ibid

excuses". This was reinforced by Kamau[210] who noted that two other activities, that is, the Night of Light and Hard Talk got a totally different reception with both attracting participants from within and without the church. During these activities there were a lot of hyped fun activity like dancing, skits, singing and lots of food too. In the ensuing discussion hype was said to be age dependent with adolescents in high school more likely to gravitate towards activities that were highly hyped more than the older adolescents as Omosh noted[211].

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210 ibid

211 ibid

8   CAN THIS CHURCH BE FAMILY?

SPMC is largely made up of families coming together in the church congregation. Thus there is quite a thin line between the role of adults as parents (of young people under study and others) and as members of the adult congregation. In this kind of setting, it is notable that relationships in the family setting spill into relationships within the congregation in general. Therefore underlying anxieties emanating from relationships between parents and adolescents while at home will be witnessed in relationships between the adult congregation and the young people while in the church setting.

8.1   Church organization

In the organisation of MCK[212] was noted a gap where mature young people who didn't fit in the conventional church fellowship groups found themselves falling in between the cracks. Apart from the Sunday worship service they did not find any other group to belong to for closer fellowship[213].

SPMC

Young adults

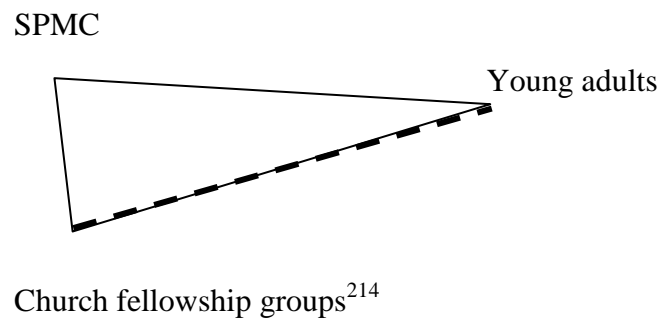Church fellowship groups[214]

Diagram 27

In diagram 27 the young adults are seen in conflict with church fellowship groups because they don't fit in any of them and yet remain members of SPMC. Its current form, the SO[215] also gave the group such a wide age bracket that it would be such a gargantuan

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212 See section 1.2

213 See section 5.2

214 MMF, MWF, JSS, MYK

215 MCK SO 147, 129

task to find meaningful group activity in a church like SPMC which has varies ages represented in SPYC[216] and only the youth pastor to care or all of them.

Participants cited single mothers as another group that together with the young adults seemed to fall in between the cracks. Being unmarried they don't fit in with the MWF and being mothers they don't fit in with SPYC. The young people viewed their church as uncaring because it did not have a ministry for single mothers even though they were members of the church. There were nuances of fear from a female participant who argued that because theirs was a perfect church there was no room for those that make mistakes.

> Kendi: In this church we don't have a fellowship for single mothers. The status quo remains. You go to school, get great marks, join and finish high school, go to university and finish, get married to a rich husband, get children. There is no room for extras. Yet people make mistakes in life.

This notion is represented in the diagram below. The dotted lines represent the conflict existing between single mothers and the conventional church fellowship groups and SPMC. In diagram 28 the distance between SPMC and Church fellowship groups is shorter than that between them and the single mothers.

SPMC

Single mothers
(unconventional groups)
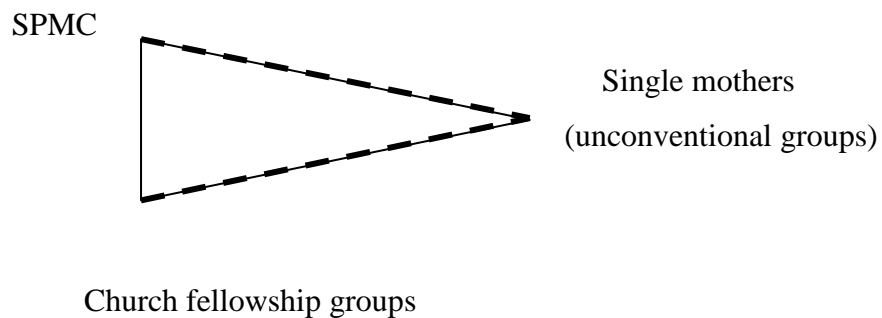
Church fellowship groups

Diagram 28

Mawira noted that this kind of fear had a background in an occurrence that affected a young girl who had been a member of the youth group.

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216 MCK SO 147 (5) 1996:129

> Mawira: I know a girl who got pregnant. The cold treatment she received here makes her not want to return. She felt unwelcome, looked down upon, judged. Even the pastoral committee was like 'what is happening to our girls. The youth are just getting pregnant anyhow?'

The stigmatization they witnessed told them that there was no room to make mistakes. Using this past experience they looked at their current situation as one that was stifling. They understood their church as not flexible to accommodate those who made mistakes or those who didn't fall into the conventional categories. Their interpretation of the situation was that the church was domesticated[217].

8.2   Dealing with expectation

Participants pointed to the fact that they were aware that adult[218] congregation expected much from them. In the same breath they noted that they were ill equipped to measure up to those expectations. When in the course of interaction the adults to reacted in a cold or harsh manner they felt unfairly judged. Conflict was derived from the knowledge that was much expected from them yet little guidance was offered.
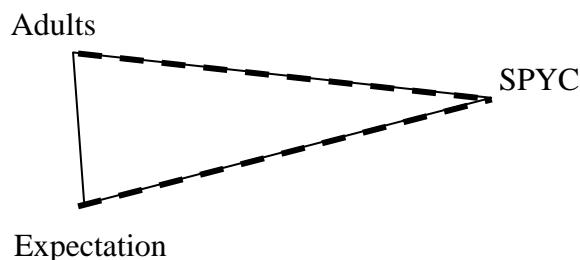
Adults

SPYC

Expectation

Diagram 29

The broken lines in diagram 29 represent a relationship where young people face much expectation from the adults and yet not much guidance is offered on how to achieve these expectations.

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217 See sections 4.10, 5.7

218 Being a family church the adult congregation was largely made up of parents of the members of SPYC.

Kamau[219] notes that he felt labelled as a young man. This notion was echoed by Atieno who noted that even she asked for help to deal with issues in her life she was told to 'deal with it' and not keep telling people her problems. Mwatate added his voice to the foray with comments to indicate his dissatisfaction in how adults reacted[220]. Sentiments expressed by Kamau, Atieno and Mwatate above indicated the presence of a gap between the expectations of the adults and the participants who expressed their inability to meet the inferred expectations. This gap has caused anxiety between the two sides. Seemingly the parents stayed put in place and wanted the young people to measure up and the young people on the other hand expressed exasperation at the lack of understanding from their parents.

In appreciation of the existing gap there have been initiatives made to bring the two sides together to talk and enhance their relationship. According to participants, the fathers and sons outing seemed to have begun on a high note and participants would look forward to their annual outing with their fathers. This initiative brought together all men in the church together, regardless of age, to establish father-son bonds and a mentorship program especially for those who did not have active father figures[221]. It was noted that the young men seemed to lose interest in this initiative when fathers failed to keep promises made in one such meet. The young men were thus left with the feeling that 'fathers and sons' had been just another outing. John and Omosh[222] give a clear picture of how they perceived the initiative.

Noticeable in this initiative is that both groups went out with a different agenda in mind. That is, while the young men were excited that finally they got an opportunity to talk to the older men and glean of their wisdom, the fathers seemingly had a different agenda. While

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219 See section 5.4

220 See section 5.5

221 See section 5.4

222 ibid

being taught how to slaughter a goat was a good skill in this context, it was not what the young men had envisaged. They had more pressing needs that they wanted addressed.

The sentiment expressed by participants show their disappointment at a well-intentioned program that was not followed through as promised. The irony here was that this had been a great opportunity to bring out the real issues happening in the lives of the young people. Such planned outings conjure an image used by Clark and Clark to indicate how these parents had been invited "to sit on the steps of their {adolescents} world"[223] and get to know what influences them and while there "empathizing and having compassion on what is tough or ragged"[224]. This is what the young men had invited the fathers to do, that is, to sit with them and get to know who and how they really are[225]. As it turned out the day consisted of fun events and that was it. The lack of follow-up on the part of the fathers as mentioned by Omosh[226] caused such exasperation in the sons that they thought even if it was scrapped from the activities of the church, it had not profound effect in character formation.

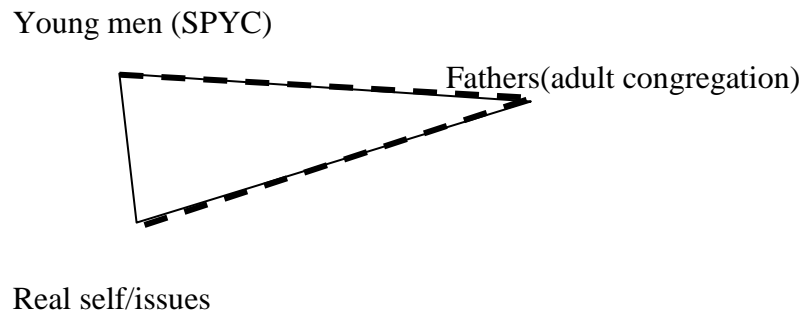Young men (SPYC)

Fathers(adult congregation)

Real self/issues

Diagram 30

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223 Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected Parenting Teens in a MySpace World,* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 142

224 ibid

225 See section 6.2

226 See section 5.4

The ideal triangle would be one that indicates the fathers as being the third party introduced to help the sons deal with real issues. However, when they didn't take up the rightful position, the sons were left still close to their issues while at the same time distancing themselves from the fathers who according to them were not willing to help, as seen in the broken lines in diagram 30.

The mothers and daughters seminar was organised slightly differently from the fathers and sons though the underlying principle was the same. Sentiments shared indicated that this initiative was less profound than the fathers and sons outing and at the time of the interview there was actually nothing much going on pointing out a relationship that was not doing well. In answer to a further question on the goings on John quipped, "Next question please?" The female participants stayed mum on this one indicating their discomfort with the subject. However in answer to a different question, Kendi did allude to a possible cause of the stand-off[227]. A spat between the mothers and daughters, left the latter feeling unloved, uncared for, unappreciated hence the quitting from the praise and worship team. Their interpretation was that the entire adult congregation did not appreciate their effort to be part of the congregation and thus they chose to be distant as seen in diagram 31.

Young women (SPYC)

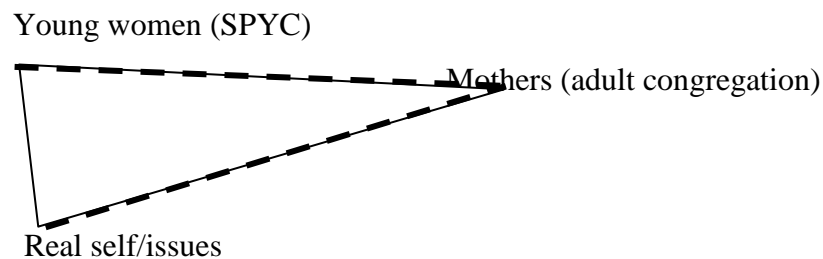Mothers (adult congregation)

Real self/issues

Diagram 31

Just as the 'fathers and sons' relationship above, the daughters too chose to keep a safe distance from their mothers and remain with their issues, especially now that the mothers

227 See section 5.4

had been unfriendly. Their not so good relationship is represented by the broken lines on diagram 31.

Notably, these two initiatives faced two great challenges. First, the lack of follow-up bred lack of faith in the system and thus the young people did not see the need to get excited about these activities because they would not last. Secondly, though well intentioned, both events ended up being counterproductive because the young people felt that their needs were not met. It is important to note that as young people go through individuation[228], stability is crucial in their development and it was missing in the operationalization of these initiatives.

8.3   Generation gap issues

Generation gap issues were understood to hold the relationship between the young and older members of this congregation in tension. Each group was seen as trying to maintain its values and what remained in the middle was a gap that needed mediation. Mawira[229] noted in his contribution that even out there in society, generally young people seemed detached from society.

Notably these young people came to church hoping to find this gap mediated gap; hoping that what happened out there in society won't follow them into the church. They seemed to look forward to a place of rest where they could find more meaningful relationships with adults. Here was the hope that their parents, who are members of the adult congregation, would take time to listen to them especially now that they were in church and not in the home setting. It was the desire that while in church their relationship would be transformed and give them the opportunity to be heard. Their hope is represented by the almost balanced diagram 32.

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228 Clark, Changing Face of Adolescence, 47

229 See section 5.5

SPMC (church setting)
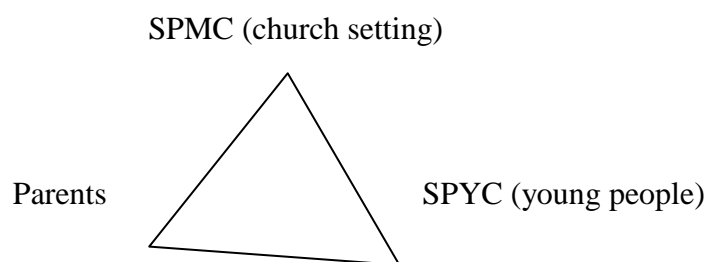

Parents   SPYC (young people)

Diagram 32

Generation gap issues were said to emanate from each group keeping to their values and
not wanting to cede ground. The challenge here was understood to occur when parents
who grew up in a different time and place tried to pass on the values gained then to their
children who are growing up in a different time and place[230]. There was a paradox in how
the members of SPYC understood how they are to relate to the adult congregation. This
was brought about by the fact that the adult congregation was made up of their parents
who were also part of the society out there that Mawira says has "denied the church a
central ground"[231]. Therefore it was important to introduce the church setting as the third
party in a bid to negotiate this gap.

In attempting to handle this challenge, it was clear that parents may not have accepted
that their children were at the individuation stage and hence were questioning all systems
in a bid to understand how and where they fit in. One of the systems under scrutiny was
their parent's values. That combined with what they gleaned from the society around
them, caused the young person to appear to have a totally different value system, hence the
rift. The rabbinical saying that "don't limit a child to your own learning, for he was born
in another time"[232] gives an even better understanding of what happens between the older
and younger generation in as far as the generation gap is concerned.

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230 ibid

231 ibid

232 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 60

Parents (adult congregation)

Young people (SPYC)
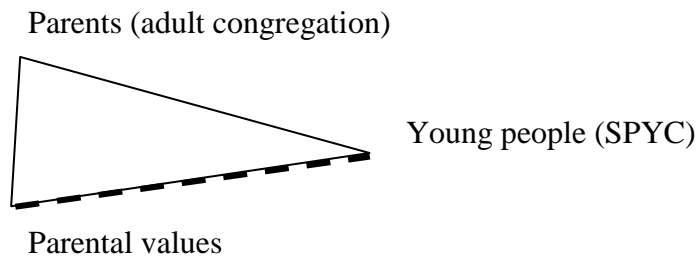
Parental values

Diagram 33

The broken line in diagram 33 represents the young people's discontentment parental values. As will be noted the line connecting parents and young people remains unbroken to show that even though the young people may not accept their parents values entirely, as adolescents they still find their parents to be a stable ground[233].

Young people were also said to have their own value system influenced by religious teachings, education system, friends and peers, globalisation as seen in the various information technology and communication media, politics and governance, economic situation and so on. Their anxiety was caused by the perception that their parents did not understand them and their world.

Young people (SPYC)

Parents (adult congregation)

Young people's values

Diagram 34

The broken line of diagram 34 indicates the parents disapproval of young people's values. However, the unbroken line between parents and children indicate that parents still

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233 Clark, "Changing Face of Adolescence", 57

value their children and given the opportunity they could create a more understanding relationship.

Clark and Clark invite parents to "be a student"[234] and to "maintain a commitment to dialogue"[235] if only to learn what young people hold as values, and in that way being the adults, they will know how best to help them navigate t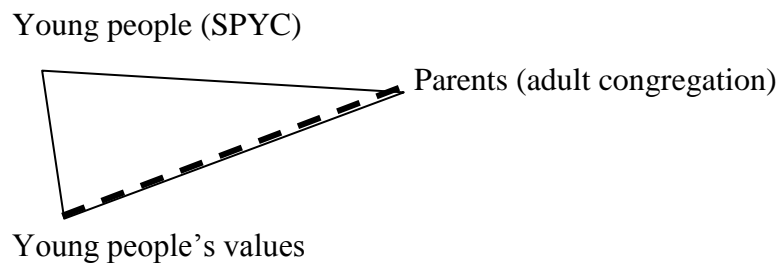heir world. In this relationship, the church seemed to be the middle ground esteemed by both parents and young people alike. It can be the place where both groups can learn and indeed nurture ways of relating. DeVries[236] notes that it is important to help young people develop relationships with mature Christian adults in the congregation. This no doubt would assist the young people as they transition through the various stages of adolescence.

8.4 Domestication

Domestication was a term used severally by Mawira to indicate the church's persistence in acting in a certain prescribed manner or mould[237]. The conflict here was that the church did not seem to want to adapt this mould to meet the needs of its youth congregation. Some of the ways in which this notion was realised was in transitions[238] and preaching.

The challenge for preachers could be attributed to the use of the yearly lectionary which prescribes the themes and scripture readings for a whole calendar year. These themes seldom dealt with matters such as finances, sexuality, academics, dating and so on as the youth would like to have teachings in. Mawira further faulted the domestication of pastors who he felt did not also reach out to the young people.

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234 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 140

235 Ibid., 142-143

236 DeVries, "Focusing on Youth Ministry through Family", 132-142

237 See sections 4.10, 5.7

238 See section 5.2

SPYC (young people)

Domesticated Preacher/minister

Real issues
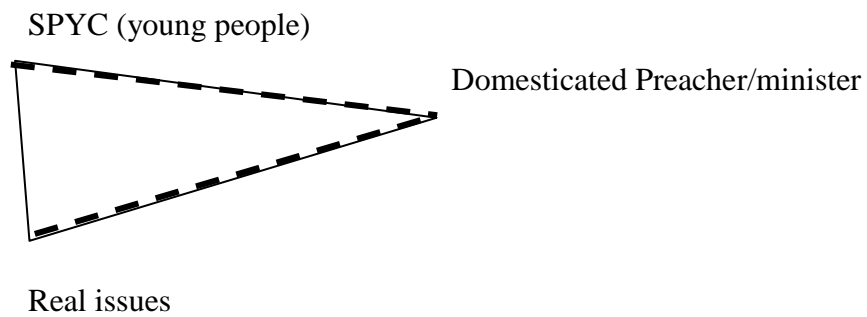
<u>Diagram 35</u>

The relationship in diagram 35 is presented by a broken line between the preacher and young people and their issues. It indicates how far removed the domesticated preacher or minister is from the issues they face and hence is not able to reach out to the young people.

When the young people reach out for help with their issues and find those they expect to reach out to them stuck in the traditional way of doing things, they interpret it to mean that the church does not care about them. They are anxious that their cry has gone unanswered. They tend to perceive that the church is not interested in them as persons but as a formal group just to complete the church structure.

8.5   Communication via longings

During the interviews, participants expressed themselves in words that pointed to an underlying consciousness of being grossly misunderstood. It was like each group heard a different thing when the other spoke and this miscommunication made the young people feel unappreciated, unloved, uncared for. Clark and Clark acknowledge this in what they call the language of longings[239] that young people use while navigating their years in adolescence. The below table is a representation of the same including what parents hear.

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239 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 163

What adolescents say	What parents hear	What adolescents mean
You don't know me	I don't matter to her	I long to belong
You never listen to me	He doesn't want to listen to me	I long to be taken seriously
I can do it	She doesn't need me	I long to matter
I am fine okay	He wants to be left alone	I long for a safe place
Its my life	She doesn't care what I think	I long to be uniquely me
Nobody cares about me	He doesn't care about anybody but himself (me included	I long to matter

Table 1: Language of longings[240]

Many times young people say they are misunderstood because their longings are not expressed directly. They say one thing and mean another and unfortunately adults, who as it emerges are not very keen listeners, hear a totally different thing. This has the potential to not only create confusion but also leave a host of hurt feelings that usually cause young people to drift away from parents and the church.

In the context of SPMC, participants may not have used the exact same words, but it could be nuanced from their contributions. In 5.5 Bea alluded to their parents not knowing who they were. This was her way of saying '*I long to belong*'[241] by asking for help from her parents. This was her way of telling them 'you don't know me[242]; this is who I am'. Participants understood that their parents mattered in their lives and so when in need they would be the first stop of wisdom. However, when parents in return tell the young people to "man up" or "deal with it; don't keep talking to others"[243] it indicates that they don't see that their adolescence seek help from them because parents actually matter to them.

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240 Ibid., 167

241 Ibid

242 ibid

243 See section 5.5

On the question of how suggestions from the youth have been taken by church leaders and adult congregation, Omosh[244] was quick to make this assertion, "I think what we get is plastic". The manner in which he said it was to the effect that they (young people) were getting tired of presenting their suggestions because the script was all too clear. They would not receive as much attention as they may have wanted as John notes below.

John: "On the question of whether or not the church embraces us, I would say it depends on who is implementing things first of all. This will determine the reception and amount of airtime you get when this thing finally rolls out. It depends much on whether you will be supported by people who push agendas in the community. Though nothing good comes easy, nothing has ever been fulfilled as requested. Even {pastor} had to struggle. As youth leaders we sit and write up the project and present it, but the people you present it to don't receive it warmly, because there is no perfect relationship ever".

The purpose of presenting their suggestions is so that at the church leaders would factor their activities in the church's calendar and budget. At the leaders meeting they expect to be listened to and when this does not happen they feel like they are *not being taken seriously*[245]. However, when they say so, what the adults hear is that the young people do not want to listen to them. This again can be attributed to *domestication*[246] as Mawira put it even though they struggled with real issues, the leaders and preachers did not take them seriously.

The 'fathers and sons' outing had been a great initiative that was meant to bring the fathers and sons together. However when the fathers failed to keep the promise of mentorship to the young men, they (young men) retreated as Omosh[247] noted. What he was actually communicating that 'they were fine just the way they were'. However what

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244 Ibid

245 ibid

246 See sections 4.10, 5.7

247 See section 5.4

he meant to say was that 'they longed for a safe place'[248]. Now that the fathers had not kept their part of the bargain they were not willing to go ahead with any other such programs. They deemed their current position to be safer than the illusion of being mentored.

The other longing is '*I long to be wanted*' which is expressed as 'no one cares about me'[249] John notes that, "I think the adults want {quoting the adults}, you to come to us, you rise up to us, show us you can make it, show us you can do this, if you are a man enough, come close". Referring more precisely to parents Atieno noted "They expect the same to happen to us as they did in their time. "Find your way. I sorted myself out and here I am. It worked for me, so sort yourself out". When the young people keep voicing their concern what the parents hear is" he doesn't think of anybody but himself (me included).

These young people opened up to parents and became vulnerable before them. Therefore when they received such a response it felt like adults "easily slam the door on the exposed raw places {they} have just been offered. Thus young people become closed up and will often say things like 'nobody cares about me[250]' when they actually are *longing to be wanted[251]*.

While attempting to find out who they really are, adolescents are prone to making many mistakes. However "because parents have, or believe we have, the wisdom that comes from experience, {they} have difficulty letting {their} kids make the mistakes that we are certain will lead to failure"[252]. Kendi agrees when she enumerates what is required of them as young people noting that there is no room for mistakes. "The status quo remains.

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248 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 167

249 ibid

250 Ibid., 167

251 ibid

252 Ibid., 170

You go to school, get great marks, join and finish high school, go to university and finish, get married to a rich husband {and} get children. There is no room for extras. Yet people make mistakes in life".

Although it can be tricky for parents to know when to allow the adolescent to be and when to step in and help, it is important to note that her defensive stance comes from the *longing to matter*. When properly mastered the young person looks at her parent as someone who really cares for her as a person who matters. This relationship can be expressed in the following diagram.

Adolescent
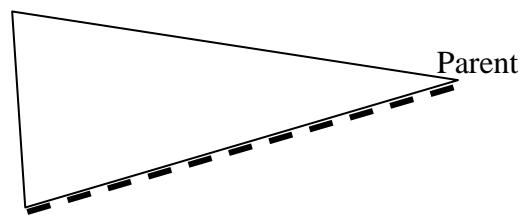
Parent

Language of longings

Diagram 36

The broken line between parent and the language of longings expresses the misunderstanding of the language young people use to express themselves because longings are expressed indirectly. The unbroken line between adolescent and parent shows that adolescent still consider their parents a valuable person in their growth process even though they may not always speak the same 'language'. Due to misunderstanding adolescent longings, parents are seen to occupy a distant position as presented in diagram 36.

9 WHY GO TO CHURCH?

Value was given as the main determinant in choices made, that is, presented with a panorama of choices, the direction one takes speaks of the values she considers important at the point of choosing. Participants expressed their keenness to follow what they found valuable whether in church or elsewhere. Notable in this section is that as they ask various questions at this stage of life, they will be seen to question everything from how their parents care for them to how the church reacts to the society around it.

9.1 Autonomy

"The development of autonomy {…} is more about being trained to handle and then learning to accept responsibility"[253]. Developing autonomy has to do with a *locus of control*[254]. Therefore as they master autonomy, young people find themselves learning to make decisions based in their own understanding and sense of responsibility, and not necessarily driven by external factors such as peers and family. Autonomy is to be understood as not just physical but as spiritual too as adolescents also seek to find out whether or not their spiritual/faith choices matter to their families and church. The acceptance and guidance given at this time empowers their choice of values and the choices made thereof. I will now use the concept of search for autonomy and identity to attempt to understand how it influences some values that participants deemed important.

9.2 The notion of freedom

Obedience to parents was ranked high on the list of reasons on why young people went to church. This may not necessarily been a good thing especially where participants felt misunderstood. Hence when they left the nest, one of the things they experienced was a kind of *freedom* from parental coercion. Once at college or university for example they finally got the opportunity to choose what they thought was best for them.

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253 See Clark and Clark 2007:56

254 The ability to make decisions as *one* moves through life. See Clark and Clark 2007:57
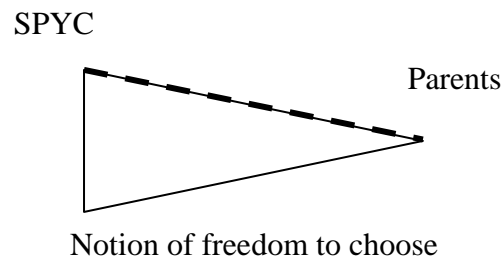
SPYC

Parents

Notion of freedom to choose

Diagram 37

In diagram 37 the broken line between SPYC and parents denotes the desire by the young people to be free from control of their parents. The broken line between the notion of freedom and parents represents the desire to go against whatever values parents hold. SPYC keeps near the notion of freedom because it is the avenue to experience who they really are.

In the choices made, two things can be noted. First is the notion of being free now that they were away from their parents. This notion was said to be true especially for foreclosed adolescents who grew up following their parents command without question. Now that they were apart from them, it becomes a time to feel 'grown up' and in a position to decide what to do or not to do, and on a daily basis. Second, it points to people who have not been trained on how to make decisions prior to leaving the nest. It was notable in the interviews that most young people had decisions made about and for them, especially by parents, and usually without any consultation. At the time of going to college they now had the *prison break* kind of situation where they had to decide what to do with their time.

It emerged that one the decisions that arose from both happenings was the act of desisting from attending church. Since it felt like it had been forced on them all along, they now seemed to feel that it was okay to not come to church now had the opportunity not to. As Atieno noted it was so that they could see "what would happen if one did not go to church"[255]. The notion of freedom was said to be informed by the manner of identity

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255 6.2

families ascribed to their young people. According to participants, for many families having a 'perfect son or daughter' seemed to be the sign of being a good Christian family. They described the perfect child as one who did not miss the church service. The image of the perfect child was found to be overbearing to the young people as they did not get the opportunity to be their real selves, but lived a pseudo-life as ascribed by their parents[256] and this was wearing them out. Therefore when they found the opportunity to be themselves, again their church attendance took the back seat. Instead of coming to church where their parents would get all the accolades for having a perfect child, they preferred to stay away.

Young person (SPYC)

not attending
worship service

Freedom to choose

(value)
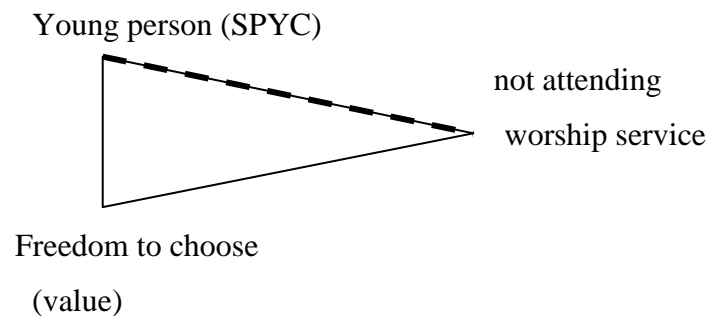
Diagram 38

The broken line between the young person and the choice of not attending worship in diagram 38 illustrates what step the young person took when she realised that she had freedom. The unbroken line between freedom to choose and the choice made indicates that choices made are dependent on freedom as a value held by the young person. The distance shows how removed the young person is from those things he may not value at that moment. The choices made at this stage are many but are mostly pegged on the freedom the young person had at the point of choosing.

From data established and in a rather interesting twist I realised that the act of leaving the SPYC and hence SPMC could not be entirely blamed on an act of rebellion. This is because these young people were individuating spiritually as they were individuating physically. SPMC seemed to represent 'home' and they wanted to leave and explore the

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256 See section 6.3

'outside world'. As mentioned earlier, the ability to make a choice was their larger driving force. In what seemed like an attempt to break free from parental control, whatever they placed value on dictated what choice they made.

Although most of the participants in the interviews seemed to agree that breaking free could be the best way to go, Mwatate offered a contribution that agrees with Clark and Clark's[257] definition of the development of autonomy.

> Mwatate: I think the issue should not be that past some age, it is up to you to worship or not to worship God, but before that age guidance should have been done. {*He paraphrased Proverbs 22:6*}[258]. The person doing the guiding should be the right person, one convinced about the reason why one needs to go to church. Then when one is a young adult, you can make the right choice according to what your parents taught you.

This argument by Mwatate departs from the notion that adolescents are plain rebellious. He showed that he would not necessarily choose to walk away from his faith in God, SPYC or SPMC, but at the same time he was seeking guidance to navigate adolescence as a faithful Christian.   Mwatate saw this as a better way to enable the young people make choices that would enhance how they experienced their community than for the young people to walk away. It creates a more balanced approach as seen in the diagram 39.

Young person (SPYC)
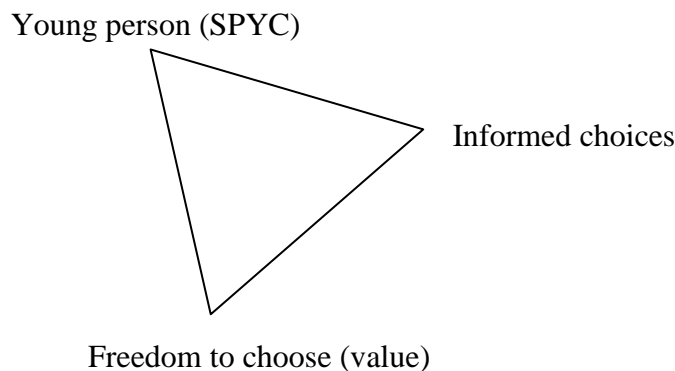
Informed choices

Freedom to choose (value)

Diagram 39

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257 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 56

258 Proverbs 22: 6 "train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (English Standard Version)

9.3   Reactive versus proactive Church

The second value participants considered was proactivity by the Church[259] as seen in her activity within society. Their ideal church was one that was proactive in taking up her prophetic role in society instead of being laid back. Participants had keenly observed the position the Kenyan church took on matters affecting society. They seemed to place a rather high stake on the voice of the church in matters concerning the society at large and they were not shy in pointing where they felt the church had failed to live up to her prophetic calling.

According to participants, one of the things the church has not done well was to remain insensitivity to the plight of needy people. Kamau noted that Christians were busy in their respective denominations and yet there was so much degradation in the nation. According to him the result of Christian growth was to be seen in how Christians lived in society.

> Kamau: I want to go to church to grow and have fellowship. But the church in Kenya is silent about many things. So many people feel like this is a place for pastors to get rich quickly yet there is so much degradation in the nation. It is like the only active people are politicians; the church is very silent. Things are going wrong, left right and centre and we are busy in our denominations.

To the participants this pointed to a lack of concern on the part of the church over a suffering society. This can be difficult for many adolescents to process because their ideal picture of what the church is belongs to their childhood concrete thinking and early adolescence where they believed all that was told to them. However, while in mid-adolescence, and now in college they are confronted with a different ideal which makes them question what they have believed all along. The conflict between both levels of thought is presented in their critique of the 'wrong' they see in the church and it affects their choice to belong or not to belong.

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259 This refers to the Church as a general entity and not just SPMC or MCK

SPYC

Real image of the church

Ideal image of the church
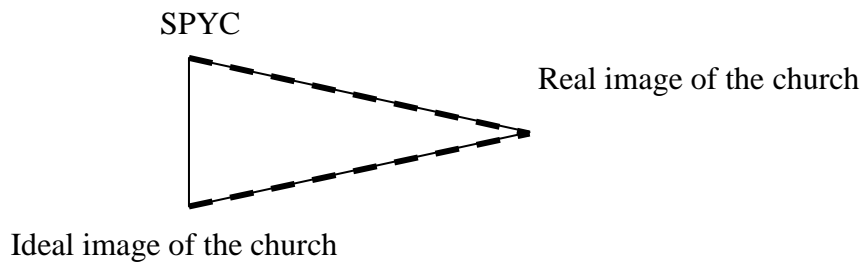
Diagram 40

In diagram 40, the real image of the church is in conflict with SPYC and the 'ideal image of the church' held by the young people. They hold on to the image of the church that was painted in their minds while growing up. This is a challenge that would cause one to church-hop looking for the ideal church. However this conflict can be mediated when the young people are helped along the individuation journey by interacting with mature Christian adults who would be at hand to address such a conflict.

Another conflict presented by the image of the church is as Kamau noted, going 'for a higher experience, more experience, more learning and perhaps doing more"[260] as presented in diagram 41.

SPYC (young people)

Church attendance

Higher experience

Diagram 41

_____

260 6.2
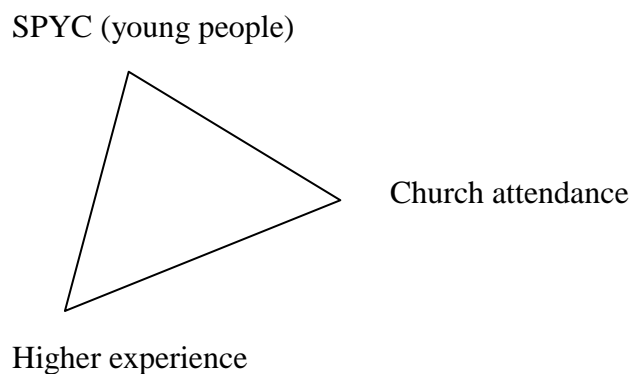
This triangle has a greater balance between 'higher experience' and 'church attendance' which is that the young people are looking for. As long as they can be sure that they are not in church for the sake of it Kamau[261] notes that they will show up.

9.4 Parental instruction and guidance

Clark and Clark describe the search for autonomy as "being somewhere on a continuum between external and internal locus of control"[262] and the young person swings between both until such a time she can develop the "sense of personal power and ability and willingness to take responsibility for choices made"[263]. Parental guidance at this stage is deemed very important because it helps young people navigate through these oscillations.

SPYC

Parents   instruction
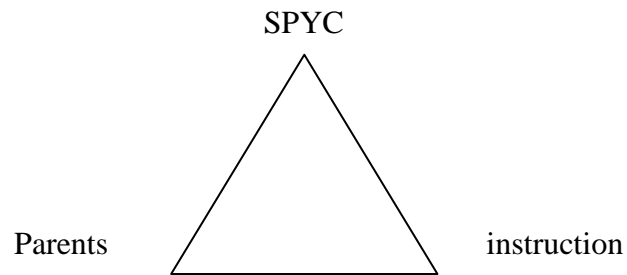
Diagram 42

This triangular relationship of diagram 42 shows a balance between SPYC, Parents and instruction. It is the ideal relationship that young people endeavour to have when it comes to parental instruction. However, when instruction is given out of conviction and not convenience, then it receives greater airtime with the youth and vice versa.

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261 See section 6.2

262 See Clark and Clark 2007:57

263 ibid

Parents

SPYC

Instruction out of convenience
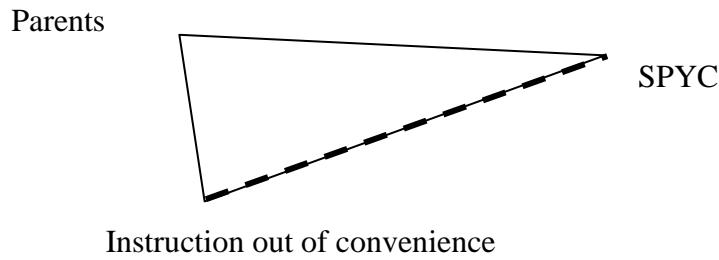
Diagram 43

The broken line on diagram 43 indicates the reluctance of young people to take instruction made for the convenience of their parents. They are however still open to instruction from their parents as seen in the unbroken like between parents and SPYC[264].

REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

In the course of interpreting data established and analysed some interesting issues emerged. It was interesting to note how these participants oscillated between moratorium, foreclosure and achievement identities throughout this period under study. When they were transforming their group they seemed to lean more towards achievement although that identity seemed to get lost when the Pastor Wema left. They seemed to have weaved their new identity around the pastor and hence oscillated towards foreclosure. It is interesting that even though other pastors were posted to them after their first pastor, SPYC does not seem to have picked up their pieces well.

Notable is how the group found identity in a place other than the conventional place, that is, mission statement and motto. Though their pastor led them into a group identity, they had been keener to maintain their own form of identity. This identity seemed to have had more stability since the group did not die completely with the transition of Pastor Wema. Identity ascribed by parents as the 'perfect child' and the resultant reactions from

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264 See section 6.3

the youth people comes up several times. It is also wrapped much around the church, the place where as it seems parents are keen showcase their 'perfect' children.

In their relations, whether with other members of SPYC, parents, Pastors, church leaders and/or adult congregation there is much oscillation between fused and differentiated states. Most of the time there was tendency to move towards the *differentiated connected*[265]. Though participants got distraught sometimes, they did not think that totally walking away from their community was a solution. Sometimes they wanted to be near their parents while at other times they would rather keep away as they explored their world. Parents on the other hand seemed to struggle to understand what the young people actually said.

There were times of *enmeshed fusion*[266], when parents believing what they required from their children to be the best, went overboard and ascribed the 'perfect child' identity, something the young people were working hard to shed. This, many times created a stand-off between the two generations. Though each generation was seen to be keen to maintain its value system, it was parents who seemed to want to dictate what should be done. Interestingly, the young people seemed to agree to parental instructions though with a caveat, that is, it should be out of conviction and not convenience.

Conflict is seen to brew in the young people's minds when the ideal image of the church created in them in younger days does not match what they saw in the society around them. Here is seen a bit of *isolated fusion*[267] when they deemed it fit to separate from a church that is not perturbed by the suffering in society. This would also be understood as an indication that now they are much more aware of what was happening around them, unlike when they were much younger and probably some of these things didn't matter to them then. Young people are also seen to struggle with the notion of freedom. John argues for why he thinks young people should stick to the choices their

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265 See section 2.2.1

266 See section 2.2.1

267 See section 2.2.1

parents made for them, only now he would like to have a discussion around it with his parents. This would be a time to explore the same topic but from a different angle, as he says, 'not using the same conviction you used when your child was five years old'.

There is a really thin line on how to balance the experience of community in this church since it is a family church. When the young people have encountered difficulty in having their issues addressed at home, it is to the church they turned in the hope that they would find a middle ground to still address the same issues. In this regard then, when does a parent act as a parent and/or as an adult member of the congregation? Is it even right for young people to demand that their parents wear both hats in equal measure? How can these be mediated so that the young people here can experience a community of people that love them as persons and not as those only interested in them just as fellowship group within MCK that completes the church structure?

I will now turn to the Discussion chapter to try and address these issues.

10 DISCUSSION CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION - Revisiting practice

This thesis is a study that looks into practice of youth ministry within MCK as exemplified by SPYC. It looks at the un-/faithfulness of their Christian practice with a view of proposing new and faithful practice. Swinton and Mowat[268] note that practices are

> communal activities that have developed within communities over extended periods of time. Even though they may be manifested in particular instances, Christian practices always relate to particular communities; communities with specific histories and traditions which give meaning, value and direction to the particular forms of practice.

Going by the definition above, I seek not only to identify critical un-/faithfulness but also attempt to propose in place new practice while noting that

> Christian practices are a reflection of the church's attempts to participate faithfully in the continuing practices of the triune God's redemptive mission to the world. {......} When a practice loses
> this dynamic and becomes 'merely technique', it ceases to be faithful.

Cameron et al note that

> practical actions of Christian groups being researched and reflected on are generally always and already consciously aligned to a particular theology. This is the 'espoused theology' of a group. It may well be that the espoused theology of practitioners is less well developed than their actual practice; or that the relation between it and the actions carried out is not always clear or coherent[269].

Such discrepancies between various voices as mentioned above were evident during the interviews and from data established. There was a clear dichotomy between what the participants understood to be the mission of the church and what actually happened. Using

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268 Swinton and Mowat, "Practical Theology", 20-21

269 Cameron et al, "Talking about God in Practice", 52-53

the "clearer account of 'theology in four voices'"[270] I will attempt to mediate between the gaps and propose new practice that will be faithful both in articulation and action by all practitioners involved.

10.1 Theology in four voices

Cameron et al note that

> the conviction that Christian practice is, itself, faith seeking understanding', a kind of theology, leads to a properly complex view of theology as such. The naming of faith-full actions as a theological voice, draws practice into a dynamic set of other theologies, which are more recognised as such[271].

Therefore theology that is seen in practice (operant voice[272]) needs to be looked at vis a vis the espoused theology of a group for reflection on critical faithfulness. Theological practice draws from other theologies – normative[273] or formal[274] – as seen in liturgies, church tradition or scripture and from academic research. As will be seen in practice, all four voices are present in an interrelated and overlapping manner. No voice stands distinct from the others as "we can never hear one voice without there being echoes of the other three"[275].

These four voices are active in the group under study. I will present each one separately and then finally reflect on how they stand with each other.

10.1.1 Espoused theology

The espoused theology is "the voice that will accompany the theology that is practice, through the reflective and faith awareness of the practitioners themselves"[276]. The

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270 Ibid., 53

271 ibid

272 Ibid., 54

273 Ibid

274 Ibid., 55

275 Ibid., 54

276 Ibid., 53-54

espoused theology of SPYC is drawn largely from the MCK SO which stipulates the purpose of MYK[277] as shown below.

> The purpose of MYK shall be to seek to develop body, mind and spirit according to the will of God as shown to us in Jesus Christ, in those young people, from childhood to 25 years of age, who are entrusted to our care. To this end the MYK through the Youth Committee of the Church shall:-
>
> (a) Strengthen existing youth work by encouraging high standards and providing training and advice for youth leaders.
>
> (b) Encourage the development of new youth work, wherever there is opportunity for it
>
> (c) Provide opportunities for young people to meet at Circuit, Synod and country-wide levels, by such means as rallies, conferences, camps and competitions.

The national office draws out a calendar of events to guide MYK activities. These activities begin from the local congregation, Circuit, Synod and country-wide as noted in part (c) above. The rest of the time each youth group ought to come up with programs that keep the young people active in the life of their congregation. SPYC also did develop some activities, some of which were mentioned during the interviews. One of the activities SPYC developed with the blessing of the church is the youth worship service that happened every Sunday morning from 9.00 – 10.00. Other activities mentioned are such as Bible Study, prayer meetings, Night of Light, Hard Talk, inter-church visits and visit to children's home.

10.1.2 Operant Theology

Operant theology refers to "the theology embedded within the actual practices of a group"[278]. It is what a group actually does. In the spirit of developing new youth work church leaders at SPMC sought to get a pastor to SPYC. Since then, there has been

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277 MCK SO 1996:129

278 Cameron et al, "Talking about God in Practice", 54

present a youth pastor at SPMC. There is also a youth service that takes place each Sunday between 9.00am – 10.00am. Here youth would gather outside the church building for a short time before leaving the church compound, till the following Sunday. Other activity though not well attended have been mission to a children's home once a year, bible study and prayer meetings, Night of Light and Hard Talk. Fathers and Sons outing and mothers and daughters seminar were initiatives begun to bring the adults and young people together. However they were not doing very well. There was no mention of participation in activity planned by the national office. Generally the group was marked with low activity since Pastor Wema left and also flight of some of its members.

10.1.3 Normative Theology – 'On Family Religion'[279]

Being a Methodist and working with the Methodist Church in Kenya, i decided to seek John Wesley's teaching to provide guidance for the un-/faithfulness of the operant and espoused theologies encountered. As the founder of the church, Wesley laid a strong foundation for his followers and was forthright in the sermons he preached. The 94th sermon, 'On Family Religion', presented an excellent teaching that i would like to hold in tension with current practice at MCK. Although it may not be applicable in its entirety, because of time in history and context, the underlying principle of instructing children was also underscored severally by participants. It is an important issue that i would also like to underline going forward.

This sermon by John Wesley's teaches about how to raise children in the family, ensuring that they developed faith in God and were prepared to serve the LORD. Based from the text in Joshua 24:15, the sermon dwells on the journey of faith as ought to be directed by fathers from early childhood until the time the child was ready to get married and begin a family. In it he recommends that a father should be incharge of spiritual nourishment of all people in the home, that is, his wife, children and even servants under his roof. Of particular interest in this paper is the role of family religion in raising Christian children.

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279 Albert C Outler, *The Works of John Wesley Sermons III 71-114 Volume 3,*ed., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 334 -346

On the subject of worship Wesley offers the following instruction to fathers:-

> On the contrary, what will the consequence be if they do not adopt this resolution? (to uphold family religion)   If family religion be neglected? If care be not taken of the rising generation? Will not the present revival of religion in a short time die away? Will it not be as the historian speaks of the Roman state in its infancy………an event that has its beginning and end within the space of one generation?[280]

Wesley saw the longevity of the church community as could only be propagated through the life of children raised under the rightful Christian instruction. He averred that if fathers did not take it upon themselves to see that the rising generation (that of their children) was properly instructed then the faith was bound to wane and die out in one generation.

On Christian teaching for children, Wesley asks fathers to restrain their children from evil and to instruct them. Specific instruction was offered on how both restraint and instruction ought to be done.

> Your children, while they are young, you may *restrain* from evil not only by advice, persuasion and reproof, but also by correction………avoid every appearance of passion. Whatever is done should be done with mildness; nay indeed with kindness too. Otherwise your own spirit will suffer loss and the child will reap little advantage[281].

He further instructed that all household should attend all ordinances of God on the Lord's day, and that care ought to be taken to ensure the reading and meditation of scripture and prayer.

> Yea, and you should take care that they have some time every day for reading, meditation and prayer. And you should inquire whether they actually employ that

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280 By a generation he means 30 years. Outler, "The Works of John Wesley", 335

281 Ibid., 339

time in the exercises for which it is allowed. Neither should any day pass without family prayer, seriously and solemnly performed[282].

He notes that children should be instructed "early, plainly, frequently and patiently"[283]. The instruction should start as *early* as "the first hour that you perceive reason begins to dawn"[284]. It should be done *plainly*, that is by using "such words as little children may understand, just as they use themselves. Carefully observe the few ideas which they have already, and endeavour to graft what you say upon them"[285].

Instruction should also be done *frequently* because

It would be of little or no service to do it only once or twice a week. How often do you feed your bodies? Not less than three times a day. And is the soul of less value than the body? Will you not then feed this as often? If you find this a tiresome task, there is certainly something wrong with your mind. You do not love them enough; or you do not love him who is your father and their father[286].

Finally, instruction should be done *patiently*.

Never leave off, never intermit your labour of love, till you see the fruit of it. But in order to this you will find the absolute need of being endued with power from on high, without which I am persuaded, none ever had and will have patience sufficient for the work. Otherwise the inconceivable dullness of some children and the giddiness or perverseness of others, would induce them to give up the irksome task, and let them follow their own imagination[287].

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282 ibid

283 ibid

284 ibid

285 Ibid

286 Ibid., 341

287 Ibid., 342

Wesley encourages parents that even though they may not see immediate results, they should not be in a hurry to give up because

> possibly the 'bread which you cast upon the waters' may be 'found after many days'. The seed which has long remained in the ground may at length spring up into a plentiful harvest; especially if you do not restrain prayer before God, if you continue instant herein with all supplication[288].

He acknowledges that restraining and instructing children is not a one-time affair but takes a long time which in turn demands persistence, especially in the place of prayer.

Wesley was concerned about the spiritual lives of children even when they attended school. He advised that even then pious people should instruct the children. He noted that even in times of seeking employment, care ought to be taken that professions chosen promoted the love and service to God. It was also the duty of fathers to guide their children when time came for marriage so that their marriage would be for "the glory of God, and the real happiness of your children, both in time and eternity"[289].

10.1.4 Formal Theology- Incarnational Relational Youth Ministry

I use the work of Andrew Root[290] as the formal voice because it presents a framework that may be used to actualise the mission[291] of the MCK. Root 'returns' Christ to Youth Ministry and shows how the presence of Christ makes possible relationships between people. It is in relationships that we are able to respond to the divine call of our Lord and Savoir Jesus Christ. In the framework of place-sharing we are able to proclaim the holistic Gospel of Christ in word and deed, as we become vicarious for one another in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

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288 ibid

289 Ibid., 345

290 Andrew Root, Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry, (Illinois: IVP Books, 2007)

291 The mission of the Methodist Church in Kenya is "To respond to the divine call of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to proclaim the holistic Gospel in word and deed and in the power of God's Holy Spirit". See www.methodistchurchinkenya.org

Root uses Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology to revisit relational youth ministry. In it he introduces the incarnate Christ as present in relational youth ministry. Bonhoeffer sees the presence of the incarnate crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ in the relationships between persons. He uses three questions to articulate this theology, that is, "who is Jesus"?[292] "Where is Jesus?"[293] "What shall we do?"[294]

Who is Jesus

Bonhoeffer sees Jesus as the incarnate crucified and resurrected Christ. The incarnate Christ took up bodily humanity in all its fullness thereby revealing the depth of God's love. Thus God became human and as a result "all human beings find direct solidarity between their being and God's being"[295]. Humanity then became free to really be human before God because incarnation revealed the "concrete place where we encounter the who of God, {that is} in the nearness of our fellow brothers and sisters"[296]. This means that incarnation is about solidarity in common humanity and hence relational and incarnational youth ministry ought to be thus.

Following the incarnate Christ means following him to the cross. Bonhoeffer sees the cross of Christ as the "rejection of Christ"[297] by the world and also a "mark of reconciliation"[298] with the world. In tandem with the suffering of the cross, there is the invitation "to not only enter into the suffering of the adolescent, but also suffer from the adolescent[299]. This is knowing that in standing with her in suffering she may not accept

292 Root, "Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry, 83

293 Ibid., 104

294 Ibid., 124

295 Ibid., 89

296 Ibid., 90

297 Ibid., 93

298 ibid

299 Ibid., 95

our position. However the message of crucifixion calls us to stand with the suffering neighbour like Christ 'stood' and died and was buried alongside fallen and suffering humanity and in so doing revealed who God truly is.

For Bonhoeffer the resurrection of Christ marked two things. Firstly, that Christ the living Lord overcame sin and death thus possessing all power in heaven and earth. Secondly, the empty grave symbolised a setting free for life in genuine worldliness and thus one can face the world without trepidation. This message of the incarnated crucified and resurrected Christ is important for Bonhoeffer because there is transformation by the person of Christ and that the suffering of the adolescent cannot destroy those close to him. We are called to joined Christ in his ministry "to and for concrete persons in the world"[300] thus

> if we are to minister to adolescents in an incarnational manner we must see them as persons encountered by the person of Christ. We must see them not as consumers of our program or even our faith, but as beautiful and mysterious individuals who, even at this moment, are held by God who is for others, for adolescents.[301]

Where is Jesus?

Bonhoeffer sees Jesus present in relationships between people in both the world and the church, where "I meet You"[302]. Root notes that

> The meeting of I and you {relationship} is the place where we encounter the living presence of Christ, because it is the place of transcendent otherness. The transcendent is that which is outside or beyond humanity's grasp; it is that which is other than my own being {....} In encountering that which is transcendent my very being is called into question because I meet that which has no correlation to me[303].

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300 Ibid., 101

301 Ibid., 101-102

302 Ibid., 113

303 Ibid., 114

Noting that God's transcendence is above any human categories, Bonhoeffer contends that it must be seen historically not only to "confront humanity with humanity's experience of time and space but in such a manner that God remains transcendent and other"[304]. He sees the transcendence of God in the person of the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Christ. Therefore when I am in relation to another (human), it demonstrates her otherness from me; and because

Christ is person, we experience according to Bonhoeffer, the transcendence otherness of God as we encounter the otherness of our human neighbour as person. Therefore, it is within this relationship between I and You we come up against the living God. In standing with and for the other person whom Jesus Christ stands besides, I encounter Christ as I see the mystery of other's humanity, as I recognize that I cannot possess him or her, but must love him or her as I confess the love of Christ for us both[305].

Jesus is present in the church community which is made up of saints and sinners, as well as in the world where his ministry through the church is performed. He notes that the church is a community and more precisely as the *church community*[306]. In the church community "Christ is not a kind of invisible entity {but} is present in the spirit of relationships that hold the community together as they love one another through the sharing of the sacraments and submission to the Word of God"[307].

Two things are to be noted about the church community. It is not perfect or free from sin because it is a community made up of saints and sinners at the same time. Jesus therefore calls the church to conform to his own person even so to escape contamination. The church must also refuse to be excluded from the world which is the other concrete place of Christ. "Just as community is upheld by the distinct relationships of people within

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304 ibid

305 Ibid., 114-115

306 Ibid., 108

307 Ibid., 109

the church, in the same way in order for the church community to remain community, it needs the world to serve as its counterpart, the place where the church discovers its own distinction in care, service and love for the world"[308].

What then ought to be done?

According to Root the concept of relationship for Bonhoeffer is not complete by just knowing and recognising that the other is present as a human being if this does not lead to ethical place-sharing. In place-sharing is the offer to enter vicariously into another's life and offer ones humanity as a companion through difficult times; and the other's reality becomes my own. The place of Christ is important in this relationship because no one can be overly selfless to be in the humanity of another. According to Bonhoeffer this is difficult and can only be done in the power of "One who is already present acting as the place-sharer of all humanity, Jesus Christ"[309]. Thus when one takes the form of the incarnate crucified and resurrected Christ, it means entering into the life of another and acting as one responsible for the humanity of the other. Root argues that by choosing to ignore place-sharing, one purports that it is possible to know Christ without necessarily following him and that he notes is "cheap grace"[310].

Understanding Bonhoeffer's place-sharing calls the youth worker/parent to understand his vicarious responsibility for the full humanity of the young person and as such cease from making statements that suggest to the young person that you are not really interested in him. Root presents some of such statements that I have tabulated to show what the youth worker says and what the young person hears.

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308 Ibid., 110

309 Ibid., 129

310 ibid

What the youth pastor says	What the adolescent hears
"Take it to God"[311]	"Please don't involve me"[312]
"Just keep praying"[313]	"It is up to you alone, find your way out of this because it isn't really suffering, it is God making you better"[314]
"Remember that God loves you"[315]	"You are alone. I want nothing to do with this, but I don't want to feel bad because God is involved"[316]

Table 2: What the pastor says/what the adolescent hears [317]

Rather, invite the young person to "Bring it to me"[318], "Come, I will pray with you[319]" and "Remember that I love you. Look into my eyes and see that I care. Feel my compassion and support; know it is a sacrament of God's love in Christ, which points to a time when you will hurt no more!"[320]

Root notes that "doing youth ministry as a place-of sharing requires corresponding to reality, seeing and entering the multiple systems and situations that affect adolescents[321]. These systems may be family and relatives, culture, school system, friendships, social

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311 Ibid., 130

312 ibid

313 ibid

314 ibid

315 ibid

316 ibid

317 Table format my own. Words taken from Root, "Revisiting Incarantional Youth Ministry", 130

318 Ibid

319 ibid

320 ibid

321 Ibid., 135

habits, finances, politics and so on. Thus in correspondence, care ought to be given not only to these systems but also to the person living in them. However in so doing the youth worker/parent must not seek super-star or super-hero status, but invite the adolescent to see his own (youth-worker/parent) struggles, as well as invite the adolescent to do the same. In so doing they are open to each other's reality, they become each other's place-sharer acting "in the power of the new humanity of Jesus Christ"[322].

10.2 Gaps presenting in the four voices

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present description and analysis of data established and chapter 7, 8 and 9 are an interpretation. These chapters give a clear picture of the espoused and operant theology of SPYC. From the data established, it is notable that SPYC is a group of young Christian youth that seems to have had a great inception, though at the time of interviews the group was facing flight of members. Those still remaining met every Sunday morning for the SPYC worship service even though it was not as well attended as before and the mood was mostly sombre.

The group has had other pastors even after pastor Wema left, though members of the group still present were nostalgic and seemingly had not let go of 'the good old days when SPYC was active. There has been a season of low activity with planned programs not attended and hence no more were planned. That notwithstanding participants seemingly expressed their willingness to remain as part of this congregation. They however wanted to be wanted and not be seen as just fulfilling the church structure. They longed to be mentored into Christian maturity too.

The espoused theology of MYK purposes to strengthen youth work by (1) encouraging high standards and providing training to youth leaders. Pragmatically the high standards are not enumerated or measured. It was difficult to say what the SO considers high standards and whether or not SPYC had lived up to them. From data established there was no mention of SPYC leaders having attended any training offered for youth leaders. (2) Encourage the development of youth work wherever there is opportunity for it. Allowing SPYC to have their own pastor, who was not in the MCK structure, may be

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322 Ibid., 128

construed to be part of encouraging the development of new youth work. This is because he brought new energy and a new way of doing youth ministry.

At the beginning, Pastor Wema and SPYC leaders came up with the structure and programs to help them achieve the group's mission. One such initiative had been to divide the larger group into three sub-groups for closer ministry. These sub-groups were the Activators (13 years - 19 years), the Adventurers (20 years - 25 years) and the Achievers (26 years – 35 years). Suffice it to say that at the time of the interviews these groups were no longer active. (3) Provide the young people with meets in the Circuit, Synod and countrywide. There was no information offered about participation in such meetings. My guess would be that faced by their current challenges, the group had not been in a position to attend those forums.

The SO also gives an upper age limit for members of MYK at 25 years old. However at SPYC were to be found members already over that age and yet were active members and part of those that decided to stay even when other members left. Although the lower age bracket seems to include children in JSS, there was nowhere the two groups met for fellowship, each had its own meeting times. SPYC met at 9.00am – 10.00am while the JSS met at 11.00am – 12.00am, meeting only the handful young people who volunteered in JSS.

The normative theology too indicates a deviance by fathers in as far as instruction to children is concerned as it was turned wholesale to the youth pastor. The formal theology pursued also indicates a deviance because place-sharing seems practically non-existent at SPYC and SPMC.

I have presented a synopsis of deviance as witnessed between the four voices of theology in operation at SPMC, in relation to SPYC. This takes me back to the questions I raised as I reflected on the interpretation of data. In this church community it is not clear how and when a parent may act as a parent and/or as an adult member of the congregation. When young people do not find answers at home, it is to the church that they turn, only to find that the same parents who would not answer their questions at home, are the adult

congregation in the church. There is an intricate situation that needs to be balanced here so that parents can wear both hats in equal measure and so that the young people here can experience a community of people that love them as persons and not as those only interested in them just as fellowship group within MCK.

In order to mediate the situation, and propose new faithful practice I will first begin by trying to understand how the gaps may have come into being.

10.2.1 The third thing

Andy Root brings to the fore a rather pertinent issue that I note deserves attention. For a long time in the MCK, the young people in the church have mostly been those who graduate into MYK from JSS. There seems to have been an unspoken understanding that once one was no longer in Sunday school then he/she ought to find a home in the youth ministry. This refers to what Root terms "the third thing"[323]. The third thing makes the Church happy when congregations are full of young people, but fails to address what manner of Christianity they profess. In the quest to ensur e that young people stay in the church we seldom embrace place-sharing and hence the incarnated, crucified and resurrected Christ is not an active participant of this relationship.

Atieno[324] made a very interesting assertion that most people in her generation have not been raised with what being a Christian really is. This is because they were brought to church and it was assumed they became Christian. Yet now when much older she realised that it could not be further from the truth. This is attributable to the weak foundation that was laid when they were taken to Sunday school. First was the hands-off approach and assumption from parents and adults in the congregation that the 'Sunday school teacher would figure it out'. Second was the assumption that now that one was in church he automatically developed a relationship with Jesus. Therefore when young people encountered the world out there, they had no solid foundation that made them stand as Christians.

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323 Ibid., 116

324 See section 6.4

In this scenario the relationship between the parent and the child is characterised by bringing that child to church in the hope that he will become a follower of Christ. In the course of bringing the child to church, there was not developed a relationship where both parent and child encounter Christ in each other and the church became the final destination. The relationship on the way to the church is what Root[325] sees as loving a neighbour so as to make her Christian. In this case the neighbour (young person) is only important in as much as she accepted to come to church.

The 'third thing' can also be seen when the young men tried to build a relationship with the fathers. 'Fathers and Sons Outing' was seen as an event geared towards ensuring that young men did not stray from the church (the desired end). For the adults, the end seemed to justify the means, that is, if it took hanging out with the sons, then they were willing to do it. However, no relationships were built as they both journeyed towards that end. It is no wonder then that Omosh[326] would note that even if the program was struck of from the activities at SPMC, it would have no effect in the character formation of the young men in the church. The 'mothers and daughters seminar' seemingly collapsed when daughters realised how the mothers perceived them. The action by mothers was misconstrued to mean that the mothers did not love their daughters. The existing bonds were broken and this incident was said to have left the young girls feeling judged, unloved and unaccepted by the mothers.

Regardless of how much material expense a parent or church will incur, time spent building a relationship with a young person is priceless. This is why the young men did not want to participate in any more outings with their fathers because the time they should have spent cementing their relationship was spent on activity which for them was not urgent. Clark and Clark note that parents need to take time and sit at the steps of the 'world beneath'[327] if they really want to understand their adolescents. No doubt sitting at

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325 See Root 2007:116

326 5.4

327 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected",67

these steps takes time and when that can be well accomplished the young people will interpret that as love and acceptance which is what they desire at that point more than anything else.

10.2.2 It all begins at home………

In the manner of relationship between parents and children, John Wesley takes a rather tough stance on how children ought to be cared for. In his sermon on 'the religion of the family'[328], Wesley particularly puts fathers on the spot for spiritual nourishment of their children and all in their household. He enumerates how fathers should lead in family devotions and ensure that there is accountability in the reading and meditating of scripture and also prayer.

This sermon breaks down the task of spiritual care for children from as early as when one perceives that they have an understanding. Since he does not match it with any particular age, I believe it would be safe to say at the earliest age possible[329]. For any father to notice this age, it then goes without saying that he must be a keen observer, and that is only possible if he spends time with the child. Instruction will also no doubt take time to be done and so will checking to see whether or not children actually prayed, read and meditated on God's word.

Laying this foundation for Wesley was critical because it was the way in which he saw the preservation of the church for longevity and for children to grow up to serve the Lord.

Instructing children for Wesley was critical and he encouraged it to be done "early, plainly, frequently and patiently"[330]. Though he does agree that it doesn't always work very well he still owed the "wickedness of children to the fault or neglect of their parents"[331]. He encouraged fathers to walk closely with their children as they instructed them even to the time of getting married.

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330 Outler, "The Works of John Wesley", 339

331 Ibid., 335

This teaching by Wesley can be expressed in the words of Root as being an encouragement to place-share with children as they grow up and finally being vicarious for them as fathers by teaching them how to live lives that glorify God. Giving instruction from the earliest moment is what participants asked for when they agreed that those of their generation do not know what it meant to be Christian. The act of spending time with children as Wesley instructs, not only allows them to see their parents live their faith, but it also communicates love and acceptance which they so much long for especially in their adolescent years.

In this sermon, Wesley speaks of a relationship between a mother and children only once, in connection with education for girls. Instead of taking them to what he considered a secular school, Wesley considered it prudent to have a mother or mother-figure be incharge of the girl-child instruction. He gave the example of his own mother Susanna Wesley who instructed seven daughters from the family home. Apart from other duties that a mother would have, I find it noble that Wesley would consider such a position for mothers. This is because, at a certain stage of life, there are things that only a mother can instruct a daughter, and the same is true for fathers and sons.

In the Wesleyan model of instruction, it is only in childhood that the parent will do all the instructing and the children more or less remain silent participants. Otherwise in the growing up years, as a father seeks to find out whether or not his children have prayed, read and meditated on God's word it gives him the opportunity to open up conversations that lend to place-sharing. As the father conducts family devotions, it gives the children an opportunity to see him live out his faith. In a way this also becomes a vulnerable position where adolescence actually see their father lead them to do the things he instructs them to do on their own. Place-sharing in such an environment becomes even more rewarding as the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Christ is found in this relationship and becomes vicarious for all the family members. Such manner of fellowship also reinforces the family as a loving environment where love, acceptance and stability will be found for children and adolescents within the family.

10.2.3 And follows in the church…..

Vicarious relationships find way into the church when people live not as cloakroom or carnival communities[332]. In carnival communities, people are brought together by spectacle and while it happens they shed their coats (cloaks) in the cloakroom only to retrieve them on the way out after the spectacle is over. A congregation that operates as such is a place where people meet only on Sunday in the worship service (spectacle) and while at it, they wear their best clothes, perfumes and smiles, and once at the church they remove their real selves (cloaks), 'enjoy' the service and then retrieve their real selves (cloaks) as they leave to go home.

This description may not describe SPMC to the letter, however there are nuances of it. Participants noted that their parents were aloof when it came to dealing with their issues and are instead asked to them 'man-up' or 'deal with it' or 'sort yourself out'. This notion is seen when Omosh noted that when SPYC leaders brought their proposal to the church leaders, getting it done very much depended on who pushes things in the congregation. It was also noted from Bea that even when a football match was proposed as a way of getting involved with the young people in the neighbourhood, it was not accepted by the leaders. They expressed similar thoughts about how some of Pastor Wema's proposals on youth activity were turned down. In this discussion can be seen the notion of not accepting what young people propose, coming from home into the church. This is because being a family church, the lenses with which parents use to see adolescents in their homes, will pretty much be the same lenses they will use as members of the adult congregation.

Going back to the argument on carnival and cloak room communities, members of SPYC then get confused by the actions of parents/adults. The confusion is drawn from the message the parents send directly to their children, and how they want to portray them in public as perfect. The parents are aware that the adolescent has some struggles, yet they have not indicated willingness to help and hence the 'sort yourself out', 'deal with it', 'man-up' kind of an answer. Ironically when they come to church on Sunday they want to

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332 Bauman, "Liquid Modernity", 200

parade their 'perfect child' before the entire congregation. It is no wonder Mawira (and others) saw the church as the most appropriate place to show rebellion against his parents. He does not understand how and why they are displaying him as a trophy and yet won't attend to his issues. When the worship service is over, they will pick up their cloaks (real selves) and then leave the church compound and the cycle continues; Mawira is still left trying to navigate around his issues. At that point parents/adults cease to be a point of stability for young people; at least in the eyes of their children they are not.

Now that I have observed the possible genesis of the gaps as presented by the four voices let me not attempt a solution towards more faithful practice.

10.3 Critical Reflection - Family based youth ministry as transformed practice

In order to enrich the experience of community for young people I find it prudent to put together a two pronged approach that will see ministry begin in the family and then overflow into the church. l have noted that being a family church, the manner in which the young people experienced being part of a faith community emanated from their relationships with parents, who also make the adult congregation. I would like to propose a similar approach in creating new practice, that is, by introducing the family based youth ministry as a foundation to the already existing youth ministry, SPYC approach. By strengthening both sides we will no doubt have a thriving youth ministry at SPMC where both parents and young people are involved and hopefully stem continual flight of young people.

Mark DeVries notes that the family based youth ministry approach is not supplementary to the youth ministry as practiced in church, but it is the foundation of it.

> The family based youth ministry creates a foundation for whatever model a church chooses to use to reach its teenagers {youth}, recognizing that no one programming strategy will work effectively over the long haul. By focusing on equipping parents and the extended Christian family, churches can maintain an

open and flexible stance toward the changes that will be demanded of youth ministry in the twenty first century[333].

In order to adopt the family based youth ministry model, there is required to be a change of mind-set. Many times when programs don't seem to work right, there is the tendency to try and improve on those activities, maybe by making them more fun or hyped as was notable at SPYC. However 'breaking the mould'[334] would be a more pragmatic approach to a ministry that is no longer fulfilling its mandate.

10.3.1 Empower parents to communicate faith to adolescents

An initial first step in this approach (family based youth ministry) is to empower parents to take up this noble challenge. This is because parents have more time with a child in the course of its development history, more than any church, pastor or program will have. They are there in the formative years of the child and hence wield much influence in making lasting impressions to the child. John Wesley must have used this understanding when he preached that children should be instructed early.

The rallying call to train a child in the way to go is emphasised in family based youth ministry because "even when children pull away from their parents influence during their teenage years, they will as a general rule, as adults return to the tracks that were laid by their parents"[335]. While empowering parents to nurture their children in a Christian manner, youth workers should realise that they are not substitute teachers or there to fill a gap. They should equip "parents to communicate faith to their adolescent children themselves[336], that is, help them to instruct adolescents out of *conviction and not convenience.*

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333 DeVries, Mark (1994): *Family Based Youth Ministry Reaching the Been-there, Done-that Generation,* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994) 74

334 This is in reference to the term 'domestication' used on several occasions earlier in the paper to indicate that the church leaders, workers and preachers prescribed to a certain mould that did not allow them to reach out to the young people as they yearned to be reached.

335 DeVries, "Family Based Youth Ministry", 65

336 Ibid., 66

Parents need to be empowered to parent through all the seasons or stages of adolescents that their children will pass through. There is need to understand the changing face of adolescence and what implications it has for both the adolescent, parent and youth worker. This time of individuation, prepares one to move into the mainstream adulthood as a peer with other adults. The three tasks of individuation, that is, identity, autonomy and belonging, need not to be placed on a linear scale so that one has to complete one as a stage before moving to the other. However in order for one to be said to become an adult there is the need to attain a certain level of maturity in all in order to confidently settle into society as an adult.

The task of identity is characterised by the adolescents search for who she is even as she tries to "insert and assimilate" [337] herself into the adult society. In "a world that defines {young people} according to how they look or how well they perform"[338], the task of parents it to help them clearly see "who God declares them to be"[339]. God considers the adolescent to be his masterpiece formed by his "mind and heart, his beloved child"[340]. Adolescents must be helped to know that they will always be "defined by knowing and trusting that God knows who they are and that they belong to him"[341].

The task of autonomy is defined as "being trained to handle and learning to accept personal responsibility"[342]. While trying to be an autonomous person adolescents find themselves caught between conflicting values. He then has to learn to "measure, evaluate and analyse"[343] all three so as to make the right decision. Though it may seem difficult,

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337 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 54

338 ibid

339 ibid

340 ibid

341 ibid

342 ibid

343 Ibid., 57

having to make such decisions everyday helps in "developing a sense of personal autonomy"[344]. The adolescent experiences a shifting from having choices made for him to having to make own choices and that creates a conflict. However, this is a necessary step of development in order to be able to become interdependent.

The task of belonging asks the question "where do I fit"[345]. Though we are created with the need for other people, we nevertheless live in a world that upholds individualism. Therefore we still encourage and demand that our children "pull yourself up by your own boot straps"[346]. This negates that humans are created to be in relationship with one another and corporately with God. The dilemma young people face most times is that they have to develop independence in order to be accepted in the society as adults while at the same time they must learn to be interdependent. This is a journey they must take and not even family can walk this road on their behalf. However, loved ones and supportive friends can act as guide posts, support system and safety nets along the way.

The changing face of adolescence today is characterised by a lengthened period that may see some adolescents still living with their parents at age 30. This is because though the debut into adolescent is marked by puberty, debut into adulthood is marked by socio-economic and cultural factors[347]. Table 3 shows how age markers of debut into adolescence and adulthood have changed over time.

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344 ibid

345 Ibid., 58

346 ibid

347 Ibid., 62

Years	Age entering adolescence/puberty	Age entering adulthood
Pre-1900	14	16/18
1960-1970	13	18/19
2000	11/12	Mid to late 20s

Table 3: The changing face of adolescence[348]

While there were only two distinct stages in adolescence for a long time, that is, early and late adolescence, over time a third stage has developed in between, that is, mid-adolescence[349]. This in effect has lengthened the period to almost a 15 years period up from 3-5 years period. The early adolescence is defined as a time when a young person is no longer a child but not yet an adult. The thinking of young people in this stage is largely concrete, that is they see things in black and white. Their behaviour is largely "based not on reflection and experience but on the immediacy of circumstances and emotion"[350].

The mid-adolescence is marked by "the beginnings of abstract processing and relational awareness but do not yet have the developmental capacity to see outside of their own life and needs"[351]. This is also known as "egocentric abstraction"[352]. This period is somewhere between 14-20 years. In this stage the adolescent is striving to be noticed and affirmed even though they may not be sure of what their personality or gifts are[353]. The late adolescent on the other hand is ready for adulthood but is not yet interdependently inserted into adulthood. "They think they are adults yet they are not quite able to take on

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348 Clark, "Changing Face of Adolescence", 52

349 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 64-65

350 Ibid., 64

351 Ibid., 65

352 ibid

353 ibid

the full responsibility of what that actually means"[354]. They are abstract in their thinking, processing information and relating to others.

10.3.2 Tasks of parenting

It is important to understand the changing face of adolescence in order to minimize the unpleasantries experienced during this time as well as fulfill the tasks of parenting. The first task is understanding, that is, "to make sure that your child knows that you are absolutely, unequivocally commited to working hard at taking seriously the reality of your child's life"[355]. This helps the young person to see the parent as approachable and willing to engage from a point of understanding and not judgement.

The second task is showing compassion, that is, "to suffer with"[356] the adolescent. It calls the parent to go where there is hurt and pain, fear and confusion, weakness and vulnerability and go through it with the one suffering. The third task is boundarying[357], that is, treating th adoleacent with respect, giving him the power and opportunity to take responsibility for choices they make so that they can learn to be autonomous and independent, yet at the same time not allowed to be the one in charge.

The fourth task, guiding, is about "making sure that {parents} recognize all along the adolescent journey that we are the ones responsible for reading the charts, plotting the course, and pointing out the channels that can help our kids navigate through the turbulent and sometimes dangerous waters of adolescence"[358].

The final task of parenting is launching them into adulthood. Clark and Clark see "parents as the ones who have the heart of investment in them to walk them (adolescents) through the labyrinth of adolescence and the entrance into assimilated adult

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354 ibid

355 Ibid., 90

356 ibid

357 Ibid., 96

358 Ibid., 97

community"[359]. in agreement with Wesley's teaching, it is also the duty of parents to ensure that their children mature into adulthood "firmly planted in the arms of the Father"[360].

10.3.3 The world beneath

Clark and Clark note that there is a wide gap between the world of adults and the "adolescent world beneath"[361]. This is the safe relational space that adolescents retreat to when they begin to develop abstract thinking.   It is the 'safe haven' they together with their friends hide from all hurting situations.   This new found world reshapes how they think and perceive things even if for a season. It is during this time that parents seemingly are ignored as loyalty to friends increases. The group will be seen to dictate how they talk, dress, associate and so on and in this world they don't feel judged.   Adults are not welcome into the world beneath because it is seen as a 'safe-house' to protect adolescents from a world that judges them.

The world beaneath though mysterious to adults is a place where parents should come and sit and encourage their adolescents to give them a guided tour. This is because when all is said and done, adolescents still need their parents even though during this season many parents may feel like their adolescent children want nothing to do with them.

10.3.4 Empower the extended church family to model faith to adolescents

Another important step in family based youth ministry is to empower the extended family of the church. At a first glance this may seem like this is important only for those young people who do not have active Christian parents. However the extended family of the church becomes an excellent place for place-sharing and adds value to the faith life of everyone in it. By empowering adults to model Christian life it provides a secure lifelong structure to youth ministry in the church. "As youth hear adults speaking of their own faith experiences they begin to learn how to describe their own experience of God"[362].

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359 Ibid., 99

360 ibid

361 Ibid., 67

362 DeVries, "Family Based Youth Ministry", 67

This relationship encourages adults to spend time with the young people without necessarily teaching or standing to give instruction. This reminds me of the sentiments expressed by participants as we settled down to begin the interviews; one said to me 'I am here because I want to speak up so let me talk'. This participant apparently said this because the group had never experienced anyone asking them of their experiences in youth ministry or as members of the church. Such friendships with mature Christian adults will be opportunity for place-sharing and pointing youth to the one who ultimately place-shared for all humanity, that is, the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ.

The extended family of the church also offers a *cloud of witnesses*[363] that young people need as they mature into adulthood. These will be people that the young person would feel free to seek help from when in difficulty and need to be guided on how to go about situations. I believe that how people treat adolescents, more than any hyped activities will always remain with them and they will always refer back to those that made a positive impact in their lives[364]. The fathers and sons outing and mothers and daughters seminar are examples of an attempt at creating an extended church family where young people can interact with adults informally and learn from them.

10.4 Implications for ministry

Looking at what I have indulged in above, I see relationship at the centre of it all. This means that for any ministry to young people to succeed, all those involved in it, that is, adolescents, parents and youth workers must work hard at fostering good relationships with one another. The concept of place-sharing by Andrew Root becomes a great building block in fostering lasting relationships because of the presence of the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Christ. John Wesley also agrees with place-sharing when he notes that instruction should be done patiently and one should not lose heart because of the "inconceivable dullness of some children and the giddiness or perverseness of others"[365].

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363 Ibid., 125

364 Ibid., 125 - 126

365 Outler, "The Works of John Wesley", 342

Our church communities must cease being carnival and cloakroom communities, and be places of place-sharing where Christ is present in the meeting of I and You. This I perceive will make the young people know that they are truly valued members of the congregation and not just a group of people present as part of the church structure.

As we embrace family based youth ministry as a solid foundation to build on, I would like to suggest a few building blocks which I consider key to making it work. First is a change of mind-set. The current youth ministry model practiced under the auspices of MYK is hands-off, so much so that it is left to the youth worker and youth leaders to 'figure it out'[366]. As seen in the operant theology of SPYC, there has been the assumption that since the young people are in church they understand what it means to be a Christian. It is also clear that spiritual formation has been left to church workers and parents do not seem to have a huge role to play.

The family based youth ministry on the other hand is the exact opposite of that approach because it sees parents as most fundamental partners in youth ministry of any congregation. Therefore, should members at this church decide to adopt this foundational ministry, it means that there has to be a change of mind-set, so that now it is the parent who will be responsible for the spiritual formation of their children and not the church. This also agrees with Wesleyan theology that exhorts fathers to instruct their children "early, plainly, frequently and patiently"[367]. Wesley also instructs that "neither should any day pass without family prayer, seriously and solemnly performed"[368]. He put ministry to children at different ages in the hands of fathers and that is a practice that MCK should return to, first from the home and then into the church.

The second building block is intentionality. Building a youth ministry that is sustainable is work and it ought to be done with intentionality. Whatever model is finally adopted has to be clearly thought out in terms of its structure, staff, and outlook. For it to

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366 To decide what needs to be done and how to do it and mostly it is activity laden.

367 Outler, "The Works of John Wesley", 342

368 ibid

work parents and the extended church family must be empowered because there is not one youth pastor or youth worker that can sustain a ministry alone; there must be teamwork. There has to be intentionality in financing the ministry, that is, there should be no underinvestment[369] or mis-investment[370].

Underinvestment may occur commonly in youth ministry where for instance a young fresh graduate is given the responsibility of ministry and after much struggling he quits and the church is back to seeking another youth pastor. Another way to underinvest is to not invest at all, that is, have no youth worker or no one directly involved in spiritual formation and development of youth and expect them to still want to be involved in the church. Mis-investment usually occurs where a church puts lots of money in activity or facilities at the expense of stable relationships with young people. Great relationships with young people are expressed in the currency of time.

The third building block is the need to equip parents and the extended church family to minister to children. Atieno conceded that the failure to construct Christian foundations is generational. This underscores the notion that parents will automatically know how to build proper Christian foundations in their children that will see them grow into mature Christian adults who serve the Lord. Church ministers have the noble duty to empower parents/adult congregation to communicate faith to adolescents. This should especially be contextual and deal with how to confront and tackle adolescent issues in a totally different time from when parents grew up. It will also take care of the fact that we live in a totally different era and context where it is not possible to take a child to be taught by a pious man or woman as Wesley instructed.

The fourth building block is to create forums that encourage the interaction between adolescents and adults in the congregation. I say this with a caveat though, that is, it should not be event oriented. SPMC created such a forum but it was so event oriented that it failed to meet the objectives. Like participants averred, the once in a year outing or

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369 Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry Why Most Youth Ministry doesn't last and what your Church can do about it,* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2008), 32

370 DeVries, "Sustainable Youth Ministry", 33

seminar won't be a solution to the gap between the young people and adults in the congregation. During such forums adults could take the opportunity sit at the steps of the 'world beneath'[371] and allow the adolescents to teach them what their world is all about.

It could also be a time of mentoring for the young people where faith stories shared by the adults provide them with the language they need to speak of their own faith stories. These are excellent times of place-sharing where both the adult and adolescent become vulnerable before one another and indeed before the one who place-shared for all humanity, Christ. These interactions should however not be marked with super-dad, super-mom or super-pastor complex that will cause a breakdown in communication. The young people need to express themselves and will only do so when they are sure that the one they speak to will not be condescending but will listen with an open heart and where possible offer solution or refer.

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371 Clark and Clark, "Disconnected", 67

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Experiencing Community as a Youth in MCK: A Case Study of St Peter's Youth Church, is a study conducted for the first time on this site. It presents findings from a focus group of young people, who give an interpretation of their common reality, the reality of experiencing their church community.

Findings from this site presents the struggle to remain an integral part of their congregation even when some of their colleagues left to pursue other options. It shows the resilience of the members of SPYC who chose to stay and try hard as they may to find lasting solutions to the challenges facing their youth group.

This study brings to the fore the challenge faced by Christian parents as they bring up adolescent children in today's world. One such challenge is that of generation gap as seen in the different values systems that each group tries to maintain. Another challenge is the silence of parents in matters of faith that robs the young people a language to speak of their faith. There is the challenge in relationships, and young people have been left on their own, they know it and it is causing even more disillusionment. The young people look to the church to find solution, only to find their parents are members of the adult congregation, and they (parents) receive them in much the same way they do at home. No wonder one participant argued that society has denied the church a central ground. Such is the triangulation of the challenge faced by parents, adolescents and the church community.

This study is the maiden work of a researcher, who set out with a lot of personal hunches from her past as a youth worker. It is a piece that has seen her wrestle with her own reflexivity in a bid to present a work that is as explicit as possible while at the same time taking into consideration her pre-understanding and assuptions. It is her hope that the information was handled faithfully.

Finally, this study is a call to the Methodist Church in Kenya to re-think her theology on youth ministry. It is a call for more research to be done throughout the Connexion so as to better youth ministry for future generations. There is need to do more studies especially in a bid to expand the current youth fellowship to cater for young adults who do not fit in

the conventional youth group. It is a call for training more youth workers to directly partner with parents in raising Christian youth. It is an invitation to parents to participate in raising young people who will be keen to serve the Lord as John Wesley teaches in the sermon 'On Family Religion'.

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APPENDIX 1 - INTERVEIW QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW IS THE ORGANISATION OF SPYC A MEANS OF EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY?'

i.   How would you describe the organisation of SPYC?

ii.   How does the SPYC mission and vision enhance your fellowship as young people?

       (Follow up question) Is he (Pastor Wema) the one who developed them?

iii.   How does your knowing the SPYC mission statement or motto affect your sense of belonging in the group?

       (Follow up question) When Pastor Wema led you in saying the SPYC motto during the Activate service, how did that affect your sense of belonging as a SPYC member?

       (Follow up question) What do you mean when you say 'buy into the community'?

       (Follow up question by R5) - What made you buy into the community?

       (Follow up question by R4) - Why do you say it is easier to plug-into SPYC than the adult service and not the other way?

iv.   How would you describe the pattern in time of leaving for those who chose to leave?

       (Follow up question) Why do you say it was about responsibilities?

       (Follow up question) Are these responsibilities in leadership?

       (Follow up question) What do you mean by saying they were available when the playing field was wide and seemingly had no rules?

v.   How would you describe SPYC activities?

       (Follow up question) How many times do you meet say in a week?

       (Follow up question) Do you think that is enough?

       (Follow up question) What determines the number of times you meet?

       (Follow up question) How does meeting once a week affect SPYC activities?

       (Follow up question by Kamau) - The question is, how well were those activities organised? How much hype were they given?

       (Follow up question by Atieno) Are you saying that for an activity to be meant for youth it must have hype?

(Follow up question) What would you say has been the aim of having these activities?

(Follow up question) What other meetings apart from the Sunday service do you ever hold?

(Follow up question) Why did you begin leading praise &worship in the second service?

vi.   Let us talk about the once a week activity, the SPYC service. How does the organisation of the worship service enhance your sense of community?

(Follow up question) What would you say about how the various roles are put together to engage participation in worship?

(Follow up question by Kendi) Can the structure enhance the experience of worship?

Let us talk about preaching. How would you describe preaching during the youth service?

(Follow up question) how does the age of the preacher resonate with the group?

vii.   What is your understanding of mission?

(Follow up question) Does SPYC do any missions?

(Follow up question) What other missions has SPYC involved in apart from visiting children's homes?

(Follow up question) How does Mission enhance your sense of community?

(Follow up question) How would you describe your preparedness to be involved in mission activity?

(Follow up question) How would you describe your own desire to reach out to someone and share your faith?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW HAS THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ADULT CONGREGATION AND SPYC BEEN A MEANS OF EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY?

viii.   How would you describe the relationship between the SPYC and the adult congregation?

ix.   How would you describe the reception of your suggestions by church leaders and adult congregation?

(Follow up question) what has been this experience like?

x.   How do you describe the times you were involved in the adult service?

(Follow up question) How open are the youth to integration into the adult service, even for purposes of visibility?

xi.   Omosh touched on 'fathers and sons' outing. What has been the experience so far?

xii.   How has 'Mothers and daughters' fared so far?

(Follow up question) Now that the mentorship program does not seem to have picked up so well, how has the church handled issues like sexuality, substance abuse, dating, and so on?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW DOES A YOUNG PERSON'S SEARCH FOR AUTONOMY AND IDENTITY CONTRIBUTE TO HIS/HER EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY?

xiii.   What would you say are the reasons that make young people to leave church when they attain a certain age?

xiv.   In your experience, how much do young people treasure the church vis a vis other interests?

xv.   How would you describe how people are enticing youth into the churches? How would you describe and rate the method used the other day by a one of the larger Pentecostal churches in the city inviting young people for a meeting?

(Follow up question) How would you say that painted the picture of being Christian?

(Follow up question) How does that resonate with you as youth?

APPENDIX 2: AUTHORIZATION FROM OFFICE OF PRESIDING BISHOP, MCK

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA
CONFERENCE OFFICE

Telephone: 020-2403437
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METHODIST MINISTRIES
CENTRE
OLOITOKITOK RD
P.O. BOX 47633 - 00100
NAIROBI.

19th May, 2014

Rev. Mukomunene Muthuri
Olav M. Troviks Vei
10 H0506
OSLO, 0864

Dear Rev. Muthuri

RE: MASTER THESIS RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge receipt of your letter requesting to be permitted to do research based on St. Peter's Youth Church, Lang'ata.

In connection with this, I am happy to grant you permission to carry out your research and by a copy of this letter, I am informing the Superintendent Minister of St. Peter's MCK Lang'ata Circuit to accord you the assistance you need.

I wish you well and every God's blessings.

Yours sincerely

Rev. Joseph Ntombura Mwaine
Presiding Bishop
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

C.C.   The Superintendent Minister
        The MCK St. Peter's Lang'ata Circuit
        P.O. Box 62271, City Square
        NAIROBI