Constructing Empowerment Among Youth in Nairobi, Kenya

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Acacia Nikoi

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Frances K. Vavrus, Co-Advisor
Dr. Christopher Johnstone, Co-Advisor

May 2016

whose prayer and encouragement always came when I needed someone who believed in me and what I was doing.

I also want to thank my advisors, faculty, and colleagues at the University of Minnesota. A big thank you to my advisors, Dr. Frances Vavrus and Dr. Christopher Johnstone, who have supported me through the years and given me the advise and guidance I have needed to get to this point. Thank you also to Dr. Joan DeJaeghere and Dr. Andrew Furco who served on my dissertation committee and encouraged me to think about my study and findings in new and enlightening ways. My learning was enriched by my participation in the Learn, Earn, Save Initiative at the UMN, and my research was guided by all that I learned on the project. Thank you to Dr. David Chapman, Dr. Joan DeJaeghere, and Nancy Pellowski-Wiger for the opportunity to be so intimately involved in this project.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of going through this process with others who were on similar journeys. I will always be thankful for the cohort with whom I began my studies: Mohamed Sallam, Amy Pekol, Tamara Weiss, Nelson Masanche Nkhoma, Laura Willemsen, Rachel Johnson, and Tom Jones. I am also grateful for those in other cohorts who adopted me along the way: Anne Campbell, Anna Farrell, Beth Lefebvre, Nancy Pellowski-Wiger, Doug Kennedy, Jill Manske, Bindu Timiri, Eliel Gebru, Amina Jafaar and Maurice Sikenyi. Study groups and writing groups helped to push this process along: Anne Campbell and Laura Willemsen in the 8121-4 reading group; and Anna Farrell, Beth Lefebvre, Laura Willemsen, and Liz Greene in the dissertation writing group.

study for being available and willing to talk to us about both the successes and challenges

they faced on the path toward adulthood.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Diedrick and Annika who inspire me each and every day.

Abstract

This dissertation examines how youth empowerment is conceptualized and experienced by youth in Nairobi, Kenya. The study is based on a four-year longitudinal study of youth who participated in a non-formal, vocational training program. The findings demonstrate the complex ways youth seek, engage, and enact empowerment in their lives and suggest that youth conceptualizations of empowerment are more complex than the discourse that surrounds youth empowerment efforts heralded through vocational or entrepreneurial training. Based on the findings of this study I propose a multidimensional model of empowerment that is grounded in youth's lived experiences and constructions of the empowerment process. These dimensions, *marketable skills and knowledge, personal development, aspirations,* and *undugu*, reflect the economic, social, and cultural settings in which youth live. Through an examination of these four dimensions, I explore the role of empowerment as a catalyst as youth strive to move from youth- to adulthood.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Youth Education, Employment, Livelihoods and Empowerment

> *"You are more than a great asset; you are our destiny in the flesh. You constitute East Africa's awesomeness."*[1]
> - *Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta*

At the 2014 Pakasa Youth Conference in Kampala, Uganda, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta addressed the youth of the region, highlighting new government initiatives for youth and encouraging them to take advantage of opportunities to support their communities and nation. Attention to the needs and well-being of African youth have historically been in and out of the spotlight, but the focus on youth empowerment within development has increased over the past decade. Governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly turned their attention to the role of youth well-being and livelihoods in national stability and community development. This is due in large part to the increase in the youth population as a percentage of the total population in Kenya and other African nations (Sommers, 2007, 2010; Thieme, 2010; Wamuyu, 2013). In Kenya, 75% of the population is below the age of 30, and 32% are between the ages of 15 and 30 (Mutuku, 2011). A large youth population, coupled with changes in the ways in which youth experience the transition to adulthood, and the opportunities that are available to them, has led communities and governments to reconsider their approach to youth needs and livelihoods.

In Africa, and in Kenya more specifically, the number of resources targeted at both youth and their communities has increased significantly since 2000 (Wamuyu, 2013). Governments have devoted resources to youth development initiatives such as

---

[1] Guguyu, 2014

vocational training. NGOs have also increased their support for youth empowerment programs and youth entrepreneurship. Because under- and unemployment are frequently considered by development experts to be at the heart of the challenges facing African youth, many programs seek to find ways to engage youth in vocational training or empowerment programming with an economic emphasis. While the most visible youth-centered programs focus on engaging youth in the economic sector through employment or entrepreneurship, the broader goal of empowerment through vocational skills training and accessing economic opportunities is frequently stated as a goal or implied in an organization's mission statement. Whether empowerment is explicitly stated as a goal or not, the process of empowerment and the ways in which youth become empowered are often given cursory programmatic attention because empowerment is often assumed to be the result of economic security.

In this research[2] I explore Kenyan youth conceptualizations of empowerment in light of the various initiatives that have been developed on their behalf. Youth empowerment is often assumed to happen by providing youth with vocational skills or by addressing their economic needs. However, my contention is that youth empowerment does not take place at a single juncture simply by addressing one dimension of a youth's life; instead, it is a process that unfolds over time during which youth are able to access, use, and put into practice skills and knowledge to affect change within their lives and/or communities. It is grounded in youth's networks of belonging and their aspirations.

In this chapter I provide a background exploration of the situation in which youth find themselves. This is followed by my discussion of the research problem, study purpose and research questions. I then define the terms "youth" and "empowerment" and the ways they are used in scholarship, popular discourse, and within this study. I then examine the historical and contemporary role of youth education and vocational training in youth programming in Kenya. The chapter ends with an introduction of the site of study.

The Research Problem

African youth are alternately described in the media, by scholars and in development literature as the potential for the future of the continent and as a burgeoning political-economic problem waiting to be resolved (Mutuku, 2011). Those who view youth negatively emphasize the 'youth bulge', a phenomenon whereby youth populations are a large percentage of the overall adult population (Urdal, 2006). These scholars highlight the roles youth have played in perpetuating instability and insecurity in the region, including post-election violence in Kenya in 2007 (Mabala, 2011; Njogu, 2013; Opinyo & Agwanda, 2011; Urdal, 2006). On the other side, those who view youth as the potential for the future cite the ability of youth to contribute economically, socially, and intellectually to community change and innovation when given opportunities to do so (Abbink, 2005; De Boeck & Honwana, 2005). Youth themselves describe a desire to contribute in the present to their families and communities, but often believe they lack the agency or opportunity to do so (Chigunta, Shnurr, James-Wilson, & Torres, 2005; Johnstone, Nikoi, Krause, & Eschenbacher, 2012; Sommers, 2010).

Regardless of scholarly and media perspectives, many Kenyan youth face a number of challenges that hinder their economic and educational opportunities and well-being. Youth living in poverty face challenges in accessing high-quality, relevant education opportunities and are often un- or under-employed. Despite increased efforts at improving enrollment rates in secondary schools, only 50% of secondary school aged youth enrolled in secondary school between 2008 and 2012 (UNICEF, 2014). This can be attributed to low exam scores, an inability to pay school fees, insufficient and under-resourced schools, and a perception among youth and families that secondary school is not relevant to their needs (Abuya, Oketch, & Musyoka, 2013; Ohba, 2011).

Within the field of development, schooling and employment are often identified as fundamental ways to empower youth to overcome and mitigate the economic and social challenges they face. The launching of the Education for All (EFA) initiative in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2000, both of which sought a basic education "for every boy and girl," emphasized the important role of education in poverty alleviation and accessing economic opportunities (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.; United Nations, 2014). In addition, the arguments for improving educational access for girls frequently cite empowerment as an inherent outcome of education (Langevang, 2008).

In response, Kenya instituted Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. In 2008, the mandate for schooling extended beyond primary education to include increased opportunity for secondary education through the Free Day Secondary Education Programme (FDSEP) (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, even if youth complete

4

secondary school, they may not be sufficiently prepared with the skills and knowledge they need to participate in the workforce due to the changing needs of the labor market and ever-changing technology (Allison et al., 2014; King, 2007; Ohba, 2011). Today, secondary schooling continues to be viewed as a necessary precursor to finding stable, suitable or desirable employment. It is also widely regarded by youth and employers as insufficient in providing the skills and knowledge young people need. Where a secondary education once meant an opportunity to gain white-collar employment or pursue additional schooling, youth today find themselves competing for a small number of opportunities (Njonjo, 2010; Omolo, 2011).

Kenyan youth also face competition for work placements as youth unemployment rates in the country vary between 15% and 35% depending on age (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2013). High unemployment rates, especially among young people, mean that youth face uncertain livelihoods as anticipated schooling and employment options are insufficient to meet the demand of a growing youth population. These factors are frequently cited as contributing to negative youth behaviors: "Lack of adequate employment opportunities for the youth leads to social problems such as crime, drug abuse, vandalism, religious fanaticism and general alienation" (Omolo, 2011, p. 63). These external, tangible factors do not work alone to disempower youth. Youth self-perceptions and beliefs about themselves and their futures are also impacted by their so-called idleness (locally understood as a lack of schooling and employment opportunities) and the marginalization they face in their communities (Vavrus, 2003). This marginalization is fostered as youth lose hope for the future, become idle and are

5

increasingly seen as a single, generic entity who pose a problem because of the perceived threat to stability and well-being of the community, country and continent (Hope, 2012; Kabiru, Beguy, Mojola, & Okigbo, 2013; Mutuku, 2011).

While access to educational and employment opportunities are important tools that contribute to youth empowerment, a number of scholars indicate that social and personal factors also impact the ways in which these tools and the empowerment process are experienced (Chigunta et al., 2005; Kabiru et al., 2013; Mabala, 2011; Murphy-Graham, 2012; Sommers, 2007, 2010). These factors, including age, gender, education level, the community where they live, social structures, and the type of peer influence they experience, inform the ways in which youth understand empowerment processes and the ways in which they might be able to put empowerment into practice.

The term 'youth empowerment' has increasingly become incorporated into national and international responses to the struggles and needs of economically and socially marginalized African youth. The term 'empowerment', however, has various meanings, and the process of empowerment that is supposedly taking place in programs designed to empower youth has received limited research. In this study I examine how Kenyan youth who participated in a youth empowerment program define, perceive, and experience the process of empowerment. In addition, I explore the ways in which empowerment may or may not have impacted their lives over time. Particular attention is paid to the ways that social and personal factors might influence how youth experience and perceive empowerment and their ability to enact it.

Study Purpose and Research Questions

In this dissertation, I explore youth empowerment as conceptualized and experienced by Kenyan youth, who were the focus of the Njia Youth Empowerment Program,[3] a four-month vocational training and empowerment program that focuses on basic employability, vocational and entrepreneurial training, and life skills. I examine changes that have taken place in youth lives in relation to the intended outcome – skills, knowledge, and empowerment – of the program and explore how those changes relate to youth conceptualizations of empowerment. Vocational and entrepreneurial training has been encouraged as a way to promote youth empowerment through increased employment and moneymaking opportunities. While technical training has been the focus of such initiatives, research has begun to suggest that "soft" or life skills are "centrally important for human capital development and workforce success" (Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & Moore, 2015, p. 4). Some scholars suggest that an emphasis on human capital development and employability are insufficient to enable youth to improve their well-being and achieve their personal goals (DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014; Sommers, 2007; Taylor, Duveskog, & Friis-Hansen, 2012). Rather, these scholars argue that the intersection of vocational or marketable skill development and life skills presents opportunities for empowerment and community engagement that go beyond the marketplace. The purpose of my doctoral research is, thus, to explore how youth understand and attempt to utilize instrumental (vocational, market-oriented, workforce skills) and intrinsic (including self-knowledge, life skills, and an ability to relate and

[3] Njia Youth Empowerment Program is a pseudonym to protect participant confidentiality

communicate with others) aspects of empowerment as they seek to attain their personal, social, and economic goals as young adults.

Based on interviews with 20 youth who completed Njia in Nairobi, I examine their perceptions of empowerment in relation to their achievements and aspirations. The questions that frame this study are:

1. In what ways do youth understand and construct the phenomenon of empowerment in relation to their own life experiences and desires?

2. In what ways are youth conceptualizations of empowerment reflected in the changes that have taken place in their lives since they completed the Njia program?

   a. How do youth view changes in their lives over time in relation to the dimensions of empowerment that emerged in the study?

   b. In what ways do these conceptualizations challenge or align with existing theoretical frameworks of empowerment?

Njia is an ideal site for considering youth conceptions of empowerment, because the ways Njia conceptualizes empowerment reflects broader trends in youth training and empowerment programming by emphasizing technical training for economic empowerment. However, the incorporation of skills and knowledge that lend themselves to intrinsic empowerment differentiates it from typical vocational training programs that focus on employment or entrepreneurship as a source of empowerment. This site is also ideal because it is an opportunity to consider the process of empowerment in African urban and peri-urban settings. Much of the research that has been done in Kenya on

empowerment has focused on rural empowerment or empowerment with a gender specific lens. However, 42% of Kenyan youth aged 20 – 24 and 45% of youth aged 25-29 live in urban centers and migration trends indicate that the percentage of young people in urban centers, primarily Nairobi and Mombasa, will continue to increase (Njonjo, 2010). In addition, many of the youth initiatives coming out of the government and NGO sector focus on urban youth. Thus, this study will help to bridge the gap between empowerment programming and empowerment literature.

I also selected Njia as the site of study because between 2012 and 2015 I was a project fellow in a longitudinal evaluation of the Njia program under the direction of Drs. Joan DeJaeghere and David Chapman, who served as the principal investigators through the University of Minnesota. I, together with a team of University of Minnesota and Kenyan researchers, conducted annual interviews with a subset of youth who completed the Njia program in 2012. During that time I developed a working relationship with the staff and had the opportunity to listen to and learn from youth as they discussed their participation in the program and the changes that have taken place in their lives in the subsequent three years. The ways in which youth discussed changes in themselves, and the skills and knowledge they had gained, reflected both processes and outcomes that correlated to the intrinsic and instrumental skills they had learned. Youth frequently talked about increased self-confidence and hope for the future, which they tied to communicative abilities (public speaking and interpersonal communication) and vocational skills. Over time, youth described the changes that had taken place in themselves, the new ways they conceptualized their futures, and the opportunities and

9

challenges they encountered in their communities, employment situations, and families. I became increasingly interested in how youth ascribed this apparent empowerment to both specific elements in the Njia program, the program as a whole, and personal experiences that they tied back to their training. In addition, I was interested in how the process of empowerment might be impacted by the ability or inability of youth to enact the intrinsic and instrumental empowerment they had described.

Youth empowerment was not a particular focus of the evaluation project, which investigated how youth connected their well-being and changes in their livelihoods, financial situations, and goals to the learning that took place during Njia. Between 2012 and 2014 there were no specific questions posed to youth about empowerment and only a few youth used the term during their interviews. For me, the emergence of empowerment as a research focus was tied to the way youth described how they thought about themselves before and after the program, the decisions they were making as they put skills and knowledge into practice, and the actions they were or were not able to take as they tried to enact what they had learned. All of these took place within the context of a national discourse of youth empowerment that linked youth employment and entrepreneurship directly to youth empowerment.

To further examine empowerment within youth lives, I devised a set of questions to specifically explore how youth conceptualized empowerment in light of their life experiences, the programmatic attention to empowerment, and the national discourse on youth empowerment. The questions (see Appendix A) were then incorporated into the 2015 evaluation interview protocol alongside questions about livelihoods, savings, goals,

schooling opportunities, and community settings. Further discussion of how this study was conceived and developed is found in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

Kenya is currently undergoing a demographic shift from having a large child and infant (0-14 years) population to having a large youth (15-35 years) population (Opinyo & Agwanda, 2011). This population shift, along with continued urban migrations (not just to Nairobi but to other urban centers as well), means that urban youth will continue to be a focus of development initiatives. These demographic shifts are not unique to Kenya. The growing youth population in Africa has attracted the attention of the development community. Such attention has led to a variety of youth development and empowerment initiatives intended to create opportunities to economically and socially engage youth in their communities (Abbink, 2005; DeBoeck & Honwana, 2005; Langevang, 2008). Although the resources invested into youth empowerment and training programs continue to increase, little research has been done on the influence of such strategies on empowerment or youth perceptions about the empowerment process. Whereas this research does not explore the direct impacts of the Njia program on youth's lives, it does explore how youth believe they are able to put concepts of empowerment into practice and the ways that economic and social challenges impact their ability to do so. This research differs from other studies because the focus lies in how youth empowerment is conceptualized, rather than the measurement of outcomes or proxies of empowerment. By demonstrating how youth understand empowerment in their own lives,

this study expands expectations about how youth experience different dimensions within the empowerment process.

In addition, much of the research that has been done on youth development and livelihoods focuses on youth on the periphery – those who live in extreme poverty, in rural areas or with little access to education. It is often assumed that if youth access education, their opportunities and livelihoods will improve. However, as more youth gain access to further (secondary or tertiary) education, the promises of schooling often remain unfulfilled. Preliminary findings from this research indicated that although youth attained a secondary education, they faced a number of challenges as they worked to achieve their goals, including employment, tertiary schooling, and contributing to their families or communities. The inability to achieve their goals led to a loss of hope and belief in themselves--in essence to disempowerment (Nikoi, Krause, Gebru, & Eschenbacher, 2013). This research therefore contributes to the literature by exploring conceptualizations of empowerment and empowerment processes among youth who have already attained what is often considered some measure of normative success (e.g., employment, further education, etc.). Therefore, this sample does not draw on the least marginalized in their communities, but represents a growing segment of the youth population who have attained benchmarks that they assumed would facilitate achievement of their goals. Despite achieving certain benchmarks, the youth in this study continued to struggle. An examination of the experiences of this group of youth illuminates the role youth empowerment programming might play for this middle group of youth that is neither the most marginalized nor privileged.

There have been few studies on youth in Africa that have addressed youth empowerment from the perspective of youth themselves. Although Mutuku (2011) sought out youth voices in her study on the types of empowerment youth desire, she did so by examining what they anticipated would be useful in their lives before engaging in empowerment programming. This study, on the other hand, is both a retrospective examination of youth perspectives on how the empowerment process has already begun to unfold in their lives and a way of understanding how the empowerment process has impacted the way they think about and imagine the future. In my literature review, I was unable to find any other study on youth empowerment in Kenya that has foregrounded youth perspectives on their experience with empowerment over time in this way.

Finally, this research provides a model for considering the process of empowerment for urban youth in sub-Saharan Africa. While empowerment models have been articulated for youth in Western contexts, these models tend to focus on adolescent youth who, because they are younger, are often in middle school or high school, and have different expectations about what the transition to adulthood vis-à-vis empowerment looks like or means than the youth in this study. Similarly, empowerment models in developing countries often focus on the role of schools in promoting empowerment, particularly for the girl-child (although studies such as those done by Ojiambo [2012] look at the empowerment process in an all-boys' school). This research is therefore an opportunity to examine new ways of thinking about empowerment processes and theory pertaining to youth in urban African settings.

Defining Youth and Empowerment

In the following section, I elaborate on key terms in this dissertation and the ways in which they are understood within the scholarship, as well as how they will be discussed in the dissertation specifically.

Youth. In policymaking, program development, and scholarship, "youth" encompasses a wide range of people and carries different socio-cultural meanings and implications. It is therefore important to consider what it is I mean by "youth". The United Nations (UN) categorizes youth as 18-24 years of age, while the Kenyan government chooses to categorize youth as individuals who are 15 – 35. These set parameters provide a guideline for policy and ensure that boundaries are in place. However, the notion of youth is a fluid cultural construct, that is often defined in relation to sociological factors such as marriage, childbirth, having a job, or having one's own place to live (Chigunta et al., 2005). In addition, the state of being a youth also serves as a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. Family and community once provided primary guidance and structure during this transitional period, but due to factors such as changing family structures, migration, urbanization, and globalization those structures are no longer as strong or prominent as they once were (Abbink, 2005; Chigunta et al., 2005). Kabiru et al. (2013) indicate that within this transition to adulthood, youth "imagine different 'possible selves' as they contemplate and aspire toward their future" (p. 81). Youth aspirations for adulthood are thus directly related to the experience, opportunities, and challenges that they encounter.

Twenty years is a large age span to cover when talking about youth in Kenya. Youth at the age of 15 have different needs and face different challenges and opportunities than youth at the age of 35. Programming and policy-making that seek to incorporate this entire span of youth are likely to face difficulties in being relevant for all youth (Mabala, 2011; Posti-Ahokas & Palojoki, 2014). In this study, I will limit my consideration to the age range of 18 to 29. I chose this age range because youth are in a unique phase of the transition into adulthood during this time period. Youth aged 18 and beyond are past the traditional age for secondary schooling, and thus have entered a liminal stage where they are not yet considered full adults but are also expected to take on some adult roles and responsibilities (Wamuyu, 2013). In addition, the age of 18 is an important marker for Kenyan youth because it is at 18 that youth are legally allowed to work in the formal sector (Government of Kenya, 2010). As youth go beyond the age of 29, they face increased external and internal pressure to assume more responsibilities and gain more independence from their families (Wamuyu, 2013).

Finally, I selected this age range for a practical reason. Youth who participate in the Njia program are aged 18 – 25. Since youth who were part of this study participated in the program in 2012, their fourth and final interview took place in 2015. The maximum age for the youth research participants was therefore 29. By exploring the ways in which their experiences with empowerment have changed over time, I may be better able to understand the role age might play in the empowerment process.

While this dissertation adopts the term "youth", I recognize the political nature of semantics (King, 2013; Mabala, 2011). "Youth" is the common term for people between

the ages of 15 and 35 in Kenya, but in Western contexts and in scholarship on individuals in this age range in the West, it is more common to find reference to 'young adults.' This distinction is important for a couple of reasons. First, there is power in semantics. As youth move further along the "youth spectrum," they become older and more mature but remain "tagged" as a youth. In a society where age and adulthood garner additional respect and incorporation into decision-making, the label of youth may pose barriers for some individuals (Mabala, 2011). At the same time, the increased attention paid to the needs of youth may lead some people to embrace this as a way to access additional, youth-targeted resources, including training opportunities and funding for entrepreneurial ventures.

The second reason this distinction is important is the way in which scholarship addresses youth empowerment strategies. Since most youth empowerment models have their basis in the West, the emphasis tends to be on the younger end of the youth spectrum and youth in this older age range become subsumed as adults or young adults. Some scholars have chosen the terms "young people" or "young adults" in their work with individuals in this age range. I have opted to use "youth" because it is the term around which vocational and empowerment programming have rallied. Programs and projects within Kenya are not "young people empowerment programs" or "young adult training" and the discourse of youth empowerment has followed suit. In order to stay true to the discourse in Kenya, I also adopt "youth" as the term of reference.

Beyond concerns over a broad age range, the term 'youth' also runs the risk of homogenizing a large and diverse group of people. Youth programming is frequently

implemented based on generalized understandings of who 'youth' are and assumptions of their needs and wants, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 2. While youth in this study have some experiences in common, which is discussed in Chapter 4, their identities and lived experiences are also extremely diverse. Youth in this study are both male and female, and when the study began they lived in urban or peri-urban centers. Despite this commonality, several youth had recently migrated from rural areas while others had lived in informal and low-income Nairobi communities their entire lives. Furthermore, while the youth who participate in the Njia program and have been tagged as 'marginalized' or 'at-risk' youth, either by the program or by dominant discourses surrounding economically disadvantaged communities, youth access to resources and opportunities varied greatly. Youth programming, in general, and responses to concerns over the 'youth bulge' more specifically also tend to identify youth as idle, un- or under-educated, and un- or under-employed. As will be seen in the youth stories that are described throughout this dissertation, the complex lives of youth in this study show how their identities and activities at times confirm but also disrupt these notions of what it means to be an urban youth in Kenya.

Empowerment. Empowerment began to emerge in the development lexicon in response to top-down development initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s (Shah, 2011). Over time it has been adapted and used in many contexts, yet no consistent definition of what empowerment is or encompasses exists (Kabeer, 1999; Murphy-Graham, 2012; Ross, Shah, & Wang, 2011; Rowlands, 1997). In development discourses, two assumptions about empowerment are frequently made: first, that empowerment is commonly

17

understood and its meaning is taken for granted, and second, that empowerment is something to be achieved with little attention paid to the details of how it comes to be achieved (Rowlands, 1997). In development programs where empowerment is not adequately defined or explained, empowerment, as a term, may be seen as less effective and easily dismissed (Prins & Drayton, 2010). Furthermore, Ross et al. (2011) state that within development literature the term "empowerment" has become a "taken-for-granted good," because it is a comforting notion and assumes positive outcomes for everyone (p. 26). The failure to adequately define or explain empowerment, together with a notion that empowerment is "a panacea for social ills" (Ross et al., 2011, p. 26), positions empowerment as a term that can be incorporated into a program or project to legitimize it without substantiating how empowerment is sought. In this discussion, I turn both to the ways in which empowerment is used in youth training and programming in Kenya as well as the ways in which I define it for the purposes of this research.

In youth programming that emphasizes vocational training, technical training, or employment opportunities, empowerment is often incorporated into the title of a project or organization or into the program objectives seemingly incidentally. The inclusion of 'empowerment' may indicate a recognition by the organization that empowerment is an important part of preparing youth as they enter into new roles in society. However, without consideration of what empowerment is or how it is achieved, there is a risk that including 'empowerment' is simply a way to legitimize programs or initiatives with little emphasis on being productive. For instance, some of the youth projects emphasize youth engagement in moneymaking opportunities as equivalent to youth employment. An

18

example of such a project is the Kenya Youth Empowerment Project (KYEP), the

primary government youth initiative supported by the World Bank, which emphasizes

youth employment in both formal and informal sectors (World Bank, 2014a). This project

combines youth empowerment with youth employment, implying that empowerment and

employment take place at the same time or are assumed to be one and the same.

A second component of empowerment that is often assumed within youth projects

is that empowerment is simply an outcome to be achieved rather than an on-going

process. The US Agency for International Development's (USAID) youth program, Yes

Youth Can, indicates among its accomplished activities in Kenya: "one million youth

empowered" (USAID, 2014, p.1). Although the definition of empowerment is expanded

beyond that of the KYEP to include economic opportunities and the ability to contribute

to and engage with their families and communities, their emphasis remains on

employment opportunities. Once someone has participated in the program, it is assumed

that empowerment is complete. This implication fails to take into consideration the

process of empowerment with which youth engage, both within a program and in other

life situations. It also lacks the recognition that empowerment is an on-going process in

the lives of youth.

At a basic level, empowerment can be identified as a process whereby a person

gains the knowledge and skills necessary to make choices and decisions over their own

life. On this level, the ability of youth to gain employment and thus have more control

over economic aspects of their lives may in fact point toward empowerment. However,

for this research, I expand beyond this basic definition of empowerment and draw upon

critical scholarship on gender, international development, and education to define and explore empowerment. While these scholars often apply empowerment in gender specific contexts, I build on their descriptions of empowerment as it relates to notions of power, as both an outcome and a process, and in the ways in which different elements of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment could be identified, examined, and applied to disadvantaged youth (Kabeer, 1999; Murphy-Graham, 2012; Ross et al., 2011; Rowlands, 1997; Shah, 2011; Stromquist, 2002).

Central to my understanding of empowerment is the recognition that there are multiple dimensions to empowerment and that while these dimensions have value in and of themselves, it is when they are incorporated together that the empowerment process is most effective. This research is thus primarily concerned with the ways in which youth understand, experience, and enact instrumental and intrinsic empowerment. Instrumental empowerment lends itself to a consideration of empowerment as an outcome (Ross et al., 2011). It refers to a youth's ability to access resources such as education, gain necessary skills such as literacy or vocational training, or participate fully within communities. It also reflects a youth's ability to take action or enact the skills and knowledge that they have gained. Intrinsic empowerment, on the other hand, denotes a process of change within an individual (Ross et al., 2011). It includes such elements as self-confidence and self-awareness, awareness of others, interpersonal relations, and communicative abilities.

An understanding of education and vocational training in the Kenyan context is important in our analysis of youth empowerment. The next section of this chapter

provides a brief background of how education and vocational training in the country has evolved over the years.

Situating the Study in Kenya

This section provides a brief overview of the political, economic, and historical context in Kenya, with an emphasis on the status of youth within the country. In particular, the overview will concentrate on how youth's roles in political and historical events contribute to both perceptions of youth and national initiatives that aim to address youth educational, economic, and well-being needs. I begin with a brief look at pre-colonial and colonial education policies, with specific attention to how colonial polices impacted the perception of vocational education. I then turn to a discussion of the renewed attention secondary schooling and vocational education have received since the early 2000s. Finally, I will discuss youth programming since 2000 and the impact of this on youth employment and empowerment. A comprehensive review of Kenyan history, or even of youth movements within Kenya, is beyond the purview of this paper.

Background. Kenya sits along the equator in East Africa and boasts a rich linguistic and cultural diversity. With a population growth rate of 2.7% annually, Kenya's total population was over 44 million in 2013, and 42% of the population were below the age of 14 (World Bank, 2014b). While English and Kiswahili are the official languages and are taught and used as languages of instruction in schools, there are over 40 African languages spoken within the country, and many people speak three or more languages. Sheng, a language frequently used by urban youth, including youth in this study, has its

base in Swahili but is ever-changing and incorporates other languages including English, Kikuyu, and Dhuluo (Githinji, 2006; Ogechi, 2008).

Kenya has long played an important role in the region as an access point for landlocked East-Central African countries, a center for trade, and in more recent history, as a hub for international (global) development and business initiatives. Contemporary Kenya is viewed as an economic driver within the region and plays an important role within the East African Community (Njogu, 2013). Agriculture is the primary industry in the Kenyan economic and export sectors. While Kenyans in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in subsistence farming, agri-business is critical to the Kenyan economy. The major agricultural exports include coffee, tea and flowers. Tourism and manufacturing are other key economic sectors and provide formal and informal employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (Njonjo, 2010).

Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, is a growing urban center and serves as a gathering point for people from all walks of life. With nearly 11 million people as of 2013, Nairobi is a place of great opportunity but also great competition (World Bank, 2014c). Even as people continue to migrate to Nairobi looking for employment opportunities, they face increasing difficulty in finding work (in the formal or informal sector) to make ends meet.

Education and youth in Kenya. The practice of education has a long history in Kenya and has historically played an important role in shaping children and youth into full-functioning adults in society. The education that was prevalent in the pre-colonial era, and continues to exist today in a variety of forms, was inseparable from daily life.

Unlike the formal education system in which a specific time and place is set aside for education, traditional education was integrated into everyday life (Kenyatta, 1962; Sheffield, 1973). Informal learning took place at home and children learned from parents, peers, and other members of the community. As children got older more formalized opportunities for education existed. This was particularly true at different transitional periods in youth's lives. Among many people groups in Kenya a significant period of formal instruction for both males and females came during an adolescent initiation period that ushered them from childhood to adulthood. Regardless of whether or not circumcision was performed at this time, it was a period when youth were secluded and given instruction that enabled them to enter into adulthood in their community. During this period male youth (though among some groups females as well) were also initiated into an age-set that gave individuals a group identity. Age-sets became a group of peers who passed through different stages of life together (Sheffield, 1973). As youth grew older there were additional opportunities to learn specific trades, such as blacksmiths or tanners, through apprenticeship structures. These different types of education are often referred to as "traditional education", with the implication that it is from the past or that it is non-dynamic and has not changed over time. However, elements of traditional education exist today to different extents and in different ways depending on the location. Despite this, the primacy of this type of education has been supplanted by the formal education system.

The introduction of the first Western-style formal education system in Kenya can be traced to 1846, when the first mission schools were established in coastal areas

(Mutua, 1975). These schools became the forerunners of the formal education system in Kenya today (Mutua, 1975; Sheffield, 1973). In 1911, the British colonial administration created the Department of Education, which established a limited number of government schools and provided support for the mission schools. According to Kelly and Altbach (1978), "schools which emerge in colonies reflect the power and educational needs of the colonizer" (p. 2). This situation was no different in Kenya, where settlers desired African staff who could serve their needs, and the colonial administration sought subjects who could fill menial jobs and an 'enlightened' class that could carry out indirect rule (Mutua, 1975; Mwiria, 1990). The education system established during the early stages of colonialism was created with a premise that Africans were less capable than Europeans and thus the education offered to Africans was not equivalent to that provided to settlers in quality or content (Mutua, 1975; Kelly & Altbach, 1978). In addition to the paucity of educational opportunities for African Kenyans, schooling centered on vocational trades while academically-oriented schooling was reserved for European and Asian Kenyans.

Discussions about the role that vocational education should play within Kenyan education policy began as early as 1924 with the Phelps-Stokes Commission. The report recommended that vocational education was an appropriate form of education for African children, while at the same time recommending that academically oriented education be reserved for European and Asian children (Wycliffe, Samson, & Ayuya, 2013). King and Palmer (2006) argued that vocational and technical education and training "were aimed at the poorer classes and colonised peoples, not so much to reduce their poverty but to secure for them a necessary but subordinate future in those particular societies" (p. 10).

As a result, students and their families viewed vocational education and training as less desirable than academically-oriented studies. Given the expectations within colonial educational policy that vocational education was a way to perpetuate racialized economic and social hierarchies, it is not surprising that these perceptions of vocational education persisted after colonialism as well. Academically-oriented schooling (particularly secondary schooling) was perceived as an avenue for gaining white-collar jobs, upward mobility, and access to higher education, while vocational education was a less desirable alternative for youth who were unable to proceed with secondary schooling due to low exam scores or economic constraints. In many sectors of society, this perception of vocational education persists today.

As a result of the perceived purpose of education for Africans, it was not until after the First World War (WWI) that a need for secondary school was recognized in most colonies. This shift coincided with increased urbanization and a post-WWI emphasis by colonial metropoles that colonies needed to be economically self-sufficient. To accommodate this, a limited number of secondary schools were established, with only four in Kenya by 1939 (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). The purpose of these schools was to prepare a limited number of individuals with the skills they would need as civil servants and for economic production.

In 1949, the colonial Kenyan government launched the Beecher Committee to establish a plan to address the increasing desire and need for education that would benefit a larger segment of the population. The Beecher Report reinforced several of the findings of the previous Phelps-Stokes Report, including a provision for practical, vocational

education for African students (Sheffield, 1973; Wycliffe et al., 2013). The Beecher

Committee recognized that this finding did not align with what the majority of the

population believed and cited a number of reasons why it was necessary:

> Realizing that Africans generally preferred literary to "practical" education, the
> Committee took great pains to cite evidence in defense of its position,
> determining the territory's general manpower requirements in commercial,
> technical, and other fields and calculating the number of children capable of
> receiving various levels of education. Both these arguments were based on
> insubstantial empirical evidence. (Sheffield, 1973, p. 42)

Although there were additional reports that provided additional guidance to the education

system, The Beecher Report was the principal policy that guided education within Kenya

up until independence in 1963 (Wamuyu et al., 2013).

As it became clearer that Kenya was moving toward independence, education and

its desired outcomes underwent a shift. An independent nation meant the need for a larger

civil service work force and a citizenry that could participate in the modern discourse of a

nation state (Sheffield, 1973; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). At independence in 1963,

Kenyan leaders recognized the need to focus on education initiatives, both because of the

populations' desire for more educational opportunities and because of the need for

increased skilled labor and an educated class that could fill high-level positions

(Sheffield, 1973). In order to address the shortages of qualified teachers and other highly

trained workers, Kenyan leaders placed an increased emphasis on secondary and tertiary

education. Even though the newly independent government desired to have an initial

emphasis on upper levels of education, it also recognized the need for expanded primary

education. This recognition, coupled with international pressures to expand primary

education, led to the first 5-year National Development Plan (1964-1969) which

identified universal primary education as part of its long-range plans (King & McGrath, 2012; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; Sheffield, 1973). Although universal primary education was prioritized, it was not made free until 1974 (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007).

Throughout the 1960's and 1970s there was a sustained increase in primary education rates, though universal primary education was never achieved. Secondary education rates did not keep pace, however, because while the government wanted to support post-primary education, they also wanted to make sure over-enrollment did not become a problem (Sheffield, 1973). As a result, communities established hundreds of local community schools, called *harambee* ("lets pull together" in Kiswahili) schools, to meet needs that they saw within their own communities after independence (Mwiria, 1990). *Harambee* schools, which were usually grassroots initiatives by community leaders and parents, were most commonly funded through contributions from a broad swath of individuals within the community, with assistance from political leaders who often assisted in identifying additional funding sources. Local committees were responsible for functions outside the parameters of daily schooling, such as fundraising and the hiring of teachers, while teachers and headmasters assumed responsibility for daily school-related activities (Mwiria, 1990). Despite government concern that *harambee* schools would undermine a sense of nationhood and produce more graduates than the job market could handle, schools continued to be established in an effort to meet some of the increasing demand for education (Mwiria, 1990; Sheffield, 1973). In 1970 *harambee* schools made up just over 50% of the total number of secondary schools in the country, and in 1984 the percentage had increased to 61% (Mwiria, 1990).

27

As the nation-building project continued, there were increasing concerns about the relevancy of secondary schools because students were not being equipped for the type of work that was needed. Sheffield noted in the 1970's that, "few of the academic secondary schools equip their students for any skill other than simple clerical work, for which there is now little further demand" (1973, p. 97). In response to concerns over relevance, the World Bank shifted its focus to "practical skills" and indicated that funding would only be provided to schools that met the criteria of teaching at least one of the practical skills, which included domestic science, agriculture, and industrial arts (Sheffield, 1973).

During the 1980s, international policy debates continued to inform the trajectory of educational policy and implementation in Kenya. The 1980s was a time of economic crisis in many part of the world, including Kenya. In response, the World Bank initiated a policy of structural adjustment (SAPs), in which governments were required to address deficits in their budgets by reducing government expenditures, especially on public goods and services. It was anticipated that by focusing on debt reduction and undergoing an economic restructuring, national economies would improve. However, these policies have been frequently cited as contributing to increased poverty and low micro-economic returns because they resulted in high unemployment rates as large numbers of public sector jobs were eliminated and reduced access to health and education services for the poor (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000).

The education sector saw a significant reduction in expenditure and as a result enrollment rates in all levels of schooling declined (Caffentzis, 2000). These policies

were particularly difficult for secondary schools because the World Bank and

International Monetary Fund (IMF) emphasized primary education, due to the belief that

primary education provided a better social rate of return than higher levels of education

(Caffentzis, 2000). During this period, the Kenyan government was beholden to the

World Bank and IMF, which wanted to improve the quality of education through

decentralization and a greater focus and emphasis on private and community-supported

schools. In retrospect (and even at the time), SAPs have come to be recognized for the

deleterious effect they had, not only on education, but also on African development as a

whole (Caffentzis, 2000; Vavrus, 2005). In the education sector, these policies dictated an

increase in school fees and contributed to a widening gap between those who could and

could not afford to attend school, particularly at the secondary school level (Vavrus,

2005).

The first of recent international emphases on education began in 1990 with the

Jomtien Conference, in which a global goal of Education for All (EFA) was established.

This goal promised to provide a basic education for all by the year 2000. This goal was

reiterated in 2000 with the declaration of the United Nations' Millennium Development

Goals (MDG), which emphasized universal primary education (UPE) for boys and girls.

As Kenya has pursued UPE and EFA goals, the primary enrollment rates have increased.

Primary school enrollments increased 20% between 2002 and 2003 and an additional

23% between 2003 and 2008, resulting in an additional two million students in the

primary education system by 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2012a). However, while

Kenya and other developing countries have focused on primary education, there has been

a significant lack of attention to and funding for secondary schooling. The success of the Free Primary Education program, in terms of enrollment levels, has meant that more youth are competing for the few spaces available in secondary schools while a lack of sufficient funding has meant that schools face over-crowding and a decline in quality (Verspoor, 2008). As a result, the Kenyan government and international development agencies began to look at mechanisms for increasing secondary schooling opportunities. One mechanism for meeting increased schooling demand has been through the implementation of universal secondary education policies.

Universal Secondary Education. Kenya chose to address Universal Secondary Education (USE) through the implementation of the Free Day Secondary Education Program (FDSEP), which was signed into law in 2008. FDSEP was a response to three main factors in Kenya: increased demand for secondary education, economic development, and in response to a campaign promise. The first factor was the increasing rates of primary education in light of Free Primary Education policies in Kenya that been implemented in 2003. As an increased number of youth began successfully completing primary school, more pupils and their families demanded additional educational opportunities.

The second factor that influenced the implementation of FDSEP was the recognition that for the country to be competitive economically, there would need to be an increase in the skilled labor force (Glassman, Hoppers & Destafano, 2008). Unlike research in the 1980s, which showed that secondary education provided lower rates of returns than primary education (Caffentzis, 2000), more recent research through the

Secondary Education Initiative for Africa (SEIA) has found that the social rates of return

increase for each additional year of schooling that youth receive beyond primary school

(Verspoor, 2008). SEIA is a World Bank program that began in 2003 to provide policy

support as countries began seeking ways to expand educational opportunities within their

countries. The SEIA highlights the role increased secondary education schooling rates

play on economic growth, emphasizing that the impact of secondary education rates also

helps attract foreign direct investment. In the SEIA report, these economic impacts are

coupled with social outcomes that contribute to both individual and national

development, including improved maternal and child health, decreased fertility and

HIV/AIDS rates, and a reduction in poverty (Verspoor, 2008).

     The third crucial factor was the political implication of establishing USE. Having

successfully campaigned on a promise of free primary education in 2002, President Mwai

Kibaki campaigned in 2007 on a platform that included the promise of free universal

secondary education. Upon his re-election, the administration moved quickly to keep that

campaign promise and established the FDSEP (Ohba, 2011).

     The implementation of FDSEP has not been as quick or 'free' as some would like.

FDSEP was not designed to provide complete universal secondary education, nor was it

designed to make education completely free. Rather, it provides bursaries to youth to

cover up to a certain amount of tuition. For example, when the program first began, day

schools received up to 10,625 Kenyan shillings (US$164) from the government for each

student (Ohba, 2011). This subsidy was sufficient for basic tuition costs but did not

include fees associated with uniforms, books, and other necessary items. There is

growing frustration among Kenyans that secondary schooling remains an expensive

venture for the majority of youth because schools have introduced additional fees and

levees to make up for the loss of revenue due to inflation rates that make the government

subsidies inadequate (Ohba, 2011). A 2011 report produced by the Government of Kenya

about FDSEP identified one of the challenges facing the program to be "a misconception

by parents that education is free" (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 6). Further

complicating the impact of the program is that the highest quality schools in Kenya are

boarding schools, which are more expensive but do not receive tuition subsidies under

FDSEP because of the emphasis on day schooling (Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti, &

Takavarasha, 2011). As a result, a larger proportion of the burden for post-primary

education falls on youth living in poverty, as they face fewer opportunities to enter or

remain in secondary school (Glennerster et al., 2011; Ohba, 2011).

While FDSEP has had the impact of increasing gross enrollment rates from 32.4%

to 45.3% in the first three years after implementation, the education system still faces a

number of problems (Ministry of Education, 2012b). According to Oyaro (2008), schools

are facing over-crowding, lack of teachers, and lack of resources, all factors that can

decrease overall quality of instruction. In addition, youth and scholars raise concerns that

secondary school is not relevant because it prepares youth with theoretical knowledge

appropriate for higher education but not with skills that are transferrable to the workplace

(Abuya et al., 2013; Ohba, 2011). In a study that followed 109 primary school leavers

from rural Kenya, Ohba (2011) found that relevance of schooling was a major factor in

whether or not youth continued with schooling. One youth in his study indicated that

32

despite the implementation of FDSEP, he was not interested in pursuing further education "because it is obvious that after four years of secondary school, I have to do something like search for another training course to get skills for employment. So even though the fees have been reduced, it does not attract me" (Ohba, 2011, p. 407). Ohba's study demonstrates how critical the ability to engage with employment opportunities in the market economy is to youth livelihoods. As the need to more closely align the skills offered in schools with the skills needed in the workplace is recognized, attention is increasingly being given to vocational education and training.

Vocational education and training. The role that vocational education and training have played in secondary education and in training programs outside the secondary school system has changed as the needs of the country and available resources have changed. As noted above, vocational education is viewed both as a second-rate form of education because of the ways in which it has been used in the past to maintain people's station in life, and as a necessary means by which to enter the workforce and improve one's livelihood (King & Palmer, 2006; Wycliffe et al., 2013). It is thus important to understand the ways in which vocational education and training have been incorporated in primary and secondary school curriculums over time and the role of technical training centers in preparing youth for the workplace.

While colonial administrators viewed vocational education as the purview of African children and youth and a way to maintain the status quo (King & Palmer, 2006), the immediate post-colonial government recognized that education needed to serve multiple purposes, including developing national pride, seeking social equity, and

developing the nation-state (Wycliffe et al., 2013). Although the 1964 Ominde Commission, a government initiated study of the post-independence educational needs of the country, recognized the need to link education with the labor market, it also emphasized the importance of changing the social structure that the existing education system supported. Vocational education and technical training was removed from the primary school curriculum and was instead incorporated, in marginal ways, into the secondary system or was taught in formal technical training institutes (Hicks, Kremer, Mbiti, & Miguel, 2013; Wycliffe et al., 2013).

The academic nature of the formal education system has been a contentious issue over time and numerous efforts have been made to make schooling more relevant. The Presidential Commission on unemployment of 1982/83 identified the academic nature of education as one of the factors leading to high unemployment (Wycliffe et al., 2013). The education system was subsequently overhauled in 1985 to have eight years of primary school, followed by four years of secondary and four years of tertiary schooling, popularly called 8-4-4. It was assumed that by changing the system students would gain the skills and training they would need to enter the labor market regardless of the point at which they left the school system. Although the new system emphasized a new vocational curriculum, the lack of trained teachers in those fields meant that the subjects were often neglected or were taught theoretically without providing practical training in technical skills (Wycliffe et al., 2013).

In 2005 technical and vocational education outside of the primary and secondary school systems were given renewed attention with a mandate to the Ministry of State for

Youth Affairs (MOYA) to renew and revitalize the youth polytechnic (YP) sector. In

2007 the Directorate of Youth Training was established to undertake the revitalization,

and in 2013 the Directorate was transferred to the newly established Ministry of

Education, Science and Technology (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology,

2014a). Youth polytechnics (YP) are now found in nearly every county in Kenya and

while they continue to offer training in sectors such as construction, tailoring, or

automotive mechanics, some YPs have expanded to offer a wider range of training

courses and supplementary courses such as accounting, which are beneficial to youth

pursuing entrepreneurial activities (Hicks et al., 2013). Despite the emphasis on

vocational education and training by government and funding agencies such as the World

Bank, enrollment in YPs continues to be low, which could be attributed, in part, to the

perception that vocational education is not as prestigious or lucrative as academic

secondary or tertiary education ("Technical training for non-varsity", 2014, January 26).

As a way to address this perception and provide youth with educational options, the

Kenyan Education Cabinet Secretary recently re-emphasized the importance of

vocational training by encouraging nearly 200,000 students who did not qualify for

secondary schooling to consider enrolling in YPs ("Form 1 losers to polytechnics", 2014,

December 29). His efforts may be undermined, however, by discourses that continue to

emphasize vocational education as a less desirable option as evidenced by a *Daily Nation*

headline which stated, "Form 1 losers to join polytechnics" (2014, December 29).

Since 2005 vocational education and training have continued to receive

government attention through new and sustained initiatives on vocational education. In

2013 the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) was created to both promote and regulate the vocational education systems within Kenya ("Technical training for non-Varsity", 2014, January, 26; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2014b). Through TVETA all technical training institutes will be required to register and undergo an accreditation process. Government-sponsored Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers that offer two-year training programs resulting in a diploma and YPs will be impacted, as will privately sponsored training programs ("Technical training for non-Varsity", 2014, January 26). Private programs offer a wide range of training programs but it is unclear which types of programs will be impacted or how accreditation processes will impact youth who participate in such programs. While some activities and initiatives have gotten underway under TVETA, including a plan to increase enrollment in TVETs by 20% by 2023 ("Technical training for non-Varsity, 2014, January 26), the full impact the creation of this authority will have on both the vocational education sector or on the youth who participate remains to be seen.

Youth Programming. This discussion of education in Kenya has shown how the connection between education and vocational preparedness has been understood and pursued in Kenyan educational policy and in Kenyan communities. To address youth needs, including unemployment, initiatives outside of the education sector have also been implemented. Starting at independence, the Kenyan government has made halting attempts to reach out to youth. In 1964 the government established the National Youth Service (NYS) to address youth concerns, promote youth education, and develop

mechanisms for incorporating youth into nation building initiatives (Mutuku, 2011). Over time it has also come to serve the purpose of building up life skills and technical training for youth, in addition to being a military reserve unit for the country (Omolo, 2011).

In 2005, the Kenyan government established the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MOYA, though the acronym MYSA has also been used in some places) and the Kenya National Youth Policy (KNYP) in 2006. However, it was only after 2007 that the focus on youth began in earnest. The contested 2007 presidential elections resulted in widespread violence, and much of the blame has been laid at the feet of unemployed, idle youth who were identified as easy to organize, manipulate, and pay off (Njonjo, 2011). In response, a number of governmental and international non-governmental initiatives have been established that seek to engage and empower idle youth, create moneymaking opportunities, and engage youth in entrepreneurship opportunities (Sommers, 2010; Thieme, 2010; UNDP, 2013). The *Kazi kwa Vijana* (KKV) (Work for Youth) program, which began in 2009, was one of the most visible government programs and aimed to engage youth in money-making community projects such as garbage collection and car washes. KKV was a cornerstone of the larger Kenya Youth Empowerment Project (KYEP), which was initiated by the Government of Kenya through World Bank funding to address youth un-and under-employment. The second component of KYEP focused on training and internships with the private sector, which was provided by the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA). The KKV program ended in 2015 and was replaced with the National Youth Service (NYS) Youth Empowerment Programme. Although the NYS was established in 1964, the 2015 re-launching of the service renews the emphasis of the role

of the NYS and youth themselves in nation building. The introduction of the NYS' Youth

Empowerment Programme has, however, been filled with controversy as claims of

corruption within the service have disrupted the program and frustrated youth (Kenyan

newspapers, *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, have covered the problems extensively.

See, for instance, Ogemba [2015] who wrote about youth actions in response to

corruption claims against the National Youth Service, or Mukinda [2016], who reported

on the demands of people who had been accused for new investigations.)

Also widely recognized are the government-sponsored Youth Enterprise

Development Fund (YEDF) and *Uwezo* (Ability) Fund, which identify groups of youth

for grants and loans for entrepreneurship start-up capital. While these programs focus on

employment and entrepreneurship, youth empowerment is understood to be a critical and

assumed component. The *Uwezo* Fund was initiated in response to President Uhuru

Kenyatta's pledge during the 2012 elections to promote youth empowerment and youth

opportunities. In introducing the Fund, Kenyatta stated, "By its very name, *Uwezo*, the

Fund is a Programme of empowerment. Its underlying philosophy is an affirmation of

hope and faith in our people" (Uwezo Fund, n.d.). For government programs, including

the YEDF, *Uwezo* Fund, KKV, and NYS, empowerment and employment or

entrepreneurship have been intricately linked.

In addition to the programs sponsored by the Kenyan government, other programs

include the Youth Empowerment Project sponsored by the World Bank, Yes Youth Can!

by the US Agency for International Development, and the *Ninaweza* (I am able) Youth

Empowerment Program sponsored by the International Youth Foundation. While each of

these programs either explicitly or implicitly indicate that 'empowerment' is a key

component to the program, empowerment remains an elusive concept within program

goals and anticipated outcomes and the emphasis remains on youth employment and

employability.

Since 2012 the Kenyan government has undergone significant restructuring,

which has had meaningful impacts on youth initiatives. As part of an initiative of

devolution, which was written into the Kenyan constitution in 2010, the government has

undergone restructuring to allow for greater power and responsiveness at local levels. As

a result, the MOYA was dissolved with the intention that youth concerns and

programming would be integrated into every facet of government. Instead of having one

government entity to cover youth development, education, technical training, and

employment, these areas were to be taken up by specific offices charged with these tasks

for the whole population. In addition, the devolution process means that county

governments are now charged with overseeing youth initiatives in their constituencies

that were once the purview of federal government. For instance, the continued

revitalization of YPs is now the responsibility of the county government in which they

are found ("Form 1 losers to polytechnics", 2014).

In 2008, the government instituted Kenyan Vision 2030, a document that serves

as Kenya's blueprint for growth and development from 2008 to 2030. The ultimate

purpose of Vision 2030 is to ensure Kenya achieves status as a middle-income country

that can provide Kenyans with a high quality of life (Government of Kenya, 2007). The

Vision is divided into four sections: economic, social, political, and enablers/macro. The

social section has the most impact on youth and initiatives such as the continued

revitalization and expansion of the YP system, a revised curriculum for vocational

training that makes it more responsive to the labor market, and the expansion of the

YEDF, have begun and have maintained their proscribed timeline. Other initiatives, such

as the creation of county Youth Empowerment Centres, which are envisioned as being a

space where youth can explore their talents, find economic and social opportunities, and

reduce their idleness, have fallen behind (Government of Kenya, 2007).

In this section I have provided background on the ways in which youth

educational, vocational, and empowerment needs have been addressed at different points

in Kenya's history. Recent initiatives, many of which are being implemented through

Vision 2030, are providing renewed attention to the needs of youth. It is against this

backdrop that my research takes place.

Preview of the Site of Study

This study was undertaken with alumni from the Njia Youth Empowerment

Program, a program established in Kenya in 2011 as a mechanism for addressing youth

unemployment in specific communities. The first two Njia centers were established in

Taharuki, middle income neighborhood on the eastern side of Nairobi, and Sukumiza,[4] a

growing, peri-urban community on the outskirts of Nairobi. Once those two centers were

well established, additional centers were established in Kenya, mostly in smaller cities

but in a few rural areas as well. The 2014-15 Njia annual report stated that Njia was

established "to empower vulnerable youth… with employability skills and link them to

---

[4] Throughout the dissertation I use pseudonyms for Njia sites and individual youth in order to protect confidentiality.

job opportunities as well as to facilitate business start-ups" (Chepyegon, 2015, p. 1). As a primarily vocational education program (which is increasingly branching out into entrepreneurship training as well), Njia's primary aim is to foster economic empowerment amongst youth through the acquisition of technical and work-readiness skills and job placements. However, the incorporation of life skills training and an emphasis on personal development means that youth are introduced to a broader range of skills than are typically encountered in vocational training or government sponsored youth empowerment programs. Youth are thus expected to learn necessary skills to enter the labor market, which are not limited to technical, industry specific skills sets but include broader work readiness skills as well. In addition, program staff anticipate that, "In the process they [youth] learn to learn, earn, save, improve self-confidence, self-respect, make informed choice options, take responsibility and move towards positive futures and self-directed growth" (Njia Foundation, 2010, pp. 3-4). These broader, desired end-results are one way in which the program differentiates itself from other vocational and youth empowerment programs.

The Njia Foundation was initiated in India in 2003 as a way to bring various community members together to address hazardous working conditions for children in India (Ramavat, 2011). Overtime, the Foundation's mission expanded to become "an innovative development initiative demonstrating end-to-end transition support to link learning and livelihood for disadvantaged young people" (Njia Foundation, 2010, p. 3). As a result, technical training was introduced and incorporated into the Njia Foundation's programming. The Foundation also established the Employability Skills and Knowledge

(ESK) model, which provides the platform from which to train youth in marketable skills that will prepare them for and provide them with opportunities to gain entry into the labor market or start their own business enterprises. According to Njia, the ESK model demonstrates that "the best way to ensure successful learning and earning programs is by linking market conditions with skills provision and post-training support" (Njia Foundation, 2010, p. 4). The success of the ESK model encouraged the Njia Foundation founder and board to introduce the ESK model to other countries. As a result, the model has been adapted, either by Njia Foundation staff or partner organizations, in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya.

The ESK model outlined below was first introduced in Kenya in 2011.Tthe program is a four-month program that includes three months of classroom training and a one-month internship. Due to outside funding, the program is free for youth participants. The nine-step ESK model takes place over a longer period of time than just the four-month program. The model begins by ensuring that the training is relevant to the needs of the community and ensures opportunities will be available for youth once they complete the program. An initial market-scan (step 1) takes place at the initiation of each center in Kenya (there are currently 16 centers) and subsequent market scans take place after every two to three cohorts of youth complete the program to ensure continued relevance of the curriculum. Curriculum development (step 2) begins once the vocational skills needs have been determined for a particular community but is also on-going, as both vocational skills and life skills training are updated based on the input and suggestions from program staff, area employers, community leaders, and program alumni.

Once the needs of the community are identified, Njia staff undertake 'road shows' (step 3), locally called *barazas*, to introduce the program to communities, particularly parents and youth, where they are working. The road shows are particularly important for the first few cohorts at any particular location as a way to introduce the community to both the organization and the model. Since the Njia model is significantly shorter than other vocational training options in Kenya, the program has met some skepticism whenever it first begins in any given community. However, Njia staff have found that once a center is established, word of mouth becomes increasingly important and youth often put their names on a waiting list before recruitment even takes place (Nikoi, Krause, & Foley, 2014).

It is during the road show stage that youth applicants are vetted and selected for participation in the program. Njia has put a number of requirements in place for participation in the program. Participants must be between the ages of 18 and 25 to participate in the program and must have a national ID (or be in the process of acquiring one). The national ID serves as a proof of identity and age, but is also a requirement to secure employment in the formal sector. As a result, youth must have a national ID in order to complete the internship (also called attachment) (step 6) part of the model. Youth who do not have a national ID are assisted by the Njia program to expedite this process but some youth (including at least one youth in this study) must wait for the next cohort to begin the program. In addition, Njia has instituted a requirement that youth be 'idle' for at least one year before participating in the program. In this instance 'idleness' is defined as being out of school and un- or under-employed for at least one year before

beginning the program. This rule was initiated because Njia staff found that youth who had experienced difficulties finding or maintaining employment were most receptive to Njia training (Nikoi et al., 2013). The vast majority of youth (though not all) are also secondary school completers; a condition that Njia found helps youth embrace the necessary vocational and work readiness skills.

Once youth are accepted into the program, they join cohorts (also called batches) and begin their training. The size of the cohort varies depending on the location of the center and the number of vocational fields they are offering, but at Sukumiza and Taharuki the cohorts range from 60 – 85 students. During the induction (step 4) youth are given life skills training and are assessed for their interests and aptitudes, a process that guides youth in the selection of vocational skills training areas. The life skills curriculum includes team-building activities that help youth learn how to work in teams and relate to other people. The curriculum covers topics such as time management, communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, perception and values, attitude and self-esteem, handling responsibility, money management, empathy and sensitivity, and AIDS awareness and sex education. In addition, youth are guided through the process of identifying and setting their own goals, both short- and long-term, and conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) self-analysis. Although these topics are taught in an intensive eight-day period at the beginning of the program, they are reinforced throughout the three months of classroom training.

Once youth have undergone the intensive life skills training and identified the vocational area they would like to study, they spend the next ten weeks learning pertinent

vocational skills (with additional life skills, financial lessons, and work readiness training interspersed) during the classroom-training (step 5). During this time youth are introduced to the basic concepts of the vocational field that they have chosen. The vocational skills taught are designed to be basic employability skills and to provide entry level opportunities in the fields taught in the program – hospitality, automotive, electrical, customer relations and sales (CRS), and industrial garment manufacturing (IGM). This is an important step as most youth not only have not had experience in employment in these sectors, but many were new to the basic tenets of the industries as well.

Njia aims to provide more than just the theoretical knowledge of the vocational skills; they want students to have grounded, hands-on opportunities to learn about the vocational fields. To do so, youth are given practical tasks in the classroom and are taken on excursions to different businesses. Njia also facilitates an attachment (internship) (step 6) in a related business. For instance, youth who study automotive might have an attachment in a garage where they are able to undertake apprentice type responsibilities, while youth in hospitality might get training at a small hotel or restaurant as a receptionist or waitress. Typically youth in this study underwent a one-month attachment that was in most cases unpaid or provided a small stipend to cater for their transportation or lunch. In a few cases the attachment led to longer-term employment with a steady salary.

During the classroom training and before engaging in an attachment, work readiness (step 7) training also takes place. This training introduces youth to the work environment and the expectations that employers typically have of their employees. Youth are taught how to dress for an interview and how to communicate with managers

45

or bosses. They are also taught about time management and the need to be reliable and trustworthy. In preparation for attachments and job placements, youth are taken through mock interviews so that they will know what types of questions to expect and are given assistance in how to develop curriculum vitae (CV).

Once the classroom training and attachment are complete, youth are guided through the placement (step 8) process. Given the difficult work environment that the newly minted Njia alumni enter, the ability of Njia to facilitate job placements is critical for many of the youth. While not all youth seek or require Njia's assistance, the relationship that Njia establishes with places of business provides needed legitimacy to the relatively short training period that Njia offers (as compared to other training programs in Kenya). Furthermore, Njia strives to follow-up with youth beyond their initial employment to find out how youth are doing, about the conditions of their employment and if they need any additional assistance.

The 9th and final step in this cycle is a program review during which time best practices and areas of change are identified. At different times stakeholders who interact with students and alumni have provided feedback on which parts of the program are most beneficial and which areas need to be expanded or adapted to better reflect the Kenyan communities and economic markets in which the program works. In centers that are well-established, these parts of the model feed back into the first two steps – the market scan and curriculum development – as well. As a result, the program as described by youth in Chapter Four has experienced changes, some large and some small, in the curriculum and

the way the program interacts with the community. I have chosen to describe the program as the youth who are part of this study experienced it.

Since its inception in Kenya, the program has worked as a non-formal education provider, establishing its own centers, creating its own curriculum around the ESK model, and hiring its own staff. As with other youth training and empowerment programs, Njia focuses primarily on economic empowerment as the pivotal outcome. For the program, this does not mean simply that you will find jobs, but rather they will acquire tools that help them to "fight poverty". Thus their description of economic empowerment assumes skills development that will lead to "economic growth, poverty alleviation, youth empowerment and social & financial inclusion" (Njia Foundation, 2010, p. 8). These goals reflect an emphasis on economic well-being with a recognition that it is necessary to go beyond that for youth empowerment to take place.

Njia established its first center in Kenya in 2011 in Taharuki, a middle income community situated on the eastern side of Nairobi. After Taharuki successfully graduated its first cohort, the Sukumiza center was established. Since then Njia has added an additional 14 centers located throughout Kenya from Mombasa to Kisumu. Both Taharuki and Sukumiza were established as what Njia calls 'demonstration centers.' The purpose of demonstration centers is to demonstrate the ESK model and prove its effectiveness to multiple stakeholders, including local and national government officials, community leaders, business people, youth, and their parents. The remaining 14 centers include additional demonstration and replication centers. Njia replication centers are housed at YP or TVET campuses and work in partnership to replicate the ESK model.

47

Replication centers follow the ESK model and Njia curriculum but also collaborate with the host YP or TVET through giving life skills lessons to YP/TVET students (Nikoi et al., 2013). Njia benefits in this process through name affiliation with the YP and by accessing certain components of the technical training. The connections that Njia has established with official government vocational training centers underscores the emphasis within Njia on being a vehicle for vocational training and economic empowerment.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how a growing youth population is contributing to an increased emphasis on youth empowerment programming in Kenya and the need for further research to explore how youth who are part of this population trend experience the process of empowerment. The chapter provided a brief discussion of important conceptual elements of the study including consideration for the term youth and an exploration of how empowerment is being used and defined. I situated youth experiences within the Kenyan context by examining the historical and contemporary educational systems, particularly with regard to secondary and vocational education, and youth programming. I also laid out the goals for my research by including the research purpose, research questions, and an introduction to the site of study. In Chapter 2, I will situate the study within the relevant literature on youth livelihoods, well-being, and empowerment.

Chapter 2: A Review of Youth and Empowerment Literature

In this chapter I explore how scholars conceptualize different but overlapping dimensions of empowerment and the impact of these dimensions on marginalized youth's engagement and development. Much of the work that has been done in youth empowerment has focused on educational and co-curricular opportunities in Western countries. In African contexts, the literature on youth tends to focus instead on livelihood and technical training opportunities. The empowerment literature based on African settings, on the other hand, places its main emphasis on community empowerment and development (particularly in rural areas) and on gendered dimensions of empowerment (Mutuku, 2011). In constructing this review of studies that inform how I conceptualize youth empowerment in this study, I focus on bodies of literature that consider how instrumental and intrinsic skill development promote empowerment and the subsequent impacts on people in marginalized areas.

Zimmerman (2000) indicated that the study of empowerment should be understood from two distinct approaches: first, as an approach to social change which speaks to the role of organizations and individuals in the empowerment process; and second, as a theory that emphasizes empowerment as a process and an outcome. Even though the primary concern of this research is with theories of empowerment, it is also important to have a clear understanding of how youth empowerment is understood and practiced by programs that work with urban African youth. I therefore begin by examining literature that considers the intersection of *youth livelihoods and empowerment*. These studies provide a scholarly understanding of empowerment

approaches to social change by examining how the transition from youth to adult, together with programs and policy, impact youth experiences with empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). I then situate my research within literature that speaks directly to some of the shortcomings found in the *youth livelihoods and empowerment* literature. This scholarship focuses on youth livelihoods through a lens of *human capabilities and concepts of well-being*, with particular attention to the ways in which this approach has been applied to entrepreneurship and vocational training. Finally, I turn to studies that incorporate concepts of well-being and youth livelihoods in empowerment theory. The *multiple dimensions of empowerment* scholarship presents empowerment models useful for establishing a youth empowerment framework to better understand the role of empowerment in youth's lives. I also incorporate literature on aspirations and relationships that elucidate gaps within the models.

Youth livelihoods and empowerment

In the past two decades there has been a growth in the number of organizations, government programs, and scholars who consider the process of youth engagement and empowerment in development contexts. Much of that interest derives from the perception that a burgeoning youth population poses a problem for nation-states and communities and increases potential risks and instabilities (Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2010). Mabala (2011) indicated that much of the scholarship and development initiatives in youth livelihoods lump youth into categories that negatively portray youth as a whole. One prominent perspective is the "youth bulge" theory, which identifies youth as a destabilizing force that, if not handled appropriately, will engage in negative endeavors

such as criminal activity or political insecurity (Hope, 2012; Mabala, 2011). The response to the fear of potential insecurity by many in international development and in government has been to focus on getting youth engaged in the market economy and in developing the nation state. This human capital approach could be seen most recently through the re-invigoration of the National Youth Service (NYS) in 2015, which President Kenyatta stated was a renewed commitment to the goals of the NYS of 1964, which had, "an objective of empowering our young people to enable them to be part of nation building… And today, 50 years after independence, that still remains a core responsibility" (Kenyatta, 2016). The approach generally focuses on various configurations of youth livelihoods, employment, education, and empowerment and are primarily dependent on vocational or entrepreneurial training, which are all deemed pathways to engaging youth in the economic marketplace (Chigunta et al., 2005; Sommers, 2007).

Scholars who write about youth livelihoods and empowerment tend to push back on negative portrayals of youth. Their scholarship centers on the nexus of youth livelihoods, youth development, and youth empowerment with an emphasis on alternative ways to consider youth needs and their life situations. They do this by using youth-centric approaches that put youth responses both to how they are perceived and to programming that is designed to empower them at the center of their analysis. Relying upon their experiences working with youth in sub-Saharan Africa, Mabala (2011), Hope (2012), and Sommers (2007, 2010) countered the negative portrayals and generalized assumptions of youth by breaking down stereotypes and contextualizing youth lives in their lived

51

experiences and their networks of belonging. Further, they argued that a broader understanding of youth lives might impact how programming opportunities are developed. Kabiru et al. (2013) and Mutuku (2011) also pursued a youth-centric approach by incorporating an interpretivist stance that emphasized youth's perspectives of their empowerment needs, hopes, and aspirations. This centers the discussion of youth empowerment on youth's lives instead of on categories or concepts that youth might not recognize in their own lives.

These youth-centric approaches were used to propose new approaches to youth programming and youth policy, which *youth livelihoods and empowerment* scholars believe have thus far been ineffective. These scholars argued that ineffectiveness in youth programming is connected to a general lack of understanding of youth backgrounds and urban contexts by program funders and policy makers (Hope, 2012; Kabiru, 2013; Mabala, 2011; Mutuku, 2011; Sommers 2007). To be more effective, these scholars suggested that programs need to do a better job of gaining youth's trust by engaging them directly in the planning and implementation of programs, which would lead to more comprehensive contextual understandings of youth lives (Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2007). A more robust, contextual understanding would then allow organizations and governments to develop policy that is more holistic in nature and would account for the multiple needs in youth lives (Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2007).

Youth livelihoods and empowerment scholars recognized that youth programming designed to address the economic constraints youth face is critical to the process of youth empowerment. As a result, their definitions of empowerment underscored the importance

of employment and entrepreneurial training. As such, poverty is identified as the main source of marginalization for youth, and economic empowerment is identified as a primary solution. Despite this, *youth livelihoods and empowerment* scholars also argued that economic considerations cannot be the sole emphasis of youth empowerment and should be understood in relation to other ways in which youth experience dis-empowerment (Hope, 2012; Kabiru et al., 2013; Mabala, 2011; Mutuku, 2009; Mutuku, 2011; Posti-Ahokas & Palojoki, 2013). Lack of integration into the political sphere, societal misgivings about youth, an inability to engage civically, instability in their living conditions, negative self-perceptions, and economic marginalization were factors that scholars have indicated are implicit in considerations of youth empowerment (Kabiru et al., 2013; Mabala, 2011; Mutuku, 2009; Sommers, 2010). According to Hope (2012), Sommers (2007), Mabala (2011), and Mutuku (2011), programs that fail to address other forms of marginalization or disempowerment are not adequately serving youth.

Mabala (2011) identified the failure to "account for the real wishes of youth" as one of three reasons programs fail (the other two being a haphazard, small-scale approach and a lack of contextual specificity) (p. 157). Likewise, Sommers (2010) believed that youth needs could only be addressed when programs listened to youth-identified priorities for their transition toward adulthood. At the end of his study based on Rwandan youth, Sommers (2012) identified three policy recommendations, all focused on favoring youth priorities, needs, and perspectives. His recommendations were: 1) to conduct research on youth majorities, taking into consideration their priorities and perspectives, 2) align policies with youth priorities, especially in settings where the populations are

heavily youth-dominated, and 3) consider whether youth leaders are representative of youth majorities (Sommers, 2012). These studies cited a clear need for additional youth-centered research that foregrounds youth's priorities and contexts.

Aspiration was also an important theme amongst the youth livelihoods and empowerment scholars. Kabiru et al. (2013), in a study on the role of youth aspirations among Kenyan youth, remarked that: "The transition to adulthood is marked by refinement of self-concepts and life aspirations" (p. 81). The experiences that youth in their study had and the opportunities they were afforded had a large impact on the development of aspirations and their subsequent life trajectories. Kabiru et al. (2013) noted that literature on aspirations in the US indicates that socio-economic status may limit (or expand depending youth's situation) youth's expectations for their lives and thus impact their aspirations. Their findings, however, suggested that living in an informal settlement in Kenya did not seem to have the same deleterious effect on youth. Instead, youth sought out multiple ways to attain their aspirations. Engaging in education, religious activities, or youth programming played a prominent role in helping youth keep their expectations in line with their aspirations. The implication of this for youth empowerment is the role that educational opportunities and social belonging may play in giving youth confidence that their aspirations can be achieved regardless of their life circumstances.

A discussion of the role of aspirations in the transition from the state of being a youth to adulthood is instructive for my study as well. Scholars such as Sommers (2010, 2012), Farrell (2015), and Mabala (2011) highlighted the importance for youth to

successfully attain identified benchmarks in the transition from the social status of youth to becoming an adult. These benchmarks included supporting family members, marriage and having children, building a home (especially in their rural homes), and becoming economically independent (Farrell, 2015; Sommers, 2012). In his 2012 study, Sommers suggested that as youth were unable to meet these benchmarks they were stuck in a liminal state of being a youth and therefore failing at adulthood. This liminal state then contributed to a sense of hopelessness amongst the youth.

Within this body of literature there is an underlying emphasis that both governments and civil society should play a more active role in engaging youth economically and through empowerment (Hope, 2012; Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2007, 2012; Mutuku, 2011). I turn now to two studies within the *youth livelihoods and empowerment* literature that offer new directions for youth policy and programming. Hope's (2012) study examined a number of initiatives undertaken by the Kenyan government and other development agencies to incorporate youth into Kenya's national development. While acknowledging the efforts to engage youth in empowerment opportunities, Hope argued that empowerment can only take place when government and non-state actors work to provide youth with an enabling environment that addresses attitudinal, structural, and cultural processes. Similarly, Mutuku's (2011) study aimed to identify what youth thought the role of the state and NGOs should be in the process of empowerment. The underlying sentiment in both studies was that empowerment is something that takes place through youth programming, either through the government or private sector. I chose to highlight these two studies because they illustrate

commonalities among the scholars in this literature with regard to the connection between employment and empowerment and the need to expand beyond this notion.

Hope's (2012) proposed model of youth engagement and development centers on a nexus of empowerment, education, and employment. While Hope lauded Kenyan government youth empowerment efforts (including the KKV, YEDF and KYEP), he argued that they do not do enough for youth and that efforts should instead incorporate what he calls the "three Es": empowerment, education, and employment. These three components were integrated to create a framework for youth engagement because they "offer the best possibility for arriving at outcomes that give the youth a potentially good start for better long-term livelihoods" (Hope, 2012, p. 227). In this model Hope differentiated empowerment from employability and education in a way that others in the *youth livelihoods and empowerment* literature do not. Despite this, empowerment is not seen as an end in itself but rather the means to achieve employment or education.

Empowerment, Hope (2012) argued, will take place when three conditions are reflected in both policy and practice: there is an environment where youth feel free and safe to express themselves; youth have an ability to participate in activities that are meaningful for youth's lives; and finally, youth experience shared leadership. It is through these three components that Hope believed youth will become empowered and develop what they need to become competent adults. Hope further explained that empowerment was "a process that strengthens and activates the capacity of the youth to satisfy their own needs, solve their own problems, and acquire the necessary resources to take over their lives" (2012, p. 227).

56

Education and employment were the second and third components of Hope's (2012) model. He proposed that beyond empowerment, youth need access to education that focuses on skills acquisition, and, accordingly he believed that the TVET institutions were the best way to accomplish this because they are integrated into the national education system and are a familiar institution in Kenya. His model assumed that by gaining technical or vocational education and training, youth would be readily employable. At the same time, he argued that it would not matter if youth were empowered or had gotten skills through varying educational processes if they were not able to subsequently be employed. Citing Kenyan government initiatives such as KKV, Hope indicated that the public sphere is not sufficient for job creation and that both economic growth and increased entrepreneurship in the informal sector will be necessary. While Hope recognized that there needs to be change in the economic structures in Kenya for youth to be able to gain employment, he did not engage in a discussion of the types of employment opportunities youth would gain with vocational training and whether or not this employment would provide youth what they need to attain their life goals.

Hope did not equate empowerment with education or employment. Instead, empowerment was one aspect of a three-pronged approach to youth engagement. This stands in contrast to the ways that empowerment is described by the programs he assessed and in public discourse,[5] where empowerment is nearly synonymous with employment or entrepreneurship. Instead, his model emphasized that empowerment is

---

[5] See, for instance, news coverage of youth programming where the terms empowerment and employment appear inter-changeable. In Waikenda's (2013, July 10) article the headline reads "Let's revisit Youth Empowerment Marshall Plan to create jobs for youth" where as the story is in reference to the Youth *Employment* Marshall Plan.

achieved as the perceived locus of control shifts and youth gain the confidence necessary

to make decisions in their lives. Based on this notion of intrinsic empowerment, Hope

(2012) indicated that:

> Youth can be considered empowered when they themselves acknowledge that
> they have created, or can create, choices in life, are aware of the implications of
> those choices, make informed decisions freely, take actions based on those
> decisions, and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. (p. 227)

Although Hope's definition focused on intrinsic aspects of empowerment, he stated that

his broader construct of youth engagement was reliant on empowerment working in

tandem with education and employment.

Hope's (2012) study provided a way to conceptualize the role of intrinsic

empowerment with skills development for youth policies and programming. Mutuku's

(2011) study, however, reframed the discussion to emphasize Kenyan youth perspectives

on empowerment. Mutuku aimed to build on the progress that had been made by the

Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MOYA) and the Kenyan National Youth Policy in

promoting policy and programming for youth. Her study sought "to explore youth's

subjective views on what the community and public institutions can do to empower them

to live better lives and to contribute to Kenya's development efforts" (2011, p. 22). An

explicit purpose of the study was to help policy makers contextualize and understand

youth perceptions of their needs as they formulate policy and programming. Using youth

voices and perspectives, she considered the types of actions that could or should be

undertaken by the government or NGOs in response to what youth are saying.

After conducting focus groups and surveys with 81 urban Kenyan youth, Mutuku (2011)

identified six different youth viewpoints of what would be most important to them for

empowerment. Table 1 names the six viewpoints and synthesizes what youth prioritized in the empowerment process.

Table 1 Perspectives on Empowerment from Mutuku's (2009, 2011) Study

Name of viewpoint	Defining beliefs of each viewpoint
Academician	Curriculum should be revised to make skills compatible with market needs and be introduced earlier in the education system.
Qualification based employment	Employment should be based on qualifications instead of experience. Youth were less concerned with changing the job market and more concerned with whether or not those who were qualified had opportunities.
Laborers	Labor standards and working conditions needed to be improved and more opportunities established to develop youth talents.
Protectors of public property	Public property should be protected so wealthy individuals could not use it to their own advantage.
I am able	Individuals should think about positive and creative ways to personally solve problems.
Build cultural centers	Cultural centers would be a place where youth could develop their talents and use them to increase their income.

(Developed from Mutuku, 2009)

The first three youth-identified viewpoints aligned well with notions of instrumental empowerment, and emphasized revising education for skills development, increasing the opportunities for skill-based employment, and reducing nepotism in hiring. The fourth view point turned toward social and political aspects of empowerment and focused on increasing transparency in government and equal distribution of resources. It was in the fifth viewpoint of empowerment that youth focused on intrinsic empowerment. Mutuku labeled this as "I am able" because it was the area that focused on the ability of youth to be problem solvers. The sixth aspect that youth most identified with also related to the belief that youth can take ownership and responsibility for themselves, and

emphasized a desire for spaces whereby youth could explore their talents and build their qualifications. In examining these six viewpoints, it was clear that youth valued both instrumental and intrinsic empowerment processes, but that emphasis remained on developing skills that would bolster opportunities in the marketplace. However, it is important to note that youth were responding to prompts about how other entities could empower them. By framing it in this way, Mutuku placed the emphasis on programming and organizations or governments and away from the youth experiences.

Hope (2012) and Mutuku's (2011) studies are useful for my study because they highlighted how youth engagement and empowerment were envisioned for and by youth. The *youth livelihoods and empowerment* literature also informs my study through the recognition that there are personal and community factors that impact youth experiences with empowerment. The age of youth, their gender, level of education, urban or rural setting, and peer influence were all identified as factors that need to be considered when addressing how youth experience empowerment (Chigunta et al., 2005; Kabiru et al., 2013; Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2007, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 1, the age range covered by the term "youth" is vast. Chigunta et al. (2005) cited studies that show that youth on the younger end of the spectrum have fewer opportunities to use the marketable skills they have learned once they complete vocational programming. Kabiru et al. (2013) and Mabala (2011) also suggested that the age of youth impacts their abilities to engage with and enact the skills and knowledge that are emphasized in vocational empowerment programs.

Gender is also a factor that impacts how youth experience empowerment. Sommers (2010) indicated that most programming for youth is developed in response to the experiences and needs of male youth, and therefore fails to take into account how these experiences may be different for female youth. Participation in empowerment or vocational programming, or the ability to enact the skills learned in said programming, may be impacted by female youth's feelings of safety in the community or the program, difficulties in accessing childcare if they are young mothers, or simply feeling unwelcome in male dominated spaces. Female youth often faced difficulties both with respect to age and gender, which prompted Mabala (2011) to coin the term "genderation." This reflects the reality that female youth experience the transition from youth to adulthood differently. They may feel disadvantaged in "youth" settings where male youth often dominate, and at the same time may feel excluded from "women's" settings where older women dominate (Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2010, 2012).

This body of literature situates youth livelihoods into African contexts more broadly and within an urban Kenyan context more specifically. It illuminates the multiplicity of challenges youth face while also challenging the discourse that places youth in a negative light. Scholars in this literature recognize that youth needs, dis-empowerment, and potential empowerment must be understood as multi-dimensional. A final important contribution of this body of literature is that it highlights the different ways in which youth from diverse backgrounds may experience not only the process of being a youth and transitioning to adulthood, but also the process of empowerment.

61

Youth livelihoods and empowerment scholars argue that in order for youth programming and policy to truly be effective, there needs to be a better contextualization and understanding of youth perceptions of their empowerment needs, and my study aims to address this need. However, in order to do so, it is necessary to look beyond youth livelihoods approaches, which place significant emphasis on skills and education for entry into the labor market. With assumptions about how vocational or entrepreneurial training will impact youth, scholars in this group often fail to critically examine whether or not the types of skills youth receive are sufficient to help them attain their goals. Furthermore, there is little discussion of the types of jobs that would be available once vocational skills have been achieved and whether or not those opportunities align with youth aspirations. In short, they assume that getting into the workforce is the primary avenue to becoming successfully empowered. To address this short-coming, I now turn to scholarship that broadens the base from which to understand youth perceptions and needs.

Human Capabilities and Well-being

Scholarship has emerged that questions human capital orientations to youth livelihoods in development settings. This scholarship shifts the focus away from a production oriented, economic emphasis on youth livelihoods towards an emphasis on human development and the development of capabilities among individuals (DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014; DeJaeghere & Lee, 2011; Powell, 2012; Walker, 2012). Much of this scholarship is informed by the capabilities approach and notions of well-being espoused by Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1993), and focuses on the role of vocational and

entrepreneurship education in improving youth well-being. Although youth economic needs continue to be a focus among these scholars, their emphasis is situated in a broader understanding of youth well-being. This approach emphasizes the role of individual capabilities, defined as "opportunities which enable us to choose and to live in a way we find meaningful, productive and rewarding individually and collectively to the good of society" (Walker, 2012, p. 388). It also focuses on functions, or the actions individuals take (DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014; Sen, 1993). Capabilities are thus the building blocks that inform an individual's actions and the ultimate functioning with which they engage (DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014; Walker, 2012).

While Sen has not identified specific capabilities that lead to well-being, Nussbaum (2003) identified 10 capabilities deemed critical to individual well-being. In a review of the capabilities approach that included a discussion of the differences between Nussbaum and Sen's conceptualizations, Robeyns (2005) listed these capabilities with a caveat that the list has undergone revisions at different times. She indicated that the critical capabilities were "composed of the following 10 categories: (1) life; (2) bodily health; (3) bodily integrity; (4) senses, imagination and thought; (5) emotions; (6) practical reason; (7) affiliation; (8) other species; (9) play; and (10) control over one's environment" (Robeyns, 2005, pp. 104-105). It is within the *human capabilities and well-being* literature that the larger evaluation project from which this study draws is situated.

Within this body of literature, there is an emphasis on different types of capabilities that can improve well-being among individuals. One of the primary capabilities that this group of scholars identified as contributing to human development is

the capability to make valued choices regarding one's life and livelihood. In an examination of a youth entrepreneurship program in Uganda and Tanzania, which is part of the larger three-country evaluation project from which my study emerged, DeJaeghere and Baxter (2014) used a capabilities approach to underscore the differences between youth who undertake entrepreneurship or small business enterprises out of necessity and those who engage in entrepreneurship because it is a choice that they value. Walker (2012) referred to this as the capability for practical reasoning, whereby individuals have the opportunity to reflect on and plan for their future. The combination of reflecting on one's opportunities and future and the ability to make valued choices is an opportunity for youth to think and act beyond their immediate economic needs. This reinforces Walker's position that the capabilities approach recognizes that "income alone cannot capture the full range of contributions to the state of well-being in a person's life" (2012, p. 388).

Powell's (2012) study on vocational training in South Africa took the capability for practical reasoning a step further and highlighted the capability to aspire, which she linked to vocational education's ability to demonstrate new opportunities for youth's livelihoods. This notion of capability to aspire is similar to Appadurai's (2004) discussion of capacity to aspire, which will be described below. Findings from the Njia evaluation project in the years after youth had completed the program indicated that Njia youth valued both increased capabilities to choose and to aspire as they took action to make informed decisions about not only employment and money-making opportunities, but also the steps necessary to achieve other life goals (Nikoi et al., 2013; Nikoi et al., 2014).

It is clear through the evaluations that not only were youth's capabilities to make valued choices improved; their capabilities to work and improve their livelihoods were impacted. Youth credited the Njia program for enabling this through the instruction not only of vocational fields, but also through lessons in life skills, communication skills, and conflict resolution (Johnstone et al., 2012).

Powell's (2012) use of the capabilities approach to examine vocational education in Africa is also an opportunity to consider the role vocational education can play in addressing human development and well-being, rather than human capital. Through interviews with 20 youth who were enrolled in South African vocational training institutions, Powell found that the effectiveness of VET had to do, in part, with youth's willingness to reimagine possibilities for their lives. Since vocational training was often not a youth's first choice, they needed to first reimagine the role that vocational education could play in their lives. The youth in Powell's study identified several outcomes of participation in the program that went beyond placement in the economic marketplace. These included empowerment through increased self-confidence and self-respect, as well as a way to earn the respect of others. In addition, youth were able to see new possibilities for their future.

DeJaeghere and Baxter's (2014) study is also informative in that they emphasized the ways context influenced youth abilities to pursue well-being. They noted that the capabilities approach "provides a framework for illuminating the role of social, material and institutional conditions in mediating how young people convert skills learned in entrepreneurship education programmes into livelihoods and future well-being" (2014, p.

62). Like scholars in youth livelihoods and empowerment, they recognized that not all the youth in their study were able to achieve the same functionings, or engage with entrepreneurship, in the same way. For DeJaeghere and Baxter's study, these contextual factors were understood through the material conditions of youth and their families and the social relations they sought to maintain. These factors influenced the reasons behind the decision to pursue entrepreneurship and ultimately the potential effectiveness of their efforts.

One of the critiques of the capabilities approach has been that it is focused too heavily on the individual and does not give sufficient attention to social structures or the ways in which individuals are socially embedded (Robeyns, 2005). There are, however, scholars who have argued that the capabilities approach can be used to explore how social structures and societal relations impact capabilities and functionings. The studies by DeJaeghere and Baxter (2014) and Powell (2012) addressed the structural constraints youth faced and the way these constraints affected their capability for practical reasoning and their capability to aspire. Furthermore, DeJaeghere and Lee (2011) used the capabilities approach, together with feminist theories of empowerment, to examine marginalization and empowerment in a study on education and well-being in Bangladesh. Of particular relevance to my study was their finding that family and community support were important in determining how girls were able to experience the capability for social relations. Social support such as supporting girls' physical safety and recognizing the importance of education, and social structures, including relevant educational systems, were important contributions to the ways in which youth could aspire to or achieve

certain capabilities.

The human capabilities approach provides a way to understand how youth well-being is impacted by participation in vocational and entrepreneurship education. However, this approach stops short of exploring the role of empowerment in youth's lives. Well-being and empowerment are certainly interrelated. An improved well-being may contribute to a sense of empowerment; and increased empowerment may impact a youth's well-being. Nevertheless, I contend that well-being is not a sufficient proxy for understanding empowerment because empowerment is not a state of being but a process that youth undergo. In recognizing the relationship between capabilities and empowerment, Murphy-Graham (2012) stated: "I would not go as far as to suggest that well-being is a requirement for empowerment. Rather, empowerment is one of many processes that lead toward improving self and social conditions" (p. 21). In order to more fully explore this process of empowerment, I turn to literature that illustrate how empowerment is understood in multi-dimensional terms.

Multiple Dimensions of Empowerment

Scholars in the *multiple dimensions of empowerment* literature situate empowerment as both a process and an outcome that impact multiple aspects of a person's life. In identifying various dimensions that contribute to individual empowerment, scholars emphasize that these dimensions are inter-related and often rely on each other to inform empowerment. They also highlight how power (or the lack thereof) influences the process of empowerment as an individual experiences a change from less empowered to being more empowered. In this review, I present three models

that are useful to understand how youth in my study conceptualized and experienced empowerment. In addition, I draw attention to crucial aspects of youth lives that are missing in these models.

In differentiating between empowerment approaches and empowerment theory, Zimmerman (2000) proposed three dimensions of empowerment theory: organizational, community, and psychological. Organizational and community empowerment reference the ways in which organized groups of people enact empowerment. Organizational empowerment is described in two different ways. Empowering organizations are those that assist individuals in exerting change in their lives, while empowered organizations effectively push for changes in policy or practice. Community empowerment refers to communities that actively seek improvements or rally to avoid elements that might be detrimental to the communal good. It is the psychological empowerment that is most useful for this study because of its focus on how individuals experience empowerment.

Psychological empowerment refers to the processes that impact change within an individual, particularly through their "beliefs about one's competence, efforts to exert control and an understanding of the socio-political environment" (p. 46). Zimmerman further breaks psychological empowerment into three components. These three components serve as a model for empowerment that is frequently used in community psychology. First, the interpersonal component refers to the ways in which an individual perceives his or her own competence. Second, the interactional component includes the skills that are needed by individuals to enact social change. The third component, behavior, reflects the actions that individuals take in order to effect social change

68

(Zimmerman 2000; Christens, 2012). These three components are understood as empowerment by how they are enacted in order to effect social change (Christens, 2012). The perspective that empowerment's purpose is for broad-based social change renders this model insufficient for conceptualizing youth empowerment within the context of this study.

The second approach to empowerment provides a backdrop for my initial conceptualizations about youth empowerment and is centered on the concepts of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment as described by Ross et al. (2011) and Shah (2011). Instrumental and intrinsic empowerment offered a mechanism through which to better understand the role of educational programming in youth empowerment. In their studies of schoolgirls in India and China, instrumental empowerment focused on the practical needs of girls, including access to schooling, literacy, numeracy, and other tangible sets of skills and knowledge. Intrinsic empowerment, on the other hand, was understood to include changes in how girls understood themselves, including self-confidence and self-awareness, and how they related with other people. These were particularly useful constructs for my study in light of the Njia curriculum. Ross et al. (2011) situated the discussion of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment firmly in cultural practices that impacted girls. In doing so, they highlighted which aspects of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment were most useful given the changing social environment in which girls in their study lived. Furthermore, the study emphasized the role that caring relationships played in girls' empowerment. Although their conceptualizations of instrumental and intrinsic empowerment continue to influence the

way this study is framed, it was in using Murphy-Graham's (2012) model of empowerment that I was able to investigate how these conceptualizations were understood in youth's lives.

Murphy-Graham's (2012) empowerment framework served as the primary model I used to examine youth empowerment during my preliminary analysis of the data from the first three years of the evaluation project. Although components of Murphy-Graham's model have similar characteristics to Zimmerman's (2000), she approached her study from a critical feminist standpoint whereby she highlighted the ways in which participants' identities (in her case women) and their circumstances impacted how empowerment was experienced. Murphy-Graham built upon previous work by scholars such as Stromquist (1995, 2002) and Rowlands (1997), who also highlighted the need to look at multiple dimensions of empowerment in a more holistic manner. Her framework is an opportunity to analyze the ways in which youth valued and experienced intrinsic and instrumental elements of empowerment. Although Murphy-Graham (2012) identified three distinct components of empowerment within her framework, she stressed that they are inter-related and at times overlap. Recognition, the first component, referred to the way in which individuals developed new ways of thinking about themselves and others. Such intrinsic empowerment dimensions as self-confidence, self-awareness, changed thoughts about one's abilities, and an open mind were all encompassed within the idea of recognition. In addition, recognition included an increased awareness of the worth of other people, which Murphy-Graham tied closely to Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities concept of affiliation. As individuals' self-awareness and self-value increases, their

ability to view the worth of others is also increased.

The second component of Murphy-Graham's (2012) framework was capacity development, which encompassed both technical and cognitive capacities. Technical capacities in Murphy-Graham's study were evidenced through accounting or agricultural techniques. In the context of my study, this is evidenced through vocational and financial literacy skills. Cognitive capacities also included the ability to think critically about one's self and community. In addition, it included the opportunity to think more broadly about one's life and opportunities. Women within Murphy-Graham's study talked of having their mind opened through participation in the program. These increased cognitive capacities were evident in a preliminary analysis of Njia youth as well.

The third component of Murphy-Graham's (2012) framework was action. She argued that the changes women experienced in the recognition and capacity development components were not sufficient if they were not accompanied by the ability and opportunity to enact those changes. However, Murphy-Graham noted the importance of recognizing that while some action took place fairly quickly, for instance some women became more actively engaged in community meetings, other change was incremental and happened over time. Changes in inter-personal relationships and division of household labor were two examples of change that tended to be slower and more incremental. Murphy-Graham emphasized that the ability to enact change and take action may be impacted by social structures that impede or facilitate certain types of action.

Although Zimmerman (2000), Ross et al. (2011), and Murphy-Graham (2012) all proposed frameworks that recognized that empowerment takes multiple forms and is

71

enacted in different ways, the role of power in the process of empowerment was understood differently in these three models. Zimmerman (2000) linked empowerment with social power rather than authoritative power. This social power, he argued, has the ability to influence community agents and decision-making processes in society. Murphy-Graham (2012) also rejected notions that power and authority are synonymous. Instead, her focus was on power as capacity, in which an individual's ability to act is affected by whether or not personal or structural change are taking place. Ross et al. (2011), however, used Rowlands' (1997) conceptualization of power-within, whereby increased self-confidence and self-esteem led to changes in how girls viewed themselves; and power-with, whereby empowerment was experienced in relation to others.

Rowlands (1997) suggested that in many empowerment frameworks, the role of power is downplayed and de-emphasized, not only in considerations of gender, but also with regard to race or class. To better understand the importance of power, she identified four different types: power over, power to, power with, and power within. 'Power over' was identified as the type of power used to create situations of disadvantage and marginalization. In 'power over', power is assumed to be the authority or domination that one person has over another. If the power structure should change, the balance of power would also shift and negatively impact the current holder of power. In the other forms of power, it is not assumed that for one person to become empowered means that another person has to go through the process of disempowerment. Rather, 'power to' is described as a productive power that allows for new possibilities; 'power-with' allows people to

work together to achieve structural or cultural changes within society; and 'power-within' refers to an individual's development of self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Murphy-Graham (2012) extended the discussion of power by maintaining that in many conversations on gender and empowerment, the underlying premise is that women's empowerment is necessary because of their disempowerment relative to men in society or family and national structures, and that this leads to unnecessary struggles over who has or should have power. Through her study of women in non-formal education programs, she argued that this approach to empowerment placed undue emphasis on situations of dominance and 'power over'. Instead, Murphy-Graham used 'power as capacity' as a lens from which to understand how both men and women are disempowered due to societal norms and expectations. This emphasis on the relational nature of power and the focus on 'power to' or 'power with' can be transferred to youth empowerment as well. Power as capacity offers a way to consider how empowerment takes place as youth experience the "creative ability that individuals have *to do* something, rather than a dominance that is wielded over others" (Allen, 1999 as cited in Murphy-Graham, 2012, p. 17, emphasis in original). In youth empowerment this may translate to the way in which youth experience their transition to adulthood.

These models help to illuminate youth experiences with empowerment, but there are two significant ways in which they are insufficient to understanding the experiences and conceptualizations of empowerment that youth in my study expressed. One of these is the way most of the youth think about or imagine future possibilities. Appadurai's (2004) conception of 'capacity to aspire' is helpful in understanding this process for

73

youth. The 'capacity to aspire' is defined by Appadurai (2004) as a culturally-grounded, navigational capacity that allows people to imagine and hope for aspects of their future. He argued that people who have a lower socio-economic status tend to have less ability to navigate this capacity or to imagine new opportunities. He further theorized that although discussions of goals, wants, and needs can seemingly be individualistic, the capacity to aspire is inherently connected to cultural norms and expectations. He stated, "Aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 67). Because the capacity to aspire is culturally and socially grounded, not everyone in a society aspires to the same things, and as a result not everyone can navigate the same situation in the same way. It is for this reason that Appadurai calls aspirations a navigational capacity. The more expansive the capacity to aspire, the better able individuals will be to navigate different possibilities and opportunities. For this reason he identified aspirations as a directive for empowerment: "Here empowerment has an obvious translation: increase the capacity to aspire, especially for the poor" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 70). By incorporating the capacity to aspire into empowerment, he suggested that individuals would be able to see new possibilities for their lives and take actions to achieve the desired change.

The second gap in the empowerment models described above is the way in which youth experience networks of belonging. While Zimmerman emphasized the role of social change on the community level and Murphy-Graham discussed social change as a possible and desirable outcome of empowerment, both models failed to explore different

ways individuals are socially embedded within their families and communities. To address this, Christens (2012) proposed relationships as a fourth component to the psychological empowerment model. He offered this addition to the model in response to criticisms that empowerment theory, in general, has neglected "more communal processes and outcomes that are also important to power and perceptions of power" (p. 115). Identifying ways in which relationships impact experiences with empowerment is important for a robust conceptualization of empowerment. However, the concept of psychological empowerment still fundamentally identifies empowerment as a construct for individual growth.

In proposing a critical youth empowerment theory (CYE), Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger, and McLoughlin (2012) highlighted the importance of belonging for adolescents. Their theory built upon four separate models for youth empowerment in the US and Canada. Although these models of empowerment were targeted at a younger age group (typically adolescence, variably described, but usually between 12 and 18) than the youth in this study, their attention to the ways in which youth engaged with their community settings and with adult participants is pertinent to youth experiences with empowerment in Kenya. Throughout all six dimensions identified in the CYE (a welcoming and safe environment; meaningful participation and engagement; equitable power sharing between youth and adults; critical reflections on interpersonal and socio-political processes; and integrated individual and community level empowerment), the importance of healthy relationships between adults and youth was highlighted. Furthermore, the model encouraged active youth engagement in social and political

processes. Although this study encouraged the role of mentors and belonging in youth empowerment, the suggestions for implementation did not reflect the needs of older youth in an urban African context.

Both Christens (2012) and Jennings et al.'s (2012) work recognized the important role that caring relationships and interactions with others can have on empowerment processes, but neither placed existing relationships, social embeddedness, or networks of belonging at the forefront of their empowerment models. In order to more fully explore notions of belonging and the importance of family and community relationships on youth lives, I turn to a discussion of the concept of *ubuntu*, an Nguni word from South Africa that reflects qualities of humanness and intrinsically evokes a sense of belonging to a larger system. Over time the concept has come to be seen as pan-African, in part because variations of the word and concept exist in many Bantu languages in East and Southern Africa. Within Kenya the concept is translated as *umundu* in Kikuyu and *umuntu* in Kimeru (Kamwangamalu, 1999).

In his study of *Ubuntu*, Kamwangamalu (1999) identified two core values embedded in this concept: communalism and interdependence. He described *ubuntu* as communalism by stating that it "is a value according to which the interest of the individual is subordinate to that of the group" (para.11). In describing *ubuntu* as interdependence Kamwangamalu invoked John Mbiti, Kenyan philosopher and scholar of religion, by stating, "The essence of *ubuntu* is that an individual owes his or her existence to the existence of others. 'I am' because 'you are' and you are because I am" (para. 15). Although Kamwangamalu's article focused on South Africa, he used ethnographic

76

descriptions of the Gikuyu, written by Kenya's first president Jomo Kenyatta to

underscore the pan-African nature of the *ubuntu* concept. In his book *Facing Mount*

Kenya, Kenyatta offered an emic perspective of Gikuyu culture and in so doing

highlighted the family and community structure on which Gikuyu life during his lifetime

was based. As he concluded the book he highlighted the emphasis on the social fabric of

society by stating:

> According to Gikuyu ways of thinking, nobody is an isolated individual. Or
> rather, his uniqueness is a secondary fact about him: first and foremost he is
> several people's relative and several people's contemporary… The fact that in
> Gikuyu language individualism is associated with black magic and that a man or
> woman is honoured by being addressed as somebody's parent, or somebody's
> uncle or aunt, show how indispensably kinship is at the root of Gikuyu ideas of
> good and evil. (Kenyatta, 1962, pp. 297-298)

While not all youth who participated in this study were Gikuyu, Kenyatta's description of

the individual in relation to family, community, and in this case, age-set can be applied to

many of the cultural groups within Kenya.

Although variations on the word *ubuntu* can be found in various Kenyan

languages, the word itself is not frequently invoked within a Kenyan context. Rather, a

variety of words are used that relate to the values of *ubuntu* that Kamwangamalu (1999)

suggests, the most relevant of which have had political uses in unifying newly

independent nation-states and to describe development initiatives. *Ujamaa,* meaning

'familyhood' in Kiswahili, was used by Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania, to

encourage Tanzanians to work together to build the nation (Nyerere, 1971; Vavrus,

2000). Although the original meaning of the term, which extends beyond blood relations,

is still clear to Kiswahili speakers, the concept of *ujamaa* has come to represent

communal economics and African socialism. Likewise, *harambee* was a Kiswahili term used by President Jomo Kenyatta as a call to self-help. *Harambee* literally means 'let's pull together' and according to Mbithi and Rasmussen, "The concept embodies ideas of mutual assistance, joint effort, mutual social responsibility, and community self-reliance… The term is found in the languages of many tribes of Kenya" (1977, p. 13). After Kenyatta's invocation of the term, *harambee* became a national slogan and today frequently refers to a fund-raising event for a community (to build a school or hospital for example) or for an individual (for example to raise school fees).

The political nature of words like *ujamaa* or *harambee* makes them difficult to use to describe how networks of belonging impact youth. There are several other words that capture some aspects of *ubuntu*, including *umoja*, meaning unity or oneness, and *ujima*, meaning communalism. Johnstone, Nikoi, and Kahihu (under review) have used the term *uhusiano,* which means togetherness or relationship, to capture the important role that community networking plays in non-formal education settings. Our use of this term captures the value youth place in relating to others, whether it is the facilitators, mentors, or their peers as they proceed through the program. In this dissertation, I choose to use the Swahili word *undugu* in reference to youth's networks of belonging because it is a term frequently used within Kenya to establish a connection with other people, whether or not they are directly related by blood. Use of the term enters people into a relationship in which mutual support and dependence is fostered. In a study on urban migration in Tanzania, Kiaga (2007) described *undugu* as a:

> …form of kinship that is extended to include not only blood relations, as in the anthropological sense of kinship, but also those that share familial friendship,

ethnicity and 'tribal regions' as denominators, constructing and signifying relations among them. Among urban middle-class men and women, *Undugu* has been used to imply a sense of integration, belonging and commitment or obligation to the larger society. (p. 84)

This definition of *undugu* captures not only the support that youth receive from their networks of belonging, but also the sense of responsibility that comes from looking out for each other.

Although Kamwangamalu (1999) stated that communalism, and by extension the concept of *ubuntu*, might not be as prevalent in urban settings as in the rural areas, studies by Joseph (2013) and Farrell (2015) suggested that the familial and social networks in which urban youth belonged played a significant role in the opportunities they had and the decisions they made. This was true because the types of networks that youth were affiliated with impacted the life opportunities that they had both socially and economically. Although different from the family networks and extended social networks described by Kenyatta (1977) and others, Joseph and Farrell present compelling ways in which interrelatedness is present in urban youth lives. Joseph (2013) identified "familial belonging" as a central part of young women's identities in Botswana. Furthermore, the familial belonging youth experienced influenced the support or lack of support they received and significantly impacted their livelihood trajectories and the choices they made. While Joseph focused on the role of families in youth livelihood trajectories, Farrell (2015) indicated that youth who lived in Kibera, a huge informal settlement in Nairobi, could only thrive through establishing networks of belonging. She stated: "Youth survived mainly by developing social networks of support, whether they grew up in Kibera or were a recent arrival" (p. 70). These networks took multiple forms including

joints (also called *bazes*, see Githinji, 2006 and this study), which are informal gathering

places for youth where "young people began to learn how to hustle" (p. 72). Slightly

more formal were the self-help groups, and more formal still, the community based

organizations (CBOs). Included in networks that youth might join were non-

governmental organizations and churches. Regardless of the type of network youth

joined, Farrell found that being associated with these networks was essential to finding

livelihood opportunities: "Even *kibarua* [day laborer] work, the least desirable kind of

work invoking insecure day labor was advertised through word-of-mouth. Without a way

of connecting with others, youth could not find opportunities" (2015, p. 78). Njia, though

initially introduced to youth through some of these networks, also became a network

itself as their peer network and connections to mentors and facilitators increased through

program participation.

The notion of *undugu* and the role of networks of belonging are critical

components to understanding empowerment in the context of my study because they

situate and contextualize youth lived experiences. This central cultural construct positions

youth in networks whereby their empowerment processes are influenced by the support

they receive from and the responsibilities they bear toward those networks. Furthermore,

youth aspirations are culturally situated within the rights and responsibilities of *undugu*.

Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated how a wide range of literature has informed my

analysis of youth's conceptualizations of and experiences with empowerment. I began by

showing how *youth livelihoods and empowerment* literature identify the multiplicity of

challenges youth face and how personal and community factors may impact both the challenges and empowerment opportunities that youth have. I then demonstrated how the *human capabilities and well-being* literature expands the discussion of youth livelihoods beyond a discussion of human capital development to one of human capabilities that improve youth's opportunities for well-being. However, it does not encompass the full range of empowerment processes. Finally, I turned to the *multiple dimensions of empowerment* literature to assess empowerment models and explore both how they can be used to understand youth's lives and the limitations of those models. I also incorporated the concepts of aspirations and relational belonging as integral to the empowerment process.

My conceptualization of empowerment is influenced by each of these bodies of literature, and different aspects informed how the study was envisioned and the analysis of data. For instance, youth livelihoods and empowerment scholars stated the need to provide a contextual and youth-centric understanding of the empowerment process. The human capabilities and well-being literature influenced me in that it provided a way to explore the role of vocational education that went beyond human capital needs. However, it is within the last body of literature, on multiple dimensions of empowerment, where I situate my work. The studies in this body of literature provide frameworks to understand how empowerment is experienced in youth lives. The incorporation of aspirations and *undugu* provide for a broader framework from which to understand youth empowerment. Having demonstrated the way in which the literature informs this study, I now turn to a discussion of the methodological framework for this study and its design and methods.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In the previous two chapters I provided an introduction to the research problem and research questions, background information on Kenyan youth, and an introduction to the literature that informs my study. In this chapter, I provide an overview of my research methodology and the data collection processes. I begin the chapter with a discussion of my research design as a longitudinal, secondary analysis. I follow that with a description of the data collection process from 2012 to 2014 and during the final data collection period in 2015. I then discuss the process of sample selection and data analysis that took place over the four-year period. Finally, I turn to a discussion of research ethics and situate myself within the field.

Introduction to the Research Design

My dissertation research is a secondary analysis of data from a longitudinal study of Njia participants during the first four years of a six-year evaluation project conducted by faculty, staff, and graduate students at the University of Minnesota (UMN). From 2012 to 2015, the UMN conducted qualitative interviews with Njia youth, staff, and stakeholders. In addition, they collected quantitative data through demographic and spoken survey instruments. As a member of the evaluation team, I conducted interviews and collected demographic information during the four annual data collection periods. In 2012, the first year that interview data were collected, youth participants had just completed the coursework portion of the program and were either in or were awaiting placements in attachments. These same sixty-four youth were then interviewed again in 2013, 2014, and 2015. The interview protocol in 2012 (see Appendix A) focused on

youth experiences with learning and economic opportunities as well as their perceptions of the Njia program. In 2013, 2014, and 2015 the emphasis of the protocols shifted to gain a broader understanding of the changes in youth livelihoods and well-being. As a research assistant for three years, I also participated in the data analysis and report writing at UMN. Through these processes I developed a deep understanding of the ways in which youth valued their participation in the program and the impact it appeared to have on their life trajectories.

During the first three years of interviews, I listened to youth as they talked about the changes that had taken place in their lives with regard to their conceptions of themselves, their plans for their future, and their ability to take action on what they had learned through Njia. This prompted me to consider how empowerment processes might be understood in the context of youth lives. During the fourth year, 2015, I developed questions specifically tailored to explore youth conceptualizations of empowerment and how they saw empowerment within their own lives. These questions were then incorporated into the evaluation protocol and asked of all youth participants (see Appendix A).

Longitudinal Methodology

As a longitudinal study, this research was a unique opportunity to examine changes that took place in youth lives and the relationship of those changes to empowerment over a four-year period. Saldana (2003) indicated that there is no definitive length of time that constitutes a longitudinal study. Rather, he stated that longitudinal studies reflect on and explore changes that take place over a given time period. With this

emphasis on change, Saldana offered three sets of questions – framing, descriptive, and

analytic and interpretive – to guide the formulation of research questions, interview

protocols, and the analysis process. Framing and analytic and interpretive sets of

questions guide the analysis of data while descriptive questions help to inform the other

two sets. I used these questions as I went through the process of developing the study and

through different stages of analysis. The framing questions Saldana identified were:

"What is different from one pond or pool of data through the next? What contextual and

intervening conditions appear to influence and affect participant changes through time?

What are the dynamics of participant change through time?" (Saldana, 2003, p. 67).

These questions were useful in identifying trends and themes that were evident in youth

lives. For example, the identification of emerging trends among youth in their activities

and decision-making processes over the first three years provided the necessary analytical

background to formulate research questions centering on youth experiences with

empowerment. As I re-read interviews in a sequential manner (i.e. all three of youth A's

interviews, followed by all three of youth B's interviews instead of all of Year 1

interviews, followed by all of Year 2, etc. as I had previously done), this set of questions

gave me a new perspective and helped me re-structure my approach to the data using an

empowerment framework that addressed the dissertation research questions. This was a

critical step in the analysis. Since I had originally read the interviews by year for the

evaluation project, I had identified some general, overarching trends, including improved

financial security over time and changes in the types of goals that were being set and

achieved. However, by reading interviews sequentially, I was able to see how changes in

an individual's life influenced the way he or she thought about him or herself and his or her aspirations for the future.

The framing questions were useful in the processes in my early work with the data, but it was the analytic and interpretive questions that Saldana (2003) proposed that I found most useful in the later steps of analysis because they provided a guide for analyzing changes within individual lives and for identifying broader trends that emerged across youth lives. These questions examine the interrelationship of changes that take place within and between individuals. Saldana identified the following four specific questions to guide deeper analysis: "Which changes interrelate through time? Which changes through time oppose or harmonize with natural human development or constructed social processes? What are participant or conceptual rhythms through time? What is the through line of the study?" (p. 127). These questions guided an examination of how youth experienced and perceived change as they went through the liminal process from being a youth to becoming an adult.

Secondary Data Analysis

In discussing qualitative research using secondary data, Heaton (2008) identified three ways in which secondary data analysis is undertaken: formal data sharing, informal data sharing, and self-collected data. In the first two, data is collected by one researcher (or a group) and shared with others, either through a formal database or through mechanisms such as peer sharing. The third type, self-collected data, is presumed to be a set of data that the researcher owns and has collected herself but is returning to in order to answer a different question. This research project lies somewhere in the middle of formal

85

data sharing and self-collected data. On the one hand, data collected by many people on the UMN/Kenya research team were shared through the evaluation project. At the same time, I was intimately involved in the data collection and analysis process and returned to the data with a different set of research questions and assumptions. This new set of questions in turn sparked the collection of new data, which were then collected as part of the evaluation project and again analyzed as secondary data.

The analysis of data based on these new research questions and assumptions was a combination of what Heaton (2008) described as supplementary analysis and assorted analysis. In supplementary analysis the researcher takes a more in-depth look at emerging findings and reanalyzes them to address an emerging question. In assorted analysis the re-examination of secondary data occurs alongside the collection of new, or primary, data. Although I developed new interview questions to be included in the June 2015 data collection process, the responses to those questions and the standard evaluation questions were analyzed specifically with the research questions for this study in mind, the data remain a part of the overall evaluation data. Therefore, although new data were sought to analyze alongside existing data, the new data continue to be considered secondary data.

Seale (2011) and Heaton (2008) identified three primary concerns about the use of secondary data in qualitative research that the structure of my research project helps to address. Their first concern was that because qualitative data collection is a collaborative process between the particular researchers conducting the interview and subjects of the study, critical information and nuance is lost when someone other than the original researcher conducts the secondary analysis. However, this concern is moderated through

my participation in the collaborative process of interviewing, transcribing, and analysis, as I was on the interview team and worked closely with the research teams to capture the nuances of youth's lives as we transcribed the interviews. Seale (2011) and Heaton's (2008) second concern was with regard to 'data fit' and whether or not the data collected is sufficient to answer the questions raised in the secondary analysis. It is precisely because of this concern that I incorporated additional questions in the year four data collection protocol. These questions (see Appendix A) were designed to illicit additional information about youth's experiences with and perceptions of the empowerment process. While there was some discussion of this topic in previous years' interviews, it was not explicitly explored as part of the interview protocol.

The final concern Heaton discussed was related to broader questions of validity in qualitative studies (Heaton, 2008). In particular, Heaton indicated that there are scholars who believe secondary qualitative analysis is weakened because opportunities for validity checks of the data are insufficient. For instance, in secondary research a researcher may have fewer opportunities to take results back to youth to confirm what they had said or meant in an interview. However, Heaton questioned whether or not qualitative secondary analysis studies, as with other qualitative studies, should be subjected to the types of validity checks that might be found in studies that take a positivist approach, which assume one truth and that tend to utilize quantitative methodologies. Supporting her critique, Altheide and Johnson (2011) suggest that because the "social world is an interpreted world, not a literal world, always under symbolic construction" (p. 585), validity is a reflexive practice in which the research team, topic and analysis process

interact. As a longitudinal research project, my research incorporated opportunities for reflexivity, including through on-going conversations with the UMN and Kenyan researchers and the ability to take information from 2012 – 2014 interviews back to youth to make sure that their perspectives were understood by the research team. Prior to conducting an interview, team members reviewed memos from previous interviews, therefore affording interviewers the opportunity to ask youth for clarification or to seek further depth of understanding to previously expressed ideas. In addition, questions in the 2013 – 2015 protocols were structured to give youth space to reflect back on previous years' responses. The opportunity to have youth explore and refine their ideas was part of the larger process of synthesizing and analyzing their words and experiences, which were situated within a given community (local, national, and international) and time.

Data Collection

  2012 – 2014. From 2012 – 2014, data collection took place during a three to four-week period in June and July. Interviews were conducted with an initial sample of 64 youth who had been students at Njia and were in the final stages of the program at the time of the 2012 interviews. The 64 youth who were interviewed in 2012 served as the sample throughout the four years of the study. In subsequent years, though, the total number of youth interviewed declined because as youth engaged in work or schooling activities, or moved to different parts of Kenya to take advantage of different opportunities, they were often more difficult to contact or had schedules that made it difficult to conduct interviews.

During data collection, the evaluation team for the evaluation project was made up of University of Minnesota graduate students, who were called project fellows, staff, faculty, and Kenyan researchers. From the larger evaluation team, groups of two to three individuals made up interview teams and collected interview and demographic data. Within the interview teams Kenyan researchers took the lead in conducting the interviews and simultaneous translation (when needed), while the project fellows transcribed, took notes and probed for additional information and clarification. Everyone involved in the interview worked as a team to make sure youth felt at ease, to ask follow-up questions, and to subsequently review interviews for consistency. The make-up of teams varied by year. In 2012, under direction from Njia that all youth would be able to participate in the interviews in English, there were no additional translators available and the evaluation team was quite small (4 staff and students from UMN and 5 researchers from Nairobi). While it was true that the majority of interviewees were able to fully engage in the English language interview, some youth preferred to use Swahili or Sheng when they talked about sensitive topics and a few struggled to participate in English. As a result, a Swahili protocol and translators were incorporated into the process in 2013.

The Swahili protocol proved to have limited usefulness as it had been translated in Tanzania for a partner organization, where formal, written Swahili is significantly different than the informal, spoken Swahili used among Kenyan youth in Nairobi. It was far easier for researchers to translate the English protocols on demand to Swahili or Sheng as needed. Each interview team was also increased to three individuals – an interviewer and translator who were Kenyan researchers, and transcriber, who was a

UMN fellow or faculty – which significantly increased the size of the overall evaluation team to fifteen. The translator's presence was particularly useful for UMN fellows who did not speak Swahili. However, UMN fellows who spoke Swahili found that the presence of a translator interrupted the flow of the interview and at times truncated youth responses. In 2014 and 2015, therefore, fellows were given the option of whether or not they would work on a research team of two or three, with or without a translator.

The language used within interviews depended not only youth's proficiency with English but also on their comfort level and language preference. Since the Njia coursework is conducted in English and most of the youth had completed secondary school, youth had at least some level of proficiency in English and an English interview protocol was the primary interviewing instrument. Despite this, youth were encouraged to use the language with which they were most comfortable. Further, interviewers clearly stated that using any language was acceptable at any time; this allowed participants to flow between languages as particular words or phrases best described phenomena. In addition, memos based on previous years' interviews included notes about which language had been used in the past. Only a few youth conducted their interviews primarily in Swahili or Sheng. The ability to codeswitch between English, Swahili, and Sheng during the interviews was reflective of linguistic patterns among the youth in their everyday communications.

Language use was not only determined by youth's comfort levels but by the comfort level of the interview team as well. Kenyan researchers had differing proficiencies with Sheng and those who were most proficient were able to make youth

90

feel at ease, thus inviting its use at different times in the interview. Additionally, UMN fellows had different proficiencies with Swahili and Sheng, and this impacted youth language use as well. For instance, interview teams that included a Kenyan UMN fellow frequently relied more heavily on Swahili or Sheng than when the UMN fellow was not Kenyan. In the interviews in which I participated, my identity as a non-Kenyan who understood and spoke Swahili (with increased proficiency from 2012 to 2015) impacted language use. In many interviews, the ability to understand and speak Swahili was not necessary but in situations where youth either appeared to struggle with English or provided more elaborate answers when they responded in Swahili, I would indicate my ability to understand either directly by telling them I understood or indirectly by responding to them in Swahili. Although my ability to understand Swahili often helped to put youth at ease, it did not erase my outsider status. As a white American from a U.S. university (who was often the oldest person on the evaluation team), my presence, combined with the formal interview setting, at times put youth on edge, as evidenced by youth who provided brief answers to questions, but once the interview was over would begin to speak more freely to the Kenyan researchers in Swahili or Sheng. This was particularly true in the first few years when youth were unsure about the process or what was expected of them in interviews.

Prior to each data collection period, the UMN hosted a two-day training for the evaluation team in Nairobi. During this time researchers became familiar with the interview protocols and reviewed best practices for qualitative interviews. By 2015, there were four Kenyan researchers who had been working with UMN since the project began,

and they provided their experience and expertise in training new Kenyan researchers and new UMN fellows. This was also an important period for team building and getting to know one another.

2015 data collection. In June 2015, a fourth round of interviews took place as part of the larger evaluation project. In addition to the evaluation protocol (see Appendix A) that was developed by a team of University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and project fellows, including myself, youth at the Njia site were asked a sub-set of questions for the purposes of this research. The questions were developed to specifically engage youth in discussing their conceptualizations of and experiences with empowerment. Some of my committee members and I had concerns about the use of language in these questions and whether or not asking youth about 'empowerment' using the English term would be adequately understood by youth. At the same time, I was not sure that the Swahili equivalent (*uwezashaji*) would be a word commonly used in urban Nairobi settings. Upon arriving in Nairobi the week prior to data collection, I met with one of the research assistants, David, who had worked with the University of Minnesota since the project began in 2012. We discussed the term empowerment, and he offered other Swahili words that could mean or imply empowerment. These words, such as *kujijua,* which means to know oneself, or *kujiamini*, which means to believe in oneself, all appeared to reflect aspects or dimensions of empowerment rather than empowerment itself. In effect they were the types of responses I anticipated getting from youth when asked, "what does empowerment mean to you".

David also raised a concern that youth's understandings about "empowerment" would simply reflect common discourses about employment or making money. Unable to identify a suitable Swahili or Sheng word that would adequately invoke the same meaning, we opted to keep "empowerment" in the protocol and test the questions on other members of the research team. Because the Kenyan members of the research team were themselves youth (although they have more education and other employment opportunities than the youth of the study), we hoped that their responses would provide a sense of how youth would respond to such questions. However, when asked the interview questions, the research team responded fairly uniformly that empowerment meant to get a job. Secondly, we hoped that a larger conversation about the purposes of the questions would elicit new ways to frame the questions. As in my conversation with David, our conversation as a research team failed to identify alternative words that would get at the broad concept of empowerment without leading youth to privilege certain intrinsic aspects of empowerment. Toward the end of the conversation, David and other researchers who had been part of the project during the previous three years suggested that we might be underestimating the youth. After all, youth empowerment was something that had been increasingly emphasized within youth programming, and some youth had already used the term (in English) in earlier interviews. As a result, we maintained the word "empowerment" within the protocol but added additional clarifying questions to encourage youth to think more broadly about it. These questions were added to the protocol with the caveat that they were only to be used when youth appeared to have trouble grasping the concept of empowerment and its scope or gave answers that

were not reflective of their previous discussions of change in their lives. In the end, these clarifying questions were rarely used, as most youth were able to clearly articulate their views on and experiences with empowerment.

Prior to collecting data, it had been my intention that a Kenyan research assistant, Nahashon, and I would conduct the interviews of my selected sub-sample of 20 youth. However, the entire research team was trained on the purpose and intent of this sub-set of questions. This ensured that when youth from the sub-sample were unable to participate and when logistical difficulties arose in conducting interviews, there were additional youth interviews to include in the analysis. In the end, Nahashon and I conducted half (10) of the 2015 interviews from this sub-sample, while the remaining 10 were spread among the other four interview teams. Nahashon and I were unable to be part of the other interviews due to youth availability and logistical reasons. As a longitudinal evaluation, sample retention can be difficult to ensure from year to year. Of the original 24 who I had identified to be part of the sub-sample (detail on how these 24 were selected is provided below), only 17 were available for interviews in 2015. In order to have a representative sample, two additional youth were added to the sample, while one youth who had been interviewed in 2012 – 2014 remained a part of the sample because he had talked at length about empowerment in previous interviews. The final sample size was 20 youth.

Logistically, it was difficult to confirm youth interview times and locations. Since we wanted to accommodate youth to the extent possible, we were dependent on their schedules and availability. As a result, there were often times when youth availability conflicted, resulting in the need to interview more than one youth from the sub-sample at

94

the same time. If Nahashon and I were engaged in an interview when a youth from the sub-sample became available, other research teams stepped in to conduct the interview. Each of these interview teams carried their own identity in terms of Kiswahili and Sheng proficiency and insider/outsider status. Additionally, since many youth were engaged in schooling and employment, they were often unavailable during the day or had moved outside of Nairobi. In these situations, we relied on phone interviews, whose timings were often unpredictable, for two reasons. First, youth often scheduled a phone interview for a specific time but when the researcher would call them they might be in a location or setting that made the interview difficult and would thus request the interview be postponed. At other times, youth would become available on short notice and the interview would be conducted by whoever was available at the time. Since phone interviews were primarily conducted in Swahili and Sheng, Kenyan researchers or Kenyan UMN fellows who were available conducted the interview.

Finally, a significant portion of my time was spent organizing logistics for the entire evaluation team during the data collection period, and there were a number of unforeseen challenges with the data collection process. As the lead project fellow from the University of Minnesota, my role was to organize the UMN fellows during the interview and transcription process, as well as to liaise with the Njia data collection supervisor to set the interview schedules for youth, stakeholder, and staff interviews. The data collection supervisor's duties were to oversee the process, ensure that the logistics of each interview were arranged, coordinate the interview schedule, and pay data collectors. In the first week of the four-week interview period, the data collection supervisor faced a

number of family health problems and was unable to continue with her duties. As the lead project fellow for the evaluation project, I took on many of those duties to ensure that we would have an ample sample size both for the evaluation and for my dissertation. As a result, there were times when I was attending to logistics and unable to participate in interviews.

In 2015, interviews were conducted in different locations according to youth schedules. The majority of face-to-face interviews were conducted at either the Taharuki or Sukumiza site on weekends or other days when the programs were not in session. For many youth this was a convenient and comfortable location and provided them with an opportunity to reconnect with facilitators and other program staff. Other interviews were conducted in public places, such as restaurants and hotels that were convenient to youth's places of work or homes. All interviews were audio-recorded (including phone interviews), and Nahashon and I conducted the interviews I participated in.

Over the previous three years I had worked both in teams with an individual who provided simultaneous translation and teams without that additional person. I found that my Swahili skills were sufficient to allow me to understand and follow the interview even when I could not translate every word. I found that interviews when a third person as translator was not present were often more robust and flowed more smoothly. Even prior to the 2015 data collection, Nahashon and I had worked together often enough that I was able to signal him if I needed additional translation or clarification. In those instances, he clarified the content of the interview within the context of his follow-up questions. At the

end of each interview, we created memos to capture the themes of the interviews and worked together to accurately translate and transcribe the interviews.

Sample Selection

Before collecting data in 2015, I identified 24 youth for the research sample using data from 2012 – 2014. These youth were selected using purposive sampling from the initial sample of 64 youth at the two program sites in Kenya. Purposive sampling allowed me to have both a representative sample that assured equal representation of males and females according to the program site and also allowed me to be able to compare across different types of youth cases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). I began by identifying youth by gender and the sites in which they had undergone training. Within the youth livelihoods literature, there is significant evidence that the ways in which male and female youth experience education and empowerment differ (Mabala, 2011; Somers, 2010), and I wanted to ensure an equal sample size for male and female youth. In addition, I wanted to be able to explore whether or not the location where the youth live or come from impacted their experiences. Since all but one youth attended Njia at the site closest to their home, I selected youth to ensure equal representation within the sample. I therefore determined that it would be best to have six females and six males from each of the two sites.

After identifying the youth based on these criteria (gender and site), I reviewed previous interviews and eliminated youth from the sample who had been interviewed only once (therefore declining to be interviewed in subsequent years) or who appeared to evade the interview or certain questions. From this reduced sample I categorized youth

according to the type of training they had undergone. Although vocational training is not

my key research interest, the types of experiences, opportunities and challenges that

youth encounter are likely to be impacted by the vocational fields that they study or

choose to pursue (Nikoi et al., 2013). In addition, there are several examples of youth

who chose to participate in a field typically identified as suitable for the opposite gender

(i.e. male youth who chose to pursue hospitality or female youth who chose automotive),

and I felt it was important to capture their experiences and perceptions as well. Finally, in

reviewing youth interviews, I selected the final sample based on different life trajectories.

Some youth had gone on for further education; others were employed by others,

unemployed, self-employed, or a mixture of all of these. Having varied life trajectories

was important, as it would illuminate the ways in which skills and knowledge that are

encompassed in multiple dimensions of empowerment were or were not affiliated with

decision-making processes and pursuing life choices.

Data Analysis

Because analysis of qualitative data is an iterative process (Teddlie & Tashakkori,

2009), an initial analysis can arguably be said to have begun during the first data

collection in 2012 and continued at each step over the next four years. Although each

year's data were analyzed separately, these analyses informed the questions asked and the

types of information sought in subsequent years. As a result, the protocols from 2013 –

2015 were simultaneously a source of analysis and a tool for new information. Memos at

the end of each interview served as the first step of the analysis. Interview teams worked

together to create memos that captured key themes in the interviews as well as

information about youth's demeanor and important notes about the interview setting. As a longitudinal study, the process of creating memos was essential both for analysis and in the data collection process since memos were reviewed in subsequent years to remind the interview teams about the youth they were about to interview.

The second stage of analysis was through the translation and transcription of interviews. Each interview team was tasked with working together to translate and transcribe their interviews to ensure that not only were youth's words captured, but their meanings as well, particularly in instances where languages other than English were used. Kvale (1996) indicated that there are concerns about reliability and validity in the transcription process as oral interactions and expressions are transferred to a written format. By working with a research assistant to faithfully render translations that were not only linguistically accurate but also remained true to youth's intent, I was able to reflect on this process to make conscious efforts to accurately reflect youth's views (Tilley, 2010). At different times in the translation and transcription process in 2015, different members of the research team commented on how the meaning, urgency, or emphasis of youth's words were lost in the translation process. This was particularly true in cases where youth interjected Sheng terms. Although English or Swahili terms often existed for the Sheng, the use of Sheng in and of itself was often because the other languages did not capture the nuance or "sense" of what youth wanted to express.

In addition to creating memos, all interview teams met together regularly through the four week data collection period to debrief the interview process, address any problems that had arisen, and identify themes that were beginning to emerge. One barrier

to daily full-team debriefings was that the Kenyan researchers did not stay in the same apartments as the UMN fellows. Instead, they returned to their homes each evening. The interview schedule was also not conducive to daily team meetings. Because many of the youth worked or attended classes during the week, Saturdays became an important interview day. On each Saturday, the evaluation team went to one of the Njia centers and conducted interviews from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. We were unable to conduct meetings at the end of those days because of the security protocol under which the UMN fellows operated and traffic congestion. The safety protocol established by the UMN directed fellows to return to the apartment shortly after nightfall (approximately 6:30 p.m.) and due to traffic conditions, it was necessary to leave the centers by 4:30 p.m. At the same time, Kenyan researchers lived in different parts of Nairobi and returning to the fellows' apartments for a debriefing session would have meant that several researchers would have reached home very late at night. Since debriefing meetings were not possible on Saturday, they were held the following Monday. During the week, interview teams met daily to work on translation and transcripts or to conduct interviews. Uncertain youth schedules, however, meant that a multiple interview teams could be in different parts of Nairobi conducting interviews at any given time. The uncertain scheduling made it difficult to set regular, specific times when the entire evaluation team could meet. Despite, those challenges, the teams met at least two to three times each week.

In 2015, a discussion of the empowerment related questions was part of the debriefing and in our first meeting researchers discussed what had and had not worked in asking these questions. Ideally, I would have reviewed the first round of interviews

(about six) for consistency prior to that meeting, but given the additional responsibilities of coordinating the evaluation exercises there was not sufficient time to review transcripts before the meeting or before the next round of interviews took place. The team meetings thus served as an important setting for collaboration and establishing consistent approaches to the interview process.

After returning to Minnesota each year, data were coded through NVivo software and analyzed for emergent themes. Through that process I had, over the years, read all youth interviews in a horizontal manner; that is, I read all of Year 1 interviews in 2012, all of Year 2 interviews in 2013 and all of Year 3 interviews in 2014. Although the data from 2012 – 2014 were originally coded for the purposes of the evaluation project, I re-read, re-coded and re-analyzed all youth interviews prior to the June 2015 data collection. Re-reading the interviews vertically (i.e. all of youth #1's interviews followed by all of youth #2's, etc.) provided new insights to empowerment processes within individual youth's lives. The process of re-coding allowed me to re-examine the data using this study's research questions to better analyze youth's stories, experiences, and trajectories as they related to empowerment. Data were re-coded using the empowerment dimensions identified by Murphy-Graham (2012) as a base framework, broadly exploring youth expressions of recognition, capacity development, and action. Additional themes also emerged through this process, including Appadurai's (2004) notion of the capacity to aspire or imagine new possibilities and concepts of belonging, whether through immediate family, peer, or facilitator relationships within the program, or through ways that youth connected with others in different settings. After collecting, translating, and

transcribing the 2015 youth interviews, I coded the interviews from my sub-sample of youth using the codebook that I had developed prior to the 2015 data collection. Through this analysis I expanded the codebook to capture youth's descriptions of empowerment.

It is important to note that coding of interviews is not, in fact, the end of data analysis. Rather, it is a mechanism by which to organize data and identify emerging trends. This important step in the analysis process can facilitate deeper understandings of emergent themes, but it is not sufficient to read a codebook to conduct analysis. In addition to coding interviews in NVivo, I mapped youth trajectories according to their earning strategies, learning opportunities, changes in their families, and ability to achieve goals (see Appendix B). This process, along with taking detailed notes about each youth, guided my understanding of youth decision making-processes and the overlap between their aspirations and life activities.

In addition to mapping youth trajectories, I examined youth descriptions of empowerment by categorizing their responses and re-reading their transcripts according to these categories. The themes that emerged in youth resonses allowed me to identify major underlying constructs of empowerment. These themes included: empowerment as gained through knowledge and skills for the workplace; empowerment as confidence in oneself and one's communication abilities and and ability to relate with others; empowerment through self-knowledge and the development of personal characteristics; empowerment in decision-making processes; empowerment as evident in aspirations or hope for the future; empowerment as related to personal realtionships; empowerment and new ways of thinking; and the role of opporutnities in the empowerment process. With

102

these themes in mind I re-read and analyzed each youth's response to questions about empowerment to see how these various themes were present or were missing in their description or understanding. Through this process I was able to analyze areas where different conceptualizations of empowerment overlapped, as well as ways in which conceptualizations of empowerment might be in tension, even for the same youth. With a broader understanding of each youth's conceptualization of empowerment and having noted broad youth-identified themes, I then returned to other portions of their interviews to identify areas where conceptualizations of empowerment might be evident in their lives. In examining emergent empowerment themes through youth's lives, I identified four dimensions of empowerment that will be explored in detail in Chapters 4 – 7.

Research Ethics

As a secondary research study, the process of receiving Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was undertaken by the evaluation project each year. In 2015 the questions related to empowerment were incorporated into the IRB submission. In 2012, youth were taken through a consent process whereby they were informed about the evaluation process and the purpose of the study. They were told about their rights to withdraw from the study at any time during the five-year period as well as their rights to end the interview at any time. Youth were also assured that their information would remain confidential and that their responses would not impact their relationship with Njia. Although youth signed a consent form in 2012 indicating that they understood their rights in the study, the information was repeated at the beginning of each interview. From 2013 to 2015 consent to continue participation was verbal rather than written. Permission to

audio-record the interview was also sought prior to beginning the interview or starting the recorder.

Throughout this dissertation I have tried to remain true to both youth's words and their meanings. As much as possible I have retained youth's words as they were spoken in English, although some quotes required restructuring to give them better readability. In addition, there are some instances where I changed details about youth lives in order to retain confidentiality. These changes protect youth identity but do not fundamentally alter the meaning of what youth said. The Kenyans on the evaluation teams translated excerpts that were Swahili or Sheng into English, though there are some instances where I have left the Swahili or Sheng words in the text, with an English translation given in parentheses. This occurs in places where a good English translation either does not exist or would not fit with the flow of the sentence, or in instances where English translation does not capture the essence of what youth were describing. For example, youth frequently used the term *ushago* to refer to their rural, ancestral home. *Ushago* is a Sheng word for rural areas or area of origin, where extended families, sometimes including parents, live. *Ushago* connotes more than just a physical location, it encompasses a place of belonging and reference to a youth's 'rural home' or 'rural area' does not fully convey the meaning they attach to the word.

Over the four years of the study I have been involved in different discussions with the research teams about how the presence of foreigners impacted youth responses or their comfort level during the interview. Teams strove to make youth feel at ease throughout the interviews, but we were constantly aware of how the power dynamics

104

might shift by having a person from a U.S. university in the interview setting. Over time, youth seemed to become more comfortable with the process and a few youth commented that they looked forward to the interviews each year. However, every year there were youth who wanted to know what we, as an evaluation team and as representatives of the University of Minnesota, could do for them. Some youth asked about gaining admission to UMN while others wanted to know whether we could connect them with employment opportunities. In these situations the interview teams reviewed the role of the university as a learning partner and emphasized that we wanted to relay their concerns and experiences to Njia (anonymously).

Researcher Background

I came into my dissertation research with nearly 20 years of scholarly and practitioner work in East and West Africa. My first introduction to Kenya took place as an undergraduate student in 1995, when I spent ten months living in Kenya and was affiliated with the University of Nairobi. During that time I studied Kenyan history, politics, contemporary culture, and Kiswahili. That introduction propelled me into the field of African Studies, where I earned a master's degree and undertook an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the challenges and opportunities experienced by children and youth. During my master's program I continued to study Swahili, including through a Fulbright-Hays summer intensive language program in Tanzania, and focused my studies on politics and education in East Africa. After completing my masters I spent one year working in West Africa on educational exchanges. When I returned to

the U.S. I spent 10 years working first with the Institute for the African Child and then the African Studies Program at Ohio University.

I first became familiar with the Njia program in 2011, when I joined the team of scholars at the University of Minnesota who had been selected by program funders as a learning partner, which meant that while their role was akin to an external evaluator, the relationship built between researchers at UMN and staff at Njia was intended to assist the program in evaluating the impact of their organization on youth development. I was fortunate to join the project in its early stages and served as the lead project fellow for Njia data collection and analysis for three years. As a project fellow, I developed a working relationship with the staff and had the opportunity to listen to and learn from youth as they discussed their participation in the program and the changes that had taken place in their lives in the subsequent three years.

In each of the first three years (2012-2014), I conducted approximately twenty interviews with youth, stakeholders, and staff, coded all youth interviews (52-64 per year) and provided an initial analysis for the evaluation reports. It was through the process of hearing how youth's lives had changed over the course of three years that I framed my study to consider the process of youth empowerment over time.

It was evident from those interviews that there was a process unfolding that warranted further research. For instance, upon completion of the program, the youth discussed changes in themselves and the skills and knowledge they had gained in a way that reflected both processes and outcomes that correlated to the personal development and marketable skills they had learned. As youth described the changes they had seen

take place in themselves, the new ways they conceptualized their futures, and the opportunities and challenges they encountered in their communities, employment situations, and families, I became increasingly interested in youth's experiences with and perceptions of this apparent empowerment. It was clear that over time youth had placed more emphasis on skills and knowledge learned through life skills than on specific technical knowledge. For instance, youth had consistently highlighted their improved communicative abilities, increased self-knowledge, and self-esteem as contributing to changes that had taken place in their lives. At the same time, while improved technical skills were cited as necessary to becoming engaged in employment sectors, over time youth seem to place less importance on these skills (Eschenbacher, Nikoi, & Krause, 2014; Johnstone et al., 2012; Nikoi et al., 2014). In addition, I was interested in how the process of empowerment might be impacted by the ability or inability of youth to enact the intrinsic and instrumental empowerment they had described.

In my work with the evaluation over the four years of the study, I worked closely with Njia staff and became increasingly familiar with the organizational culture and dedication of the staff. Beyond the tasks of coordinating the annual data collection, I had the privilege of collaborating with one of the program coordinators to present the work of Njia at a conference in Nairobi in 2013. I also collaborated with the Executive Director of Njia to present the Njia model and youth's voices at conferences and in publications over the past two years. While a longer time in the field conducting the research for my dissertation might have been useful for this particular project, my long-term engagement

with Kenya gave me much needed understanding of the historical and contemporary context in which youth live.

Research Timeline

The data that were used in this study were gathered between 2012 and 2015, but the majority of the analysis undertaken for this study was in 2015. Although I had begun formulating my research ideas prior to 2015, my work to that point had largely been directed at the evaluation project. Table 2 provides a review of the work that was undertaken from 2015 to 2016. In early 2015, I began re-coding and analyzing the interviews from 2012 to 2014. It was during this time that I developed interview questions specific to empowerment processes and submitted them to the evaluation project. In May I arrived in Nairobi to attend to logistics of the data collection and gather background information about the program. I spent time at the Njia head office meeting with staff and the executive director and at the Taharuki site, where I observed two classes (an electrical class and a hospitality class). Data collection took place in June. During this time interviews were conducted and subsequently translated and transcribed.

Table 2 Research Timeline

Dates	Research Activity
March – May, 2015 **(US)**	• Re-coded previous youth interviews • Identified youth participants for sub-sample • Submitted research questions to the evaluation project for inclusion in IRB • Identified and had Skype conversations with research assistants
May – June, 2015 **(Kenya)**	• Collected background materials on Njia and Kenyan youth initiatives • Conducted site visits to Njia classrooms for informal observation to provide background

	context on youth experiences
	• Met with executive director of Njia to discuss the purpose of the research and parameters for Njia participation
June, 2015 **(Kenya)**	• Conducted, translated, and transcribed interviews • Initial analysis
July – August, 2015 **(US)**	• Completed the final cleaning of interview data • Coded interview data • Began to identify emerging themes and concepts
September 2015 – April 2016	• Continued data analysis • Writing and rewriting • Revision • Editing

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology that guided this dissertation research, the process of data collection and analysis, research ethics, and my research timeline. I began by describing how this study developed as a result of my participation in a larger evaluation project focused on the Njia youth training program in Kenya. I discussed my approach to the research using longitudinal methodology and secondary data analysis. My description of the data collection process highlighted how data was collected for the larger evaluation project and how questions specific to my research were integrated in 2015. I then detailed how I identified a sub-sample of youth from the larger evaluation project for this study. The data analysis discussion highlighted how analysis was an on-going process that started with research teams in the field and continued with further analysis on my return to Minnesota. I then provided a discussion of research ethics and how my background influenced my research interest in Kenya and shaped the data collection process. In the next chapter, I provide detailed information about the youth who participated in this study and an ethnographic description of the Njia program. I use

youth voices to discuss the Njia curriculum and present a model for youth empowerment that will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4: Positioning Youth's Lives in a Model of Empowerment

An exploration of youth conceptualizations and experience with empowerment should, first and foremost, begin with an understanding of youth lives and the setting in which their potential empowerment is taking place. Through situating empowerment in the context of youth lives it is possible to recognize the liminal state that being a youth encompasses. Many youth livelihood scholars have noted the uncertain nature of this stage of life, as youth move along a trajectory from being a child to taking on greater responsibilities associated with adulthood (Sommers, 2012). As is demonstrated in this chapter, youth in this study found themselves at an in-between stage after completing secondary school, but not yet able to engage in employment that would move them along the youth spectrum or in higher education, both of which would have been deemed ideal activities by the youth themselves and the people within their networks of belonging. Given the uncertainty of this stage of life and the different factors driving youth actions and decisions, there are numerous factors that impact the ability of youth to engage in employment or entrepreneurship opportunities, discover their interests, and make decisions regarding their lives.

I begin this chapter by introducing the youth of this study through a demonstration of common experiences and characteristics, and unique personal histories and trajectories. I then provide an ethnographic description of the Taharuki and Sukumiza Njia centers that situates them within their respective urban and peri-urban communities. I follow this with a discussion of the Njia curriculum through the perspectives of youth as they discussed aspects of the program that they identified as valuable in their lives. This

study does not intend to provide a thorough analysis of Njia's curriculum. Rather, this discussion will give detailed information that exemplifies changes that youth discuss in their lives and that are described in subsequent chapters. Finally, I offer a brief description of a model for youth empowerment that emerges from youth lived experiences and their conceptualizations of empowerment. My proposed model of youth empowerment is a contribution to scholarly understanding of the dynamics of youth empowerment in an urban African context.

Youth Backgrounds

As a longitudinal study, this research provides an opportunity to observe not only how the lives of the youth have changed over time, but also the ways in which they construct and apply empowerment principles to their own lives. In order to describe empowerment, youth often used their lives before participation in the Njia program (and before the research began) as a comparison marker for explaining changes that they were experiencing in their lives at the time of the interviews. Since Njia was positioned as a youth empowerment program, youth conceptualizations of empowerment were affected by what they learned in the program and the ways they applied those principles to their lives. To understand those changes and how empowerment was conceptualized, it is helpful to understand common characteristics that the 20 youth in this study shared at the start of the study. These characteristics reflect their life situations in the years leading up to, and during, their participation in Njia. Although youth were not interviewed prior to participation in the Njia program, they were specifically asked at different times over the four-year period about their lives before the program.

Youth in the study were between the ages of 19 and 25, though 90% of the youth were between 20 and 23. In selecting the sample for this study, I purposely chose an equal number of male and female youth from each of the two Njia sites (five males and five females). Both the sites of study and the sex of youth are evenly distributed among the ages, though the youth on either end of the age spectrum are male. I attempted to have proportional representation of male and female youth from each of the vocational areas. However, the limited number of female youth from the electrical field in the broader evaluation sample and sample attrition among female youth in industrial garment manufacturing made this difficult, especially in regards to maintaining confidentiality. As a result, four of the five females from the Sukumiza site studied hospitality. Since hospitality was taught at both sites, there are more youth from this field than from the others. Table 3 provides an overview of the sample distribution by site and field that youth studied. Although I do not provide an in-depth analysis of the specific vocational curriculum or comment on the effectiveness of a specific vocational track, the types of experiences that youth have, or the ways that they are or are not able to put certain skills sets into practice are affected by the vocational field of study and whether or not that field aligns with cultural notions of what is appropriate for male or female youth.

The majority of youth had grown-up in the urban or peri-urban areas of Nairobi, but two youth had moved to the greater Nairobi area shortly before participating in Njia. Of the 20 youth, 15 were living with their parents or other family members at the time of the first interview and only two indicated they were living on their own. One youth had married and was living with her husband. There were three youths who did not talk

extensively about their living situations so it was unclear where they had lived prior to the interviews or what their living situation was at the time of the 2012 interview.

Table 3 Distribution in site of study and field of study by sex

	Taharuki	Sukumiza
Hospitality	1 Male; 2 Female	1 Male; 4 Female
Automotive	3 Male; 2 Female	
Industrial garment manufacturing		1 Male; 1 Female
Customer relations and sales	1 Male; 1 Female	
Electrical		3 Male; 0 Female

One of the primary characteristics that was common to youth in the study was a lack of financial well-being. However, the degree to which youth faced financial difficulties varied. All but three youths had the means to study through secondary school, an indication that they or their families had some access to resources to pay for school fees and associated costs such as uniforms. A few youth indicated that they had been able to attend secondary school because they had received sponsorship through various organizations, and this would have eased the financial burden on their families. Despite this, none of the youth or their families had the financial capacity to pursue post-secondary education, even though several youth had received high enough marks to qualify for admission to diploma or degree programs. This was because fees at tertiary institutions, including government vocational training institutions, are higher than those at secondary schools. In addition, many youth had younger siblings who were still pursuing primary or secondary schooling and this impacted their options. For instance, Matthew, one youth in the study, described how his family's financial situation impacted

114

his ability to pursue further education: "I have been unable to achieve that [diploma] because I have a sibling behind me and my parents have school fees that have to be paid" (June 13, 2014). As was the case for many youth, the use of fees to study at a diploma or degree level would have meant that Matthew's younger sibling would have been unable to finish his or her secondary education.

In addition, youth who had lost a parent (35% of the study sample) highlighted the struggles they had meeting basic needs. Rose described how the difficulties she faced growing up influenced her goal to have a comfortable life:

> My life was uncomfortable. I grew up with a single mom; she really struggled a lot because my dad died when I was one year. Through that I've seen a lot of hardship. So it hasn't been a comfortable life. We have to have persevering needs. So I want a comfortable life in the future. (June 16, 2012)

Other youth discussed how the loss of a parent meant that there was a greater imperative for them to contribute to rent, provide food for the family, or pay for younger siblings' school fees.

A second characteristic that youth shared was their inability to find secure or stable employment or go for further education for the duration of at least one year prior to enrolment at Njia, which was part of the criteria for participating in the Njia program. As a result, youth frequently indicated that they had "just been at home," had been hanging out with friends in the neighborhood (with the implication that this was a negative behavior), or had been jobless. David's discussion of his life before participating in the program highlighted this point: "Before I joined Njia I was jobless, *nilikuwa nakaa kwa baze*" (June 16, 2012), which means, "I was just staying around the neighborhood." This and similar phrases were frequently translated as idleness, a concept brought up not just

by translators but also by youth and staff. Although 'idle' may have pejorative implications and suggests that youth did not engage in any activities, it was used more frequently when youth were neither engaged in employment that aligned with their long-term goals nor in educational activities. Thus, participation in free, non-formal educational programs such as Njia were viewed by many youth as an opportunity that gave them an alternative to idleness while building their skill sets and knowledge base. Many youth expressed concern that had they remained "idle" they could have become involved in drugs, drinking, prostitution, thievery, and other negative activities, and this concern was part of what propelled youth to join the program. David continued his discussion of his life before Njia by describing why he joined the Njia program:

> You know in life it is a must that I want to be in a better position than I was before I joined Njia. At least I want to gain something. To get my own job. I want to make a difference. (June 16, 2012)

Many youth expressed desires similar to David's and this provided them with motivation to join the Njia program.

Most youth had completed secondary school, which meant they had developed a certain level of expectation about the type of employment or education they would receive. Secondary schooling has long been assumed in East Africa to be a way to move beyond manual labor and the informal sector and into office or white collar jobs (Vavrus, 2005). This often drives not only youth's desires to complete their secondary degrees but also drives parents to support their children in their education whenever possible, even if it means neglecting other needs to do so. The assumption is that by educating at least one child through secondary school, the successful child will then be able to economically

116

contribute to the family, including through the payment of school fees for siblings. For many youth then, the concept of 'idleness' was not simply the inability to find *any* kind of work, but the inability to find the *right* kind of work – work that would be deemed suitable to a secondary school graduate and be an avenue through which they could contribute to their family and community well-being. Notions of what ideal post-secondary employment is has been noted by others scholars in East Africa. These ideals have been articulated by scholars for at least the past 10 years (Vavrus, 2005). David, for instance, described himself as just hanging out around the neighborhood, but later indicated that he had been working for *Kazi kwa Vijana* (KKV) doing road construction with groups of youth. Since work with KKV was viewed by most youth in the study as something that was neither ideal nor something that would enhance their future opportunities, participating in that activity was akin to being idle because payment only met the most basic needs and did not provide any opportunities for situational change for youth.

The inability to engage in employment or educational opportunities deemed appropriate for secondary school graduates contributed to a growing loss of hope amongst some of the youth. The role of hopelessness among urban African youth has been noted by scholars as contributing to a lack of direction and sense of disempowerment (Nalkur, 2009; Sommers, 2012). The anticipation for the future that many of the youth held as they completed secondary school gradually waned as they found themselves unable to compete in the marketplace or meet expectations of family

members who had invested in them. Nathan described the way his thoughts about his

abilities and about himself shifted after he completed secondary school:

> When I was in high school, I was good at [communication]. And due to the lack
> of exposure when I left school, when I didn't have anything else to do I would
> just go and idle. I didn't have anything that I was doing, so [that ability]
> deteriorated. So when I joined Njia, it's like [my communication ability] came
> back again and I was able now to know that I am still that same person that I used
> to be. It's not over within me. I can do it. It gave me that psyche, that confidence.
> [The confidence] was built up again in me because it was lost. For real, it was
> gone. (July 10, 2013)

Nathan demonstrated that the skills he had honed in secondary school and his self-

confidence waivered when he did not have opportunities to put them into practice. Other

youth described their life during that period as not having "much of a dream" (youth

interview, June 14, 2014), "not valuing life" because "it did not have something in store

for me" (youth interview, June 16, 2012), or having "no direction" (youth interview, July

10, 2013).

While many of the youth felt discouraged and as though they were losing hope

during the period before participating in the program, they were also determined to find

and take advantage of opportunities that would help them meet the expectations put upon

secondary school graduates and to achieve their own goals. For example, Peter indicated,

"initially I was so hopeless" during a period in which he engaged in informal work as a

driver, a position that he said "is not a profession." As a result, he joined Njia because he

thought "this was maybe going to change my life because I see it as a stepping stone"

(June 13, 2012). His approach was similar to many of the youth who saw their

participation in Njia as a way to continue making progress toward their educational and

employment goals. Feeling frustrated and stuck in life, a phenomenon identified by other

scholars as well, propelled them to join Njia, not because it matched their end-goal, but because they felt it would help them move to the next step (Sommers, 2012).

Although youth had many things in common before they participated in the program, each person's experiences and backgrounds were unique. Furthermore, as they left the program and began to put their skills and knowledge into practice their lives took very different and unique turns. Table 4 provides background demographic information on each youth. The table is followed by a brief discussion about each youth.

Table 4 Youth Demographics

Name	Sex	Site of study	Vocational area	Age in 2012
David	M	Taharuki	Hospitality	19
Keith	M	Taharuki	Automotive	23
Eric	M	Taharuki	Customer relations and sales	20
Michael	M	Taharuki	Automotive	22
Matthew	M	Taharuki	Automotive	20
Rose	F	Taharuki	Automotive	21
Sarah	F	Taharuki	Automotive	22
Susan	F	Taharuki	Hospitality	23
Martha	F	Taharuki	Hospitality	22
Grace	F	Taharuki	Customer relations and sales	22
Anthony	M	Sukumiza	Electrical	25
Peter	M	Sukumiza	Electrical	22
George	M	Sukumiza	Hospitality	21
John	M	Sukumiza	Industrial garment manufacturing	22
Nathan	M	Sukumiza	Electrical	22
Linda	F	Sukumiza	Hospitality	20
Abigail	F	Sukumiza	Hospitality	23
Elizabeth	F	Sukumiza	Industrial garment manufacturing	20
Dorothy	F	Sukumiza	Hospitality	20
Beatrice	F	Sukumiza	Hospitality	20

Description of participants. Above I provided an overview of commonalities that youth in this study shared. Below is a brief introduction to each youth with a

paragraph on how their networks of belonging changed over the four-year period and a second paragraph on their life activities and aspirations over the same period.

David. David was living at home with his parents when he began Njia. He found this frustrating because he felt that at his age he should not be a burden to his parents. Although he was not able to find full-time employment over the four-year period, he was still able to help his family by paying some of his brother's secondary school fees and providing food for his family. David began living alone in 2014 when his parents moved from Nairobi back to their rural home, but he was proud to continue making contributions to the family.

David struggled before participating in Njia. While he was in secondary school his father became unemployed, and David dropped out of school. He was determined, however, to finish Form 4, and after working in *kibarua* (casual labor) and for KKV for a while he was able to pull together enough funds to pay his way through the rest of secondary school. In 2012, David indicated that his main goal was to improve his life and to "at least be somewhere" (June 16, 2012). He also wanted to work in a three-star hotel before progressing on to a five-star hotel. After completing Njia, David worked part-time in the hospitality sector as a waiter for about six months. When that employment ended, he stocked shelves in a small shop for a brief period. He continued to search for employment in hospitality, but when he failed to find an opportunity, he decided to focus again on *kibarua* work, because he felt that he could at least make enough money to help his family. Due to his limited financial status, his goal to return to school for a diploma in hospitality remained elusive.

120

Keith. When Keith moved to Nairobi he stayed with a family friend. He had a wide peer network but found that when his behaviors changed (which he attributed to empowerment) his peer groups started to shift; some friends abandoned him and he made other friends. He remained very connected with his rural home and over time his extended family and community began to seek out his advice. He married in 2014.

During the Njia program, Keith started work each morning at 4 a.m. unloading trucks. When he first completed the program Keith wanted to become an automobile consultant, start his own charitable organization, and continue his education with a diploma course. However, after completing the program he started working at a manufacturing company and worked there through the 2015 interview. He tried to start up his own business a couple of different times but faced difficulty. During the 2014 interview, he talked about a small cyber café that he had opened, but in 2015 he had to shut it down because it had been robbed. Between the 2014 and 2015 interviews, he was renting land and ran a rice plantation with his father, and in 2015 he was still making plans to return to school part-time.

Eric. Eric valued the encouragement and support he received from his family, particularly his dad. He indicated that once he began engaging in positive activities, including Njia and working, the respect he had from his family increased. He was able to take care of some responsibilities, including shopping for goods at home and paying for younger siblings' school fees. Eric lived at home with his parents and siblings throughout the four years, but by 2015 he had started to assist in paying rent. Peers were an important part of Eric's life as well. He indicated that his age mates, particularly those

who were at Njia with him, provided him with motivation to keep searching for new opportunities.

Eric set a number of goals for himself, including attaining a diploma in CRS, becoming independent, and getting a job so he could save money to start a business. Once he finished the Njia program, Eric found employment as a sales representative for a local company. Although he worked at the same company throughout the four years, he never felt secure in his employment and felt that he might be let go at any time. Between the 2014 and 2015 interviews, Eric was able to start a new business, as a wholesaler of soap products. Although he had begun to make tangible plans for joining a diploma program, Eric instead used his savings to make sure that his brother graduated from Form 4. In 2015, he believed that he had re-saved enough to return to school within three months.

Michael. Michael came from a supportive family and in 2012 was living with his mother and brothers at his uncle's home. He joined Njia because they were not financially stable and he wanted to be able to find a job and support them. By the second year, Michael had moved out of his family's home and felt that this improved his family's financial situation. When he first became independent he invited an orphan from his community to live with him and was working to send the child back to school. The first thing he mentioned in his 2015 interview was that he had gotten married and had a baby. Because he was married, he was unable to support his parents as fully as he had previously, and at times they helped him with expenses.

Michael attributed his inability to complete secondary school to the low-wage, hard labor jobs that he was able to find prior to Njia. However, once he completed the program he found employment in a manufacturing company, where he worked throughout the four years of interviews. Despite working there for four years he considered himself a casual employee (meaning he had no contract or job security, but was expected to work every day). He was pleased that the work with the company facilitated his ability to live on his own in 2014.

Matthew. The support Matthew received from his family came in a variety of forms. He initially lived with his cousin, but after a few years went to live with his parents. He also had a child over the course of the interviews and by 2015 he found a place to live with the child and *mama mtoto* (the child's mother). His parents encouraged and advised him in different matters, and occasionally provided him with financial support after he started to take responsibility for his child. Matthew also had a peer group within his neighborhood on which he relied.

Matthew had a hard time finding employment after he finished secondary school. He indicated that he was just idle with other boys in his neighborhood and would sometimes work in *kibarua,* though he also made money by having a 20% share in another youth's business. Because of his experiences trying to find stable employment, his primary goal was to start his own business. He began working in a manufacturing company when he finished Njia and worked there for two years. Working at the company gave him the capital he needed to start a business, in which he sold shoes and handbags. Once it was established he hired another person to look after it while he was at work.

123

Unfortunately, the other person did not manage it well and he had to shut the business down. Around the same time he lost his job at the company. In 2015 he was 'hustling' to make ends meet and support his girlfriend and their child.

Rose. Rose was raised by a single mother and had a close relationship with her family. She gradually started to help her mom with household expenses, and was pleased in 2015 that she was paying for utilities, rent and other household expenses. Rose found her peer networks to be particularly important to her. Not only did those networks provide her with encouragement and moral support, she was also able to provide her peers with encouragement, and taught them some of the same skills and knowledge she had learned. Her church was also important to her as she participated in choir and other church activities.

In 2012, Rose imagined a comfortable life in which she would not have too many struggles. It was important to her that she be able to do something that would allow her to give back to her family. After completing the Njia program Rose worked for a few months at an automobile garage. When that contract finished she worked on short-term contracts in the CRS field; work she found to be a passion. After saving enough money, Rose decided to pursue a diploma in public relations. While doing that she engaged in small money-making activities, including selling *mandazi* (doughnut type snacks) so that she could help her mom with some of the basic expenses. After completing her diploma, Rose found employment in two different sales and marketing jobs and hoped that she would be able to study for a degree in public relations.

Sarah. As a married mother, Sarah's primary familial network was with her husband and child. It was her husband who encouraged her to participate in the Njia program, and encouraged her, over time, to start up her own business and consider returning to school. Her mother was also a large source of support and tried to help her find stable employment. The young women in her neighborhood were an important source of support for her in the first interviews, but in later interviews she also felt she was an inspiration to them. Although she moved out of her neighborhood in 2015, she still did business there because she considered it her "hood".

Sarah began applying her entrepreneurial knowledge even before she left school. She began by selling *chai* to her classmates and the Njia facilitators. She also made jewelry to sell in different places. As she completed the program she continued making jewelry, even as she found work in sales and promotions. She briefly tried other lines of work but decided she preferred sales and marketing and returned to those positions. By 2014 Sarah was well-established among employers in sales and marketing, and even though the industry is based on short-term contracts, she would often be called to start a new contract before the previous one had ended. In 2015 she indicated that in addition to the jewelry business, she had established a stall at the market where she was selling shoes and handbags.

Susan. Susan largely kept to herself and did not have a large peer network. Instead, she relied heavily on her mother. She was able to move out of her mother's house and pay for her daughter's nursery school while she was working, but moved back in with her mother when she decided to leave her job. Even when living on her own

Susan relied heavily on her mother's advice and encouragement. Although her peer networks were limited when we first interviewed her, by the fourth year Susan had become part of several different neighborhood and work related *chamas* and served as the treasurer for at least one of them.

One of Susan's primary goals when she was interviewed in 2012 was to make sure her daughter (and her future children) received a good education. She was pleased when she enrolled her daughter in a nursery school a couple of years later. Susan's first job after Njia was as a waitress at a small restaurant. She found the work conditions difficult and eventually resigned. She was hired to clean a business center and after working there for a year she was promoted to receptionist. Her work impressed her bosses and she successfully approached them with a request for a raise. With her income, she opened an education account at the bank for her daughter and was proud that she was able to contribute to her daughter's future education. In 2015, Susan decided that the long hours she was required to work at the business center took too much time away from her daughter. She also felt that the working conditions had gotten more difficult and so she resigned. At the time of the interview, Susan had moved back in with her mother and was contemplating what she should do next.

Martha. When she started the Njia program, Martha was living with her family in one of the informal settlements near Taharuki. She indicated that she was very shy and so her social networks were limited, but as she grew in confidence and was able to interact with others more freely, her networks began to expand. She had particularly good relations with her colleagues at work, with whom she started a side income-generating

activity. In 2014, Martha was able to provide enough for her family that they were able to move to a more secure location within Nairobi. By 2015, she had moved out of her parent's home and was renting her own apartment.

When she was interviewed in 2012, Martha had several goals that she was trying to achieve. She had given herself a five-year time frame and wanted to open her own hotel, depend on herself, help others, and be unique. After completing her attachment in hospitality, Martha was able to find employment as a housekeeper at a hotel in Nairobi. She continued working at the same hotel through 2015, but her positions there gradually changed: first to a room attendant, then she worked at the front office as a receptionist. In 2015, she and a few colleagues had decided to work together and start selling small toiletry items to customers on the side.

Grace. Grace lived with a tight-knit family and indicated that when she imagined her future, she imagined living with all of her family members. As a single mother, her parents and cousins provided support in caring for and raising her daughter. Grace also had good relationships with her neighbors, who provided Grace with assistance when she was looking for schooling opportunities.

Grace wanted to find employment that would cater for her needs and provide assistance to her family, but she also wanted to be a in a position where she could help other youth. After completing an internship that confirmed her passion for promotions and sales, Grace continued on to work full-time with another promotions company. After saving enough money to return to school, Grace took some time off of her job to focus on completing a diploma. After completing her diploma she realized that she was not

127

interested in sitting in an office, working on a computer all day. As a result she went back to the company she had worked for previously. She was so determined that this was the right path for her that she declined a job offer that would have provided her with more stable income, but would have required her to sit in an office. In making this decision, she had an opportunity to go into business with her mother, brother, and uncle.

Anthony. As the oldest child of a single parent, Anthony felt close to his family but also felt a lot of responsibility for his younger siblings. He had a supportive peer network and an aunt and uncle who helped him when he moved from their rural home to Nairobi. As he became more established within Nairobi, he began supporting his siblings by paying their school fees. He also started to contribute to activities in his rural home area.

When he was first interviewed, Anthony indicated that his primary goals were to become self-employed and to help his siblings. Although he studied electronics, his work in the electrical field was sporadic. After experiencing the uncertainty of the field he sought more stable employment. He found work at a manufacturing company and worked through the 2015 interview. He also started his own enterprise selling vegetables. While it was a small side business initially, it gradually grew and in 2015 he had his own stall in the market and plans to expand it even further.

Peter. Peter took his role in the community very seriously. As a Form 2 student he started a youth ministry organization as a way to promote peace and understanding, and he continued to do this work after Njia as well. He also used social media to connect with youth to spread his messages about peace. He indicated that the community he grew up in

was very diverse and he learned to relate well to a variety of people. This is why he is passionate about talking to young people and encouraging peace.

After completing Form 4, Peter had a difficult time securing employment. His main source of income, both before and after Njia, was through *kibarua*. Once he had completed the certificate in electrical, he was able to find *kibarua* work with electrical contractors. Although this work was not very reliable, it provided him with enough income to continue with his work with youth. In 2014, Peter had gotten his driver's license and found a job delivering water to people's homes. Although this provided him with a bit more income, he wanted to have something more stable. To do so he went into business with his brother and purchased a car so that they could bid for tenders delivering goods to different companies. Peter wanted to have plenty of opportunities to give talks to youth, encourage them, and mentor them. He hoped that he would somehow be able to turn his work with youth into a stable income so he could focus more fully on those efforts.

George. George is the youngest in his family and benefited from the assistance of an older brother and sister who assisted him financially when he was struggling. He valued the financial assistance, encouragement, and advice he received from them, his parents, and cousin. George also valued the role his friends played in his life. George met with his friends on a weekly basis to exchange ideas and give each other encouragement. Their experiences also provided him with inspiration. In 2014 and 2015, George assisted his parents in starting and running a business. In addition, when his father, and later his mother, fell ill, he paid their medical expenses. In 2015 he was married and had a baby.

When George was interviewed in 2012, he was engaged in a variety of odd jobs; he worked at a car wash on the weekends and worked with *Kazi kwa Vijana* doing tree planting and road construction. Shortly after the 2012 interview he started his first job in a hotel as a waiter. When that contract ended he went on to a second hotel. During that time he completed a diploma in ICT and soon afterward found employment in the field. The position was a big step for George and he saw both his salary and his standing within the community increase. In addition to his job, George opened up his own car wash and employed other youth to run it. Beyond his employment goals, George was particularly interested in being able to give his children what his father had been unable to give him – education beyond secondary school.

John. In the first two interviews John did not share very much about his family, although they were supporting him during that time. In 2012 John indicated that he had previously had problems relating to others, especially other youth, but subsequently stated that after learning life skills in Njia he was able to more easily relate with others. He found peers in the marketplace who assisted him in establishing his photography business and other peers who encouraged him to apply to the on-line research company. In 2015 he was pleased that he was no longer a burden on his family and that he was able to support his sister as she finished Form 4.

John joined the industrial garment manufacturing sector because he had long had an interest in fashion and felt that he would learn useful skills that would be transferrable to fashion. He hoped that by working with a manufacturer for a few years he would save up enough money to open his own business centered on fashion. However, after losing

two different contract jobs because the companies shut down unexpectedly, John decided he would focus on other opportunities. He used the money he saved to open a photography business; a business he felt would give him the freedom to pursue other things as well. He found a job doing on-line research and advanced quickly in that line of work. By 2015 he had concentrated his efforts on the work with that company and felt that he was finally in a position where he could save the money he would need to return to school.

Nathan. Nathan was living on his own when he was interviewed in 2012. Although his parents sometimes gave him a few shillings for lunch, other times they were unable to do so. Nathan indicated that his parents were supportive of his different efforts and provided financial assistance when they could. At the same time, Nathan wanted to get into a better financial position so he could help his younger sisters if they were admitted to a university after secondary school. Nathan was actively involved in different aspects of his community; he had mobilized youth at church to share their life experiences with younger youth who were still in school, and he volunteered with NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBO) as a peer educator.

Prior to attending Njia, Nathan's volunteer work as a peer educator provided him with a lunch allowance and money for transportation. After completing Njia, Nathan embarked on several different opportunities. For a brief period he worked with an electrical contractor and through that he met a property owner who hired him to manage his rental properties. Nathan completed a diploma in community development, which led him to a position as a program manager with an NGO. He enjoyed this position because it

was a way to interact and impact youth in his community. In addition, Nathan started his own business selling electronics. At the time of his final interview Nathan was balancing all three positions – real estate manager, program coordinator, and selling electronics.

Linda. Linda was an only child in her family, a situation that she recognized as unique. She also realized that this status opened up additional opportunities for her at this stage in her life. She felt that she had a responsibility to make a difference in her community because she did not have younger siblings who would need her help. At the same time, Linda's parents faced some financial challenges over the period of the interviews, and, as an only child, she felt as though she had the responsibility to assist them. Linda also had peer networks to which she was connected. She was able to get support from some of her friends but she enjoyed encouraging and empowering other youth through church and music.

When asked to describe the life she imagined for herself, Linda indicated that she would like to be happy, which she further explained as being successful in her career, being able to educate her future children, and helping others to achieve the same things she had. Linda appeared to have more work experience prior to Njia than most of the other youth. However, she also described the many challenges, including sexual harassment, that she faced as she tried to maintain jobs. After completing Njia, Linda went to live with an aunt in coastal Kenya. While there she worked at a supermarket and discovered that she had a passion for learning about new places and new languages. When she returned to Nairobi she started and ran her own business for a brief period and

then decided to return to school. During the 2015 interview she was enrolled in a diploma course in public relations.

Abigail. Although Abigail's parents lived in the rural area, they still provided significant support to Abigail and her son. While she participated in Njia, her parents provided her transportation fees and gave her advice on what her next step could be. Abigail was also well connected within the neighborhood where she lived. In 2012 she reported that she had recently become the chairlady of a youth hawker group that was established to help youth save and start a business. Her friends also provided her with important information about where to find job opportunities. When she finally found steady employment, she helped her brother return to secondary school by paying his school fees. In addition, she assisted her parents by paying for food, clothes, and other household items.

Abigail's primary goals throughout the four years of the study were to start her own business and continue with her studies. Since Abigail had not completed secondary school, she had a hard time securing steady employment both prior to and after Njia. Between 2012 and 2014 Abigail was able to find short-term work with different manufacturers, but this work was neither consistent nor reliable. In 2014 she indicated that she was home taking care of her child. During her 2015 interview, however, Abigail's situation had begun to change. She had found employment at the front office of a local hotel and had a steady income.

Elizabeth. Elizabeth placed a lot of value on the peer relationships she had developed through the Njia program. She credited friends (and her mom) with helping

her to gain confidence and overcome her frustrations in working with the sewing machines. While she talked about the role her family played in supporting her (and her supporting them when she had enough income), it was her peer and community networks that she talked about most openly. Elizabeth joined an acting group that acted within the community and considered additional business opportunities to engage in together. She was also part of a group formed by members of her church and neighborhood that was seeking business opportunities that they could do as a group. In 2015, Elizabeth talked about the support she received from her family as she completed her diploma course.

Although she had studied industrial garment manufacturing, Elizabeth was unable to find employment in that field. Instead, she worked for a few months in a hotel and then worked on an assembly line for a manufacturer for six months. She also joined a youth group that acted at churches and at different functions in the community. This acting group was a source of income and helped her pay for a computer certificate course. When her job ended, Elizabeth enrolled in a travel and tourism diploma course, where she also studied restaurant and cabin crew (as in a flight crew). As a result, she was able to find a job working for a caterer. This job gave her enough income to complete her diploma program. In 2015, Elizabeth was diligently working toward her goal of becoming a flight attendant, but was facing difficulties raising enough money to get a passport and other documents that would be necessary to be successful in that field.

Dorothy. Dorothy's family was supportive of her decision to enroll at Njia. Her mother moved with her to live with Dorothy's aunt so that they could be closer to the Sukumiza center. While in the program, Dorothy would take the information she had

learned in her classes and teach it to other youth who lived in and near her aunt's home. Dorothy appreciated the friends she had gone to secondary school with because of the encouragement they provided her. Many of her friends had been able to continue their schooling for diplomas or degrees, but they continued to encourage and advise her. Her church was another important network of belonging.

When Dorothy first talked about her future goals she indicated that she wanted to be employed and not stay at home. She felt that if she got a good job, went to school, and started her own business, she would be able to support her family to a greater extent. Immediately after completing the Njia program, Dorothy started to achieve some of her goals. She found employment as a cashier fairly quickly and moved out of her parents' home, which she indicated relieved a burden for them. She also started paying her brother's school fees. By the 2014 interview, Dorothy had found employment at a different company as a secretary. After working there for a short time, the company provided educational assistance, and Dorothy began to pursue a diploma part-time. In 2015, Dorothy was completing an internship for her diploma program and had her own on-line business selling handmade goods. Although she quit paying her brother's school fees while she was in school, her on-line business made that possible again.

Beatrice. Friends and family were an important source of support for Beatrice. When she was interviewed in 2012, she was living with her parents. Her friends, both in the Njia program and in her neighborhood, provided her with a lot of encouragement and even provided financial assistance when she needed help paying for transportation. When Beatrice returned to school she and a friend started working together to make and sell

135

jewelry. When she completed school and was working full-time, Beatrice transferred the business to her brother so he could also benefit.

When Beatrice was first interviewed, she indicated that she would like to have a happy life; one in which she could find a job, save a little bit, help other people, and have a little bit of fun. She though the best way to help others would be to open her own business. Since she had not completed secondary school, she found it difficult to find work that would sustain her or her family. When she completed the program she joined a friend in making and selling jewelry. Through this venture she was able to save enough money to return to school to complete a diploma course in travel and tourism. When she returned to school her parents supported her by paying for her accommodations and she rented a room near her school so she would not have to pay for daily transportation. When she finished school Beatrice began working in sales and promotions and sold items door-to-door.

Discussion. These brief synopses of youth lives both before their interviews and over the four years that they were involved in this study provide an overview of the similarities and differences in youth backgrounds and life trajectories. They are a starting point from which to understand their experiences with the empowerment process. Once youth completed the Njia program, they participated in a variety of activities. For most youth, their employment situation became more secure over time, even though there were a few youth who had difficulty finding and maintaining secure employment. A few youth had also been able to achieve their goal to return to school for certificates or diplomas. All youth had networks of belonging that supported them in different ways. It appeared

136

that familial or parental support was most influential in their lives, but peers also played a large role for some youth. It is from the experiences described here that youth first encountered Njia and saw it as an opportunity to change the direction of their lives. I turn now to a description of the Njia centers and the communities in which they are located.

Ethnographic Description of Taharuki and Sukumiza

Turning into the middle class neighborhood of Taharuki from the main road, a visitor to Njia passes gated homes and courtyards (groups of homes that are situated together with a wall around them) that were first established in the 1970s. Both residential and commercial development is visible as the scenery gradually shifts from homes to small businesses. There is a large church compound and small shops,

Figure 2. A shoe and furniture shop across the street from the Taharuki Center

including hair salons and small boutiques that line one side of the road (Figure 2). Alongside the cement structures are roadside kiosks where people sell a variety of items, including fruit and vegetables, clothes, and furniture (Figure 1). On the opposite side of the street are a supermarket and small restaurants, both sit-down and fast food, a bank, and several multi-function buildings. In front of the supermarket an old woman sells oranges from her makeshift mat on the ground and street children mill about begging for a

Figure 1. A roadside kiosk across the street from the Taharuki Center

137

few shillings or something to eat. The variety of options for buying basic goods, from the supermarket to wooden roadside stands and the woman sitting on the ground speaks to the multiple income levels found in and near this Nairobi community. While Taharuki is considered a middle-class community, none of the youth in this study came from Taharuki itself. Taharuki's role as a transportation hub for *matatus* (multi-passenger, fixed-route taxis) and rail make it easily accessible to residents of the surrounding middle and low-income areas, which is where youth traveled from each day.

The Njia center itself is located in a multi-function, six-story building that houses multiple businesses including a fast-food chain, hair salon, business copy center, and fitness center. The sounds of the city, from car horns and music from *matatus,* to the sounds of people buying and selling from the roadside stalls permeate the classrooms, reminding visitors of the hustle and bustle of the neighborhood. From inside the building music from the adjacent fitness class made it difficult to hear interviews in the evenings and on weekends. In 2012 the program occupied just a few rooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the building, but by 2015 had expanded to include an office, computer lab, hospitality, and electrical wiring classrooms and additional classrooms that had multiple purposes. A bit run down, one researcher's first impression was that the building and classrooms were "quite humble" (personal communication, June 6, 2015), and during one of the interviews in 2015 the three people involved (youth interviewee, interviewer and myself) kept shifting our seats as water dripped down from the ceiling on us. Njia's policy has been to invest in personnel and programming rather than infrastructure, so they do not put money into building new property or purchasing their own buildings; rather,

they use what is available within the community (personal communication, 2014). The building itself is modest and does not stand out physically (as opposed to buildings such as the church and school compounds down the street), but word about the program has gotten out to the community, and several times during the two-day period I was in the Taharuki office in 2015 youth came in to inquire about when the next training would take place or whether they could apply to the program.

The Sukumiza site gives a different impression. Leaving Nairobi, it becomes evident that both the terrain and the livelihood opportunities are shifting as high-end hotels catering to the airport and large shopping centers and growing office parks give way to industrial parks. As the congestion of the city begins to ease, signs of industry begin to appear, including a number of manufacturers, a cement company, and the Export Processing Zone, which houses numerous and ever-changing factories. Sukumiza itself is a place of transition. Once considered a rural town, as Nairobi has grown it has increasingly become part of the greater Nairobi area. As a result, some of the youth have grown up in Sukumiza and consider the area their rural home (*ushago*[6]). However, Sukumiza is also a transit point for youth migrating to and from Nairobi and for other youth in the study, Sukumiza was their first stop in a rural-urban migration. In later years of the study they had moved to other parts of Nairobi. The emphasis on industry and residential growth in the area has also increased in the recent past. The greatest evidence

---

[6] *Ushago* is a Sheng word for rural areas or area of origin (where extended family, sometimes including parents, live). *Ushago* or *mashambani* in Kiswahili connotes more than just a physical location; it encompasses a place of belonging.

of this, perhaps, is through increased housing costs and the recent announcement of a proposed high-end mall to be built within Sukumiza (Michira, March 3, 2016).

The Njia center is off of the main highway and outside of Sukumiza town itself, which complicates its accessibility for youth. The ability to attend a training program without having to be in Nairobi itself relieves a large burden for youth, as the cost of daily transportation makes participation in youth programs centered in Nairobi unattainable. Not needing to pay school fees also makes Njia more financially accessible to youth than the government-run vocational training institutes, located in and around Sukumiza. However, youth who come from Sukumiza town must walk from town to the center, while those who come from neighboring towns either walk a greater distance or take a *matatu* (thus incurring transportation costs) to the junction where the dirt road leaves the highway. During heavy rains this road can become difficult to traverse, for both cars and pedestrians.

There is a striking difference between the Njia center in Taharuki and the Sukumiza center. The Sukumiza center is housed at a children's day school that was started as a Hindu charitable organization, though it does not look like a typical Kenyan primary school. On entering the walled, school compound (which sits on 11 acres, and boasts a garden, playground, and open dining pavilion) the most striking feature is the classrooms, which are plastic domes that have a ventilation system to keep the rooms cool. The hustle and bustle of the city that is so present even within the walls of the Taharuki site, are not heard at Sukumiza. Instead, visitors hear teachers and children in their primary school classrooms or children's laughter on the playground.

140

Staff of the children's center tend to the gardens regularly and keep the classrooms and other buildings maintained. Inside the classroom buildings that Njia uses, the walls are covered with posters made by youth that reflect the lessons they have had from both their vocational and life

Figure 3. Inside of the IGM classroom at the Sukumiza Center

skills training. Figure 3 shows the posters and demonstration materials displayed in one of the Sukumiza center classrooms. Prominently displayed is the student pledge, which states:

> I believe in myself and my ability to succeed. I respect my family, my teachers, my friends and most importantly myself. I will continue to learn to develop the best in myself and others. I have the determination to meet my goals and discipline to make choices that are positive and healthy. I will always do that which will make my family, my community and my country proud. As a student of Njia I am responsible and ready to lead.

The pledge, which several youth referred to over the course of their interviews, highlights the importance that Njia places on the life skills curriculum that was detailed in Chapter 1. Not only does the pledge reinforce the importance of goal setting, it also highlights the role that determination, decision-making, respect for self and others, and responsibility all play in achieving success. The prominence of family, community, and country in the pledge underscore that as youth seek to achieve their goals, they do not do so in a vacuum. Rather, the decisions they make and the actions they take are embedded within the larger social contexts in which they live. The emphasis on self and others speak to

global concepts of citizenship and what it means to become an active citizen within your family, community, and country. At the same time, they link directly to notions of *undugu* that place youth as individuals directly in relationship with their broader communities (Kiaga, 2007).

Learning through Njia

The previous two sections provided a backdrop for understanding youth's lives and what led them to participate in the Njia program, and the Njia setting itself. In this section, I turn to a description of the Njia curriculum, and focus both on the technical and life skills that were taught by using youth's voices to highlight the aspects of the program they found most important. I use the term *marketable skills and knowledge* in reference to technical or vocational skills, financial literacy, and work readiness skills that prepared youth to engage in employment or self-employment. I use *personal development* to describe a set of skills and traits related to personal growth and self-knowledge. Personal development skills were often taught during the life skills components of the Njia training and focused on self-confidence, self-esteem, communicative abilities, and traits such as determination or perseverance. I adopted these terms because they reflect both a type of skills and knowledge and the way in which they are used and valued in youth lives. Marketable skills and knowledge is important to youth empowerment because youth identify tangible skills and knowledge acquisition as a critical component of empowerment, in large part because they can be used as they navigate the economic marketplace. Youth valued the personal development skills and knowledge because of the way youth began to think differently about themselves and others. I include a larger

discussion of these terms in the final section of this chapter and in Chapter 5. Using an in-depth description of John, a youth who participated in the Njia program after spending time "just at home, not doing anything constructive" (June 13, 2012), I introduce the details of the learning process that John and other youth found valuable. Although John is the focal youth for this section, I incorporate descriptions from other youth to bolster John's description of what was learned and to provide different perspectives or depths of perception. I use a focal youth at this point to situate the different lessons youth learned and to demonstrate why they were important in youth lives. In Chapter 5 I will return to John's personal and livelihood story and his descriptions of empowerment to demonstrate how the skills and knowledge he gained during the program were reinforced through the activities he engaged in and decisions he made in the subsequent three years.

John's story. John was 21 years old and had been living in Sukumiza for eight years when he heard about Njia. As a new organization in the community Njia had worked closely with the Ministry of Youth Affairs to identify youth who qualified for the program and would benefit from the services it provided. John had frequented the Ministry to participate in youth forums and gatherings and was at the Ministry the day Njia arrived to demonstrate the program to youth and stakeholders through its roadshow. John thought the program would be an opportunity to make progress in achieving his goals in fashion, which had been a long-time passion. Although he had completed Form 4 two years previously, John had been unable to further his education, and he described his life as unconstructive and idle. He said:

> Before [Njia], after completing high school, I was just at home not doing anything
> constructive. I didn't join university – the largest challenge being financial. I was

just idle. When I heard of Njia and they were going to bring me some training, I
chose to participate. (June 13, 2012)

By participating in the program, John anticipated that the skills he would gain would

provide him with an income that would allow him to pursue a bachelor's degree in the

future.

Since fashion had long been a passion that John desired to pursue, he was pleased

to discover that through Njia he could study industrial garment manufacturing (IGM).

Although not the same as the fashion industry, John learned how to use sewing machines,

which he described as a "skill I've always adored," and more about an industry that might

be relevant to his future goal of opening his own fashion business. He stated:

> Most useful is using the sewing machines, [which is] related to my future career
> in fashion. Because in fashion that will always apply. So that is one skill I am
> always going to use in the future. Then I was able to advance my computer skills.
> Actually, I think I can do almost everything a computer can do. (June 13, 2012)

He found this to be an important skill:

> Nowadays we source new designs and update designs from the Internet. So you
> get them there, you print them. You can get customers and entrepreneurs on the
> Internet. The presentation – all the documents. So I can type them and print them,
> editing, all that. (June 13, 2012)

While John anticipated applying the technical garment manufacturing skills to his own

business in the future, he also understood they would be important skills in order to

secure employment at garment factories, a job that he suspected would be necessary in

order to pursue his educational and entrepreneurial goals.

There were four other vocational areas from which youth could choose to

participate at Njia: hospitality, automotive, electrical, and customer relations and sales

(CRS). Youth who trained in the hospitality sector learned basic skills for waitressing,

144

setting tables, cleaning rooms, and the basic roles of a receptionist such as how to greet

guests. In the automotive field, youth learned to identify the parts of an engine, how to

change tires, the basic functions of a vehicle and how to make minor repairs. Those who

studied the electrical wiring gained skills in wiring homes, installing light fixtures and

other small domestic wiring skills. The CRS skills focused on specific selling processes,

including identifying customers and potential markets and models that assist in sales. One

CRS youth, Grace, identified some of the knowledge she learned:

> There is one [sales model] I really love. It is called the AIDA model. This is how
> you approach the customer to make them buy. Where the A stands for attention;
> how you capture the attention of the customer. Then I means interest; how you
> arouse an interest in a customer. And then D stands for desire; that is you create a
> need in that person so they get a need for what you're selling. And then lastly
> there's the action. This is when you close a sale. Yeah, it's a nice process. (June
> 16, 2012)

Although automotive and electrical wiring were fields that have historically been

accessible to youth through becoming apprentices in the *jua kali* sector (*jua kali* means

"hot sun" in Swahili and refers to employment in the informal sector, which is often

outside and literally under the hot sun) in Kenya, certification has become increasingly

important for Nairobi youth as they seek stable employment. For youth who have already

completed secondary school, the ability to study these fields through an institution such

as Njia (or a government institution that can provide accreditation) is appealing because it

further validates their education credentials.

While each youth selected one main area of vocational training, they also received

an introduction to skills from each of the other vocational sectors as well. This provided

145

them with flexibility as they sought job opportunities. Sarah, who had studied

automotive, valued the multiple types of skills she received and explained:

> Njia has been helpful because when they train us in various ways. You do automobile, you do hospitality, and you also do CRS. So when you go out in the field, and they say we need someone to go to automobile, you can go for automobile. You can go for hospitality…. So at least we are diverse… Cause now I went for automobile attachment, but I found that I'm not really that interested in automobile. My passion is in CRS, because I like dealing with customers. So, I also did a CRS attachment in town… So I studied once in Njia, but I was trained in different fields. (July 3, 2013)

Not only did learning skills in a variety of fields provide youth with multiple avenues for

employment, Sarah's comment demonstrated that it also opened up opportunities for

youth to identify passions that they would like to pursue in life.

Beyond the technical skills needed to work in the their chosen vocational fields,

youth reported that they learned basic work readiness skills, including time management,

how to present oneself, both with regard to stature and physical appearance, and how to

talk to employers. John inferred that his improved time management was due to engaging

in constructive activities and having a new knowledge of steps he could take to take

better advantage of his time. He described how having activities in which to participate

impacted his time management, "I am managing time better… I always have something

to do. My time is occupied, I don't have idle time" (2012). At the same time, John

recognized that there was a specific set of skills he learned with regard to time, and that

his ability to master them improved his outlook on life:

> Ok- time management, before you start a day you are supposed to know all the things you need to do the following day. You list them down, find the most important, the things you can't do without giving them the priorities. Then the small ones you fit them in between those bigger tasks. Then you should have a timeline – you say you are supposed to do this at a particular time. Then, the

146

following day make sure whatever time you allocated for a specific item or event, make sure you follow it. (June 13, 2012)

Many youth changed vocational fields over the course of the four years of the larger research project, and they found the transferrable nature of the work readiness skills incredibly important to their ability to get and maintain jobs. Rose explained the knowledge they gained in searching for employment:

> They taught us how to search for jobs. They really did that. They showed us how to relate – when you go to search for a job, what you should do, how to write a CV, things like that – maybe we knew but we didn't have much knowledge. (July 3, 2013)

Since most youth in the study had spent several years searching for steady employment between secondary school and starting Njia with very little success, having these skills was one way that youth felt new opportunities were opening for them.

Because youth had not previously had significant experiences in formal employment settings, they also found workplace etiquette skills and learning how to manage their own expectations important to being successful in employment. For example, many youth in the study highlighted that they learned to dress appropriately for certain jobs, to present themselves in particular ways and to arrive on time. In addition, newfound skills in time management were a mechanism by which youth were able to navigate multiple activities, including jobs, small businesses, educational pursuits, or responsibilities at home. Some youth who worked in factory settings after Njia found that knowing how to relate to co-workers and the proper behavior in the workplace differentiated them from other employees. A few youth indicated that supervisors

recognized these differences and as a result they received promotions or increased responsibilities at the job.

Over the course of four years, John's perspective of what was the most important and consequential marketable skills and knowledge that he learned shifted. Although he originally believed that technical training in IGM would have the greatest impact on him, he came to value entrepreneurship and financial skills to an even greater degree. Although the training provided in these areas were introductory, John felt that they gave him an advantage when he left formal employment and started his own venture selling cabbage. As he completed the Njia program, John indicated, "Then on the business side – I have all the skills anyone needs to start, run and gain from a business" (June 13, 2012). He further described the entrepreneurial skills he gained:

> For one you have to sit down and analyze a problem that is existing. Like, find out how many people need a service or product. From there, find out how many people are doing that thing or solving that issue. If there are so many, try to find some advantage over them. If none, just start and advance later. We learned how to calculate the cost of something. You consider the standards of your customers. That will tell you how much to price something. We've also learned record keeping. You record how much you have spent, how much is coming in and calculate whether you are making profits or losses. (June 13, 2012)

Because the program encouraged practical use of the skills youth were being taught, a few youth, including John, started small money-making ventures even before completing the program. In John's case, he saw that his fellow Njia youth needed assistance with computers and he put skills he had acquired prior to the program, and refined within the program, to use. He described his small money-making venture in this way:

> We have portfolios [notebooks where youth write down what they have learned and insert drawings or pictures that relate to the topic], so whatever we learn we're told to get a photo related to what you have learned and put it into the

148

portfolio. So most of my friends are not computer literate. I am lucky to have some computer skills. [We] get whatever we have learned, I go to the internet, browse some photos, I come and sell to my friends…The facilitators encouraged us to start something small and try to implement whatever we had learned and I tried that small one and it worked. (June 13, 2012)

His description of this venture highlights how a specific skill set (i.e. computer literacy) together with the new business knowledge he was learning opened up an opportunity for John. The way John interacted with his peers in this exchange highlights both the tension and support inherent in *undugu* that was described in Chapter 2. Although John charged his peers a fee for the pictures he printed, he also gave peers the pictures he printed on credit when he knew they had a difficult financial situation:

The photos that they want, at times I give them on credit. I give someone credit. They don't pay me at all.

Why do you think they don't pay you?

I think, for one, they take me for granted – as in, 'this is just a friend.' So even if they don't pay me back there won't be any repercussions; I won't take any action against them. And something else, most of us here, our backgrounds are not very strong financially. So at times they lack the money to pay me. (June 13, 2012)

This explanation clearly highlights the tension between the expectation that he would assist his friends and the need to make money through his business. John's experience, however, also demonstrates how peers supported one another as they explored new possibilities and tried to make ends meet. In a discussion on borrowing, John noted that he both lent money to other youth but was also able to borrow money from others when he needed to cover his business costs. This tension is explored further in Chapter 6.

In addition to learning how to balance books and determine profits and losses in a business, youth were also introduced to other financial literacy skills that they put to use

in their personal and business lives. The two most important skills that youth identified

revolved around savings and budgeting, and these often complemented each other.

Although a few youth had been saving prior to participation in the program, most youth

had either not been in a financial situation where they were able to save, or they imagined

that they could only save large amounts of money at one time. John indicated that his

savings improved after participation in the program because of the realization that by

gradually saving small amounts of money he would accumulate enough to do something

with it. He explained:

> And the saving part also. Before, whatever I earned I used to see it as being
> minimal, as in I couldn't do a lot. But in anything I get right now, there is that
> percentage which I must save. So from anything, even if I make 100 shillings,
> there is a bit I save. But before I said I'd save when I get a lot of money, but I
> save from anything that I earn now. (July 13, 2013)

In addition to valuing saving, John also learned how to navigate different savings

mechanisms, including formal banks. When he began selling pictures to other youth for

their portfolios, John used a mobile money account. During the program, youth were

introduced to both formal and informal savings structures. Within each class youth

formed *chamas* (groups) to practice saving on a small scale. A *chama* is made up of

individuals who contribute a set amount of money on a specified day, for instance the

students in one *chama* might decide to have each of its 10 members contribute 100

shillings every Friday. Each time the group met, one individual would be selected to

receive the contributions from that day. In this example, each Friday a different

individual would receive 1,000 shillings. *Chamas* are a common savings mechanism

throughout Kenya, but those started within the Njia classes had varying degrees of

success. Some youth appreciated participating but others felt there was not enough oversight and their *chamas* were not successful. Those who did not feel their *chama* was successful cited the dissolution of the group before all participants (usually themselves included) had the opportunity to receive the group money. In other words, students who contributed and received funds in the early stages of the *chama* quit contributing toward the end, and people who were the last to receive the collected money would receive less than those who collected at the beginning of the cycle. Regardless of the success of their Njia *chama,* almost all youth were involved in *chamas* through their workplace, neighborhoods, churches, or families over the four years of the study. Youth were also encouraged to save in formal financial institutions and representatives from several different banks invited youth to open savings accounts. John took advantage of this opportunity and when he started working in formal employment used that account in addition to his mobile money account. By the fourth year of the study he was using mobile money, a formal bank account, and PayPal for managing his expenses.

Budgeting and prioritizing needs was a key component of the financial literacy training. John began focusing on his basic needs and put off other purchases to ensure he would be able to meet those critical needs. He explained:

> I consider like the necessity, as in how much I need to spend on or if it is something I really need that I can't do without. Like for me I can't do without lunch. All my lessons are in the afternoon. So I really need to have money for lunch. So I go for the basic needs as in the very crucial needs. So if the thing I am thinking of spending on can't wait for some days, I postpone that. So I spend on the really basic things. (June 13, 2012)

Other youth indicated that prior to participating in the program they would use any money they had available to purchase unneeded items. Susan indicated whenever she had

a little extra pocket money prior to the financial literacy, she would "just find things along the road [in the markets] and I would decide to buy it" (June 16, 2012). Likewise, Keith indicated that prior to participating in financial literacy classes, "I had some cash for *flossing* [showing off or having a good time] around" (June 12, 2012). For both youth, however, the financial literacy training directed them toward saving and taught them the value of budgeting and prioritizing their spending so that they could focus on their future goals. Susan found that prioritizing her spending meant restricting and limiting herself to basic necessities for herself and her daughter, "You can restrict yourself. I can say, 'this month I am not going to buy clothes for myself. Let me save this amount'. Or you can limit yourself. You don't spend much. You don't have luxuries. [You decide] let me save this money" (June 14, 2014). For Keith, budgeting became a form of self-control so that he wouldn't unnecessarily spend money on "*flossing* around, parties and merry making." He explained:

> Through budgeting and doing priorities, I have been prioritizing myself and I do budget and if I remain with surplus, I do save. Before then, I used to get the pay, you pocket it then if you walk around you see something nice and then you spend… Parties and merrymaking was more often when it comes to end month. That one is not in my budget now. When it comes to the end month, I do my budget before I go to bank to withdraw and I only withdraw the amount I have budgeted for. I don't withdraw extra. (July 3, 2013)

The experiences of Susan, Keith, and John demonstrate the various ways that financial literacy skills were put into practice by youth. Regardless of youth's financial status over the four years of the study, all youth valued this knowledge and most were able to put the knowledge to use as they sought to achieve their goals.

152

Personal development through Njia. Youth tended to join the program based on

the vocational skills they would be taught and the opportunities they thought this

knowledge would offer. However, most youth repeatedly commented on the importance

of personal development. Most of the personal development skills initially came through

the program's life skills curriculum, but further development of those skills and

characteristics took place through interactions at work, in their interactions with family

and through engagement with community organizations, neighbors, and individuals

where they lived or in *ushago*. This curriculum combined sessions that focused on

attitudes and self-esteem, goal setting, values, handling responsibility, communication,

decision-making, empathy, and sensitivity. Each youth highlighted different elements of

the training they felt were important, but overwhelmingly youth focused on the ability to

communicate with a wide variety of people and an increased self-confidence. As John

recounted his story and the changes he had experienced in his life, three broad categories

emerged as most impactful in his life, personal traits, an ability to relate with other people

and thinking about his future. The last two John tied directly to increased self-confidence.

Determination, perseverance, and the ability to work hard were identified by

many youth as important personal traits that were emphasized within the program. John

felt he had acquired these characteristics and described why he felt he was now able to

persevere:

> I've also learned to overcome challenges. For the first month when we were here
> it was really raining every day. We were being told to persevere, 'just come [to
> the center]. Whether you're rained upon, whether there is mud and everything,
> just come.' We were supposed to come directly at 9:00 in the morning, but at
> times we had to wait until 11, that is when the rain would stop and then we would
> come here. We were told think about how you will keep the rain away a little. So

153

we would think of raincoats, umbrellas and stuff. So we had to wake up, get a raincoat – whether it is raining or not – just come to school. Whether you had mud on your feet or anything you just come here. [They would tell us] 'there are taps, you wash your feet and just forget that and get on with the program for the day'. We also had to come out of this place really late. During the first time we were complaining, 'why do we need to come and stay here when it is raining?' Maybe when we realized that it is going to rain in an hour or two – we thought we should be released early. We were told 'ok don't look at it that way, get what you are supposed to get in a day because our time here is limited. This is what we are supposed to cover.' So we were like ok let's stay here, finish what we are supposed to cover and go home if it's late. This time will pass. At times we had to do without lunch money. We were told, 'don't concentrate on whatever is pulling you behind. Just focus on what you want.' It's a way that we know how to overcome any challenge. (June 13, 2012)

Like many other youth, John typically walked to the Sukumiza center to participate in the Njia program. The center was located off of the tarmac highway on a road that was difficult for both vehicles and pedestrians when it rained heavily, and during his time in the program the area experienced a significant amount of rain. For youth who had to walk long distances to the program, the weather could have become a reason to delay their participation or reduce their attendance rate. Furthermore, many youth undertook casual employment opportunities early in the morning or late at night to cater for their lunch or fare for transportation, or to assist their families with basic needs, and unfavorable weather conditions made that even more difficult.

This lesson in perseverance was coupled with a curriculum that taught youth that when they became employed, they would need to have perseverance and determination because they would face difficulties. Reflecting back on the program after being employed for one year, Rose, a young woman who studied automotive at the Taharuki site, described how the program helped prepare them for difficulties in employment:

While we were in Njia, they taught us a lot. But when you get a job, there are

154

different things that will come, like opportunities. There will also be discouragements. They really helped us in knowing that [we should] not just give up. They told us how to relate to that job and hold onto it until you get a greener pasture. (July 3, 2013)

Determination and perseverance became a theme that was evident through many youth's lives and was highlighted by several youth as a characteristic of someone who is empowered.

Conflict resolution and anger management were also an important part of the Njia curriculum, and John felt that this was particularly important for him. He described his behavior prior to learning these skills, "As for me I had a problem with anger. My temper was really high and it was easy for me to get angry. It was so easy to annoy me. I was making big things out of small things" (June 13, 2012). John found an immediate change in the way he was able to interact with other people. In the first interview he described what he had learned that helped him to control his anger:

[I learned that] before analyzing a situation or responding, you have to think about your reaction or answer and its' effects 5 years from now and tomorrow. We're also told before we respond to fit in another person's shoes. How would I have wanted them to react? So with those I'm not having issues with people. They are issues I can handle. I am thinking twice before responding. And it's working. (June 13, 2012)

In subsequent interviews he felt that using these skills had helped him relate more easily with people in the workplace and in his family. When he was asked to describe how empowerment was demonstrated in his own life, John indicated that he can now "live peacefully with everyone" (2015).

Beyond anger management, John highly valued his ability to interact with and relate to a wide variety of people. The phrase "relate with people" was used frequently by

youth as they described personal development skills that they had gained. "Relating with

people" referred to knowing how to verbally communicate with a wide range of

individuals, including family members, customers at work, other youth, supervisors and

bosses. It also included listening skills and non-verbal communication. John explained

that when youth entered the program they did not always know how to relate with people

within the community:

> You see, when youth go to high school, we learned the bad manners, as in, you
> see our behavior is bad. You find that we don't know how to relate with elderly
> people. Not just talk. In general, as in the dress code, the way we talk and also the
> way we behave. (July 13, 2013)

John contrasted this previous behavior with an ability to now listen and interact with the

elders and others in his community, which he likely learned through the life skills lessons

on empathy, building relationships with others, and inter-personal communication

strategies. In 2012 and 2013 he described his changed behavior:

> We were taught how to relate with people. I'm able to connect with people in a bit
> of an advanced way. I can understand people. People can understand me. So my
> personal relationships have changed… I can relate to people from all levels of
> life. From kids up to very big managers… And I think I'm good at relating with
> elder people because I can also sit down and listen to people talking. I get
> whatever they tell me. I listen and then I can respond. (excerpts from interviews
> on June 13, 2012 and July 13, 2013)

> Youth often tied the ability to relate with others and improved communication

skills to increased self-confidence and self-esteem. After indicating that self-esteem had

assisted her in communicating well, Rose elaborated on what self-esteem meant to her:

> We were being told how to relate to different people. Because when we came here
> we came from different backgrounds. We didn't know each other. So when we
> came here we learned how to cooperate with each other. We respect one another.
> We value each other. (June 13, 2012)

156

It was not just in interpersonal situations where youth valued the ability to relate and communicate with each other. Youth also indicated that these skills were of value in the work place, especially for those who had their own money-making ventures, or were in hospitality or customer relations and sales. In the final year of interviews, John continued to value his ability to relate with people as it both created and demonstrated confidence. He said:

> Again, confidence, for now I can approach maybe hotels, let's say big people or big institutions, I know how to approach them if I have business ideas. If I'm going into horticulture, I know how I'm going to approach potential clients. That is empowerment. That is confidence. Before I did not know how to introduce myself to business people, but for now I can. I think that is added confidence. (June 13, 2015)

As youth's confidence and ability to relate with other people increased, so did their belief that they could exude some control over their circumstances. Studies have shown that shifting perceptions of where one's locus of control lies has great impact on the process of empowerment (Chubb, Fertman, & Ross, 1997; Lillevoll, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2014). The shift in "locus of control" is best demonstrated by Keith, who felt that he now had the ability to influence change in his life:

> I was empowered with one thing – that I can make it. That was empowerment. Before I came to Njia, me as Keith, I knew that if you want to make it then you must have a 'tall uncle' to take hold of your hand and take you somewhere. But when I left Njia I was aware that I can go somewhere, express myself and I can get what I want. (June 6, 2015)

Keith demonstrated how with an increase in self-confidence he realized that in "order to make it" the locus of control was no longer external and dependent on a "tall uncle." Instead, like many of the youth who expressed that their self-confidence had increased, his locus of control was increasingly internal.

In addition, youth often saw public speaking and the ability to express their ideas

to individuals and large groups as part of learning how to relate with others. Looking

back on the program and the impact it had on his classmates, John expressed that

confidence building and the ability to present in front of people were developed at the

same time. He described one such classroom situation:

> When we came to Njia they were empowering us in terms of life skills, like
> communicating with people, associating with people, being social. So they would
> put us through programs or settings that would develop confidence in us. For
> example, they would choose random people who were told 'today you are leading
> the program.' It was like they encourage you to do this. So the encouragement
> gave some of us… Okay in my part, I was always confident, I've always been
> confident. But I saw friends who were very shy; they could not talk in front of
> people. At the end of Njia they were really free to talk in front of people. I think
> empowerment changed their lives. They were maybe shy, now they are confident.
> (June 13, 2015)

Other youth confirmed the connection between confidence and public speaking through

their own stories. Elizabeth, a young woman who described herself as "too shy" before

the program, felt that she had gained confidence during Njia and as a result she began

participating in a youth group in which she would act and speak in front of other youth.

She described how she was able to overcome being shy:

> At least when we came here (to Njia), I got to interact with so many people. I
> knew so many people. And after that, you know when I came here I was too shy.
> Now I can even… I'm an actor. I can act on a stage, face a congregation… Now I
> can communicate, even in front of a congregation. (July 13, 2013)

As in both of these examples, youth frequently inferred that being shy was a hindrance,

something that would hold youth back and was not equated with empowerment.

The life skills curriculum also impacted youth through helping them to identify

goals and make plans on how to pursue them. This process also facilitated new ways for

youth to think about their lives and livelihood trajectories. John indicated that although he had envisioned pursuing a career in fashion after high school, he had been unsure how to go about achieving that goal. Looking back at his life immediately after high school, he said:

> I was still trying to find a channel. Still trying to devise a way and think of how my future will continue. That was just immediately after high school. So I was thinking, 'which steps am I supposed to take? I need to go back to school but I can't. So what can I do to do this?' From the time I came from high school I've always wanted to study fashion but I always used to wonder how am I going to find a way to do this. But since I joined Njia I've been seeing possible ways. They are hopeful days when I realize I'll be able to go to school. (June 7, 2014)

John felt that not only had the marketable and personal development skills and knowledge given him the necessary tools to move ahead in achieving his goals, the process of self-knowledge had given him a new way to think about his life and his ability to succeed.

As this section demonstrates, the marketable skills and knowledge and personal development that were taught through Njia were valued by youth. Even before putting them into practice in employment situations, youth recognized their potential value in different aspects of their lives. Since youth were at a time in their lives where they were unsure what their next steps should be, the lessons learned served as a catalyst to new opportunities. Marketable skills and knowledge were particularly important in the first two years of interviews as youth were seeking to establish themselves financially and reposition themselves socially. As the situations youth found themselves in changed, the emphasis they placed on specific skills or types of skills shifted, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, but they all continued to play an important role in youth lives.

159

With this overview of youth in this study and the aspects of the program they valued, I turn to a discussion of youth empowerment and a model that can guide an examination of this process in their lives.

Modeling Youth Empowerment

As youth described their experiences with the program in 2012 and later (2013 and 2014) talked about the ways their lives and aspirations were changing, it became clear that the youth in the larger study valued more than just the employment or entrepreneurship opportunities that were becoming available to them. Equally important was how what they learned contributed to personal growth and to access to opportunities that changed the ways they interacted with family and friends, imagined their futures, and made decisions to achieve both personal and family-oriented goals.

In the first three years of interviews (2012-2014), the term "empowerment" was used sporadically by youth, and no questions about empowerment were incorporated into the interview protocol. When empowerment was discussed, it was most often in reference to youth programming, frequently programming with employment or entrepreneurship outcomes, but also in reference to programming that provided HIV/AIDS education. The other way in which youth discussed empowerment was with regard to how they were either engaging or desiring to engage with their community, including one youth who wanted to start his own NGO so that he could "empower each and every person who needs empowerment" (Nathan, July 10, 2013). A few youth applied the term empowerment to their own lives as they discussed ways in which they were interacting with others, particularly other youth. Although the use of the term empowerment was

limited, youth responses to questions about their livelihoods, learning opportunities, goals

and aspirations, and conditions in their communities from 2012 – 2014 focused on how

their self-confidence and self-knowledge had increased, how they were able engage in

constructive decision-making, even though at times it seemed counter to their economic

self-interest, and how their stature within their families and social environment seemed to

be shifting, all changes that I argue alluded to a sense of empowerment.

In 2015, the final year of interviews, questions specifically about empowerment

were incorporated into the interview protocol. The interview questions about

empowerment asked youth to define empowerment in their own words. In response to

this initial question, youth frequently defined empowerment as a set of skills or form of

knowledge that would help them engage in the marketplace. For instance, Abigail's

response was that empowerment meant "getting something that can help you in life"

(June 11, 2015) and Peter said that empowerment "is all about adding more skills to what

you have" (June 15, 2015). These descriptions are quite similar to (inter-) government

discourses of youth empowerment that have been common since the mid-2000s, when

international organizations and government offices began implementing programs to

address concerns over the "youth bulge" (described in Chapter 1) and which have been

recently reinforced through efforts to achieve the goals set forth in Kenya's Vision 2030

(also described in Chapter 1).

As youth discussed in more detail how empowerment was evident in their own

and others' lives, a more complex and elaborate illustration of empowerment became

evident. This illustration developed as youth discussed the impact of knowledge and

skills, as evidenced by the individuals' mindset, actions, and how they interacted with others. Based on youth's experiences and descriptions of empowerment, I see a model for youth empowerment emerging; one that builds on the previous conceptions of empowerment as multidimensional, but places notions of belonging and aspiration actively in the midst of the empowerment process. In this model I identify four dimensions that shaped the ways in which youth in this study conceptualized and experienced empowerment (1) *marketable skills and knowledge*, (2) *personal development*, (3) *aspirations*, and (4) *undugu* (ways of relating with others described in Chapter 2).

The first two dimensions (marketable skills and knowledge and personal development) can be understood as both an outcome of empowerment and as instrumental to the empowerment process. Similar to the dimensions proposed by Ross et al. (2011) (instrumental and intrinsic) and Murphy-Graham (2012) (capacity development and recognition), these dimensions highlight aspects of empowerment that might be taught, could potentially be measured, and have been identified by other scholars as a contribution that education can make to the empowerment process. In this way, these dimensions can be thought of as something tangible that can be acquired, which aligns with one way that youth conceptualized empowerment, as revealed in interviews with them and as will be illustrated in Chapter 5. In this sense, the acquisition of marketable skills and knowledge and personal development can be seen as an outcome of empowerment. At the same time, these dimensions can also be understood as integral to

empowerment as a process in which youth put their marketable skills and knowledge and personal development into action to navigate opportunities and challenges in their lives.

Marketable skills and knowledge refers to the technical or instrumental skills that youth have identified as important elements in fostering change in their life. While there is overlap with the way Murphy-Graham (2012) described capacity development, there are distinct differences. In the case of Njia participants, the most salient difference is the emphasis among youth on skills that allow them to enter into and thrive in the economic marketplace. While Murphy-Graham's capacity development included expanded cognitive capabilities, including new ways of thinking about the world, marketable skills and knowledge focuses on skills and knowledge that can be applied to improve youth's access and ability to navigate vocational opportunities. Vocational skills and knowledge, financial literacy, work readiness, entrepreneurial training, and the ability to navigate their opportunities are all encompassed within this category. Although the ability to navigate economic opportunities is critical for the youth of this study, I do not equate empowerment simply with financial independence or assume that the acquisition of a certain set of skills is equivalent to an empowered individual, as is sometimes done in youth development programming and in functional models of empowerment. Instead, the skills and knowledge fostered within this dimension of empowerment are an important set of tools that youth can use to engage with other dimensions of the empowerment process.

As with conceptualizations of intrinsic empowerment (Ross et al., 2011), personal development refers to such concepts as self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-

confidence, as well as personality traits such as the ability to persevere and be determined. It also refers to the ability to imagine new ways to think about or value oneself and one's position in various networks of belonging. Also included in personal development is the development of communicative abilities, which, as noted in Chapter 1, includes interpersonal communication with a diverse range of individuals, from peers to supervisors and community leaders, and public speaking. Although this could easily be understood as the development of marketable skills and knowledge (as Murphy-Graham [2012] does with capacity development), I incorporate it within personal development because youth repeatedly tied their ability to communicate and relate with people effectively directly to increases in their self-confidence both within and outside of market-based environments.

Although both Murphy-Graham (2012) and Zimmerman (2000) included a separate dimension to reflect actions or behavior related to developing or acquiring the personal traits, skills, and knowledge, I understand action as taking place within the marketable skills and knowledge and personal development dimensions. I do this primarily because while youth were pleased that they had acquired news skills or new ways of thinking, or had developed greater self-confidence or self-knowledge, the empowerment process was most evident within their lives when they had the opportunity and ability to put such skills and knowledge into action in a variety of settings.

The aspiration dimension of this model encompasses both the goals youth set for their lives and the way they imagined new possibilities for themselves and those around them. Goal setting and establishing concrete steps to achieve those goals were part of the

164

Njia curriculum. As a result, youth had the opportunity to identify both short- and long-term goals related not only to their desired livelihoods, but also to other aspects of their lives, including goals that centered on education and learning, their families, becoming established within their communities and helping others. Their goals often shifted as they put the skills and knowledge they learned into practice, a process that sometimes led to the discovery of new types of opportunities or passions that they had been unaware of previously.

Beyond the task of setting goals, the aspirations dimension also encompasses new ways of thinking about possibilities in their lives. Different from the notion of new ways of thinking about oneself that was included in personal development, this element encompasses a change in how youth approach life. Many youth discussed how they had gone from feeling hopeless to having hope for their future because they could see new possibilities for their life. Other youth expressed that their mind had been opened up to try new opportunities. This change in youth imaginings about their potential within their social setting was evident not only in youth's lives, but also in their discussions of empowerment.

Aspiration is also tied directly to the various social networks in which youth belonged. Although youth had personal goals and aspirations that were for themselves as individuals, their aspirations and imagined futures were often directly linked to positions they had in various networks of belonging; as a son or daughter, sibling, parent, friend, role model, or member of any number of different types of communities. These roles shaped many of the aspirations and goals that youth identified, as well as the way they

165

experienced marketable skills and knowledge and personal development. In this way the aspirations and *undugu* dimensions are intricately linked.

The concept of *undugu* was introduced in Chapter 2 and was connected to notions of brother or sisterhood and the idea that individuals have a place of belonging in different communities. This sense of belonging affords them both a social support network and a sense of responsibility to the larger community. As a dimension of empowerment, *undugu* represents the ways in which youth are socially embedded. The social networks to which youth belong actively influence their ability to enact dimensions of empowerment as well as how youth conceptualize the purpose of empowerment. Through *undugu* I explore the social supports that youth receive in their networks of belonging, their desire to reciprocate that support, the ways their roles within the community change and the challenges that *undugu* poses as they seek to achieve their goals.

Within this model of empowerment, the four dimensions should be understood not as static or stand-alone dimensions, but as interactive and interrelated aspects of empowerment. I offer these four dimensions as a way to investigate empowerment processes among youth with the caveat that empowerment is about the whole being (both individually and communally) and their lived experiences, and as such is not easily divided into clearly labeled and defined dimensions. The dimensions are interconnected, with blurred borders that often get messy. For instance, a discussion of self-confidence often revolves around the ways in which they are also able to enact marketable skills and knowledge in new and different ways. It also often encompasses the ways in which self-

confidence contributes to youth's abilities to contribute to the community. In the remainder of this dissertation I will describe the four dimensions in detail and will also demonstrate how changes in dimensions reinforce others and influence how youth understand, value, and enact empowerment in their lives. While the marketable skills and knowledge, personal development and *undugu* dimensions will be discussed individually, the role of youth aspirations will be demonstrated throughout the discussion of the other three factors. In the chapters that follow I will demonstrate this model using the conceptualizations and experiences of selected youth in Nairobi who participated in the Njia program as they sought to pursue their goals and aspirations and improve their livelihood opportunities.

Conclusion

Through this chapter I have situated this study in the lives of youth who, in an effort to engage in activities that would help them achieve their goals, participated in the Njia program. I then described the Njia sites within their respective communities and demonstrated skills, knowledge, and personal traits that youth valued and were taught through the program. Finally, I presented a multidimensional model that is grounded in youth conceptualizations and experiences with empowerment and is demonstrated in their lived experiences. While the four dimensions presented in this model have elements that are evident in other models of empowerment, the centrality of youth aspirations and *undugu* make this model a unique way to examine youth empowerment. In the following chapters I explore the four dimensions in depth, demonstrate their interrelated nature and examine how they are evident in youth lives. Throughout both chapters I will

demonstrate how youth aspirations inform their experiences with empowerment and are transformed as the other three dimensions influence youth's lives. Chapter 5 will explore in depth the role marketable skills and knowledge and personal development play as catalysts in the empowerment process. Chapter 6 will address *undugu* in understanding youth empowerment.

Chapter 5: Enacting Marketable Skills and Knowledge and Personal Development

In Chapter 4 I introduced a model of youth empowerment that focuses on four different dimensions of empowerment: marketable skills and knowledge, personal development, aspirations and *undugu*. In this chapter I focus on the first two dimensions and examine the role they play in youth lives and in the empowerment process. In Chapter 4, I also discussed the Njia curriculum through the descriptions youth provided of the aspects of the program that had been most influential to them. Through their accounts I demonstrated ways in which participation in the program facilitated the development of marketable skills and knowledge and personal development within youth. I now turn to an examination of how youth put marketable skills and knowledge and personal development into practice in their lives and the subsequent contribution these dimensions played in youth empowerment. Using youth conceptualizations of empowerment and examples from youth lives, I examine five different ways these dimensions of empowerment are understood and used in their lives.

The first way that marketable skills and knowledge and personal development act as dimensions of empowerment is when youth have the opportunity to enact what they have learned in different settings. In this discussion I return to John, the focal youth in Chapter 4, to examine the ways marketable skills and knowledge and personal development were, and were not, influential in his life. Secondly, marketable skills and knowledge and personal development do not function as two separate and distinct dimensions of empowerment. Instead, as youth engage in activities that use a particular skill, set of knowledge, or personal traits, other aspects of those dimensions are often

reinforced. For instance, putting technical skills into practice can lead to an increase in self-confidence as youth realize that they are capable of enacting those skills. The self-confidence can, in turn, lead to additional forms of knowledge, either about themselves or in relation to knowledge they need in different settings. Rose's story highlights how this cycle contributes to the on-going process of empowerment.

The third way I examine marketable skills and knowledge and personal development is by exploring how these dimensions act as both a catalyst for and a response to aspirations. Sarah's story exemplifies how developing skills and knowledge led to new ways to imagine the possibilities in her life and a career in a field that she would not have previously considered. The fourth way in which I explore these two dimensions is through an understanding that while employment is one reason youth value marketable skills and knowledge, employment is not the only reason youth felt that increased skills and knowledge contributed to empowerment processes.

Finally, I discuss the role of marketable skills and knowledge and personal development in youth lives when employment is not possible or is in conflict with other goals that youth have identified. Within the study there are occasions when youth seemed to make decisions that might be counter to prevailing expectations about how an economically marginalized youth should respond to livelihood opportunities. In these instances, however, youth demonstrated multiple aspirations at work in their lives. Throughout the chapter I use youth voices to illuminate the role of marketable skills and knowledge and personal development in their lives. In so doing, I will also demonstrate how they intersect with aspirations and *undugu*.

Valuing Skills, Knowledge and Personal Traits in Youth Lives

The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and the ability to act was critical to youth

definitions of empowerment. For youth who live in poverty or come from economically

marginalized areas, acquiring skills and knowledge that will give them entrée to

employment or entrepreneurial opportunities is an important part of the empowerment

process. Youth in this study identified the acquisition of such skills as a mechanism to

employment or entrepreneurship, and therefore those skills were viewed as a path to a

more stable economic future. Many youth indicated that marketable skills and

knowledge, were critical components of the empowerment process because they were

tools to expand one's opportunities in life. For example, Eric chose to join the Njia

program because familial financial constraints prevented him from going for schooling

beyond Form 4, and he therefore "felt like I needed to have those basic skills which

would empower me to have that entry level job" (June 16, 2012). The basic skills he

received through Njia were important as he secured employment in a manufacturing

company. Over time, the types of skills he needed and valued shifted but he continued to

find them central to notions of empowerment, which he described as "to give or receive

certain training that can help you cope with the outside world. Those skills are just

empowerment" (June 9, 2015). Similarly, Sarah felt that being able to give presentations

at work contributed to her empowerment: "It [empowerment] is like giving you that extra

strength to do something. Before, I didn't have that confidence to talk in front of people. I

didn't know that I could sell stuff. Getting that knowledge is being empowered" (June 13,

2015). As with these two youth, this acceptance of skill development and knowledge

acquisition as a central component of empowerment is what initially led many youth to join the Njia Program. Even as youth expanded their notions of empowerment beyond skills associated with marketable skills and knowledge, they continued to value the opportunities that skills and knowledge opened up in their lives.

Beyond the marketable skills and knowledge that youth associated with empowerment, youth indicated that personal development was an equally important part of the empowerment process. While many youth deemed marketable skills necessary to access economic opportunities, personal development was a way through which youth saw new possibilities, had new ways of thinking, and deepened their belief in themselves. Grace defined empowerment as an increased belief in oneself and an ability to see new opportunities:

> I think empowerment is the ability to know you can achieve. That is what empowerment really means. It means you have the potential to do something, so you wouldn't shy off of your dreams because you know you are actually capable of achieving them. (June 7, 2015)

Likewise, Michael felt that empowerment meant "opening up the mind and acquiring something useful to our lives," he further explained that a person who had experienced empowerment "would have knowledge to earn a living, socialize and also encourage others" (June 9, 2015). For Michael, empowerment was not just about earning a living; it was also about relating well with people and being a positive influence in the community.

To demonstrate how marketable skills and knowledge and personal development were important in youth's lives and in the empowerment process, I return to John's story, which demonstrates how both of these dimensions were important as he left the Njia program and embarked on new opportunities. As with the previous chapter, I incorporate

pieces from other youth's lives to provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which

skills and knowledge are important in their lives.

John's story, part II. As John completed the Njia program, he reflected on how

participation in the program, the acquisition of marketable skills and knowledge, and new

ways of thinking (personal development) impacted the way he thought about the future

At the end of the program he stated:

> I'll be able to achieve the goals. They were almost dying because I didn't have
> anywhere to turn to. But with whatever I have been taught, the skills I have been
> given that will enable me; I have a positive mind now. From the skill I've been
> given, I'll be able to go save. From saving, I will be able to navigate a little bit
> that which I've dreamed of. (June 13, 2012)

Although John had harbored some of his goals (particularly with relation to working in

fashion) prior to participation in the program, the introduction of new skills and the

encouragement to establish goals and think through how to achieve them enhanced

John's ability to imagine that his goals could become a reality.

Even before completion of the program John began putting personal development

into practice by setting his goals and making plans as to how he would achieve them. As

he finished the Njia program, John's long-term goals remained in the field of fashion and

he had thought about the first steps he would take to achieve them. John broadly outlined

his long-term goals:

> Let me start from today – after I am through with this training, I will go work, get
> some nice job. While I am working I will be saving. Depending on the job and the
> salary I may decide to start some small business. After a maximum of two years I
> will go to college or university. After college or university get a good job or start
> my own business. After working for some time, I will have a business. The
> business I'm going to start while working, I will continue with it even after
> college. So that means this, plus the salary from the professional job that I get, I

am thinking of starting my own firm. I don't want to be employed forever. (June 13, 2012)

John's plan to achieve his goals included first finding employment and earning money in order to save money, which would eventually facilitate the ability to pursue a degree and start his own business. Having his own business was important because John did not want to always be reliant on working for others. Although his life did not proceed according to the plan he envisioned in 2012, the ability to imagine possible paths his life might take strengthened his confidence that he would achieve some of his dreams, and helped him to take the initial steps necessary to attain them. Over the four years of the study, John's goals and plans shifted to match the realities that he faced after completing the program. Despite this, he has maintained his primary goals, including going back to school and starting a business.

Immediately after completing Njia, John put the technical skills he had learned to work by securing a one-month attachment, and subsequently a 3-month contract, at a company that produced clothing for both national and international markets. When that contract ended he secured a one-month contract at another company. In these positions John was pleased to be able to use his new marketable skills and knowledge and personal development. He indicated, "whatever skills I got from here, I used them. They enabled me to get the job" (June 7, 2014). Furthermore, he felt that his ability to talk to and communicate with his supervisors (personal development) was one reason he was able to retain his position when others were not. He explained:

> The first job I got there were many of us, we were like 20 of us who were taken to the same company. But I think the way that I was relating to the seniors [supervisors] - that is what enabled me to get an extension, a three-month

contract. The others didn't get it. I got it. So I think it's because of how I was relating to the seniors. (June 7, 2014)

In his reflection on his employment, John implied that although the technical, garment manufacturing skills were important at the job, it was his communicative and relational abilities that made a difference in being retained for employment.

John's assessment of how his ability to relate to his supervisors led him to secure an extension speaks to the possibility that not everyone who participated in the Njia program was able to adapt the skills they had learned as quickly or easily to an employment setting. John felt that youth who had participated in Njia but could not find work fell back into bad habits that would keep them from succeeding, "I even have friends from Njia. After Njia they could not find work immediately. Now you find that maybe they chew *miraa* (a mild stimulant). When you start chewing that thing, I think it lowers your thinking ability" (June 13, 2015). He went on to discuss how once youth fell back into those habits, they lost their motivation to work and engage productively in their community. Other youth felt that the value of this and other programs was dependent on the effort that any single youth was willing to put forward once they had learned new skills and knowledge. In other words, despite learning similar skills and knowledge, youth who were unable to enact what they learned, or were less able or willing to put in the necessary effort, were less likely to benefit from what they had learned.

John's ability to use the skills he had acquired not only provided an avenue for gaining employment, it also served as a catalyst to being able to make the decision a few months later to leave this line of employment. Although John had been able to secure employment in the IGM industry, the two factories where he worked both shut down

175

unexpectedly. After experiencing the unstable nature of that employment, John decided

to use the money he had saved from his salary to start working for himself, and he began

to freelance as a photographer and do graphic design jobs.

With the assistance of one of the Njia facilitators John realized that his

photography could be a source of income. Although he had previously attempted to sell

photographs, he had lacked the business knowledge necessary to pursue this as a self-

employment venture:

> I used to do business, but it wasn't all that serious. I had not taken any business
> course or training before. So [through Njia] I was able to advance my knowledge
> in business. My sales have gone up and I'm saving. (July 13, 2013)

The realization that he might be able to use his talents to earn an income was a catalyst

for John as he considered different options for his life. After working in garment

manufacturing for four months, John decided to use his savings to focus on photography.

John relayed his decision to start his business, the process he underwent, and the

challenges that he faced:

> So from what I earned at the garment companies – okay those places were not like
> really promising, because the companies were always closing. So I decided I
> wanted something that would be a bit more constant. I wanted to start this
> immediately after I finished Njia, but I didn't have the capital then. So I worked; I
> solved the issue of capital. So from what I saved I bought the materials needed for
> my photography business. During Njia they taught us how to do a market scan
> before you start a business. So I was able to know, okay, not many people have
> good cameras. So I was able to know this will be a business that will work. They
> also taught us how to approach customers, how to convince them.
>
> The biggest challenge was the market. I didn't know how to start telling people I
> can do photography, this is how I do photographs. There was no way I was going
> to tell someone I can do a photo session of you, yet I didn't have any samples. So
> I had to do some free samples. Two for friends, then from those I have been able
> to widen my scope. It was expensive, but I did it and in the long run I got paid
> back. (July 13, 2013)

Through setting up a business, John used both marketable skills and knowledge and personal development. As John considered the possibility of starting a business and began to plan the steps needed to take to make it happen, he put entrepreneurial and financial literacy skills into practice. In the process of initiating his business he also had to rely on communication skills and an ability to talk comfortably with people to create a market for his work. In establishing his business, John relied on the basic entrepreneurial and marketing skills to develop the business into something that could sustain him.

John used the skills and knowledge he had gained to start the business but the process of initiating the business also encouraged him to learn more about entrepreneurship. John realized early on in the process that there were more skills that he needed, but he had the confidence to research those skills on his own:

> Okay I will say on the bit of finances, or how am I putting it, okay like pricing. We were not taught how to do pricing for your products. That one I went and researched on my own and did that. And I will say, also on the bit of marketing, [the training] wasn't very broad - it wasn't in-depth. I had to go with that on my own. Then, on the issue of financing, I can't run a big business; I can only run a small one, which I really understand as mine. But if you tell me to run a big one, I don't think I can because of the issue of doing the paperwork. (July 13, 2013)

In starting his business John drew on his existing knowledge and skills but he also sought out new knowledge from friends in his neighborhood who were running their own businesses. They provided him with knowledge about launching a small enterprise and engaging effectively with the market.

In addition to photography, John also did consultancies for a cyber café that was run by a friend of his. Whenever there was a need for a graphic designer, John was hired. Between these two activities, John was able to save enough money to move into his own

living quarters and begin supporting himself: "I buy food for myself. I moved from my parents' home, I live in my own house right now. So I buy my food, I buy my clothes, I pay the rent for myself" (July 13, 2013). The two activities supported John and made him more independent. However, the income was insufficient to achieve his other life goals. He still desired to return to school and someday have his own fashion firm.

In 2013 John also began working as an academic writer with an on-line research company, an opportunity he learned about from friends. He started out slowly with that work and initially relied heavily on his income from photography and graphic design work to meet his basic needs. However, as he undertook trainings and developed his writing skills, the amount of time he devoted to the research company increased. By 2015, he only did photography for established clients and no longer tried to broaden his customer base. He described the way he balanced these two opportunities:

> I'm working at [an on-line research] organization. They are my employers currently. Right now I am working from home but at the beginning you go and work from the office for 3 months. After that you can either continue working from the office, or you can work from home – you can free-lance. So my first three months I worked in Nairobi. Now I'm working from home. What we do is we get orders to write articles for blogs. So they are sent to this organization and they distribute the work to us. We do the writing, return them to the organization, and they deliver the work to the client.
>
> I had friends who were doing writing and they used to tell me 'you can join writing, it's a nice thing.' But since I did not have the skills, because I had not gone for the training, I could not join them. I had friends who were doing it and I always wanted to do it. From the money that I was being paid [in garment manufacturing and his photography business], I used to save the money, like all of it. From whatever I saved, I was able to pay for the training and travel costs. After the training we were given a test, and I passed and I was hired.
>
> One challenge is that it's time consuming. Once you start writing, you have to write for the whole day. You don't have a lot of free time. Leisure time is minimal. From that, I'm a bit disconnected from the community. My social life has been limited. It's very demanding. Now that I have advanced my writing

levels, I have more work so I have less time to do the photography. (June 13, 2015)

Although the photography business had been a way for John to earn money through an activity that he enjoyed, he found that the on-line business was a more stable source of income.

The employment trajectory John's life has followed has allowed him to achieve some goals and pursue others. Independence was perhaps the most important goal that John was able to achieve. Despite his statement above that all of his savings went into paying for the training program, John saved enough money to move out of his family's home and live on his own. Each year, as his income and saving allowed, he moved into larger and more stable housing. John described the changes in his living situation each year, "I was living in a single room [in 2013]. Right now [2014] I'm living in a single room but it's self-contained - it's a bed sitter [private bathroom attached - not shared]" (June 7, 2014). By 2015 John had moved from Sukumiza to a nearby town, because "I wanted a bigger house." In addition, he found that it was a more secure location, with less police harassment of male youth and fewer problems within the community related to drugs, which was something he had seen impact his friends in Sukumiza. John tied his increased independence to the process of empowerment:

> Generally I think independence is the biggest thing I gained from the empowerment. I was able to go into whatever I wanted to be employed in. I'm earning, I have my own place, I've got my own things. Now I have my own [savings] account. God willing, I'm going to have my own horticulture business. So I was empowered. (June 13, 2105)

Independence in this example was attained because he was able to use his acquired marketable skills and knowledge to find employment that he enjoyed.

According to John, independence was not just about an individual's ability to act on his or her own, but was also a benefit to the youth's family and support network. He felt that "when you become independent from the empowerment that you gain, you are no longer a burden to the community, to the family" (June 13, 2015). In his own life he described how moving into his own living quarters impacted his family:

> I'm no longer a burden to them. I also support them when I can. When I used to live with them, they are the ones who would buy food for me. If I needed to travel somewhere they would pay the bus fare. But right now, I do everything for myself. So whatever I was depending on them, I no longer do so they can divert the funds to something else. (July 13, 2013)

In addition to not seeing himself as a burden to his family, John valued his ability to contribute to the family by assisting with his sister's school fees or giving her pocket money.

Overall, John felt he had advanced in many areas in his life, "I would say I've advanced from where I was last year, so I'm better off. In terms of everything: health, savings, I moved to a bigger house, I made new friends" (June 13, 2015). John believed the path his life had taken was getting him closer to his goals of further education and establishing his own fashion firm, but that they would take more time to achieve. In 2015 he still viewed the goals as long-term and he was putting other plans into place that might help him along the way:

> I've still not attained [schooling]. I had said about five years and now I have 2 years remaining. I wanted to save the whole sum, then I would go back to study. So I would say I'm still on track because the target that I had set for saving is still on track. So I think I'm still going to achieve it - that is what I'm hoping. (June 13, 2015)

When asked about opening his own fashion business he added:

> That will come after college. Now I developed another idea, before I go to college. Actually this might boost my goals. Recently I developed an interest in farming, agriculture. That is what I'm currently looking into. My father organized 2 acres of land [in the rural areas] for me so I'm now looking for the assets.

The introduction of horticulture opportunities among John's goals demonstrates how developing marketable skills and knowledge, in this case entrepreneurial skills, can encourage new possibilities and opportunities. John considered the decision to investigate options in horticulture as evidence of empowerment in his life:

> One example [of making new decisions] is spending the money that I have been saving for school on starting my horticulture business. In decision-making, I was able, through empowerment, to know that if I put this money into horticulture, it is going to produce more money. This will be a running business, so I'll still be working. I'll be studying and I'll still have some business running. So I won't have to stop working so that I go into studying. In making this decision, I know I'm breaking my policy or my agreement with myself; I was supposed to save this money strictly for education. But now I've thought and seen that if I put this into horticulture, it's going to be a better deal. (June 13, 2015)

John originally stated in 2012 that his schooling and fashion business were part of a five-year plan. When asked to think five years ahead during the 2015 interview, they remained integral to his imagined future, but he also implied that he was starting to think about the next stages of life:

> In the next five years, I will have earned my bachelor of science. I should also have a stable fashion business and horticulture should be blooming. I think I will have gotten married actually. In the next five years I'll be 30. So I think that is the age where you consider marriage. But it's not on my mind [now]. (June 13, 2015)

John's five-year plan suggests that as John was becoming more financially stable he was able to see a shift in his trajectory from being a youth to becoming an adult. Scholars have noted that marriage is a cultural marker of adulthood, but that there are frequently economic barriers that prevent youth (particularly male youth) from completing this rite

181

of passage (Sommers, 2012). For male youth, one of the primary economic barriers includes living independently or building a home (especially if youth are still connected to or have land in their rural home). The introduction of marriage into John's not-so-distant plans indicated that he felt he was approaching a stage where he would be closer to adulthood. John's economic independence was further demonstrated by his belief that he was at a point in his life where he had established himself:

> Now that the last two years I've been buying the things that I needed, I no longer spend a lot on buying whatever I need. So I'm spending less on buying stuff, furniture, whatever I need for my work, so I save more. Then, after advancing my levels in writing, I earn more so I save more. (June 13, 2015)

John felt that because he had established himself in his job and put certain things in place, he would be able to save at a faster rate, which would propel him to achieve his schooling and self-employment goals.

Discussion. In John's life there were many different types of skills and knowledge that were important as he navigated opportunities to achieve both long- and short-term goals. Personal development was evident at various times, but perhaps most vividly as he completed the Njia program. During this period John identified his personal goals and strategized ways that he would be able to achieve them. Communication skills were also important to him. Although he felt this was a skill he already had prior to Njia (as explained in Chapter 4), his ability to communicate with people was critical to establishing a client base for his business.

The value of marketable skills and knowledge was arguably more evident than personal development in John's story. From learning to use a sewing machine to acquiring knowledge about starting his own business, the marketable skills and

knowledge that were taught during the Njia program were a catalyst for him to be able to gain access to employment and other money-making opportunities. However, his ability to build on that knowledge once he left the program was equally important. Specific, task-oriented skills were important in John's life, but their level of importance shifted as he attained different thresholds. Working in the industrial garments industry was an important first step for John as he sought financial stability and a path to achieve his goals. However, once he had achieved one level of financial stability, John needed additional skills to get closer to achieving other goals. Although the entrepreneurial skills played this role for a while, John sought additional training that would lead to better pay and increased stability. Even as he achieved this, John kept his long-term goals in mind and used these changes in employment to make strides toward attaining his personal goals.

Finally, the way that John differentiated himself from other youth, and youth reflections on the role of skills and knowledge in others' lives, suggest that not all youth were able to use the marketable skills and knowledge and personal development in the same way. The role of these dimensions in the empowerment process appears connected to the opportunities youth either have or perceive themselves to have and their ability to engage those dimensions in some fashion. In the next section I discuss in more detail how the ability to act on marketable skills and knowledge and personal development impacts youth empowerment processes.

Enacting Knowledge and the Integrated Nature of Action and Knowledge Creation

The acquisition of knowledge seemed to be a focal point of youth's descriptions of empowerment, but several youth indicated that empowerment took place through the actions they were able to take. Dorothy indicated that an empowered person "takes the advice they are given. They take a step. They don't just take the advice and wait behind that person that has empowered them. They take a step and act" (June 11, 2015). While some youth indicated that vocational, entrepreneurial or financial skills were the tools they needed for empowerment, it was not always the skill in and of itself that youth in the study identified as empowerment. Rather, it was the ability to apply those skills in different settings and for different purposes that youth identified as empowering. For instance, Rose, a female student in the automotive field, defined empowerment in the following manner: "Empowerment. It means you learn something, and also you get to produce it. Whereby, if I get knowledge, I'll be able to do something with it later. That is empowerment to me" (June 9, 2015). Rose's personal story reflects this description of empowerment and emphasizes that the acquisition of knowledge often leads to new opportunities and the ability to act on that knowledge. As with John's story, Rose's story demonstrates how both marketable skills and knowledge and personal development were important dimensions of her empowerment process. However, whereas John's story privileged the role of marketable skills and knowledge, her story emphasizes the interconnectedness of the two while privileging personal development.

Rose's Story. Raised by a single mother because her father died when she was

young, Rose described her life growing up as uncomfortable and she imagined a more

comfortable life in the future:

> I imagine I want to live a comfortable life. I don't want to struggle, because I
> really struggled my years when I was growing up. So I want to live a better life
> and I want to help other people in the community also. Because I've been given
> an opportunity, I also want to give back to the other ones. (June 16, 2012)

Rose hoped that participation in the program would be a step toward having a

comfortable life, in which she would be able to take care of her and her family's needs.

Rose's motivation in life was born out of living in difficult circumstances and this

motivation helped her to pursue the opportunity to study at Njia. However, she was also

motivated by a desire to help others in her community, a theme that I will return to both

in Rose's story and in Chapter 6.

Rose studied automobile at Njia because she always had a passion for cars, and

she felt that the program was an opportunity to learn something new. In addition to her

passion for cars, Rose was also interested in the technical aspects of automobile

mechanics:

> I had a passion for cars. So that is why I just said, let me try and do this course.
> Because I wanted to learn more about cars, just to know the parts of the cars, how
> I can be able to fix this. Because if you learn automobile, you learn how to make
> something. You just see this thing. It's not the way that you'll be able to imagine
> it. The way the engine works, the way you can be able to remove the engine and
> see how it works. (Jun 13, 2014)

Studying automotive increased Rose's technical knowledge, but that was only one way

that these particular skills in marketable skills and knowledge contributed to her

empowerment. Her self-confidence and self-esteem also rose as she put the technical

185

skills to use and navigated a male dominated world, which she discussed in both 2013

and 2014:

> When I was doing automobile, I really enjoyed it, by the way. Because let's say
> many people didn't think that us females would do that – mechanics. But it was a
> really nice thing, getting to experience something that not many people know. It
> taught me to be – I would say to be strong. Because doing that course, it wasn't
> easy. When I was doing my internship other people would come [and say] 'you're
> a lady. What are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here.' So I got
> empowered by that, seeing that at least I did something that I'm proud of. (July 3,
> 2013; June 13, 2014)

Increased knowledge in automobile mechanics facilitated opportunities for Rose through

her internship, but it was putting those skills into practice that contributed to an increased

self-confidence and a sense of being empowered. Being one of only a few women

working at the garage also enhanced her belief in herself:

> I worked as a mechanic for almost four months and I was empowered, just seeing
> I was the only woman there. And I was able to do it on my own. It was
> challenging, but I can say I also saw myself as a champion because I did
> something not so many people can be able to do. And I got to learn a lot about it
> because they [her male colleagues] have something in them that they use to make
> cars, and for me that was something new. (June 9, 2015)

These experiences helped to build her self-confidence, an aspect of personal

development, but they also encouraged her to pursue additional knowledge and skills

through other educational opportunities. Although Rose faced challenges and skepticism

as a female mechanic, these did not appear to impact the pride she had in her ability to

handle the situation. In fact, the skepticism of others seemed to bolster her sense of

empowerment as she felt that she was a "champion" for other women.

As with many other youth in the study, Rose saw the marketable skills and

knowledge she acquired in the automotive field as a catalyst for other opportunities in her

life. Her employment as an automobile mechanic was a brief four months, but it allowed

Rose to earn enough to cater for her basic needs and save money to return to school to

pursue a diploma. Although her diploma course was in public relations, Rose saw this as

a continuation of the work she had done in the automotive field. She explained the

similarities in this way:

> It [public relations] isn't that different [from automotive] because in automobile a customer would come. You'll have to relate to them. You'll have to know the issues, what the problem is. It's the same way with customer care. You have to know what the problem is, how you will be able to assist the customer. (June 13, 2014)

Whether Rose left the automotive field because of the challenges faced in the industry or

because she enjoyed the public relations field, which she had been introduced to through

the customer relations and sales curriculum at Njia, is unclear.

After her contract with the automotive garage ended, Rose indicated she would

have liked to do further study in the automotive field but that the cost was prohibitive,

and, as a result, she opted to pursue a diploma in public relations. However, in later

interviews she suggested that she changed fields because working with people and public

relations were her true areas of interest. Regardless of the motivation behind studying

public relations, continuing her education had been a long-term goal for Rose. Although

she had been able to save enough to begin the diploma program, Rose found that the

costs of school fees and everyday expenses became overwhelming and she had to rely on

assistance from her mother in order to graduate:

> I was going to school and she had to borrow some money so that she could be able to pay off my fees, because I had so many arrears and I couldn't graduate before paying it. So [my mom] had to borrow some money and pay the arrears for the school. It was difficult because we had to sacrifice a lot, because now the

amount she was earning had to be reduced because she had to pay it to the bank. (June 13, 2014)

Rose was not reliant upon her mother alone, however. While schooling, Rose also used the entrepreneurial and financial management skills she had learned at Njia to try a small business selling *mandazi* (fried doughnut snack) with a colleague from her diploma course. This business served as a side job while she was in school and Rose knew that it was not a long-term venture:

> My friend and I started a business of selling *mandazi*. We were just selling, but it was a nice business that we started. [I like it because] we tend to meet a lot of people at that job. You socialize with a lot of people, because you meet different people from different places. It gives you that idea of knowing people, having business ideas. [But] it is not a job that you can maintain yourself with. It's not something stable because it can end at any time, and you don't get paid everyday. If I get a better, greener pasture, I'll move on to that one. But I'll still hold on to this until the time being – until I can get something else. (July 3, 2013)

The *mandazi* business provided Rose with a small but necessary income while she was at school, but it was also an income she was ready to leave when the time was right.

By 2014 Rose had quit the *mandazi* business and was focused on her employment as a customer care agent. In the two years after completing her diploma, Rose worked in customer care with two different employers. Working with these employers was an empowering opportunity to use the skills developed during the diploma course, but she found that she gained additional knowledge at the same time: "At my work we normally have group discussions and you get to present for everyone. You get empowered and also you get to learn a lot" (June 9, 2015). For Rose, the discussions in which she engaged were more than just an opportunity to use her communicative skills; they were also an avenue to learn from her colleagues about the industry.

188

Like many youth, Rose connected communication skills, public speaking, and relating well with others to self-confidence and self-esteem. In 2012 Rose indicated: "The self-esteem that we have been taught here has really helped me to communicate, to know, to just ask questions" (June 16, 2012). When asked to further elaborate on what she meant by self-esteem Rose tied it directly to relating to other people:

> We were being told how to relate to different people. Because when we came here we came from different backgrounds. We didn't know each other. So when we came here we learned how to cooperate with each other. We respect one another. We value each other. (June 16, 2012)

Interestingly, Rose saw increased self-esteem as both a catalyst for increased communication skills and a product of being able to communicate with others. Although her discussion in 2012 suggested that learning how to relate with other people built up her self-esteem and led to a greater ability to communicate, her ability to enact these aspects of personal development at her workplace in 2015 further contributed to the empowerment process.

Completing her diploma and finding employment were two of the goals Rose had identified in 2012 and 2013. However, by accomplishing these she was also able to begin achieving other goals as well. In 2014, Rose stated that her life "is much better because as for now, I am assisting my family in a smaller way. Anything that is not there, at least I assist my family. I can say life is not bad" (June 13, 2014). By 2015, Rose described her life as more stable, in large part because she was able to more systematically assist her family: "Finally, I can say life is much easier. We are coping. Right now I can be able to just provide anything. I can pay the bills, utilities… I can say it's much easier" (June 9, 2015).

189

Although Rose felt that her life situation was improving, she still aspired for more opportunities. Since she finished her diploma, Rose had turned her sights to earning a degree in public relations. When asked in 2015 to think about her life in the next five years, Rose was optimistic:

> In the next five years, I can say that I can be the best public relations officer, and also the best in customer care, because I've worked as both. So in five years I can see myself being the best. (June 9, 2015)

She hoped that by applying herself and working hard she would gain more reliable employment and her family would be in a more stable position.

Rose's ability to contribute to her family's needs was one way that Rose had begun to give back, but she had also been reaching out in her community. Even before completing the Njia program, Rose had been involved in activities through her church that she characterized as a way to give back: "We have this group in church, when we go we visit the street children, the orphans, you give something to them. So it's like you're giving back to the community, to your friends also" (June 16, 2012). In 2015, however, Rose indicated that her role in the community had changed and that now she was more directly involved in giving advice to other youth, including encouraging them to participate in Njia. When asked how her role had changed, Rose replied:

> In terms of just empowering those other girls, because we are having other girls in our community. Just empowering them. Telling them about Njia, what it did for me, how I went to learn about it, doing my automobile. There's a girl I referred [to Njia] and she joined Njia Empowerment Program, whereby she also did hospitality. So I was empowering them, telling her to do something that I also did and getting her to learn more. (June 9, 2015)

For Rose, her experiences with the empowerment process had led her to interact with youth within her community in a different and new way; a way in which she now saw herself as contributing to the empowerment process of other youth.

Rose's view of how her own empowerment contributed to her ability to empower others speaks directly to Rose's definition of empowerment. As noted above, Rose saw empowerment as learning something and (re)producing that knowledge, "whereby if I get knowledge I'll be able to do something with it later" (June 9, 2015). Rose identified many different things that she had learned, at Njia and in her diploma program, and put them into practice. Rose then used what she had learned to produce knowledge for other youth in an effort to assist them in their empowerment processes.

Discussion. Rose's story is an opportunity to understand how different dimensions of the empowerment process intersect and build upon each other. I imagine this cyclical nature of empowerment on two levels. On the one hand, Rose acquired certain skills and knowledge and in putting those to use she increased her knowledge and skill set and contributed to her personal empowerment. On another level, Rose's ability to enact empowerment gave her the confidence to influence other youth and encourage them in their own empowerment by passing her knowledge on to them. Many youth who engaged other youth in this way reflected that this further increased their own self-confidence and sense of empowerment.

An examination of both Rose and John's stories highlights another way in which youth conceptualized empowerment. In associating empowerment with knowledge

acquisition, several youth indicated that empowerment built upon skills, knowledge, or interests that the youth already had. John stated:

> I think empowerment is maybe providing someone with some extra ability to go beyond a point where they could not go without the assistance… Basically I think the main definition of empowerment is enabling someone to cross a barrier, to be able to cross somewhere they could not. (June 13, 2015)

Similarly Linda described empowerment as a stepping stone: "It's like giving someone a stepping stone; using what someone has to strengthen [them], to make [things] better than how it is" (June 15, 2015). Through these definitions youth demonstrate that even when empowerment is envisioned as something given or acquired, empowerment does not emerge from a blank slate. Rather, empowerment builds upon already existing potential, as Anthony's definition of empowerment demonstrates. Anthony saw empowerment as a person's potential, which can be enhanced through introducing new skills and knowledge. He explained that once an individual is exposed to new knowledge, his or her desire to pursue new options is increased and that desire increases their potential. He continued his description by saying, "so you will be empowering [them] – you are taking something that is there and you are giving it potential. You are increasing it" (June 13, 2015).

For Rose and John, as well as other youth in the study, there are arguably multiple building blocks from which empowerment took place. As secondary school graduates, they had already proven both their academic ability and their willingness to work hard to achieve a goal (their secondary school diploma). In addition, both youth were able to pursue a course of study that aligned with an inherent interest they already had. Not all youth were able to engage in a course that aligned with their passions, as will be

demonstrated in Chapter 6, but all youth did have some level of academic credentials and an array of life experiences from which the empowerment process could extend.

The Contribution of Marketable Skills and Knowledge and Personal Development to Aspirations

John's story also illustrated the role that aspirations plays in youth's lives. In his discussion of the goals he had prior to enrolling in the program, John demonstrated a sense of hopelessness that seemed to overwhelm him. Thinking about his life in a new way, combined with new skills, enabled him to pursue opportunities that he either had not imagined before or had come to seem too distant to achieve. For instance, his increased knowledge of entrepreneurship and his self-knowledge led him to realize that his talents with photography could become an opportunity to generate income.

Anthony also tied increased skill development to new aspirations in his life. He described the change that took place in his outlook after participating in the program and the experiences he had in the first year afterward in this way:

> As per last year, I had trouble; I had nowhere to work, and I had no way of continuing with my education. For one, I really aspired to go to school, and I had nothing, nothing, nothing. I had no direction. Before I joined here, in fact, I had no future dream. The only dream that I was looking for is what kind of work to do, then I stay [with that]. Yeah, since the last time when we had this [interview], I have really seen a change in getting an opportunity to go to school, and also an opportunity to do some small market-place selling. In fact this is driving my dream, my future dream. (July 11, 2013)

Like John, Anthony expressed that he had a sense of hopelessness prior to developing marketable skills and knowledge and personal development through Njia.

John felt that having new ways of thinking about the future was tied to empowerment. He stated: "An empowered person can think of their future. Not only

think, they can apply their thoughts in their future, like materializing whatever they've thought" (June 13, 2015). Other youth also reflected on the importance of acquiring skills and thinking in new ways to their ability to affect change in their lives and to the process of empowerment. In Matthew's description of empowerment he indicated, "It means making aware. Changing youth ways of thinking" (June 9, 2015). Matthew went on to explain that someone who has acquired skills and knowledge has new ways of thinking about their lives, but those who do not have the knowledge cannot have similar thoughts. To further explore how marketable skills and knowledge and personal development intersect with youth's aspirations in the process of empowerment, I turn to Sarah, whose story demonstrates the aspirational role of skills and knowledge.

     Sarah's story. Sarah was married with a small child when she first came to Njia. Although she was involved in activities through her church and in taking care of her child, she described her life as "down. OK, my spirit was so down. I mean I was so down. You know, I was just in the house" (June 16, 2012). Despite this, she came into the program with three goals:

> I had three goals. I told myself that I'm going to work hard to learn more from Njia, from the teachers, facilitators. Then I'm going to try my best and work hard and get that job, because I want to get a job to train more to go to school. And also I'm a mother; I want to help my son. (June 16, 2012)

These three goals provided motivation for her to learn as much as she could during the Njia program and put them into practice in her life.

     Sarah began putting her newly acquired entrepreneurship knowledge into practice while she was still enrolled in the Njia program, by selling *chai* (tea) to her classmates and facilitators and making and selling jewelry. Since practical experience was an

194

important part of the Njia program, she was encouraged to create her own small business.

Over the four years of interviews Sarah described how she began her businesses and the

challenges and successes she faced:

> In Njia, that's when I realized I could do business, because when I finished school I had just done basic computer packages. Then I came to Njia. I didn't know about business; I was just employed in one place. But after Njia I started selling *chai*, I started making jewelry, I was just doing stuff here and there; that's when I realized I can do business. I had some challenges when I was starting with the jewelry. I already had some materials, but people would request for specific designs and then they would not pick them on time. You just have to be patient. In this line of job, you need to be patient. Sometimes the work is so nice, you can get a lot of profit in one day, maybe even 2000 shillings [approximately US$22]. So if I've sold jewelry, especially before an occasion, I will get a lot of cash. But if it's just the normal school days, you'll find maybe a client can tell you they want a necklace. You have come with a necklace, then they tell you next week. And you imagine that it's not only one person. So you just need to be patient.

> *How about the chai business?*

> Mmmm - the *chai* business was challenging, because of the weather! Sometimes the weather is hot, people say 'eh, it's too hot, I'm not going to take tea.' So, imagine, I carried my two flasks [of *chai*], and go back with them. Maybe both of them are full, or one is full, the other one is half full. (2012 – 2015)

This initial foray into her own business was an avenue through which Sarah realized that

entrepreneurship was a way that she could supplement her income. Furthermore, it helped

Sarah to identify her passion of working with people through sales: "The biggest thing for

me, when I was in Njia, I started with the jewelry and the *chai* – these sales it ignited that

passion. I had it [the passion] but it wasn't very high" (June 12, 2014). Although she quit

selling *chai* when she completed Njia, she continued the jewelry business on the side,

even as she moved on to other opportunities.

Beyond entrepreneurship, Sarah used other marketable skills and knowledge in

her life as well. Although Sarah studied automotive while in the Njia program, she valued

the skills she learned in a variety of sectors, including hospitality and customer relations

and sales. Having knowledge in different sectors allowed Sarah to pursue different

opportunities when what she was engaged in was not ideal. Sarah's first attachment was

with an automotive firm, but she found that the location of the garage was so far, and the

fare for transportation too expensive, to justify continuing in the attachment. After one

week she decided to pursue a different opportunity:

> So I told my friends - Hey, you know this program, it molded us to be all around.
> You can be told to go to this thing, because I've been trained. I've been trained in
> automobile, CRS, hospitality. So I tell them, I'm not going to be specific. I'll even
> search for attachments even in hospitality or CRS. (July 3, 2013)

After withdrawing from the automotive attachment, Sarah found, with the help of an Njia

facilitator, a second attachment, this time in hospitality. After completing that attachment

Sarah went on to gain experience in CRS, a field she worked in for two years.

Sarah's transition to CRS stemmed from a variety of factors. The first was

availability. Although she was able to work briefly in a hotel, she found the work

unstable and thought that the pay was not sufficient to cater to her needs at home and her

transportation costs. When she switched to CRS there were two different types of work in

which she would engage: promotions and sales. In promotions she typically worked in a

retail setting such as a supermarket and demonstrated the product of whoever had hired

her. Sales positions typically involved selling items door-to-door or in a specified

environment. Although positions in promotions and sales were typically short-term

contracts (varying from a few weeks to a couple of months), by 2014 she had established

herself within the market and rarely had time between jobs:

Jobs are also easy to get because now I am exposed to the market. I have

196

channels. I have people who link me. I have people who know me, like I have worked with agencies. So maybe today I am working with [one company], maybe under a marketing agency. Next time, I'll be doing it with another company. So whenever a company has interviews, they send me the message. They tell me there is an interview. So I'll look, if I am comfortable to go to this job, I'll go and they're throughout the year. There is no particular time that I will say there are no jobs. (June 12, 2014)

Beyond availability, Sarah also preferred promotions and sales because she tended to receive better pay for her work than she did in other jobs. In determining which contracts to sign or which jobs to pass over, Sarah put her financial knowledge to use by determining not just the pay she would receive, but by calculating the expenses each job entailed. In this way she was able to determine which jobs would be the most suitable for her needs.

The final reason that Sarah preferred to work in the promotions and sales was because she realized she enjoyed working with people. This was also the reason she enjoyed having her own business. In 2015, Sarah continued to work in promotions when she had a good paying opportunity, but her focus had turned to her new business selling handbags and shoes. Sarah identified how learning new skills and putting them into practice helped her to recognize this passion and identify ways that she could use this in her life: "Even going out there and earning for yourself, if it wasn't for Njia I wouldn't have even gone out there and started selling *chai* and other things. So that is also a part of being empowered" (June 13, 2015).

The process of selling *chai* ignited new possibilities and changed her aspirations for her life. Sarah felt that the ability to think of new possibilities was part of the empowerment process:

When you are not empowered, maybe you don't even have those skills and you don't have even that reasoning that you go and look for something you can do. Maybe you would be thinking of these easy things, like being a house girl. But you can think big because you have that knowledge… Because now I am empowered, because I have that strength, I can think of going and starting something on my own. (June 13, 2015)

Aspirations play an important role in youth empowerment and marketable skills and knowledge and personal development both contribute to youth's capacity to aspire to new and different possibilities.

Skills and Knowledge in Challenging Environments

This chapter has demonstrated that youth valued the skills, knowledge and personal traits associated with marketable skills and knowledge and personal development. Employment was one reason youth valued the skills learned in these two dimensions, but there were other reasons youth found them valuable. When asked how she understood empowerment in her own life, Abigail indicated, "I would say I'm empowered jobwise". When asked to explain what she meant by being empowered jobwise, she elaborated by saying, "the way I can manage, I can be able to buy myself food, clothes, shoes, etc." (June 11, 2015). Abigail felt that empowerment came about through employment because she was able to cater for her basic needs. However, her description of her empowerment as related to having a job also highlights that there are other ways in which youth might experience and understand empowerment.

Economic opportunities were one reason youth valued skills and knowledge, but employment and monetary gain were not the only outcomes that youth saw as empowering. For many youth, participation in the program or engagement in employment or community activities was a form of empowerment because it meant that

they were active and no longer idle. Martha indicated that even participation in the *Kazi kwa Vijana* program, which many youth indicated was not really a mechanism for achieving their goals or potential in life, contributed to empowerment: "Ok, even *Kazi kwa Vijana* is to be empowered, because at least you are doing something; you don't have free time" (June 16, 2015). Likewise, Cynthia expressed that no longer being idle impacted the way that she was viewed by people in her neighborhood: "the way I used to just hang around at home, just to idle. I wasn't doing that any more. So I changed. Now they are seeing me as someone responsible and not that idle" (July 6, 2013). For Cynthia, the change in status started with the Njia program and continued as she returned to school to pursue a diploma. Many youth indicated that shifting their identity away from being an idle youth to someone who is engaged in some sort of activity contributed both to differences in how others perceived youth and to the process of empowerment.

Marketable skills and knowledge contributed to youth's empowerment processes regardless of whether or not they used those skills to secure employment. Sarah indicated that she was empowered because her knowledge of automobile was a space to participate and contribute to her family's needs:

> Getting that knowledge is being empowered. I've known about automobile, I can even name some automobile parts; my husband can even send me to buy some spares and I can even know the parts, so that is part of being empowered. (June 13, 2015)

Keith also felt that he was empowered through the automotive skills he learned in the program, despite the fact that he was not employed within the automotive sector, because through those skills he would also be able to help others. He explained:

I do feel empowered because when I joined Njia I was immune, even if someone has a puncture problem by the side of the road. I could just pass by without assisting. But after attending three months of training here in Njia, if I find someone stranded on the road side, the vehicle is not in a good condition, I can just excuse myself and ask him or her, 'what is the problem, can I assist?' That one is empowerment. (June 13, 2015)

Keith's example shows not only how the use of marketable skills and knowledge can be of value beyond seeking employment, but also how youth desire to use their skills to assist others. Helping other youth, giving back to their community, and providing assistance to family was mentioned frequently by youth in this study as reasons why they felt the marketable skills and knowledge, the opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship they afforded, and personal development were important. Youth's sense of responsibility as a motivating factor is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

The Njia program is designed to enable youth to engage in employment or self-employment opportunities, but this is not always possible. This is often because finding employment in such a tight job market is difficult, or because doing so interferes with other, equally important goals that youth have. In the discussion of John's story above, I noted the perspective of some youth who believed that the inability to enact skills and knowledge could undermine the empowerment process. This is a real danger when youth are faced with high unemployment rates. David, a youth who studied hospitality and had worked for a number of companies, both inside and outside of the hospitality industry, on a short term basis until 2014, found that between 2014 and 2015 he had a hard time securing employment:

I have posted some CVs but I have not gotten any reply, so I can say that according to my career as an hotelier, I have not achieved anything since last year. What happened is that when I didn't get a position after posting like four CVs, and

they did not reply back, I decided to go try hustling, since it was something that I was doing even before I joined Njia. So when I got an opportunity I went and I was selected to join. And so I found it easier hustling – doing and being into something – than dropping some CVS and not getting something back. So I decided to pursue *kibarua*. Not pursuing it that much, but I am doing it to get something, like collecting the money. I am saving some money and when I have enough I will go for a diploma that is higher than the certificate I did here. (June 6, 2015)

This work maintained David's needs, but did not provide enough income for him to save substantially toward his goal of returning to school for a diploma in hospitality, or to provide his parents, who had recently moved back to their rural home, with significant assistance. Despite the difficulties he faced in securing employment, David was still motivated to find a way to achieve his educational goal.

David's definition of empowerment highlighted the role of aspirations in the empowerment process. He linked motivation to empowerment by defining empowerment as "anything you can do to a person in order to motivate him or her to do something." He further explained that, in his own life, the motivation he had received prompted him to act on his skills and both imagine and try new opportunities:

Since the empowerment I got from Njia, I have tried to do several new things that have enabled me to get other ideas and I try to do them. And again, I have tried to empower and help other people as well. Looking at where I come from, I was really thinking about very few things; but now coming here [to Njia] has enabled me to join with other people and with the education that we got we have new ideas. So empowerment *ni poa* [empowerment is cool]. (June 6, 2015)

David saw both the education he received and the ability to engage with others about that education as catalysts to the development of new ideas and aspirations for new possibilities. This description is juxtaposed against previous remarks he had made about his life before Njia:

Before coming to Njia, I never thought I have life out there. I was just a normal boy. At least now I've got my main skill in hospitality. So I've taken it seriously. Back then I was still young. I didn't have that much of a dream, you know, just like in Kele you don't take things seriously – you only see it, relax, and hope that God will bring something your way. Kele is a place where you will find people are always… let me say, boys…you will find them hanging around the 'hood. Maybe taking drugs. Some don't have a vision or ambition in life. So they end up in a gang, maybe robbing people. That's the culture in Kele. (June 14, 2014)

Even though he had difficulty using his marketable skills and knowledge in employment that would be deemed suitable to move him toward his goals, the ability to differentiate himself from the way he was in the past and think of new possibilities kept him motivated. It was this motivation, rather than employment or schooling that David felt was part of the empowerment process.

David's motivation was steeped in new ways of thinking about his life and the realization that he did not have to be defined by his background. This is an important consideration for empowerment among youth who have lived in difficult situations. Martha affirmed this in her discussion of empowerment as a mechanism through which youth could realize that their background would not hold them back: "To empower is to make someone think beyond where they are and not to think that their background can determine… That is, it's to help the youth get a better future" (June 10, 2015). Although not stated as explicitly as in Martha's definition, or seen as clearly as in David's example, this idea was often implicit when youth described what their life might have been had they not joined Njia or found other alternatives. Even when faced with difficult situations, the ability to imagine that they had opportunities in life contributed to youth empowerment.

Difficult work environments were another challenge youth faced. These

sometimes prevented youth from being able to work in a particular location, and at other

times influenced decisions that might seem counter to conventional wisdom about their

livelihoods. Female youth noted the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace

and several shared their experiences in trying to secure jobs prior to joining Njia. In the

following conversation Linda described some of the difficulties she faced:

> Another challenge, maybe I'm qualified for that kind of a job but maybe the employer wants me to do a favor to him so that I can get the job. If I don't entertain, like I have to go.
>
> *But you can just play music for him; you said you are a musician. Can you play music for him? That's a way of entertaining him.*
>
> Ok that is not what he's interested in; he can go listen to music somewhere else.
>
> *What is his interest then?*
>
> To satisfy him sexually or even if he doesn't want to maybe sleep with you, maybe he'll harass you by spanking, maybe touching a part of your body or even not physically. Maybe by the way they are looking at you, the words they are using. You don't feel comfortable.
>
> *And does this happen to all the girls or only to you?*
>
> Ok it is a challenge to many girls.
>
> *So that is something that you have undergone?*
>
> Like thrice.
>
> *So had you given the favor do you think you would have gotten the job?*
>
> Ok, what I believe is when one does what that person wants maybe they can get the job, yes, but they cannot stay for long. Like after that person gets what he wants, he just…Ok I believe that you are not the first person to be in that kind of a problem, that kind of a situation. So after you get the job, you just stay for a while then he finds a way to chase you.

How have you been able to overcome any of these challenges as a young woman?

Like that one of sexual harassment? Ok, I'll give an example of a place I went for a certain job, then the boss wanted me to do him that favor. First of all, I tried to make him understand my principles and what made me go for that job. Ok, in the first week he understood, but after a week he came back to me, said if I really need the job because no one was going to know, I should maybe submit.

And then what happened next?

I just walked out, ok, I didn't argue with him. The following day I never went for the job. (June 13, 2012)

Youth indicated that this type of encounter was not unusual for female youth in Nairobi. The high competition for jobs can give people in positions of authority additional leverage over youth, especially those who are economically marginalized or appear more desperate for employment. Both young women and young men acknowledged the prevalence of sexual exploitation, and recognized the great disadvantage youth were at in such situations. Requests for sexual favors were frequently reported by youth in the study, but often in the context of something that happened to other youth, or to friends they knew. In addition to requests for sexual favors, youth reported that monetary requests were also prevalent. In those situations both males and females reported employers who demanded a certain sum of money before a position could be secured. Some female youth reported that having a better sense of themselves and increased self-confidence (personal development), which they indicated had been fostered at Njia*,* helped them navigate these situations.

Some youth were able to use their self-confidence and self-esteem to mitigate challenges in the work place. However, others made the decision to change vocational fields so that the work environments would be more conducive to their needs. Working

conditions were frequently cited as reasons why youth transitioned from hospitality to other sectors of employment. Susan was one youth who found too many hurdles in the hospitality industry. Her primary concerns were the late working hours and the low pay, and she indicated that she often felt unsafe when she left the hotel where she worked due to the late hours and the need to take multiple *matatus* to return home. The decision to leave the hospitality industry was made easier for Susan when a former employer contacted her about a cleaning position in her business center. Susan worked hard in this position and eventually secured a promotion to receptionist. In 2014, Susan was proud of her promotion and indicated that because she had confidence, she was also able to approach her boss and ask for a raise:

> That being confident – see there was a time before I joined there, I could not even face someone and talk to someone. But you see right now I am gaining confidence. I can defend myself. When I saw that money was not enough, I approached my boss, I told her this and this; this money is not enough, I'll appreciate if you can add me some. (June 14, 2014)

Although her boss agreed to the raise, Susan was concerned that the change in her position had a negative impact on her family:

> Before I was promoted to reception, I used to spend a lot of time with my daughter, because I was able to leave here early, at 6 p.m. But now I come out late – at 10:00 p.m. So those are the changes. You know I don't get enough time to spend time with her. (June 14, 2014)

Susan maintained her job for nearly a year, but when we interviewed her in 2015 she had recently quit because, "I realized that the owner was just using me. I was working for long hours and the pay was small. I encountered rude clients and there was no freedom in that place" (June 18, 2015). At the time of the interview Susan was unemployed, focused on her child and deciding what she would do next. While Susan had joined Njia because

205

of the opportunity it presented to get a job, her decision to leave her employment because of the long working hours and lack of respect she encountered underscored that employment was not the only consideration in her life.

Conclusion

Marketable skills and knowledge serves as a critical dimension of empowerment because of the unique situation in which youth find themselves. Their liminal state between child and adult, and between secondary school student and active community agent means that they need something that will help propel them to the next stage of life. Marketable skills and knowledge thus serves as a catalyst to give them entrée to the next step in their lives. By learning a vocational trade, gaining entrepreneurial knowledge, or learning transferable work readiness skills youth have tools that are necessary to engage in employment or entrepreneurship – two activities expected of youth if they are going to successfully move along the spectrum toward adulthood. However, marketable skills and knowledge alone is not sufficient for youth empowerment. Self-confidence, self-knowledge, and other personal traits, which are part of personal development, are also necessary as youth seek opportunities to enact the skills and knowledge they have learned. John's story demonstrates the importance of the skills, knowledge and personal traits developed in both dimensions of empowerment as he sought out new opportunities in his life.

As I have indicated so far, access to marketable skills and knowledge and personal development are important for youth empowerment, however, they do not function as silos, nor are they static dimensions that once achieved do not change. Rose's

experience with the automotive industry demonstrates how enacting one set of skills often reinforces others. During Rose's employment in the automotive industry, the opportunity to put her technical skills to use also led to increased self-confidence and she demonstrated that a woman could do that kind of work. Both John and Rose's stories demonstrated that the types of knowledge needed changes over time. For both John and Rose, what they learned at Njia was a catalyst to find employment, but they both recognized the need for other sets of skills and knowledge in order to move to new opportunities. For both youth, new sources of knowledge provided avenues by which to pursue opportunities that aligned with their interests and provided increasing levels of financial stability. While this was not the trajectory that all youth had, it was common to many of them.

This chapter also highlighted how aspirations, as a dimension of empowerment, were integrally related to marketable skills and knowledge and personal development. Youth were able to use new skills sets and ways of thinking about themselves, imagine new possibilities, and have hope for their future. This contributed to the notion of youth empowerment as a catalyst of change in their lives. With a renewed hope, youth explored ways in which the tools of marketable skills and knowledge and personal development could be put into practice.

David and Susan's life trajectories illustrated the precarious situation facing many youth in this study, and in Kenya more broadly. While youth may desire to engage in money-making activities, there are not always opportunities or they may not be ideal opportunities. Although gaining marketable skills and knowledge and personal

development can help to mitigate these circumstances, they cannot always eliminate all the barriers that youth face. Susan decided that her dignity and relationship with her daughter were more important than maintaining her employment. However, Susan's ability to make that decision was facilitated by several factors, each connected to different dimensions of empowerment. Perhaps most importantly, she and her daughter were able to move back to live with her mother, who was employed and able to financially assist her at this time. In addition, the fact that she had been able to use financial literacy skills to save money gave her some flexibility as she sought new options (marketable skills and development). Finally, Susan was able to keep a focus on her long-term goals as she decided what her next steps should be (personal development). Without these factors, the decision to leave an unsupportive work environment could have been made much more difficult.

It is important to note that although employment and entrepreneurship were often desired and necessary outcomes of marketable skills and knowledge and personal development, they were not the only ways youth valued them, nor were they necessarily needed for empowerment to be evident. Cynthia indicated that these dimensions helped her to avoid idleness and Sarah thought that she had learned skills that were helpful to her family. Both Sarah and Keith appreciated the vocational skills, not for use in their employment, but because they were a mechanism by which to help other people. In the following chapter I will examine this further through a discussion of the role of *undugu* in empowerment.

Chapter 6: *Undugu* in Youth Networks of Belonging

In his introduction to the book *African Intellectuals and Decolonization*, Nicholas

Creary, arguing that human subjectivity in African settings has been under-theorized,

asked:

> In a South African context, for example, would it be possible to explicate 'human subjectivity' in terms of *ubuntu*, or the idea that 'I am because we are'; that is, that one's human identity (or subjectivity) is radically bound to one's existence as part of a larger group? (2012, pp. 3-4)

A similar question may be posed in a Kenyan context and with regards to youth

empowerment; is it possible to talk about youth empowerment and the choices youth

make that affect their livelihoods and life trajectories without discussing the ways in

which youth view themselves as individuals and as part of a larger social structure? The

experiences of the youth in this study suggest that their life trajectories and their

experiences with empowerment are inextricably tied to their networks of belonging.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the concept of *undugu*, a Swahili term that encompass

notions of communality, interdependence, and reciprocity. In this chapter, I argue that

youth experiences and conceptualizations of empowerment are situated within their

networks of belonging and *undugu*. *Undugu* thus impacts youth experiences with the

empowerment process and influences youth aspirations and the decisions they make.

Three broad themes emerged from this study in relation to how youth's lives and

trajectories intersected with that of the family and the community networks in which they

lived and socialized. I begin by examining the first theme: the significant role that

support systems and networks of belonging played in assisting youth to attain their goals,

achieve certain stages of life, and experience empowerment. Using Grace's story, I

highlight how the different networks she was a part of – her immediate family, extended family, and neighborhood – supported her as she worked toward different goals. The second theme addresses youth's social responsibilities within their networks of belonging, and how notions of reciprocity impacted their decision-making process and the goals they chose to pursue at a given time. Anthony's story demonstrates that as youth became more financially and socially stable, their focus shifted from being recipients of support to supporting others. The third theme I examine is how changes in youth's stature within their networks of belonging impacted their experiences with empowerment. Linda's story demonstrates how the combination of the support she received from, and her social responsibility toward, her networks of belonging changed her standing within the community and the ways in which others viewed her. In recognition that there are multiple ways that being a part of these networks of belonging and the cultural concept of *undugu* can be experienced, I conclude the chapter by examining how changes in stature had positive and negative impacts on youth. These shifts in responsibility and stature were seen by youth as a demonstrable outcome of empowerment, but the empowerment process was also fostered through these shifts as changes in their roles and stature increased youth self-confidence, belief in themselves (personal development) and the way they thought about their future (aspirations). Throughout the discussion of these three themes the role of marketable skills and knowledge, personal development, and aspirations, as they relate to *undugu,* will be incorporated.

Living in Community – *Mtu ni Watu* (A Person is People)

In each of the sections of this chapter I begin with a Swahili proverb that exemplifies a specific sentiment of *undugu*. I chose to use proverbs because while notions of communality, interdependence, and reciprocity can be explained in English, quite often the essence of what is being conveyed is not captured. In this section, *mtu ni watu,* which means "a person is people", demonstrates that an individual cannot live in isolation. Rather, a person needs to live in community with others and at times needs their help. Youth in this study demonstrated *mtu ni watu* through both the support they received from their networks of belonging and the ways in which they reciprocated and passed that support to others.

Parents, siblings, extended families, neighbors, or members of local community groups served as a significant source of support for youth as they completed schooling and sought new opportunities for their lives. Although people were not always able to provide the necessary financial support to enable youth to continue their education or open a business, youth recognized and valued the encouragement and advice they received. The support Martha received was similar to the support identified by many youth. She indicated that her mom provided her with both encouragement and fare for transportation: "From the day I joined Njia up 'til now, she is supporting me" (June 16, 2012). The support and encouragement youth received encouraged them to strive for their best so that they could give back to those who had supported them. David, for example, decided to join Njia because of the way his mother had worked hard to give him support: "I decided to soldier on because I reasoned that since my mother had struggled to bring

211

me up to where I am, I should also work hard to lift her up" (June 16, 2012). Like David, many youth were eager to be able to provide assistance to their family members in recognition of the support they had received, which had been a motivating factor in their desire to seek out empowerment. In telling Grace's story below, I demonstrate the types of support youth received from the many people who were present in their lives. I also show how networks of belonging influenced youth experiences with marketable skills and knowledge and personal development through the decisions youth made and the actions they took.

Grace's story. Grace, like many youth in the study, faced difficulties when she completed secondary school. Although she had a supportive family that worked hard to make sure she attended secondary school, she lacked the necessary finances to continue schooling, and she found employment opportunities were elusive. Five years after finishing Form 4, Grace felt that her life was not going in the direction she would have liked. Although she desired to go back to school, she did not have the financial means to do so. Furthermore, with a young daughter, she knew she needed a way to change her life circumstances so that her daughter would have more opportunities.

In the time between when she completed schooling and when she joined Njia, Grace said she was, "just out there doing nothing" (June 16, 2012). Despite this characterization, Grace had found a few short-term employment opportunities in the intervening five years and had used those experiences to start identifying the type of work she enjoyed. She knew, for instance, that she enjoyed sales jobs because she had worked for a couple of different companies promoting their products. However, her lack of

212

knowledge and skills in these areas had proven to be a setback in her ability to succeed in

the field. She described the work she did:

> At times I was doing promotions, like I've done promotions with this company
> that sells hair products. I've also done sales with a company that sells cosmetics.
> Yeah, but what I used to do back then is not what I can do right now [i.e. after
> Njia]. Right now I can do something more creative than what I used to do back
> then, because I have knowledge about sales. Before, I was just bumping into the
> market and I didn't know what it was all about. And I don't know how I could
> approach a client or something, or how I could close a sale. How I can make
> follow-ups. So maybe when sales were a bit difficult, I could get discouraged by a
> customer. Back then I would feel like it was something that is really big. Yeah,
> but now I know with sales you can really get discouraged, you can't just die a
> little just by being discouraged by one customer. You still try. Maybe like when
> they discourage you, then there is that one out there who will embrace what you
> are telling them.

> *How long were you doing promotions?*

> The promotions were never long; maybe they were coming once or two days in a
> week. And then you go for like a month [without work], then you are called for
> another one. It was not something that you could call a job, really. It was just
> something that just came up. It goes, it comes, it goes. (June 16, 2012)

Based on these experiences, Grace knew that she enjoyed sales and was pleased when she

heard, through a friend, that there was an opportunity to study customer relations and

sales (CRS) at Njia.

Beyond the opportunity to study CRS, Grace joined Njia because she felt as

though she was not making the progress in life that she desired. During the 2012

interview, Grace reflected on her life before participating in Njia and the reasons why she

decided to join:

> At that time I really needed something to make my life begin. I never had funds to
> go to school or something. I also never had an opportunity [i.e. admission]
> initially to go to school. Considering the fact that I had cleared Form 4 in 2007, I
> had not been able to get to the next level. When I came and heard what Njia was
> offering, I thought it was an opportunity of a lifetime: 'this is what will give me a

213

head start in my life.' So it's like a stepping-stone to the next step in life. I really needed something that would brighten my life. If I was just staying with the youth, I would be left back there. I also have a kid, so I needed something that would help me - that would make me grow rather than just staying in the estate [i.e. Nairobi neighborhood] doing nothing. (June 16, 2012)

Grace found that marketable skills and knowledge specific to the CRS field, and personal development, which were taught through life skills sessions, had a positive impact on her effectiveness and success when she was working in promotions. She identified increased knowledge of the process of selling products, an understanding of the markets, improved communication skills, and the ability to approach customers as particularly important to her. She further described the marketable skills and knowledge, as well as some of the personal development skills, she learned:

> I've learned the selling process. I've learned how I can identify a customer. I've also learned how I can identify a potential market. I've also learned how to do market research. I've also learned to be persistent, that was in the life skills session. I've also learned that for a salesperson to grow, you really need to be aggressive. And I've learned like 21 ways you can become a brilliant salesperson… Just to give an example, there is another one they call accredibility [*sic*]. This is being far better than your competitors, other salespeople, or consultants. [Through this model] I would make the customer - I would really engage them so that they will feel more comfortable. I can even tell them if you use this product, this is what you will expect. Yeah, and I've also learned how to tackle objections from the customer. (June 16, 2012)

These skills were an important part of her success as she ventured into employment and schooling, which will be demonstrated below.

A lack of skills and knowledge in customer relations and sales, however, was not the only hindrance Grace had found in finding and maintaining employment after completing secondary school. She also found that sexual harassment and not knowing

what to expect in an interview were problematic. In 2012 she discussed the challenges

she faced in trying to find employment:

> And also sexual harassment, yeah. It happens. So you see that maybe somebody is
> trying to take advantage of you. Maybe because you really want the job and
> you're like 'OK, God will give me another job. I won't go for that.' So maybe
> you'll just wait. Maybe you'll try to deal with that and the person is still persisting.
> You just have no way other than doing away with the job. They say, 'darling
> Grace, I want to be with you so that I can give you this job.' Or even after the job
> is set up. Like there was a time, when I was working for a hair additions
> company, and one day the boss came and he was like, 'Grace, I really want to be
> with you.' And that person is even married. So I had no option other than quitting.
> And I had not even worked there for like 2 months. It was just like a month and
> around 2 weeks. He really persisted to the extent that I couldn't even work, so I
> had to quit. At the time I was also looking for a job with [another company], and
> it also happened. In [a third company], it also happened. You get discouraged
> along the way. (June 16, 2012)

Although Grace had more opportunities for employment before the training than many of

the other youth in this study, her experiences highlight the difficulties that youth faced in

finding ways to support themselves and their families. Her experiences also highlight the

importance of both marketable skills and knowledge, such as vocational and work

readiness training, and personal development, including determination so as not to

become discouraged, confidence in oneself, knowledge of and confidence in your own

values, and the ability to relate with people.

Grace also had trouble finding employment prior to Njia because she was

unfamiliar with the interview process and the expectations that employers might have of

her:

> So maybe when you go for an interview you don't even know what an interview
> is. Maybe you don't even know how you're supposed to prepare for an interview.
> You get to see those people who are really advanced; they get to outdo you, like
> really outdo you. And so you just keep trying, trying, trying, trying and you won't

get a job. You're not even competent enough because, if it's sales, you don't even know what sales entails. (June 16, 2012)

Studying work readiness skills helped Grace prepare for an interview, but it was after she interviewed for an internship that Grace saw the value of work readiness skills, belief in oneself, and determination. She described that first interview and how difficult she found it:

> Like when I went to the first interview, that person was **really** tough on me. So when I finished, my facilitator was like 'Grace how was the interview?' I just told him, 'Sir, this thing is just so unpredictable.' And I was supposed to be taken through some other interview sessions, but I felt very unprepared to go there. If it was [before the training], trust me, I couldn't have gone back there [for the other parts of the interview]. He was real hard on me, and he was really asking so many questions, and he was really tough on me. His voice was so intimidating, and you feel: 'Oh! This is not my place.' But after I got the internship and we went through the [on-site] training, a person was taking us through the training and I came to realize 'Oh, maybe this one was just to test my patience and the like.' (June 16, 2012)

The process of going through an interview and the support of her Njia facilitator gave Grace insights into both the process and purpose of an interview.

After successfully completing the interview, Grace's internship was an opportunity to put the skills and knowledge she had gained into practice:

> OK, I was taken into a company and we were dealing with the selling of advertising space. I was hired to close a deal. And I sold an advertising space to [a large company in Kenya]. I never had that courage to stand in a crowd and you know, talk to people. But I was in a boardroom that was filled with very executive people. And I was doing a presentation and I managed to close a sale for that advertising space. I felt 'Wow! This is what I really needed in life.' And so the manager in that company was so happy. Maybe even if I won't get a job within that company, I'm very sure that when they write me a recommendation letter, then I will be able to get a job somewhere. (June 16, 2012)

Grace's experience in both the interview and internship were not just opportunities to demonstrate her skills. After presenting to a boardroom of executives and closing a sale,

her confidence was enhanced, she was introduced to new skills, and the skills and knowledge she had previously used were reinforced. Furthermore, the experience cemented in her mind that sales was a passion she wanted to pursue as a career. When asked after her attachment experience if this was a career she would want to pursue, Grace responded:

> I think sales is marvelous, I can't change. I'm finding it very interesting. Just it being a career, it builds you. It gives you a chance to really exploit yourself, so that you can see what you can do. It's something that you can even engage yourself. Am I really doing the right thing? Because if you go out there and you talk to like five clients, and you don't close even once, then definitely something is wrong. Rather than just staying in the office, maybe you're doing typing and the like, without even getting exposed. It might be boring. Meeting people outside there, you get challenged, you get new ideas. [Because of the attachment experience] I can feel that I have a replenished self-esteem – it is very high, I can go places with that.
>
> *Can you explain what you mean by self-esteem?*
>
> That is believing in myself. Back then I thought I didn't have a degree or a diploma, so what can I do with my life if I'm not educated? But I think now I can't say that again. I know I've got a lot in me that the outside world needs. (June 16, 2012)

As Grace put her marketable skills and knowledge into action, her personal development also increased as she noted greater self-confidence and realized how much she enjoyed interacting with people. These experiences led to an increase in self-esteem. Grace's increased self-esteem, in turn, was an avenue for her to think of her position in society in new ways.

While increased skills and knowledge opened up opportunities for Grace to work in a field that she had discovered to be a passion, the support she received gave her both the moral encouragement and resources she needed to pursue various opportunities.

Grace's parents encouraged her to seek out new possibilities and provided what limited

financial support they could afford to help her in this. Her mother and cousin gave her

practical help with her child, and neighbors provided her with advice. Peers were one

source of encouragement, though she noted that not everyone was supportive of her

efforts:

> Like my friends, some of them have really been encouraging me. But definitely
> you don't expect encouraging words from everyone. There are those who maybe
> try to discourage you. Some will even try to make you feel like schooling is not
> important. But, ah, from the few that have really encouraged me, they've helped
> me a lot. Like from the friends that I was with in Njia, most of them, like in the
> evening, after an internship, they are calling you up asking 'how was your day?',
> 'What are the challenges you faced?', 'I think maybe we should meet and talk
> about that'. And then you feel like 'Wow, this is so nice'. (June 16, 2012)

The support Grace received from peers was similar to support other youth in the study

identified. While some peers, particularly those who did not participate in the program or

who thought training programs were not helpful, did not provide much encouragement,

the relationships Grace developed with her colleagues in the program were a source of

motivation. Knowing that other youth had similar experiences helped youth to understand

that theirs' was not a unique situation. At the same time, since a part of the life skills

curriculum had focused on empathy, relating to others, and valuing the worth of others,

the relationships youth developed within the program were generally supportive.

Beyond the support she received from her peers, Grace was stimulated by the

pride her parents seemed to have in her and the ways in which people in the community

saw changes in her life:

> And my mom was always really encouraging me. Telling me, 'my daughter you
> can do it. I'm really happy about you.' Maybe even from the time I'm out of
> school, around 5 in the evening, I get to the house around 5:30, and you feel like

there is warmth in that house because my mom is really happy about it. And even the neighbors were like, 'Oh, how can my daughter join you?' They really want their daughters and sons to come and join what I am doing. It was like no, they don't see me in the estate again. Each and every time they see me, I'm busy, I'm doing something. Maybe when I'm around in the house, that's when I help my mom do the general cleaning in the house. So I don't get time to move around the estate. Yeah, the chief in the area has been making a follow-up. He has been asking me how are you doing in school, and I felt really encouraged. And I thought maybe the society as a whole is embracing the fact that I'm developing in a way, and they're happy about it. (June 16, 2012)

Knowing that her family was proud of her accomplishments and that the community could see changes taking place in her life helped Grace as she pursued additional work and schooling opportunities. The recognition by others (*undugu*) that Grace was engaged in something worthwhile and was learning marketable skills and knowledge that would help her in her future contributed to Grace's personal development through a growing sense of self-worth.

Grace was very cognizant of how support from her parents, other family members, peers, neighbors, and mentors had benefitted her in her life, and this impacted her aspirations as she wanted to give back to others in similar ways. In thinking about her future goals, Grace imagined that if she opened her own business she would be able to hire youth, which she saw as one way to give back. When asked to describe the kind of business she would want, she responded:

Something like a boutique. Maybe like getting clothes from abroad, then bringing them to Kenya and selling handbags, clutches and the like. Yeah. But definitely, I would love it to be big so that I can give back to the society for what they gave me, so maybe I can hire youth. And you know I will be giving it back to the society.

How would you give it back to the society?

> Ok, I'll go back to where I was, I'll take youth, maybe I'll take them through a training session, and make them feel nice about themselves, make their self-esteem grow. Maybe I'll give them jobs - maybe I'll only take five, at least I'll make a mark. (June 16, 2012)

Although a long-term goal, Grace felt that opening a business through which she could hire others would be a way to encourage youth who faced situations similar to hers. This aspiration was grounded in cultural notions that identified entrepreneurial youth as successful, and in the desire to reciprocate assistance she had been given. In the short-term, Grace focused on supporting her parents and making sure that her daughter had educational opportunities.

After completing her attachment, Grace secured a sales position with another company in which she worked "in the field," approaching people and companies for sales. While she worked in that position, she put her knowledge of sales, her ability to work with other people, and her determination to use, and she learned new skills as well. In 2013 and 2014 she explained her position:

> They were calling us consultants. We were just letting people know about [the organization], most of our work was fieldwork. I also got an experience to go do fieldwork and achieve. [Now] I know how to approach different types of people and get what I want from them. Ok, when I was working with [them], at times - that was our biggest challenge, at times it was raining. We were supposed to go do field work. Those were the only challenges - the natural challenges, the ones you can't even change. But the other ones, I think I tackled them OK.

> *How did you tackle [the challenges]?*

> Ah, let me say from the teachings, let's say you get someone who is very temperamental, let's say you know how to deal with that person. Then I would go down and we would talk. Yeah, it's just a manner of how you talk to people, and how you'll get along. It was really a nice experience actually. And ah, it was paying good. OK, I would say it was paying good and I was able to pay my way all the way from Sukumiza all of the way to the west side of Nairobi on a daily basis, and I was not straining. And I was in a position to save good money,

220

because I took my kid to school, and apart from that I contributed to my parents. I assisted my parents as I was preparing to go back to school. So it helped me a lot. (July 3, 2013; June 25, 2014)

This position was important for Grace because not only was it a job she enjoyed (a privilege not all youth shared), it also put her in a position where she could educate her daughter, one of the primary goals she mentioned in the first interview, and contribute to her parents' well-being. She was proud that she was able to contribute and she knew that it made her parents happy as well:

At least at that time, I was assisting my parents. And they were glad about it, you know it feels good to see that your daughter is doing something and is maybe contributing something to the well-being of the family. Yeah, they were so excited. And that is actually what drove to me to go to school. (July 3, 2013)

Grace's parents' belief in her, and the pride they demonstrated, prompted her to go further with her education, and in 2013 Grace applied and was admitted to a diploma program in health records management.

The diploma course was a two-year course that Grace felt would offer her some stability and a steady income, something that to that point in her life she had not experienced through work in sales and promotions. Enrolling in the diploma course meant that Grace had to quit her job and move to the college's dorms to study full-time. This change meant she had to delay her goal of moving with her daughter out of her parents' home. Instead, her daughter remained with her parents while Grace moved to the campus. This was difficult because she went from being a daily presence in her daughter's life to seeing her sporadically. Although this change was difficult for both of them, Grace felt that her daughter understood that it was important for Grace to get an education:

> Let me say in the beginning it was a bit hard, because a kid having a mom by her side, day in and day out – then there is a situation that has come and I'm not living at home, so she can't see me on a daily basis. So it was something that was a bit traumatizing for her. She is over it now, until at times when I go home and I spend a lot of time at home and she asks me, 'Mom you are not going to school?' I'm like, oh at least you understood that mom has to learn and mom has to go to school. (June 25, 2014)

During this time the support that Grace's parents provided was vital, not only because they were able to take care of her daughter, but also because they gave Grace assistance to pay her school and accommodation fees when her savings were insufficient.

Other family members and neighbors also assisted Grace during this time. Grace was particularly grateful to her cousin:

> At that time I was going to school, I had no one to leave the kid with, because my mom works during the day, so it was a bit difficult. I needed a person to take care of the kid, take her to school, and to pick her up in the evening. But, ah, my cousin was the one who stepped in. She is still supporting me, though right now she's also going to school. But at least she's somewhere near our homestead. So now we've paid for extra money so that my kid can stay in school up to five, and then my cousin will be out of school in time and pick her up. (July 3, 2013)

Grace's neighbors also provided assistance as she returned to school. One neighbor provided her with guidance through the application process while another approached the school on her behalf to see whether or not there would be any accommodation options for her.

In her second year of study, Grace faced a family crisis. Her father died unexpectedly, an event that impacted her health and ability to focus on school. She described how that event impacted her:

> In the last three years life has been smooth, let me say until last year. Something just happened that really pulled us behind. Let me say that it is by God's grace we are here right now. My dad passed away unexpectedly last year. Managing to go on after that traumatizing event was a big, big challenge for us, for my mom and

222

for my brothers, and me too. It was something that really got me down; it really affected my studies, my health. I was sickly. Every now and then I'm in the hospital; right now I'm out, you see. I thank God we moved on. We learned to live by it, because things happen to make you stronger. (June 25, 2014)

In addition to the emotional trauma of losing her father, his death increased financial strains on the family, which were complicated by the fact that her mother lost her job as a house cleaner just a few weeks later.

When her mother lost her job, Grace introduced her mother to sales and promotions work. Her mother began working in this field to cover household expenses and to pay Grace and Grace's daughter's school fees. Grace also began to work part-time in sales as she finished school. Once again Grace was working in a field she enjoyed. Grace's mother had success with the company where they were working, and this prompted Grace to consider alternatives to her previous goal of having an office job:

Let me say according to the lessons that I have learned through meeting with people, just being in an office is not good enough. What is good enough is being in a position that you can take care of your life and your life needs without hassle. I've come to realize that maybe if you do a job in an office most probably you will be limited. They won't exhaust all your efforts [i.e. you won't reach your potential]. And maybe the reward won't be as much as what you do when it is your own work. That is why I think doing something where you are your own boss is now much better than being in an office. (June 25, 2014)

The changes that her mother experienced in her life when she switched from working with a company that provided house help to working in promotions was one of the main factors that prompted Grace's change in perspective. The success her mother achieved with the company had put her into a position whereby she could be an independent contractor. This change in status had a significant impact on Grace:

Well, the reason as to why I want to become an entrepreneur is, let us say, I have a testimony by my mother. My mother was employed as a house cleaner since I

223

was a kid. Then it came to a time she joined [the company to work in promotions]. And I saw her life turned 100 degrees; because then she was paid something that was, even if it was much [i.e. well-paid], but right now she is taking home six times as much as she was making at that time. Now she has time for herself, she doesn't have anybody who is after her. She is just doing things independently. So I got inspired, and I thought, 'well I think something of your own is much more rewarding than when you are employed for somebody.' (June 25, 2014)

As Grace saw different possibilities through the success her mother was experiencing, her aspirations began to change and she began to imagine new ways that employment and self-employment might help her achieve her goals.

By the final year of interviews Grace had completed her diploma course and was awaiting graduation. With the courses completed, she decided to pursue her work with this company full-time, and shortly thereafter received a promotion to senior manager. She was pleased with completing her studies and with her promotion, in part because it provided her with additional income whereby she could be a greater support for her mother: "In my family, at least the change is because my mom is not alone. I am giving her a hand in most of the things of the family; taking care of the bills and stuff" (June 7, 2015). While she had been in school her ability to 'give back' to the family and community had been reduced. Once she started working full time, she was able to contribute more to her family, but her time was constrained, which meant the ways in which she could help the community remained limited:

For the community let me just say this, I've not been doing much because now my time is very limited. Very, very limited. I reach home very late and I leave home early. At least I've secured jobs for some of the girls [young women] in the neighborhood. I've given them some tasks they are doing and they are earning something. (June 7, 2015)

224

Grace's ability to contribute back to her community was further hampered by the fact that her family moved from one area of Nairobi to another. While this move provided more security, it also disrupted the relationships and community ties she had previously established.

In addition to working full-time at the time of the 2015 interview, Grace and her mother had recently been offered the opportunity to run a service point (customer service center) in Nairobi town for the company. This was an opportunity to try their own business and they developed a team with her brother and uncle to make it succeed:

> The head office moved, so we were given the service point in Nairobi town to run it ourselves, me and my mom. It has been a bit challenging. We've tried taking care of the logistics of the company, but now we are a bit settled. Also my brother, my uncle, 'cause we do it as a team: me, my mom, uncle, and my brother. Everybody has their defined roles in the company. And all the roles that have been shared amongst the four of us are very important roles in starting up the company. (June 7, 2015)

This was a new venture when Grace interviewed in 2015 and she was excited to see how it would unfold. Beyond being their own venture, it was an opportunity for Grace to collaborate with her family.

Despite the fact that she had completed her diploma in health records management, Grace felt that she no longer wanted to pursue that line of work. Rather, she realized that she preferred working with people on a daily basis, and as noted earlier, she recognized that working with computers in an office all day would not be fulfilling. Soon after completing her internship for her diploma program, Grace was offered a job in health records management with a base salary. However, because of this self-knowledge,

225

Grace declined that job in order to pursue her employment in sales and promotions. She

described her decision to decline this second job:

> Immediately after I finished school [diploma course], I was called upon to go and
> work at a hospital. At that time is when I was beginning to work [in promotions]
> full time. And you see this is not a job [promotions] that you will be told I will be
> paying you 30,000 shillings a month [US$333]. This [promotions] is a business,
> it's your business, and when you open your business you cannot say I will be
> paying myself this much. And here I am. I have a job [offer] that clearly states
> what I will be getting in a month. But with the empowerment I had, I saw more
> opportunity at [the promotions company] than at [the hospital]. I thanked my
> lecturer for the opportunity and told him I would not take the job since I am
> engaged somewhere. If I was maybe not empowered enough maybe I would have
> gone for that employment. (June 7, 2015)

Grace tied the decision she made to decline the job and a steady income, which she had

identified in her first year of the study as a personal goal, to empowerment. The

empowerment stemmed from self-knowledge and understanding of her strengths:

> Well, it [training at Njia] also helped me to discover myself – in terms of my
> strengths and my weak points, because right now I know I can make a good
> salesperson. A very, very good salesperson. Well, I can also say I cannot be an
> office person because it is not in me. I love doing something that is more involved
> with other people, rather than when I would be forced to be alone in an enclosed
> place, even with the computers. So I feel like where there are people, there is
> money. (June 7, 2015)

Through enacting marketable skills and knowledge, Grace's personal development

expanded through increased self-knowledge. Discovering her passions, together with the

inspiration she received by seeing her mother succeed, broadened Grace's capacity to

aspire to new opportunities. Grace was no longer confined to previous expectations of

what success would mean in her life.

Although Grace traced her initial discovery of her strengths and weaknesses to the

training at Njia, her experiences with sales and promotions before the program suggest

that she had already begun to value that type of employment. However, by gaining additional marketable skills and knowledge she was able to see how she might be able to use that interest for more sustained employment purposes. Furthermore, the opportunities she had to put marketable skills and knowledge into practice reinforced the personal development she had learned regarding her strengths, weaknesses, and personal preferences. Speaking in front of people and selling products during her attachment and first job reinforced her passion for sales. Her previous ideas about what types of jobs would be stable initially led her to believe she would need to find an office, or white collar, job in order to be successful. Although she undertook the diploma course to achieve this type of job, her experiences in her medical records internship and in her work with the promotions company took her back to the realization that she would be happiest interacting with people in a sales position.

Discussion. Grace's actions and goals were rooted firmly in the networks of belonging, especially her family, in which she lived. The moral support provided by her parents served as motivation for Grace to seek out additional opportunities. The combination of their moral, financial, and practical support made it possible for her to participate in the Njia program and complete her diploma. The encouragement of peers and the practical support she received from her cousin and neighbors enabled her to enact marketable skills and knowledge and personal development, thereby facilitating the empowerment process. At the same time, she had a desire to contribute to her family's well-being. This was particularly true, and necessary, after her father passed away. Although assisting her family did not hinder her educational or entrepreneurial goals in

227

the same way as it hindered some youth, Grace postponed her goal of living on her own with her daughter in order to be with her mother.

For all of the youth in this study, finding a way to earn an income, either through employment or by having their own business, was a goal that they sought to achieve. This is not surprising given that the Njia program was marketed primarily as a vocational (and later entrepreneurial) training program. When Grace finished the Njia program and was asked to imagine her life, she talked of finding employment and then subsequently starting her own business. However, these two things were not necessarily the end goal for Grace. Like the majority of youth, she was just as interested in the goals that included her family and community. Her initial response to a 2012 question that asked her to imagine her life was that she imagined, "A nice life. Building my own house. Having my whole family with me" (June 16, 2012), and throughout the four years a consistent goal was to educate her daughter. Even the desire to have her own business stemmed from her goal to hire additional youth as a way to give back to her community. These goals demonstrate how the aspirations and *undugu* dimensions of empowerment worked in Grace's life to inform the ways in which she was able to enact skills and knowledge and the reasons why she felt they were important in her life. Grace's ability to immediately give back to her community was delayed by her schooling, but when she did start her entrepreneurial activities with her mother, brother, and uncle, she made sure that she hired some of the girls in her neighborhood.

Grace's story highlights the importance of *undugu* as youth set goals and sought to achieve them. Her story also demonstrates how support went beyond financial

contributions and included encouragement and practical support. The different types of

support youth received facilitated their experiences with empowerment processes and

ushered them into a stage where they were able to more easily assist others.

Reciprocity – *Leo Ndiwe, Kesho Ndimi* (Today it is You, Tomorrow it is Me)

Over the four years of interviews youth began to achieve some of the short-term

social goals they had set, particularly with regard to paying the school fees for younger

siblings at the secondary school level, or providing for their parents in some fashion, for

example through the provision of basic goods or by building a home for them in their

rural areas (*ushago*). Although initially a source of stress for some youth, the ability to

provide for their families in this way developed into a source of pride for many of the

youth. The social support youth received and their desire and duty to give back to their

families and communities speak to the interrelatedness that both Creary (2012) and

Kamwangamalu (1999) referred to in their discussions of human subjectivity. This

interrelatedness shaped the decisions youth made as they weighed the benefits and costs

of the opportunities before them. The impact varied among the youth. For some it meant

delaying their own educational pursuits to assist siblings or pursuing multiple streams of

income to earn enough to provide a significant contribution. However, for other youth,

the interrelatedness provided additional opportunities.

I began this section with the Swahili proverb *leo ndiwe, kesho ndimi*, which

translates to 'today it is you, tomorrow it is me.' This proverb highlights the notion of

reciprocity inherent in *undugu* and implies that if I am able and help you out today, then

tomorrow if I have a need, you will be in a position to help me. Grace's story

229

demonstrated multiple ways that youth had been the recipients of *leo ndiwe* throughout their lives, including through encouragement, practical assistance, and financial contributions. All youth had attended secondary school (with only three youth unable to graduate), something that required sacrifice by others in order to achieve, as is demonstrated in the way youth later sacrifice to send siblings to school. In order for youth to achieve new standing within their family or community, or to take steps towards adulthood, they also needed to reciprocate that support, *kesho ndimi*.

In a study of Kibera youth, Farrell (2015) noted that for youth, particularly young men, to be considered adults they needed to prove their dependability:

> For a young man to enter *utu uzima* or adulthood, the literal translation in Kiswahili being 'the state of being a whole human,' he had to achieve economically as well as prove his ability to an extended kin network, to take on the rights and responsibilities conferred through adulthood before he could be regarded as whole. (p. 91)

While Farrell emphasized the role of economic achievement for young men, the findings from this study suggest that both male and female youth were implicitly expected to actively contribute to their families' well-being. One youth noted that while reciprocation is anticipated, youth are not forced to provide for their family: "You look at the way the situation is, you just give. But they don't make me give" (Susan, June 16, 2012). Some might argue that youth could be seen as abandoning their own goals to address the needs of those who were part of their social milieu, but the ability to move toward adulthood and take on a new social role were an integral part of youth's personal goals and the cultural aspirations to which they ascribed.

To explore how expectations of reciprocity impacted youth lives and their experiences with empowerment, I turn to Anthony's story. While Grace's familial network was a significant source of support and collaboration as she worked to achieve her goals, not all youth had family networks that were able to support them in the same way. Anthony's story demonstrates how his networks of belonging provided the initial support Anthony needed to find livelihood opportunities, but over time the expectation within those networks shifted as Anthony became financially able to assist others. Furthermore, even though Grace sought to provide assistance to her family, doing so did not mean that Grace had to delay personal goals. This was not so for all youth, including Anthony, who at one point decided to drop out of his diploma program to ease his financial burden. This decision allowed him to contribute financially to his family and members of his communities in Nairobi and in his rural home.

Anthony's story. Throughout his life, Anthony participated in a number of different employment, entrepreneurial, and educational activities. These activities often overlapped as he sought ways to support his family while working to achieve his goals. In order to better follow Anthony's life story, I have included Figure 4 below, which gives a brief timeline of the activities that Anthony engaged in both before and after he completed the Njia program. Anthony was the oldest of five children and moved to Nairobi in 2012 to find employment opportunities that would allow him to both pursue his personal goals and help his father, who was unemployed and a single parent, provide for his siblings and their school fees. Prior to living in the greater Nairobi area, Anthony lived in Mtito Andei, a town along the Mombasa Highway that serves as a transport hub

from Mombasa to Nairobi, where the majority of economic opportunities centered on

transportation, tourism, and agriculture, including coffee cultivation and subsistence

farming. Anthony hoped that the greater Nairobi area would offer more diverse

opportunities for his livelihood.
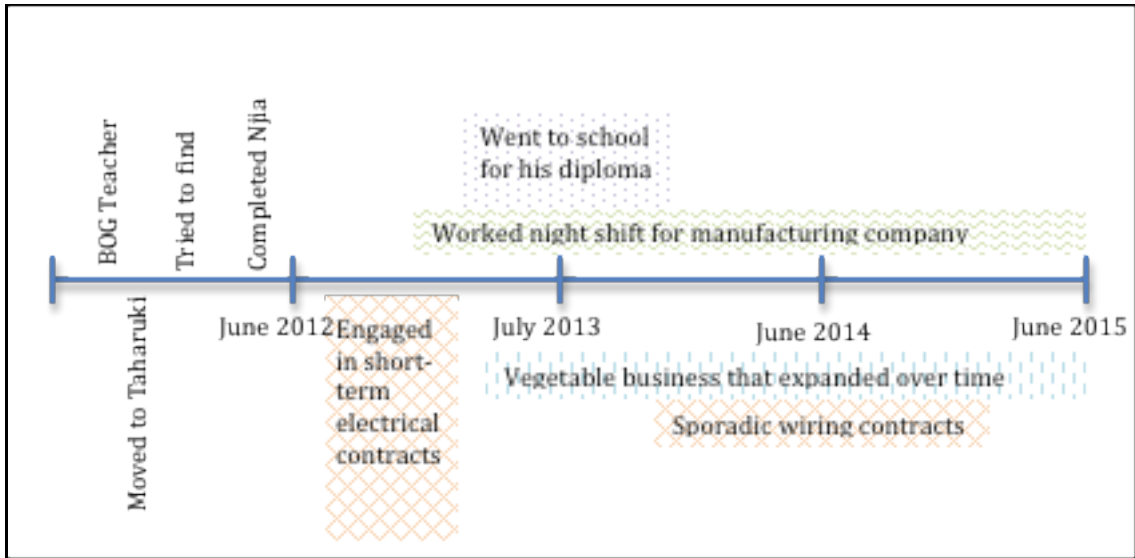
Figure 4 Anthony's actvities before and after Njia

After completing secondary school in 2006, Anthony had hoped to attend

university to continue his education. Although he had done well on his KCSE (Kenya

Certificate of Secondary Education) exam (a finishing exam required of all secondary

school completers that determines their eligibility to attend college or university) he

found that:

> My parents had no money to support my higher learning. Actually I had 61
> points.[7] I was unlucky because I was only cut from the university entry by two
> points [on the national exam]. That is why I say I was unlucky. (June 13, 2012)

---

[7] A score of 61 is equal to a B on the KCSE grading scale. Students who earn a B+ (a
score of 63) and above receive government scholarships to attend public universities. A

While his score on the KCSE prevented Anthony from going to university on government

sponsorship, his family's financial situation meant that he was also unable to join other

educational opportunities, including diploma or certificate level courses. Knowing that he

would have to raise funds in order to continue his education, Anthony engaged in *kibarua*

in Mtito Andei for a brief period.

Since *kibarua* did not provide him stable or sufficient income, Anthony became a

Board of Governor's (BOG) secondary school teacher[8] in his county. BOG teachers are

generally hired directly by schools, and typically have fewer qualifications and receive a

significantly lower salary than their counterparts who are hired by the Teacher Service

Commission. In contrast to the way government teachers are hired, the schools

themselves hire BOG teachers through the Board of Governors, which is made up of

representatives from the community, parents, teachers, and/or alumni. When asked why

he left the BOG position, he responded:

> Definitely it was because of the low pay. That was one thing. Again, I was
> looking for a way to further my skills, because I can't keep on working as a BOG
> teacher for the rest of my life. Actually, that is what motivated me to further my
> skills. (June 13, 2012)

Both the low pay and the realization that this was not work that would satisfy him

throughout life motivated Anthony to pursue other opportunities.

---

score of B was still considered to be good quality and he might have been accepted into a
university, but would have been required to pay for it himself.

[8] The majority of teachers are hired through the government Teacher's Service
Commission (TSC) to teach in public schools. One person who taught as a BOG teacher
in the same time period indicated that he had made the equivalent of US$25/month and
that his salary was frequently delayed (Personal communication, February 3, 2016).

Although his father was unable to support Anthony for further education,

Anthony still had his moral support, and members of his extended family financially

supported him in small ways when they were able. Anthony described one situation when

he was still living in Mtito Andei in which his grandmother gave him support to purchase

cattle, which he intended to sell for profit:

> There was a *chama*[9] that was lending money. So I borrowed that 10,000 shillings
> [approximately US$111]. I combined that with some amount that I had and I
> purchased two bulls. In fact that project required some support. The organization,
> it was run by the ladies - these women's organization - so I used my grandmother.
> I would give her money, take the proceeds and then she brought me that
> money [the loan amount] and I paid within that year. Then we bought those bulls,
> although later on we came to sell them. We sold them and currently they are not
> there. (June 13, 2012)

Although willing to help him in small ways, Anthony's family was unable to give him the

type of financial support he needed to go back to school and achieve his goals. As a

result, when Anthony left the BOG teaching position, he decided to move to Taharuki.

When Anthony moved to Taharuki he sought employment but found that not

having connections within the factories and not having the proper documents hindered his

ability to secure a job. He described the challenges he faced finding employment:

> Actually the main challenge so far that I have met is that I have no relative or any
> person within [the company] on whom I can rely. So I only go, introduce myself,
> explain myself and make myself known to them. Actually it has not been that

---

[9] A *chama* is an informal savings group. *Chamas* originated with women's organizations
in Kenya but have spread to all aspects of society. There are different ways in which a
chama might function but in each one the members of the group contribute a set amount
of money in a given time period. Some *chamas* pay out the collected amount to a
designated (and rotating) group member each collection date. Others, like that of
Anthony's grandmother, use the collected money to make more money. They offered
loans to each other and community members but charged interest. The proceeds were
then divided amongst the group members at specified times throughout the year, often at
year-end or when large one-time expenses, such as school fees, might be due.

easy. Because the majority [of employers] are just saying, 'leave behind your particulars [documents, CV, etc.] and we will call you' and actually that has been a big problem. If I had a person [on the inside] who I could go to, and is familiar with me, and knows my background, I think it would have been so simple. That has been a great challenge. (June 13, 2012)

The need to know someone who is connected with a company or employer was a constraint that many youth cited in their efforts to secure jobs. Although Anthony and other youth lamented the need to have inside connections to gain employment, when they did have a connection, they were eager to put it to use. Anthony's uncle filled this role after Anthony completed the Njia coursework and internship. His uncle was a mason who lived in one of the informal settlements in Nairobi and was impressed by the electrical training Anthony received through Njia. Although unable to provide Anthony with financial assistance while he was in the program, his uncle actively sought ways to assist Anthony once he finished:

> Like now, I was communicating with one of my uncles who was really appreciating my training, and he was telling me that after this particular time he will be able to make a way for me in future employment, something of that sort. Actually he is communicating with the guys who do wiring in the houses, so he wants to find an opportunity for me. (June 13, 2012)

The optimism that his uncle had that he would be able to help him find employment opportunities gave Anthony encouragement for his future.

The other major constraint that Anthony faced when he moved to Taharuki had to do with everyday finances:

> The other one is financial. The issue has to do with finances, because I need to travel to find work. Like if I am told to come by 8 and I have to travel to somewhere, I don't have exact means that I can travel. So it takes me time organizing, sometimes even walking, to that particular part and you find that it is late. (June 13, 2012)

In the first year after moving to Taharuki, Anthony found financial support in two different areas. First, he found he could rely on an aunt when times became particularly difficult: "My aunt really supports me so much. When I am broke I call her [and tell her] 'now things are bad, truly, do me a favor'" (June 13, 2012). In addition, Anthony found support in the church he attended in Taharuki: "Currently, I have a brother I came to know in the church when I came to this area. I stay with him in the house. Not a blood brother; we became friends and now I live with him" (June 13, 2012). This same "brother" gave Anthony financial support when times were difficult and later provided him with money to pay for one term of his school fees.

Anthony joined Njia because he saw it as an opportunity to gain skills that would help him find employment or put him on a path toward self-employment. In thinking about his future in the first year, Anthony identified two major goals: self-employment and supporting his family. He said:

> The main goal was to enhance self-employment in the near future. That is the main goal. If I get a chance, an opportunity, to be employed, well and good. The other goal is to financially support my brothers and my sisters who are still in darkness. (June 13, 2012)

As Anthony completed the Njia program, people from his home community (Mtito Andei) viewed him in new ways, which provided him with encouragement. When asked in 2012 what type of support he was receiving, his response reflected the value he placed on social support. Anthony described a change in how his community viewed him prior to Njia and afterward:

> The other [support] is back from our society [in Mtito Andei]. You see, from the past, the way I understand them, is they usually say that when a person fails to get the university marks [i.e. high enough results on the KCSE for admission to

university] they consider him a wasted mind. So I can see some change now because they often call me, [and ask] 'how is the going, how far [have you come],' things like that. So I can see they still have concern in my planning. (June 13, 2012)

By participating in additional training and gaining marketable skills and knowledge, Anthony felt that the ways his *ushago* community responded to him had started to change. Instead of dismissing him as a youth who was not successful, they began to see him as having potential. The interest that they took in his life was another way in which Anthony felt encouraged in the decisions he was making. In many ways, the investment, not just financially but socially and morally, was a reflection of *leo ndiwe, kesho ndimi*. People invested in Anthony, knowing that as he saw some measure of success, he would also be able to give back and Anthony valued belonging in this way. In this way, marketable skills and knowledge intersected with *undugu* to increase Anthony's sense of self-confidence (personal development) and facilitate the empowerment process.

In addition to changing the way others viewed Anthony, the training also changed the way Anthony felt about his own future. Prior to the program he felt that had failed to a certain degree because he had not gained entry to university and had therefore let his family and community down. However, as he established new goals and put technical skills from the electrical class into practice, Anthony indicated that his self-esteem increased and he started to think about his future in a different way. He explained:

> During the time I was in my attachment I opened my eyes so much, and I realized that I can still perform. Not going to university was not the destiny. In fact, if it were not for this program, I would not have had those goals I've already told you about for my future. (July 11, 2013)

By putting marketable skills and knowledge into practice, Anthony's self-confidence

(personal development) increased and his aspirations for his future began to shift and he

realized that not attending university was not equivalent to failing in life. The intersection

of these three dimensions again contributed to Anthony's empowerment process.

Acquiring new skills and knowledge fostered change in Anthony's perspective,

but *undugu,* through the role of mentors, also helped Anthony to imagine new

possibilities for his future. Anthony felt that not only did mentors introduce new ideas,

they also showed him that others had struggled in life, yet found ways to change their life

course. Anthony discussed the role of mentors on his changing aspirations in both 2013

and 2015:

> We had several mentors who were introduced through the course of the program.
> Like, we had Justus who was brought to us. He's a great friend of mine. Ok, we
> still meet on Facebook, we do chat, and still he does encourage me so much about
> how I can achieve goals, and probably I hope there's much for me from him. So
> the mentors, they did a great work, because some of them were even pointing at
> life examples of how life was difficult and how things change slowly by slowly. I
> can say surely, I have seen how through persistence that road is really achievable
> through whatever they were saying. Ok, I used to undermine myself sometime
> before, thinking that I'm the only person who has undergone such a hard
> situation. But I found others have even started from a very low point, to a great
> height. [Justus] empowered us. He really tried to explain how he made his way in
> life – from nowhere to somewhere. That passion, that zeal he portrayed still runs
> in me. If he made it, then why not me; and that's a thing that makes me run until
> today. It makes me not to sleep. (July 11, 2013 and June 13, 2015)

Mentors had a particularly important impact on Anthony because of the motivation he got

from hearing their stories and applying them to his own life. Since mentors in the Njia

program were often young (either still considered youth, or just beyond that designation)

or had come from similar backgrounds as the youth at Njia, Anthony and other youth

found inspiration through hearing their stories and learning about their lives. One youth

noted that when the automotive class did a site visit to an automobile garage, he was

motivated by the fact that an African Kenyan, rather than a non-Kenyan or a Kenyan of

Asian or European descent, owned the garage:

> What inspired me so much was the garage we were taken to in our class. The guy is just a native Kenyan and the garage is doing very well. So from there I got motivated, if he has done it, what of me? I can do much better. (Keith, June 6, 2015)

Mentors were important as youth considered possibilities for their lives. Frequently, as

youth aspirations increased, so did their hope for their future.

Mentors also played a role in helping Anthony stay away from negative behaviors

and influences that might have impacted him had he not been introduced to new

possibilities in his life. In an interview in 2012 he explained:

> From their talk, from the advice they have given, I don't see why I should involve myself in some activities [referring to drugs and the local alcohol brew, *chang'aa*]. So I think I am goal oriented from the information that I have been imparted by those people who have been gathered around us. (June 13, 2012)

Not only were mentors a source of inspiration, they also provided guidance on good

behaviors and ways to live well.

What Anthony learned in the classroom and from mentors fostered new ideas and

aspirations, but these were enhanced by Anthony's experiences. Anthony related the first

time he really considered the possibility that he could be an entrepreneur and how those

thoughts changed as he encountered different experiences:

> I was in electrical class. [The facilitator] talked a lot on how people make money. Like these [light] switches - he was saying that a switch goes for 20 bob [shillings] [US$.22] or 10 bob [US$.11] on wholesale. And you find that even one can sell up to 80 bob [US$.88] or 100 bob [US$1.11] [in the marketplace]. That's just a switch. You'll buy them at a low price and they make a double price. So there was that time we were thinking of making a joint business as an electrical

239

class. That time I came to see things in reality - now moving from words into reality. Because we were talking of how we can come up with [the business idea] and we run [the business]. It's only that we were not that much organized. And the source of the capital also became a problem. [Those challenges] made us just leave it at an end point. We were thinking of making it a real business, but it couldn't go through. After that, now I started thinking about, what if I come up with my own business. At first I was thinking that after doing the electrical class, I'll just get employment [through contractors] or else get employed by a company. The last option was, what if I try this business that we were talking about. So if it wasn't for the discussion we had with our mentors and facilitators, maybe it couldn't have been an option for my life. Now, I started seeing that accessing these [electrical] gadgets can be so expensive for me. So I sat down and thought of alternative B. What if I do another [business]? It's not that I must make money from electrical roots [based on electrical training]. How about others? Then I visited a friend of mine, who just introduced me really now, into the real practical part of a business. In a week or two, I found myself running mine. That's how I started and found myself in business. (June 14, 2014)

Anthony's foray into the business world stemmed from a number of different sources of knowledge and experience. The Njia program itself provided a new way for him to imagine his future, and it introduced to him the possibility that he could succeed in a business of his own. However, it was through his interactions with other Njia students and mentors that he fully thought through what starting a business might look like for himself. Although the program had introduced him to basic concepts of starting and running a business, it was his friend who worked in the market in Thika who gave him the final tools he needed to get his vegetable business started (as discussed below). This renewed hope for the future (aspiration) was enhanced by Anthony's increased self-esteem:

The self-esteem that I had – I used to ignore myself so much. Yeah, like saying that I cannot perform. Like the issue of selling cabbage. In fact, I never thought of one day being a seller in any way. But from the point that you are able, you have to have confidence and maybe apply some few facts of an entrepreneur, and you can perform. And really, all that helped me to perform. And I can say that I'm

performing, and I can see some light in it. That's why I'm talking of, in the future, being a stable entrepreneur. It is a big dream that I'm dreaming of. (July 11, 2013)

Being able to see new opportunities in his life increased Anthony's self-esteem and confidence, but the increased confidence also helped him to take the next steps toward opening his own business.

Activities after Njia. Anthony initially joined the program because of the technical skills he presumed he would receive. The electrical wiring course was a field that had interested him since high school and he took advantage of the opportunity to expand his skills:

> Before [the program] I really had a lot of interest, even when I was in high school, in this field of electronics. The other time during the science congress[10] I made an electric vehicle; a project that I defined, modified, and then managed to go up to district level. Just by my idea that dealt with electronics. So when I got this chance, I really found it an interesting thing. From the electronics it really helped me a lot. (June 13, 2012)

The training in electrical wiring and repair gave Anthony sufficient skills to begin working with building contractors as they wired homes and businesses: "Now, in the electrical area, if I am given a good attachment I can install [wiring]. I have enough theory to do electrical installation, to repair and maintain these electrical gadgets" (June 13, 2012). Anthony was confident in his ability to do electrical wiring and his uncle was able to make some initial connections for Anthony after he completed his Njia attachment. Despite this, Anthony found the work sporadic and unpredictable:

---

[10] The Kenyan Students Congress on Science and Technology is an annual event in which secondary school students from across Kenya develop and present research and inventions. Initial presentations and competitions are held in specific zones and the top participants are selected to continue on to county levels (though at the time Anthony was in high school, this would have been district levels) and then to the national level.

I started with my uncle. We performed for about two or three weeks, and then the contract was terminated. I hoped not to remain idle. There is a friend of mine who does some electronics, so I went to work for about two weeks. And really, that time now is when I came to realize the benefits of the little knowledge I had acquired while I was schooling. Whenever that work appears he calls me, we go, and we perform together in that particular field. (June 13, 2012)

Anthony's initial experiences doing wiring in homes and engaging in other electrical work were short-term contracts and did not provide the stability or income he needed. Despite this, Anthony valued the electrical skills he learned and continued to use them into the fourth year of the study. He described how that same friend he partnered with in 2012 continued to work with him in 2015, even though the contracts they secured were infrequent:

The contracts that he had, we can share. So we have been jobless for almost a good half a year [i.e. they haven't had electrical work in the last 6 months], now that the quotas are beginning to increase again, when there is a better work, he will let me know and I will go. (June 13, 2015)

Anthony maintained his connection with his friend and continued to periodically join him on electrical jobs. However, since the contracts were sporadic, he was unable to depend solely on this work. For this reason the transferrable nature of the skills he learned at Njia were important.

Anthony's initial experiences in the electrical field demonstrated the uncertain nature of that type of work and he desired to have something more secure to take care of his needs. As a result, he sought more stable employment in a manufacturing company:

I had a friend of mine who works with a company. So, after completing my [Njia] training and doing the electrical contracts, I explained to him how I'm struggling: 'I'm in town, I need to pay rent and all that'. So he told me that he can show me an alternative way, that if I see and consider it valuable, I participate in it. So, after thinking… Ok, at first I thought that it was not the right choice for me. I've been training [in electrical wiring] and I felt the job will bind me. In fact, I had so

242

many questions, but at long last I resolved to one point: that I can be successful in any way. So I thought of applying and maybe looking for a way of still going on with my life. So, I went and I was recruited. Then as I was working, I was again amended to a night shift, and in that opportunity I saw a way in which I can still further my education, as at the same time be working. (July 11, 2013)

Although he had originally been concerned that pursuing a different line of work would 'bind' him and keep him from achieving his goals, Anthony found that through his decision to accept this work new avenues to pursue his goals became available. His decision to accept employment in the manufacturing company not only gave him the stability he needed to pay bills and begin contributing to his brothers' and sister's school fees, it also afforded him flexibility to return to school. Although he would have preferred to study for a diploma in electrical engineering, he found that course too expensive and he determined that it was better to study for a diploma in business administration.

Employment at the manufacturing firm provided Anthony with the opportunity to return to school, and was a source of capital so that he could start his own business: "I worked for 2 months - for 2 months just maintaining the rent and all that. But on the 3rd month is when I thought of now investing in the business" (June 14, 2014). By saving a portion of his monthly income, Anthony was able to start a business selling vegetables that continued to grow each year. The marketable skills and knowledge – the ability to plan, prioritize, and save, and the basic business skills that he learned while at Njia – together with new aspirations in the new ways he imagined he might be able to succeed in business, provided an avenue for Anthony to start selling cabbage when he was not at school or work. Although Anthony felt he had acquired some skills during the training, it was through the process of trial and error that he was able to see how they would be

243

applied in his business setting. He described the process of starting the business and some

of the challenges that he faced:

> There were challenges at the start. Like the first time, I took a stock [of cabbage] of 1,200 shillings [US$13], because I had only 2,000 shillings [US$22] and I couldn't invest all of them at the start. But I tell you, I knew very little about the preference of the customers or how to go about selling the product. So when everyone came, they claimed [to only pay] so much and I gave it to them [at that price]. At long last I only made a profit of 500 [US$5]. Now, considering I had to go for the stock, I was so down. It was as if to me, I was running in place. Ok, I'm sparing my time to go sell, but I get very little. But with time, I came to realize the points of weakness, and found that maybe I can still make more. In fact, I got the experience now that one needs, because I never engaged with anybody selling. I just fell into it. So at the start I faced a main challenge, because I had very little skill about how to go about it. But with time, slowly by slowly, I can say that I got the major knowledge that one needs. Currently, I am operating with a stock worth 2,500 shillings [US$27]. But so far, I'm doing well, because I've already returned my capital. I still have the stock. Tomorrow is a market day. I'll still be out, after attending my morning class. I'll be selling. So by Sunday, I'll have already earned an extra amount that I'm hoping still is in the stock that I have. So that's why I'm saying that I really, slowly by slowly, got the point on how best I can perform. (July 11, 2013)

Up to this point in Anthony's interviews (2012 and 2013), he demonstrated that

friends and family gave him support, to the extent they were able, as he situated himself

in Nairobi. However, in 2014 and 2015 Anthony's discussion shifted as he talked less

about support he received from others, and more about ways he was starting to assist his

father, siblings, and others who were part of his networks of belonging (both in Nairobi

and Mtito Andei). The role of *undugu* at this stage was evident as the support systems

that had helped Anthony began to anticipate his ability to reciprocate that assistance. This

shift coincided with greater financial stability for Anthony, even though that stability

came at a cost of temporarily suspending his schooling. Between 2013 and 2014,

Anthony found that he could no longer continue to pay the fees for his schooling. His

employment and fledgling business did not provide the funds he needed to pay his living

expenses, keep his business alive, contribute to his family and his community, and pay

for his fees as well. During the 2014 interview, Anthony explained why he decided to put

his diploma course on hold:

> There was a time I had gone for that diploma but funds became a problem. Surely that - it made me just opt to leave school. Last time I was schooling on the sales and the marketing. But I could not complete because fees became a problem. I did not get support from the family side. It was I and I [just me]. After working with this company, I need to pay a rent and that money was not that much. 10,000 Ksh [per month] [US$111] is not a lot of money. You are paying rent, you are doing this and you want to also take fees from there. Actually it became a problem on my side. That's why I opted to keep it parking [put it on hold]. And that was the time I really ventured into business, I can say that I have made several improvements from that time. (June 14, 2014)

Withdrawing from school was not the only major change that happened for

Anthony between 2013 and 2014. His relationship and interaction with his family and

community in Mtito Andei also changed during that time. In 2013, Anthony reported that

he rarely returned home, largely due to the expense of traveling, but that he was able to

provide a small amount of financial support for his siblings. He also gave them advice on

life situations. In 2013 he described the limited support he provided his family:

> My home area is in Mtito Andei and maybe going to Mtito Andei is a bit expensive, considering that I am still schooling. From the side of the family, I was only there in April. That's when I went home for two weeks, and then I went back [to Nairobi]. I can say I'm trying to contribute so much, because I do send money to support my brothers who are schooling, and to finance my sister. I just give a push, not really financing the whole thing, but I give them support. I can say, the major contribution is just financial issues, and maybe as a counselor. I do counsel my brothers on the right way to go and things we learned from Njia. Like development of self-esteem, and showing or pointing to them to run after a goal, or just living like that. (July 11, 2013)

By 2014, after he decided to take a break from school, Anthony's financial contributions to family, individuals in his neighborhood, and community-building activities began to increase:

> When we have functions, I do really chip in. On the family side I do contribute so much. Besides, if not from the home-side, maybe the functions of the members that you are living with… Maybe people's weddings, in *harambees,* or hospital bills. In fact I've done several, like last month I had three, and in all of those there is not one that I didn't give out. I do really give out. (June 14, 2014)

Not only did Anthony take pride in making these contributions, he also saw them as an investment in the future, stating, "it's like you are investing in them. When you need them they will chip in" (June 14, 2014). On the one had this represented the second half of *leo ndiwe, kesho ndimi.* Those who had supported Anthony while he was living in Mtito Andei and when he first moved to Nairobi had provided the first half of the proverb – today it is you. In 2014 and 2015, as Anthony was able to start supporting others, his actions reflected the second half of the proverb – tomorrow it is me. At the same time, Anthony saw his contributions to others as the first step of a new cycle – *leo ndiwe, kesho ndimi.*

In 2014, Anthony opted to focus on his short-term business selling vegetables and his night shift work in manufacturing, rather than continuing his education. Doing so allowed him to increase his contributions to family, pay for his daily expenses and expand his vegetable business. In 2014 he diversified the stock he was selling: "I'm also selling some fruits, like oranges and avocado and also garlic and ginger. These are things that I've included after finding that they are still in demand, and I still can get some profit

out of the sales" (June 14, 2014). By 2015, he expanded the business by building a permanent structure within the market to accommodate his stall.

As his business grew, the ways in which he depended on his income also shifted. In the early years his work with the manufacturing company allowed him to cater for his living expenses and invest in his business. However, over time, Anthony came to rely on the profit from his vegetable business to pay for his living expenses while his monthly paycheck from manufacturing was used for longer-term goals:

> The business caters for my living. It's paying rent and the day basics that I need in my house like maintaining food, things to do with soaps. Those things. Those are things that I do use the business for. The monthly pay from the company - that goes straight to my account. I don't touch it. That accumulates monthly. In the business you find that there are times that I make more sales than the others, like over the Easter holiday I made some more profit, and the extra profit I was still sending to the bank account. Of late I've been using that savings to buy materials for my house construction. That's a project now that is almost completed. The iron sheets I've already purchased. Everything is ready. (June 14, 2014)

The ability to depend on his income from the business for his daily expenses was indicative of the way in which the business had grown over two and a half years. This growth contributed to new aspirations as it gave Anthony the financial freedom to start pursuing goals that would help him attain new positions in life. By the final year of interviews Anthony had completed his house and furnished it in Mtito Andei. The completion of a house, especially for youth with strong ties to rural areas, is often a strong indicator of economic stability and a pre-requisite for marriage (Farrell, 2015; Sommers, 2012). Upon completion of his house, Anthony also became engaged; something he had indicated the previous year was a short-term goal. His ability to build and furnish his house provided evidence that Anthony was making progress toward

247

adulthood, and through his engagement, further cemented his social belonging within the community.

Through his savings Anthony was also able to support his three siblings through secondary school. He described how the support he gave to his family increased over time:

> Generally it's all about the schooling. By the time we were starting [2012], we had only one brother in high school. Now there are three of them. I have to cater for their fees. I support my dad so much in meeting their school fees. (June 13, 2015)

In addition to paying for school fees, Anthony had also invested in livestock in Mtito Andei and paid a monthly salary for someone to look after the cattle and goats while his brothers were in school. Although the livestock were a way to financially support his family, his ability to hire someone to look after the cattle helped to shift the perceptions that his family had of Anthony. As Anthony's support of his family and community grew, so did the esteem with which he was held. Anthony saw his changed relationships in his communities and family as a result of empowerment, or as something that naturally happened as empowerment took place. Comparing the way in which he was regarded when he was a BOG teacher, Anthony stated:

> Before, when I taught as a [BOG] secondary school teacher, the closeness that was there between the family and me is not the one that I have right now. The way I used to support at that time is not the way I am supporting now. That one pertains to extra duties to the society and the family. Because now they have seen that I can help – as a matter of advice to my brothers, even to my parents, they have known that I possess a different thing. So the way I use to see it is not the way I see it today. (June 13, 2015)

In addition to changes in how his family viewed him, Anthony also described changes in his position within Mtito Andei. During the 2015 interview he recalled that in

248

"recent months I've been called for several occasions." He further explained his

engagement with his community in Mtito Andei and how that felt to him:

> [I was called to] a school *harambee.* We had all the alumni of my primary school
> because they are now making a secondary school. I was there as a guest [proud
> laughter]. And there were several other occasions for community people. One was
> renewing his marriage so I was there to support him, financially, materially. (June
> 13, 2015)

When asked how he felt about these contributions, Anthony responded, "I'm ever happy.

Saying I'm now giving back to society. So I never feel shy nor feel underrated" (June 13,

2015). *Undugu* was evident as Anthony took pride in his ability to contribute to the

community through the *harambee* and in other situations. In this way *undugu* played a

role in fostering empowerment in addition to being an outcome of the empowerment

process.

     Discussion. Anthony's desire to provide assistance to his family, particularly by

paying for his siblings' school fees, was reflected by many youth. While most youth were

unable to provide significant contributions initially, their ability to contribute increased as

they became more financially stable, which became a source of pride for them. On one

level, the need to postpone one's personal goals in order to attend to the needs of others

may seem to be an unfair burden on youth. However, when examined as part of the

concept of *undugu*, the actions are understood as part of a larger system of support.

During the 2015 interviews, youth were asked about the ways people who had

experienced empowerment interacted with their families or communities. A few youth

noted that becoming empowered was synonymous with providing financial contributions.

Matthew noted that an empowered person tries to "lift up their families in the

community. Like now, you find that we can come as a group to make contributions, so that if someone has a tragedy, then we help out. Also, we can donate some to orphans" (June 9, 2015). Although youth wanted to support others, there was also a level of expectation that becoming empowered meant youth would remember those who helped them. Sarah responded in a very straightforward manner when we tried to get her to elaborate on family expectations for youth who had experienced empowerment. Laughing, she told us, "They expect cash from you!" (June 13, 2015). She continued by saying: "Like community – I mean my neighbors, my friends – because I have a job and they do not have, and they ask you to give them money for something and they expect you to give them" (June 13, 2015). Even though youth were willing, and often eager, to assist their families and others, there were times when expectations to support others were raised before youth were financially prepared, as will be seen in the discussion of Linda and Keith's stories.

Even though Sarah indicated that people expected financial contributions when they felt someone was empowered, this was not the only way in which youth's relationships with their families and networks of belonging changed. Sarah elaborated on her statement that people expect you to contribute something to them:

> You can help them in many ways. Maybe even when they need someone to come and give them strategies to do something you will be asked. But someone who hasn't gone to school, or one who hasn't had experiences, you will not hear them being counted. But you will hear, 'that one knows something.' Maybe they want to cook and they will ask you 'were you learning hospitality? You were being taught to cook?' Come and show us some recipes. But someone who hasn't gone to school, you will not hear them being called. (June 13, 2015)

Being called upon to teach others what they had been taught, providing advice to friends and family, or being role models for other youth or family members were important in the process of youth empowerment.

Changing Roles in Families and Communities – *Jina Jema Hung'aa Gizani* **(A Good Name Shines in the Dark)**

Providing financial contributions was just one way that youth's positions within their networks of belonging were changing. As youth engaged in activities that were deemed constructive, such as returning to school, working in formal positions, starting their own business, and participating in church or community programs, the ways that they were viewed and treated also began to shift. For some youth the change meant that they were invited to assist in decision-making within their family or community. Others were asked to mentor younger community members. Many youth talked about how changed perceptions had led them to be role models for other youth. The proverb that begins this section, *jina jema hung'aa gizani,* reflects the changing relationships between youth and their networks of belonging. The proverb means, "a good name shines in the dark" and suggests that the positive actions that youth take come to be known by their community.

As youth's ability to provide for their families and invest in their communities through youth forums or community *harambee*[11] increased, they found their stature amongst their family (both nuclear and extended) and within their communities (their neighborhoods in Nairobi and in *ushago*) increasing. Anthony alluded to this when he

---

[11] Here I refer to *harambee* as community fund-raising effort.

talked of being called to participate in a *harambee* for his school in Mtito Andei.

Although attending a *harambee* is inherently about providing an economic contribution,

his invitation to be a guest identified him to the community as someone who had reached

a new status. This new status in the community contributed to the empowerment process

as youth began to view themselves in new ways (personal development).

Many youth found that their changed status within the community created

opportunities to mentor other youth or be a role model for others to emulate. Several

youth connected the ways they engaged with other youth to empowerment. In Chapter 5 I

described how Rose identified empowerment as a process whereby an individual learns

something but is then able to reproduce, or share, what they had learned. Rose's

description of how, because she had experienced empowerment, she could now empower

other youth was a reflection of her definition of empowerment: "Normally us girls we

like encouraging and giving… just empowering another person. Guiding them. Telling

them 'do this' and not just commanding but showing them how they can do it and how

they can be able to succeed" (June 9, 2015). David's description of how youth interacted

both in their community and with family expanded this notion:

> What I can say is that someone who is empowered can be a role model in the
> community. It is someone who, when he is with his friends, he mostly gives them
> an idea and he mostly talks about achieving something. And when it comes to
> interacting with the family, he tries to also challenge the family to try this and try
> something that can be fruitful at the end. So mostly I can say he tries to motivate
> others. (June 6, 2015)

Changes in youth's stature, both in their families and in other networks of belonging,

were both a reflection of youth empowerment as well as a mechanism through which

youth continued to experience the empowerment process. In this next section I turn to

Linda and Keith, two youth whose stories are avenues through which to examine how changes in their relationships both stimulated the empowerment process and were affected by it. Their stories have similarities with some aspects of Grace and Anthony's stories. Linda's parents, like Grace's, provided a strong base of support, even though they were unable to provide the financial support she needed; and similar to Anthony, Linda was eager to find ways to assist her parents and her broader community. However, both Linda and Keith's stories demonstrate greater changes in the ways they interacted with and were perceived by other youth and community leaders.

Linda's Story. Like Grace and Anthony, Linda finished Njia with several goals, both for herself and as related to others. Her personal goals included finding a job in the hospitality sector, starting her own business, and going back to school. She also determined that she wanted to be financially self-sufficient, as she felt this would give her the freedom to educate her future children, help other kids and youth in the community, and be independent of her parents so she would not be a burden on them. When asked to describe her future life she responded:

[I imagine] a happy life.

Happy? Maybe you could explain happy.

Ok, being successful, maybe educate my kids and maybe help other people achieve what I have achieved.

Maybe you could explain what successful to you means?

Ok success to me is being able to sustain my family and being able to help others. I like interacting with the community, mostly kids. (June 13, 2012)

Although she identified work-related goals, the desire for success translated to a "happy life" that offered the chance to take care of her own future children and other kids in the community.

For many youth, familial belonging influenced the decisions they made, and families, principally parents and siblings, were the primary recipients (at least at this stage of their life) of youth's desire to "give back." As an only child, Linda saw her unique nuclear family as an opportunity to forge a different and more independent path than her peers. At the same time, she realized that she would bear most of the responsibility for caring for her parents on her own. As a result, Linda was eager to make headway in her life to achieve her goals. However, Linda's story also demonstrates the complexity of the social relations in which she engaged. Her struggles to find employment were fraught with the challenges faced by many young women as they balanced the need to find employment with the expectations of male managers, or other authority figures, who made demands on them either sexually or financially (described in Chapter 5). In addition, Linda at times expressed frustration at the ways in which her neighbors expected her to assist them individually before she was financially prepared to do so. Despite these limitations to collectivism, the support Linda received from her community, the mentorship she valued from teachers and employers, and the encouragement from her family were mirrored in her desire to contribute to her family and community's well-being.

Njia was introduced to Taharuki at a time when Linda was looking for an opportunity to jump-start her life. Although she had completed secondary school, she had

been unable to raise the funds necessary to continue to university. Linda's mother provided her with advice and encouraged her to participate in and complete the Njia program. While her parents were able to provide her with lunch money and *matatu* fare, it was not easy because her father was unemployed and her mother was going through a prolonged illness. It was a stressful time, both for her family and herself. She described it in this way: "You know I was feeling I had so much stress because I'm the only kid and [I] had no one to talk to. And I was thinking of maybe going on with my education" (June 13, 2012). In addition, Linda had been actively searching for employment but found that her lack of certification, coupled with situations in which she felt she was being sexually harassed in order to receive or maintain a job, made finding and retaining employment difficult.

The difficulties Linda faced as she sought employment, her inability to enroll at a university, the support she received from her parents, as well as the desire to not be a burden on them spurred her to seek additional learning opportunities. As a result, Njia was an opportunity she did not want to miss: "I chose to participate in [Njia] because it was like a chance given to me because I was not able to raise money to go to another college to further my studies. When Njia came I took the opportunity" (June 13, 2012). Throughout the program her parents supported her both financially, by providing her with fare for transportation, and through encouragement to continue. Linda left the program feeling that she had gained important skills in entrepreneurship, financial management and in using the computer. However, the most important things she felt she had learned were personal development skills, including self-confidence and communication skills. In

the first year she indicated: "When I came I was so shy. I couldn't express myself before people, but I became confident; and the confidence that I got can help me to go and talk maybe to a manager somewhere and get a job" (June 13, 2012).

As Linda completed the classroom portion of the program, she used the savings from the small *chama* that she participated in with her classmates to prepare for her anticipated attachment. Linda was eager to be able to rely on herself for her transportation and lunch needs once her attachment began. She explained: "For the time being, because I know that I'm going to get an internship, I need transport and I don't want to burden my parents. I'll be using [my savings] for my transport and lunch" (June 13, 2012). Even though her first priority was to make sure she did not create additional burdens for her parents as they were going through a difficult time, she also thought that if she made a little bit more money, she might be able to take care of some additional needs: "Maybe I buy myself some clothes because I don't have siblings. So I can use it for myself" (June 13, 2012). These two quotes demonstrate how although Linda was eager to be financially independent so that she would not cause her parents more stress, she also recognized that once that basic need was taken care of, as an only child she would have a bit more freedom with her finances than many of her peers.

After completing her attachment, Linda had a unique opportunity to live with an aunt in Malindi, a town on the Kenyan coast. During that time she worked part-time at her aunt's supermarket, but also found work as a customer sales representative with a large bank. She spent one year in Malindi and in that time found that she was able to put skills and knowledge that she had learned to use:

256

Njia gave me a stepping-stone. Like I've told you, you know when I went to Malindi, I was working as a cashier in this supermarket. Honestly, I hadn't studied computer, but when I was here I was taught by Henry about computers and so I could use [cash register] computers with confidence, because I had learned about that. So, I appreciated [what I learned]. This empowered me because when I [got to the supermarket] I had the confidence. I knew what I was doing. (June 15, 2015)

In the process of living and working in Malindi, Linda also discovered that she enjoyed learning to live in a new place and learning new languages. This new interest led her to consider new possibilities for furthering her education:

When I got to Malindi I learned that I was so fast in getting new languages. I learned Mijikenda within the first few months and I could speak fluently. I could understand a little Italian[12] and I could even write it. Then I was like, 'wow, I'm good at learning foreign things.' And then I can interact with people and all that. International relations, when I came to know about it, it has to do with the real you. If you can go out there and you can express yourself and all that, you can learn from people and be able to live with them like that. So I was so much interested in that. (June 15, 2015)

When she returned to Nairobi these newfound passions spurred Linda's desire to return to school. However, there were other things she needed to accomplish before she could do so.

On her return to Nairobi, Linda found that even though her father was working and her mother had recovered from her illness, there were still a number of things in the home that Linda wanted to improve. She described the changes she sought in her home:

[When] I came back my dad had some issues. So we sorted them out because I had cash. I gave him and we sorted them out - I didn't like how our house looked like, so we changed it. We furnished it at some point and I loved it. We had no electricity, so with the money we had I told my dad what to do and now we have power in the house. (June 15, 2015)

---

[12] Malindi has a large Italian population and Italian has become a common language of commerce.

The combination of Linda's contributions to the household and her father's employment

led her family to become more financially secure, something that would help Linda when

she went back to school. In addition to being able to use her savings to help her family,

Linda felt that her family noted changes in her demeanor as well:

> My dad tells me I'm a mature person, not like a kid. He can confide in me when making some decisions. If he wants to start up something, he can ask me and then we talk about it and we can make it work. He trusts me. He is actually my best friend. (June 15, 2015)

As Linda engaged in employment activities and her financial status improved, her father

recognized and acknowledged the changes taking place and the dynamics of their

relationship began to shift.

Linda also used some of her savings from working in Malindi to start her own

cosmetics boutique and salon. Linda liked the independence of having her own business

but faced a number of challenges and found that maintaining it was difficult when she

also wanted to go back to school. She described some of the challenges she faced:

> When I started up that shop it wasn't working at first – you know business needs patience, so that people can learn what you're doing. They can be more familiar about your business and all that. So, I didn't have that patience. And then I didn't have someone to run the shop, because I had that dream of going to school. I didn't have a faithful person to run the shop. When I got one girl, she used to work for me, but when I was away she used to close down the shop and go. Then when she knows maybe I'll be back tomorrow she opens again. Then the people around there they tell me 'this girl doesn't come.' Then at some point she used to take things from the shop; she doesn't write them down. So when I start counting things I see I have a loss or something of the sort. (June 15, 2015)

The process of putting the entrepreneurship skills and knowledge she had into practice

was a learning opportunity for Linda. The lack of someone dependable complicated her

ability to keep the shop viable, but through running the business Linda learned a number

of other things that she would take under consideration if she decided to open a business in the future.

When asked what lessons she learned through opening her own business, she stated:

> From that [experience], I think a business needs a very serious person. Starting a business, let me put it that way, you have to be very serious in it. You start it yourself; you know the profit, how the market is and all that. Even after sometime, when you bring somebody to work you know that your profit is supposed to be this amount; this is the range. If someone takes something from there you will just know. And another thing I learned - my business was in the home, so from home people would say 'Linda, today I need that dress, how much is that dress?' I tell someone its 800 shillings [US$8]. They say 'Ahh, didn't you buy this dress at 500 [US$5.50]' so its like 'you're eating a lot [i.e. making too much profit], so just take 600 or 550 shillings'. You know just because [the business] is at home. And then they are like, 'no, you we've seen you while growing up, I'm like your mother.' She makes you feel guilty so I would give her. Or they come for it for free, they tell you 'I need that [hair] oil. I'll bring you the money tomorrow. You know where I stay; its just there next to your house, so come for the money there.' Are you getting me? So putting a business at home – hectic.

> *You don't have any plans of putting up a business at home again?*

> No [emphatically]. No – not again. (June 15, 2015)

Linda's experience with having a business run out of her home highlighted a tension of living within her community. On the one hand, it was her neighbors who informed her when the person she hired to work in her shop was taking advantage of her. Furthermore, many of her customers were part of a long-standing network of belonging in which mutual support was anticipated. A woman's suggestion that she was like Linda's mother implied that she had already supported Linda (*leo ndiwe*) and expected that support to be reciprocated (*kesho ndimi*). Situations whereby individuals expected her to give them

259

favors by discounting items or giving them on "loans" made continuing her business difficult.

When Linda closed down her business she wante to return to school but found her savings were insufficient to pay for her school fees. In order to bridge the gap in her savings, Linda worked briefly as a waitress at a restaurant in Sukumiza. Although it was difficult work, she was able to save the money she needed to start schooling. She described how even though she had low pay, she appreciated the job, especially her exposure to one particular VIP and his wife:

> Ok, the salary was low and then sometimes we never used to get paid. But I think I had favor, God's favor, because I used to get a lot of tips. I was so good that when we would get prominent people… ok I served [one VIP] for 3 months. I served him like 5 times, and then we exchanged contacts. I exchanged [phone] numbers with his wife. She would say, 'ah when we come we want to be served by that girl.' She never used to know my name but she used to describe how I am to the manger and he would say 'Ah, Linda.' Then I used to serve them throughout. I used to talk a little with the wife and she used to encourage me. I would tell her I wanted to go back to school and she would say, 'you can do it', you can do more and all that. At some point, when I get desperate for a job, I think I should call her. Yeah. I would call her and tell her 'I don't have a job and I want to [work]' but I've never reached that point. (June 15, 2015)

Being singled out by a VIP and being recognized for her good work increased Linda's confidence in herself and her abilities, which also helped to improve her performance. In addition, she felt that by catching the eye of someone so important she had someone she could turn to if things did not work out the way she anticipated or if life became too difficult.

After adding to her savings, Linda turned her attention to pursuing a diploma. The time Linda spent in Malindi had sparked an interest in international relations. She identified this interest because she learned new languages quickly and was easily able to

interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. She hoped that going back to

school would allow her to do these two things. However, even though she had sold her

business and worked in the hotel industry, she had not been able to save enough to pursue

a diploma or degree in international relations, because it was only offered at two of the

more expensive universities. Instead, she decided to study for a diploma in public

relations at a university she was able to afford. She described why she chose that field:

> Then, when I was starting my university it was so hard for me. I wanted to do international relations. I wanted to do it, but it was very expensive. I opted for public relations, which is somehow related a little. Because public relations is a local thing, it's dealing with companies. But international relations is dealing with people of different states. So I thought its almost the same thing. Let me do this first; maybe later on I'll do that one, but if this one works for me I'll continue with it. (June 15, 2015)

Although she was not able to pursue international relations, Linda was glad she was

studying for her diploma and was grateful that her parents gave her moral support and

were able to support her financially when her savings were exhausted.

Linda noted that at different times in her life there were different people who

provided encouragement, served as mentors, and positively influenced Linda. She

mentioned two women in particular. The first woman was a high school teacher who

influenced Linda through the stories she provided about her own life and how she had

succeeded. The second person who served as a mentor was someone who had employed

Linda at a bank when she lived in Malindi: "She used to tell me, you go and do

something. She used to give me an example of her daughter. And I was like, 'wow I want

to be like her.' She used to mentor me a lot" (June 15, 2015). These women provided

Linda with a source of encouragement and guidance as Linda made decisions in her life.

However, it was her father who provided her with the most guidance, and encouraged her

to differentiate herself from others:

> My dad – He has supported me a lot. Like fare, I used to come from Sukumiza to Nairobi daily because I didn't find a hostel [at the school]. So I used to come daily and he would give me lunch money. He paid my fee. First semester I was able to pay my fee but this other one he has helped me a lot. He has supported me, he has advised me: 'Do this, don't do this.' You know what you want.

> *What is one major advice that he gave you that you can share?*

> My peers, my age mates –like ladies – most of them are now married. Me, I'm the only kid in our family so I always want to make a difference. I want to be different. So he always tells me… ok most of [my peers] were telling me 'you are late. You know you are 23, you don't have a kid, and you're not even married. What's up with you?' You know when you get 30 years, you get one kid, you get old. So you have to hurry up or something. My question was 'what if I get a kid now? A kid will tie me down. I'll not get a good chance to go to school, maybe I will go later.' And then most of these companies are like 'we want a girl within the range of 18 – 28' and then you are 35, you are finishing up your degree. Are you getting it? So competition for young women would be high. So that is what my dad used to tell me: 'You know what you want in life and now that you have the chance to do it, don't ashame [*sic*] me and don't ashame [*sic*] God. And don't listen to your peers. Everyone has a life to live; they chose that kind of life. What did they achieve? A kid, what else? Nothing. They are there, loitering. Maybe the husband is doing the same kind of a job or he's not even working, he is drinking or something of the sort. So getting a kid is not a privilege to you now because you have a life to live and you are the only kid. So you have to make a difference.' So that is what he told me, 'do something to make a difference in your life. For your sake.' Because I always ask myself, because I'm the only kid, when my parents get old and I don't have cash or a good job, I don't like earn for myself – because I never know my future. I don't know the kind of husband I will get married to, when my mom maybe gets sick – and I'm not praying for that – what will I do to help her? She doesn't have anyone else. I am her only child. Are you getting it? I will make my future now when I am young and then when I'm old I'll be taking the fruits of what I did in my youth. (June 15, 2015)

The advice from Linda's father was echoed in her own words when she talked about how

she imagined her future, as stated above, and in the advice she gave to other youth. Linda

and her father also recognized that by being an only child, Linda had opportunities that

might not be available to other young women. With his support Linda was determined

not to have a child before she had put other things in her life, including a career and

education, in place.

In 2015 Linda's status within the Nairobi estate where she had grown up and now

lived had changed. Linda embraced her new role as a role model for other youth and

encouraged peers in their lives. She described a number of ways she motivated youth and

gave examples of the advice she had given to peers:

> I have many friends now because they look up to me, 'you did this, so I can do this.' So I talk to people. Mostly girls. Then they are like 'Ah, Linda you didn't waste your chances, you did this and your age mates are not the same as you right now.' So I'm a go-getter. If I want something I must get it, no matter what comes my way. So I motivate girls mostly.

> *How do you do this? How do you motivate them?*

> I'm in the Social networks –like WhatsApp, Facebook. I can update something and I'm constantly updating things that can motivate you. At the end of the day I can get someone saying I love your status and then from there we start talking about it. Then they want to know about my life, how did I achieve this. I'm very God fearing. Then I tell the ways they can follow. If she doesn't have a job, I tell her what to do, like, 'you know you can't just stay at home waiting for the job to come. So you know what to do, so you can go to companies and ask for job without being choosy.' And then there is a girl I told her to come [to Njia]. She also looked at me and told me 'I like how you are, how did you get here.' I told her to come here and she did hospitality. Ok now she is working at a restaurant, I don't know where actually, but near Nairobi. So I told her to come here because she hadn't schooled well – she didn't finish high school and all that. Now she is ok, she is working. She came to me with her mother – I tried to convince her mother, because her mother thought 'my girl can't do this because she has not studied, you can only obtain a certificate after you have your Form 4 certificate.' She didn't understand but I convinced the girl well and where she is now she is ok and even her mother tells me 'you did a great job.'

> *How else would you say your role has changed in the community?*

> Let me put it this way. When I studied hospitality, I stopped being shy in the first place, so I knew I could talk to people. When I got to university, like now I'm

doing public relations, it's all about interacting with people, settling disputes and things like that, talking to people. So, in that I talk to many people and I'm still doing music. When I get a chance to do music, I do music that can motivate people. 'Stop doing this so you can achieve this.' Or 'don't give up even if your life is not all that good'. That is how I motivate people. On Friday I was at a church function – singing and motivating people. (June 15, 2015)

As Linda's life was changing so was the way in which people in her community viewed her. As they began to view her differently, she was able to give youth advice and serve as a role model. Linda used several mechanisms for motivating and advising youth. She embraced social networks as a way to reach a large number of youth and followed that up by connecting on an individual basis. However, it was her music that she identified as her largest tool for connecting with and empowering youth. After demonstrating her music, she explained, "So that is what I do. I reach out for the young generation – my generation actually" (June 15, 2015).

Even as Linda provided advice to others, she also recognized that the support system she had and the encouragement she received from her father were different from what many other youth experienced. When asked what challenges youth faced in the community where she lived, she replied that tensions between youth and parents often held youth back:

Youths? Jobs. Stress. They have stress from their parents. There are two girls I know who left home just because the mother was like, 'See your friends are like this, why are you not doing this?' And then that's not you, you want to be your own. You have a goal. Like one girl she knows how to braid hair very well. Then I was telling her instead of going to be employed for 200 shillings [US$2] if she advertises what she does [braiding hair] on WhatsApp or wherever, that is a talent that she has on her hands. She can get a lot of cash and she's not paying rent, she can even braid hair outside her home. So she started braiding hair and was bringing in money but at some point she was disagreeing with her mother a lot. Because the mom was looking at her as a burden or something of that sort. So with that kind of stress *madame* [young ladies] will leave home and rent their own

house and live alone. There they will be exposed to so many challenges, because they are like, 'I don't have somebody to talk to at home.' The people you need the most are the people who are rejecting you. Not necessarily rejecting, but pulling you down. You have low self-esteem. So you get stressed.

Have you tried to help in any way?

I talked to her, I told her 'do you know…' that's what my dad usually tells me, he can tell me 'do you know your mom lived her life and she made her own decisions. Now it's your turn to make your own decisions.' At the end of the day you won't come back and say 'Ah, my mom made me make this decision, if it was not for her, I couldn't have done this.' Are you getting it? So that is what I used to tell the girl. 'Now just because your mom has sent you away and you've started living' – ok, I'm not very sure if she's living alone or she's living with someone – 'ok, don't rush into making decisions, and then finally you come to say my mom made me do this – be yourself, make your own decisions.' This is what I told them. (June 15, 2015)

The encouragement that her father provided to her was reflected in the advice Linda gave to other youth. Linda was very active as a role model and advising other youth in the neighborhood where she lived. She felt that this was an outgrowth of empowerment in her life. When asked how someone who experienced empowerment relates with the community, she responded:

The larger community? Mostly they look at you and say, 'ah, you have gone far' [i.e. you have come from humble beginnings and become successful]. The daughter of so and so is really doing good.

So is that something you have experienced?

Honestly, there is a girl who told me, 'my dad told me to be like you'. She is still in high school. She is in Form 4. She told me, 'my dad always tells me to be like you'. So that means, that is her dad. I don't know how many dads talk like her dad. So it is something nice. (June 15, 2015)

This is another demonstration of how *undugu* both contributed to youth empowerment processes and was described by youth as evidence of empowerment.

Discussion. An examination of Linda's story shows how *jina jema hung'aa gizani* may be evident in youth lives. As Linda avoided idleness and engaged in different activities, people began to recognize the changes in her life. Linda actively sought out opportunities through her music and use of social media to connect with youth, and this was recognized both by the youth with whom she talked and parents who asked her to talk with their daughters. Her changed status within the community went beyond the types of employment or schooling she engaged in and reflected a way that she contributed socially to her communities. As was the case for other youth whose relationships had begun to change, the shift was a source of pride for Linda and contributed to increases in her self-confidence.

As Linda's experience demonstrates, there were times in youth's lives that the expectation to reciprocate assistance, or provide for others, was difficult for youth. In Linda's case, this happened because neighbors expected her to provide them with business favors before she was financially prepared to do so. Their dual role as guardians of her business when her assistant did not run it well, and benefactors when they wanted something at a reduced price or on loan, made it difficult for Linda to continue her business. When she shut down her business she determined that, because of that kind of pressure, she would not open one at her home again.

Linda was not the only youth to experience this challenge. Beatrice had joined with a friend to make and sell jewelry at their school. The business was initially profitable, but it came to a point where most of her customers were also friends, and this created conflicts in the business interactions: "Most of the people I was selling to were

my friends. They were saying they would pay me with time or the next time, so I gave up" (June 20, 2014). The pressure to balance her friendships and her business needs became too much and Beatrice decided to quit selling jewelry, although she did transfer her business knowledge and materials to her brother.

Business situations were not the only times that youth felt pressure to provide for others before they were financially prepared. Several youth indicated that as soon as they had a steady income, they needed to help others. To further explore some of the challenges youth faced as they navigated the expectations of others, I turn to Keith's story, which is an example of both the desire of youth to give back to their communities and the difficulties they face when they started to do so.

Keith's story. When Keith was asked in 2012 to imagine his future, he responded that he would like to be an automobile consultant in an automotive garage. He felt that he could achieve this by working hard, and as a result he would have a better life. To Keith, a better life meant that he would have an income that would allow him to either start a charitable organization or contribute to organizations that already existed. This desire to help others was motivated by the fact that he had been helped at different times in his life:

> What motivated me to do this, was when I was in high school I was sponsored and when I'm in college here in Njia, I'm also sponsored. So this has inspired me that though we cannot be able to pay for our fees, if there is somebody who is there, who is willing to pay for our fees, why can't we do the same to others who are willing to learn but don't have the opportunity, simply because they cannot afford? (June 12, 2012)

Keith's belief that he could one day be in a position to help others or have his own charitable organization was bolstered through his experience in the internship he had

267

through Njia. The automotive garage where he had his internship was run by a successful, young (mid-thirties) Kenyan and solely dealt with high-end cars. This inspired Keith to believe that he too could be successful and therefore be in a position where he could contribute to others.

Beyond the sponsorship he received in secondary school, Keith described a broad support network that included his peers and his father:

> I'm staying with a friend. He is a former high school friend. He was my 'dad' when I joined high school. So I'm staying with him and he has been so supportive. He caters for my transport when I am coming to classes, my supper, and all the stuff I need to make my education good. So he is not that old of a person, but what he has done is much more and I would really want to thank him for that. Though he is a peer, he has done a lot to make me to reach this end.
>   And another thing. I also have friends who are doing these on and off jobs from Industrial Area [a part of Nairobi where there are a lot of casual jobs]. There are some jobs that we attend at dawn, so if such jobs appear they inform me early so I prepare myself. I go do that job and then I rush to school [Njia]. Those jobs we start at 4 a.m. – that is offloading some materials. So my peers have helped me. (June 12, 2012)

Keith's peer network provided him with assistance in multiple ways. His friend, who was likely an older student at his high school and served as a mentor for him, was able to assist him as he settled into life in Nairobi. This assistance was significant since Keith's access to cash was limited. Keith's ability to earn money for upkeep in 2012 was tied directly to the networks of belonging he had created with friends in his neighborhood. Both types of support (receiving information about jobs and a place to stay) were important because Keith's family was not in a financial position to provide him with much financial assistance. His father, however, provided him with encouragement and moral support that kept him moving towards his goals:

My dad, though he has not been able to support me financially, he has managed to give me pieces of advice that have kept me going. So when I heard about Njia, I informed him and he told me that the best thing to do is every opportunity you get, respond to it positively, because you don't know what is after it. So the words I've been getting from my dad have been a limelight and those words have been driving me to a better direction. (June 12, 2012)

The financial and moral support Keith received was important in this time of transition, when he was still struggling to find employment that would sustain him.

After completing Njia, Keith had a difficult time finding employment in the automotive field. Instead, he began working at a manufacturing company. Through this work he had a stable income that allowed him to start achieving some of his goals. Keith was able to save money towards starting his own business and he built himself a *cube* (a mud-walled, tin-roof home) in *ushago*. As he started to have a steady income, Keith also found that he needed to manage the expectations of family and friends:

When I secured a job, it was difficult handling money, friends, and relatives. By then they used to support me. Now, when I managed to secure a job, they wanted me to appreciate back. You find that the cash you are getting, if you budget with it, there is no float [extra spending money] you can use to entertain them. That one was a major problem because some of my friends were saying that 'Keith has managed to secure a job, now he is trying to sideline us.' And the expectations of family were high.

In what sense?

In the sense that now Keith is working; we know that he will do this and this and this. And the time frame was short for that. Another challenge was before I secured a job I was staying with a cousin. Immediately I managed to secure the job, it was like there was a relief on him. He wanted me to pay for everything. Now, because he used to cater for bills, supper, lunch, everything, rent. So when I managed to get a job, it was like now it is his turn. These ones are the major challenges. (July 3, 2013)

The challenges Keith faced went beyond providing for his family's basic needs. Keith's friends, who had helped him find different jobs when he was in need, expected him to

269

maintain a certain lifestyle, a lifestyle that was not cheap. In addition, the person he had

been living with felt that it was now his turn (*kesho ndimi*) to have a reprieve from some

of the living expenses.

Despite these challenges, Keith was pleased that his increased contributions

within the family corresponded with changes in how he was regarded:

> But at the moment I am self-reliant. I do cater for my bills. And I do assist my
> parents in paying the fee of the last born. Now they look upon me as a model
> because they can call me to advise the young ones and tell them what life is all
> about because they see me as an achiever. (July 3, 2013)

Keith tied his ability to contribute to his brother's school fees with the perception that he

is 'an achiever', and he thus served as a role model for others.

Keith continued to work at the manufacturing company through the 2015

interview, but also sought opportunities to start his own business and supplement his

income. In 2013 he attempted to start his own wholesale supplier business, and had even

officially registered the company. Before he could get the business running, however,

Keith's father became sick and he had to use his savings to pay for his father's medical

expenses. He then pursued a second business, a cyber café, but the business was robbed

and he lost all of his equipment. Although he hoped he would be able to rebuild the

business, in 2015 he still had not been able to save the needed amount.

Despite the set-backs with his first two business attempts, Keith was able to

successfully start an agricultural business with his father:

> *I remember last time you had told us you had hired a piece of land. How is that
> working out?*
>
> That one? It is doing very well. We had used it for a rice plantation. The lease
> period expired and we renewed it.

So it was successful?

The harvest was very successful and my dad advised me that because the money we spent has been recovered, why shouldn't we risk again? So the money we got from the rice harvest, I added a little bit more, and we got a much bigger land compared to the one we had before. At the moment, the paddy rice is there. We are waiting for a harvest. Harvest is in August. (June 13, 2015)

Through the success of the harvest, Keith anticipated that he would have the opportunity to go back to school:

I talked to my dad. The money we will get as a return on the farm we are working right now, part of it should be kept aside for my schooling. That one is also a source of income for my schooling. Another thing, there is a friend of mine; we were in college with him. He told me a business idea that can really boom is investing in sugar cane plantation. So I'm still meditating about that and like business people do say, that business is a risk. So I'm deciding if I'm up to take that risk. If it succeeded and returns are successful, that one will propel my schooling. That will give me a better time and space to start my own auto garage. (June 13, 2015)

Even though Keith's employment was not in the automotive field, he was still interested in pursuing a career in automotive and he anticipated that having other sources of income would be one way that he would be able to achieve that goal. His father was also supportive and as they went into business together on the rice plantation, the profits they made were designated to help Keith return to school.

As Keith's financial status improved, he also began to be more disciplined with his finances. While he previously used his money to "floss around" (what he described as socializing and merrymaking in Chapter 4), in later years he started to budget and prioritize how he spent his money. In 2013, Keith described how his peer network had influenced him:

Before, they knew when it was end of month, and they would call me from my job, 'hey Keith – where are you?' So you find yourself, you are from job, you don't even report to the house. Then from job, then direct to pub. So then from pub you find that tomorrow you skip the job because you hanged out. So, that is how friends used to influence my spending. Before I attended [financial literacy] class, it was a routine – every weekend, especially Saturdays and Sundays I used to go for nightclubs. Going there – if you go there, money speaks. So you find yourself spending so much so that you borrow from people – your colleagues, you are being paid the same amount but before mid-month you go to them to bail you out. (July 3, 2015)

As Keith's habits and way of socializing changed, so did the way his peers responded to

him:

Personally, like I told you before. Friends, friends, friends. I had a lot of friends, and at the moment only a few I can count on because the majority were people who used to take advantage [of me]. They used to get more benefit on me then I do on them. So when I realized that, the friendship started to fade. It fades, it fades until it disappears.

How are they taking advantage?

Before, when it reaches on weekend, they used to knock at my door they tell me 'Ah, Keith, where are we going to party today, which pub would you suggest for us.' When such favors were over the friendship disappeared with that one.

So how did that hit you? When did you realize that the people were actually using you?

When you are in good terms with someone, then all of a sudden you see the gap widening without a proper reason, you have to sit back and start doing self-assessment and that is when I realized that these people were making use of me. I used to give, but now that I don't give the friendship is not there. (June 13, 2015)

Keith found that as he set boundaries on what he would and would not give to others, and

as his financial decision-making changed, his friends became less interested in spending

time with him. However, even as those friendships faded other relationships took on new

forms.

One of the primary changes that Keith noted in his relationships in 2014 was that

he had gotten married:

> My family – from the last time I was interviewed up to date, I have experienced
> some tremendous changes in my life. First, I'm a husband to someone. When I
> was interviewed last, I was single, but now I am talking as husband to someone.
> That one is one of the changes that has occurred in my life. (June 14, 2014)

This change of status may have contributed to the way his peer groups were shifting. As

Keith took on more adult responsibilities, his peers may have decided that their interests

did not match with his increased responsibilities or new ways of living:

> Where I am staying in Nairobi, so far changes have occurred. Friends that I used
> to relate with before I got married, nowadays there is a gap. Because when they
> come to the house there is not that much time for idling. Spendings. We used to
> spend during the weekend, party, merry-making; at the moment there is no time
> for that. I've also managed to get new friends. There are some old friends I off-
> loaded then some new friends get on board. (June 13, 2015)

While Keith noted that significant changes took place in his peer networks after he

married, he had noted those changes at different points in his interviews prior to marriage

as well. Regardless of when his relationships with his friends began to change, Keith's

changed priorities and his unwillingness to financially support his friends in their

socializing impacted his social circles.

Although Keith faced challenges in managing his finances vis-à-vis his networks

of belonging once he became financially stable, he also felt that his *ushago* community

viewed him as a role model:

> So far from the messages I'm getting from home – friends, the people I went to
> school with – they are telling me 'Keith, you are doing great'. And there is our
> paternal uncle, he called me and told me 'Keith, you have seen some race of
> civilization so one of these fine days, organize so that you come, you sit with
> these kids and you tell them the truth about life'.

That one is after they observed your life?

After they observed my life. They observed 1, 2 things I've done. My house and my dad told them that I had managed to rent a land again. So that one motivated them so they called for my support to talk to my cousins back there.

Keith experienced changes on multiple levels. By using marketable skills and knowledge and personal development to secure and maintain employment, Keith experienced financial changes and increased financial stability. However, the empowerment process was also facilitated through *undugu* as he engaged in activities that were respected by the community and recognized as ways to attain adulthood. By building a house, renting land near his rural home, and getting married, Keith increased his stature in *undugu* and showed that he was able to take on adult responsibilities.

The financial and life status changes had conflicting impacts on his networks of belonging. On the one hand, Keith's stature within his family and rural community had grown. His opinions were sought after and his elders called on him to speak with others. When Keith talked about these things pride was evident in his voice, and he tied this type of engagement to the empowerment process:

> The community sees an empowered person as a role model. The community uses an empowered person to pass messages. An empowered person is used as an instrument in the community to eradicate some injustices. Like, injustices, they only use empowered person because he knows the consequences and the aftermath and the benefit of all of this. So when he meets or she meets a group of victims, he sits them down and talks to them, he will tell them what the advantages/disadvantages are and give them room to weigh which direction they would like to go. Those are the qualities of an empowered person and how the community looks at them.
>
> If you narrow it to a family level, lets say there is a family meeting, the empowered person will be given a chance to chair the meeting. He will be given a chance to give an opinion or counter some reactions. Like people may talk, people may talk. Eventually an elderly person will calm the crowd and seek the opinion of the empowered person, 'Mr. So and so, you've heard the way your brothers,

your cousins, your sisters are talking, what is your opinion.' So at family level, the empowered person is used to finalize the actions, the reactions of talks.

  An empowered person in a family can be used to motivate others. He can be used as an example to tell 'emulate so and so – he was brought up with you, you know him from childhood, so look at him. Why has he changed all of a sudden? So these are things we need you to emulate from him'. So he can be used as an example. For example, I have a cousin who is going to university. He is here in Nairobi. His dad called me and told me that 'Keith, I want you to talk to this guy, tell him about college life'. I talked with my cousin. We talked, we talked, we talked, he told me he has grasped some of the concepts I have given him, and we hope that the talk will hail something. (June 13, 2015)

Keith was able to tie these notions of empowerment to the changes that had taken place in his own life. He recognized that he had attained a position whereby he was identified as someone that others should emulate.

  Discussion. *Undugu* had both positive and negative impacts for Keith. As Keith put marketable skill and personal development into practice and improved his financial security, he was immediately expected to reciprocate (*kesho ndimi*) the support he had received from others. This was a challenge, however, as he was still trying to establish himself and make progress toward his goals. His financial stability and desire to put financial literacy skills into practice created tensions among his peers, some of whom had contribute to his well-being before he had a stable job. These individuals likely anticipated that he would reciprocate their support. Keith navigated this situation by shifting his peer networks, a process that took time. At the same time, Keith saw his stature in his family and other networks of belonging increase. For him, the role of *undugu* in the empowerment process meant that he was viewed differently by his family and the community and could now be called upon to give advice and mentor others.

Conclusion

Undugu played a critical role as a dimension of empowerment in how youth experienced the empowerment process, the decisions they made in life, and the reasons they sought out 'youth empowerment' through programs such as Njia. The social support networks to which youth belonged facilitated the ways that youth navigated the empowerment process and the opportunities that were presented to them. All of the youth in this study expressed that in their lives they had received support from different sources. While youth received varying levels of financial support, youth found that the encouragement and practical assistance they received gave them space to pursue new ideas and ventures and to explore different possibilities in their lives.

The limited financial support families were able to provide also influenced the decisions youth made. Youth who had families that relied on their income and financial contributions had fewer opportunities to explore different ways to make an income. Although Anthony attempted to pursue a diploma course of study, the precarious financial situation of his father and siblings meant that he needed to wait before he could realize that goal. Youth whose families seemed more financially secure, such as Grace, were able to take steps to achieve personal goals earlier than others. As the financial stability of youth and their families increased, youth were able to more actively pursue activities associated with their long-term goals, including continuing their education or starting an enterprise.

Within their networks of belonging, youth were also able to contribute and support others. Before they had solid sources of income, the desire and need to

reciprocate the support they had received appeared to be a burden on youth. However, as they slowly gained access to resources, this ability to help others became a source of pride and contributed to the ways youth were being perceived by family, friends, and others in their networks of belonging. As youth put marketable skills and knowledge and personal development into practice and started to take on responsibilities associated with adulthood, their stature within the community began to change. Youth reported an increased incidence of advising other youth, being consulted in decision-making processes, and being seen and treated as role models within the family and community. The changes in *undugu* contributed further to the empowerment process by increasing youth self-confidence, helping them to see their lives in a new way, and expanding their capacity to aspire to a new role in society.

The changes in their networks of belonging were not always easy or positive. Youth sometimes found that the notions of *leo ndiwe, kesho ndimi,* and the expectation of reciprocity, were a burden placed upon them before they were financially prepared. Others found that in order to accomplish the goal of helping others and reciprocating the support they had received, they needed to wait to pursue other goals and aspirations. A few youth, like Keith, found that his changed position and new priorities meant his peer networks started to dissolve but new networks began to take their place.

This chapter demonstrated how *undugu* functioned as a dimension of empowerment that both facilitated youth's experiences with empowerment and structured their approaches to empowerment. It also showed how *undugu* was interrelated with the other dimensions of empowerment and influenced how youth enacted skills and

277

knowledge according to not only their personal needs, but also to the needs of others around them. Their aspirations were also shaped by the support and encouragement they received and by imagining how different possibilities in their lives would affect themselves and others in their networks of belonging.

Chapter 7: The Case for a Model of Youth Empowerment

In Chapter 4, I presented a model of youth empowerment that is grounded in youth conceptualizations of empowerment, their lived experiences and the intersection between their experiences and conceptualizations. The model recognizes the economic, social, and cultural settings in which youth live, work, and set out to achieve their goals. I offered four dimensions, *marketable skills and knowledge*, *personal development*, *aspirations*, and *undugu*, that reflected youth conceptualizations of and experiences with empowerment. In the subsequent chapters I provided an in depth examination of each dimension by exploring how youth described empowerment and how it was evident within their own lives. In using focal stories of individual youth, I illustrated different elements within each dimension, and at the same time underscored the interrelated nature of the four dimensions. Although each individual story was intended to highlight a specific point about the dimension it was to illustrate, it was impossible to disentangle the role of one dimension in a youth's life from the other dimensions. The four dimensions are intricately connected and work in tandem to generate empowerment among the youth. For instance, Grace's story was used to illustrate the role of support networks in youth's lives as they sought to enact marketable skills and knowledge and personal development in pursuit of their goals. In writing her story, however, I recognized how important her ability to use the skills, knowledge, and personal traits identified in marketable skills and knowledge and personal development were in understanding the totality of her story.

In this conclusion I reaffirm the role of each of the four dimensions as central to youth empowerment. In doing so, I highlight the key findings from each dimension and

279

synthesize how each dimension contributes to an overall model of empowerment and how the transition to adulthood is an integral part of youth empowerment. I follow this with a discussion of the implications of this research for development practitioners and empowerment theorists. Finally, I offer areas of research that could be further explored to deepen understandings of this model for youth empowerment.

The first dimension, marketable skills and knowledge, were critical to youth conceptualizations of empowerment and the changes that they experienced within their lives. Youth indicated that knowledge acquisition was important because knowledge and skills were two things that would assist them in life as they pursued their goals. Since youth were not in a financially stable position and had sought participation in a vocational training program, they were quick to emphasize the role of marketable skills and knowledge as they attempted to engage in employment or entrepreneurship opportunities. For many youth, employment and entrepreneurship were their paths to greater financial security. However, the importance of marketable skills and knowledge in fostering empowerment went beyond its economic implications.

Personal development, the second dimension, was equally important for youth. While they sought out marketable skills and knowledge and viewed it as an entrée to employment opportunities, youth valued the important role of increased self-confidence, self-knowledge, an ability to relate to other people, and personal traits on both their personal lives and their livelihood trajectories. Throughout all four years of interviews, youth talked about different elements of personal development, including communication skills, relating with people, self-confidence, and self-knowledge, as being among the

most important things they had learned through the program. By 2015, personal development was discussed more frequently than the specific marketable skills and knowledge that were taught through the program. Youth indicated that new self-knowledge and confidence in their abilities was important to the process of empowerment. This was accomplished in a variety of ways, including through the discovery of interests and passions in their lives and the realization that they were capable of accomplishing certain things. Youth also believed that their self-confidence was enhanced through their increased ability to relate with other people, understand their perspectives, and communicate with them, both in formal settings and on interpersonal levels.

The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and personal traits was important to youth, but they also found that putting those skills into action contributed to the empowerment process. The stories that were described throughout the dissertation demonstrated that when youth were able to enact marketable skills and knowledge and personal development, they had opportunities to further enhance their self-confidence and ways they thought about themselves and others, and develop additional skills and knowledge. Although youth felt that knowledge acquisition and the ability to enact it were key aspects of empowerment, they also recognized that the process did not emerge from nothing, but built on already existing sets of knowledge and aspirations. Youth did not enter into Njia as an empty slate. Instead, the knowledge, skills, and personal traits they learned and developed built upon their previous experiences, sets of knowledge, and expectations of what they wanted in life.

The dominant discourse around youth empowerment in Kenya focuses on employability and entrepreneurship, and as a result, marketable skills and knowledge, and to a lesser extent some elements of personal development, are assumed to be sufficient proxies for empowerment. However, the youth in this study demonstrated that technical skills alone, or engagement in employment, were not equivalent to empowerment. Instead, youth conceptualizations of empowerment went beyond the technical skills they had learned, or the work in which they might be able to engage. Youth conceptualizations reflected a broader understanding of what they needed and wanted to accomplish in their lives as they transitioned into adulthood. These conceptualizations were evidenced in the way youth thought about themselves, their future, and their social roles.

Employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education were important ways that youth could achieve benchmarks of adulthood, but youth did not find these to be the sole outcomes of an empowerment process. In some ways, marketable skills and knowledge was a tool that facilitated a greater personal development, the ability to imagine new avenues for achieving benchmarks of adulthood, and a shifting status within their families and networks of belonging. In fact, youth noted that employment that did not help them achieve other goals in their lives was not part of empowerment. This process, therefore, led to the need for both aspirations and *undugu* as dimensions of empowerment.

The process of empowerment was enhanced by the third dimension, aspirations, as youth imagined new possibilities for their lives, set new goals, and gained hope for their future. Aspirations first began to increase as youth gained new skills and

knowledge, however it became even more important as youth put skills and knowledge into action and realized what they might be able to do in life. Increased self-confidence, self-knowledge, and the personal traits associated with personal development facilitated the way youth were able to put marketable skills and knowledge into practice and contributed to their ability to see a greater range of possibilities in their lives. This was particularly true for youth who used the skills and knowledge they learned to identify new passions. The recognition that they had something they were interested in and good at opened up employability opportunities, but was also an avenue through which youth could imagine putting their talents and skills to use now and in the future.

The aspirations dimension was also important as youth identified goals both for themselves as individuals and for their networks of belonging. As Appadurai (2004) noted, the capacity to aspire is grounded in the culture and subcultures in which individuals live. Therefore, networks of belonging influenced youth aspirations both in how they acted on opportunities and in the different possibilities they imagined for their lives. Other scholars who have studied youth in sub-Saharan Africa (Nalkur, 2009; Sommers, 2012) have noted the deleterious effects of hopelessness on youth aspirations. However, the youth in this study demonstrated that having hope and seeing possibilities to make changes in one's life was an empowering phenomenon.

Finally, the networks of belonging that youth were a part of influenced the role of the fourth dimension in this youth empowerment model, *undugu.* Through *undugu* youth experienced times in their lives when they were supported by others to achieve their goals. The types of support youth received influenced their experiences with the

283

empowerment process as they attempted to enact marketable skills and knowledge and personal development. However, as part of a larger social system, it was expected that youth would also reciprocate that support by assisting those who had helped them and by helping others. This social responsibility influenced different aspects of youth lives, including the decisions they made about what opportunities to pursue.

The status of youth within their families and larger communities played a large role in how they experienced empowerment and the transition toward adulthood. The expectation that youth attain the ability to fulfill a cycle of *leo ndiwe, kesho ndimi* meant that youth needed to have some independent financial security. Marketable skills and knowledge were thus very important as youth sought money-making opportunities that would help them achieve this. However, financial contributions were not the only way that youth were able to change their status within their networks of belonging. Youth expressed that as empowerment increased and was demonstrated through positive social engagement such as employment, schooling, entrepreneurship, or actions within the community, they were invited to be role models for others and engage in decision-making within their networks. This outward manifestation of empowerment was not, however, the only way that *undugu* was part of the empowerment process. As youth increasingly engaged in decision-making in their networks of belonging, took on financial responsibilities, served as role models and advised others, empowerment took place through increased self-confidence (personal development) and by recognizing new possibilities (aspirations) for themselves, both as youth advising other youth and as potential adults taking on additional responsibilities.

In examining youth lives and their experiences with empowerment, I was originally concerned that the process of empowerment might be difficult to distinguish from the natural life cycle, as suggested by Saldana (2003). However, I have come to see empowerment as a catalyst in youth's lives as they progressively attained social and personal benchmarks of what it meant to become an adult within a Kenyan context. Marketable skills and knowledge and personal development often gave youth the tools they needed to take the next step in life. These tools in the empowerment process were a way for youth to shake off their sense of hopelessness and disengage from discourses that identify youth as idle and stuck in a transitory stage of life. Marketable skills and knowledge and personal development also provided a new platform from which youth could imagine new possibilities for their lives and could begin to aspire to new stages of youth- and adulthood. Furthermore, as youth's lives changed, so did their status within their community and families. This, too, is reflective of what might be expected as youth moved closer to adulthood. Through an exploration of *undugu*, including youth's increasing ability to reciprocate support they had received from others and the changing role they played as role model and advisor to other youth, it appears that empowerment can be a mechanism that facilitates a socially recognized movement toward adulthood.

Implications

This research contributes to scholarly understandings of empowerment by grounding a model for youth empowerment in the conceptualizations, needs, and experiences of youth. As noted in Chapter 2, youth livelihoods scholars (Hope, 2012; Kabiru et al., 2013; Mabala, 2011; Sommers, 2007, 2012) argued that youth

programming must take into consideration youth's priorities, needs and perspectives. In examining youth's conceptualizations of empowerment, this research shows that the way youth empowerment is often conceived in youth programming does not always align with the way youth imagine it. The dimensions proposed in this model go beyond typical assumptions of youth empowerment and are not limited to the economic needs youth face, but emphasize their social, personal, and aspirational needs as well. Through a deeper understanding of youth conceptualizations of empowerment and perceptions of their lives, NGOs, international organizations, and governments have a greater opportunity to align youth programming with youth needs. Programming that reflects youth understandings of their lives and their notions of empowerment are more likely to have a transformative influence on youth, and greater coherence with youth's lives. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the need to examine youth's lived experiences over time. Farrell (2015) and Mabala (2011) noted that the transition to adulthood is significant in youth's lives and this study demonstrates it is also critical to youth's conceptions of empowerment as well. The examination of youth's lives over time is an opportunity to more fully understand how the movement toward adulthood and the process of empowerment are interrelated.

The emphasis on youth's transition to adulthood is one of the primary ways this model diverges from the multi-dimensional frameworks presented by Murphy-Graham (2012), Ross et al. (2011) and Zimmerman (2000). In recognizing this transitiona s significant to youth's concetpualizations of empowerment, I highlight how the process of empowerment can foster, and be fostered by, the economic, social, and personal

aspirations of youth as they seek to attain status as adults. Like Murphy-Graham's discussion of recognition and capacity development and Ross et al.'s discussion of instrumental empowerment, I recognize the need for knowledge acquisition (marketable skills and knowledge) and changes in the way youth think about themselves and their abilities (personal development). Other models identify action or behavior as a separate dimension of empowerment, but I view the ability to act on knowledge and skills as integrated into the marketable skills and knowledge and personal development dimensions. Furthermore, I argue that the need for knowledge acquisition is integral to improve youth economic opportunities. Despite recognizing this need, I do not equate empowerment with employment, entrepreneurship, or vocational training as is sometimes done in youth vocational and empowerment programs.

My model of empowerment differs significantly from other models through the incorporation of aspirations and *undugu*. As a dimension of empowerment, aspirations is more than the ability to set or achieve goals. Instead, it is the process by which youth imagine different possibilities for their lives in the present and in the future. It encompasses the role of hope in youth's lives as they seek to attain those possibilities. The role of aspirations in empowerment is similar to the way Appadurai (2004) discusses the capacity to aspire. As youth are exposed to new knowledge and have new experiences in life, their ability to identify new possibilities for their lives increases. These aspirations are both driven by and enhance the empowerment process.

Although Christens (2012) and Jennings et al. (2006) argued that the role of caring relationships should be reconigzed in youth empowerment programs and

processes, their models of empowerment did not encomass networks of belonging in youth empowerment experiences. The incorporation of *Undugu*, as a dimension of empowerment, does more than recognize the role of caring relationships in fostering empowerment or situate youth experiences in their communities. *Undugu* illuminates how youth view their possibilities and actions as they seek adulthood. It encompasses the support they receive and how that support impacts their experiences with empowerment. It also recognizes their responsibilities within their networks of belonging as they transition to adulthood. *Undugu* is a critical dimension of empowerment as it impacts how the other three dimensions in this model are experienced and understood by youth.

The introduction of personal development, aspirations, and *undugu* into this model of empowerment is particularly important for in global discourses of youth empowerment and youth programming that have identified skills development through vocational training, employment, or entrepreneurship as the primary vehicles for youth empowerment. This is especially true given the difficult work environment and high rates of unemployment within Nairobi. Youth identified skills development as important in the empowerment process because they recognized the economic opportunities attaining those skills might provide. However, not all youth were able to use marketable skills and knowledge and personal development in employment and entrepreneurship, yet they continued to value the elements encompassed in those dimensions because of the other ways they impacted their lives and social networks. Counter to global discourses surrounding youth empowerment that equate skills development or vocational training with empowerment, youth saw the acquisition of such skills and opportunities as

288

contributing to the empowerment process, but not as empowerment itself. For many youth, the ability to use marketable skills and knowledge, and to some extent personal development, in employment or entrepreneurship, was a means to an end, rather than an end-goal in and of itself. This was especially true for employment situations that youth felt did not help them to achieve other life goals. For this reason, the introduction of *undugu* and aspirations are necessary to understand what empowerment means in their lives.

Undugu and aspirations also provide a mechanism for understanding what drives youth to participate in vocational training programs. Although personal development helped youth articulate their goals and plans to achieve them, youth goals and hopes for the future were also situated in cultural expectations and *undugu*. Of critical importance for youth was their potential ability to achieve benchmarks that indicated they were making progress toward adulthood, such as financial contributions to the family, building homes in *ushago*, marriage, or encouraging others. Earning an income was a critical component to achieving many of these goals, and thus marketable skills and knowledge were necessary, but were not always the end-goal.

Further Research

Further analysis of this model of empowerment is warranted. Although I sought to incorporate both male and female voices and experiences in this study, the emphasis in youth livelihoods literature, especially in urban areas, has greatly favored male youth. In addition, youth programming often makes the needs and experiences of male youth normative, and studies have followed suit. When a discussion of female youth has been

included, the role of prostitution and transactional sex and reliance on male notions of adulthood dominate the analysis. Sommers (2012), for example, characterized female youth in Rwanda as stuck in a liminal state because male youth were unable to attain adulthood. The female youth in this study, however, appear to demonstrate a willingness and opportunity to seek their own paths to adulthood that are not dependent on male youth. Further study on female youth experiences is thus needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of how empowerment is conceptualized and enacted in their lives. One way to do this would be through a more in-depth analysis of female youth's goals and aspirations in relation to their support networks.

It would also be informative to study this model in other settings, within Nairobi and in other urban African settings. Because this was a secondary analysis of evaluation data from an employability program, the data skew toward the vocational and economic needs of youth. Even though the interview instruments attempted to break this barrier by discussing social and aspirational aspects of youth lives, the settings in which interviews were conducted and youth's awareness that interviews were part of an evaluation of the Njia program meant that employment and money-making opportunities were often at the foreground of youth responses. Other research (Hope, 2012; Mabala, 2011; Mutuku, 2011; Sommers, 2010) suggests this model would be applicable across a broader range of urban African youth, but additional studies with youth who had different types of affiliation, such as through churches, *bazes*, or HIV/AIDS training and empowerment programs would illuminate the extent to which this model captures other youth's

experiences and conceptualizations. This would also be true for urban centers beyond Nairobi, both in Kenya and in other African countries.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined the ways in which Kenyan youth conceptualized and experienced empowerment in their lives after participating in a youth empowerment program that focused on vocational and life skills training. Within Nairobi, youth empowerment is often presented as equivalent to employment, entrepreneurship, and skills training. The findings of this study, however, suggest that the value youth placed on empowerment processes goes beyond their ability to find employment or start their own business. Instead, empowerment encompassed the acquisition of knowledge and personal growth and development, and was understood through the social and cultural environment in which youth live. To better understand how empowerment was conceptualized and experienced, I offered a multidimensional model for youth empowerment, which included: marketable skills and knowledge, personal development, aspirations, and *undugu.* The development of this model for youth empowerment provides a mechanism for better understanding how empowerment processes can better cater for youth needs and act as a catalyst in youth's transition to adulthood.

References

Abbink, J. (2005). Introduction. In J. Abbink & I. van Kessel (Eds.), *Vanguard or vandals: Youth, politics and conflict in Africa* (pp. 1-36). Leiden: Brill.

Abuya, B., Oketch, M., & Musyoka, P. (2013). Why do pupils dropout when education is 'free'? Explaining school dropout among the urban poor in Nairobi. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education 43*(6), 740-762.

Allison, C., Krause, B., Jaafar, A., Liuzzi, A., DeJaeghere, J., & Chapman, D. (2014). Youth prospects in East Africa: Current evidence and knowledge gaps in youth employment and livelihood programming. Unpublished manuscript. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Altheide, D.L., & Johnson, J.M. (2011). Reflections on interpretive adequacy in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 581-595). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Appadurai, A. (2004). The capacity to aspire: culture and the terms of recognition. In R. Rao & M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and Public Action* (pp. 59-84). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Caffentzis, C. (2000). The World Bank and education in Africa. In S. Federici, C.G. Caffentzis & O. Alidou (Eds.), *A thousand flowers: Social struggles against structural adjustment in African universities* (pp. 2-18). Trenton, NJ: African World Press.

Candidates who miss varsity to be picked for technical training. (2014, January 26). *Daily Nation.* Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke

Chepyegon, J. (2015). *Annual report 2014-2015: Progress and achievements.* Nairobi: Njia Youth Empowerment Program

Chigunta, F., Schnurr, J., James-Wilson, D., & Torres, V. (2005). Being "real" about youth entrepreneurship in Eastern and Southern Africa: Implications for adults, institutions and sector structures. (SEED Working Paper No. 72). Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization.

Christens, B.D. (2012). Toward relational empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology 50*(1-2), 114-128.

Chubb, N.H., Fertman, C.I., & Ross, J.L. (1997). Adolescent self-esteem and locus of control: A longitudinal study of gender and age differences. *Adolescence 32*(125), 113-129.

292

Creary, N. (2012). Introduction. In N. Creary (Ed.), *African Intellectuals and Decolonization*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

De Boeck, F., & Honwana, A. (2005). Introduction: Children and youth in Africa. In A. Honwana & F. De Boeck (Eds.), *Makers and breakers: Children and youth in postcolonial Africa* (pp. 1-18). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.

DeJaeghere, J., & Baxter, A. (2014). Entrepreneurship education for youth in sub-Saharan Africa: A capabilities approach to an alternative framework to neoliberalism's individualizing risk. *Progress in Development Studies 14*(1), 61-76.

DeJaeghere, J., & Lee, S.K. (2011). What matters for marginalized girls and boys in Bangladesh: A capabilities approach for understanding educational well-being and empowerment. *Research in Comparative and International Education 6*(1), 27-42.

Eschenbacher, H., Nikoi, A., Krause, B., DeJaeghere, J., & Chapman, D. (2014). *Longitudinal evaluation of Year 3 cross-program report.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Farrell, L.D. (2015). Hustling NGOs: Coming of age in Kibera slum, Nairobi, Kenya. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession Order No. 3734023)

Form 1 losers to join polytechnics. (2014, December 29). *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke

Githinji, P. (2006). Bazes and their shibboleths: Lexical variation and Sheng speakers' identity in Nairobi. *Nordic Journal of African Studies 15*(4), 443-472.

Glassman, D., Hoppers, W., & Destefano, J. (2008). Transitions from primary to post-primary education: Using non-formal learning opportunities to increase access and relevance. Paper presented at *Biennale on Education in Africa*. Maputo, Mozambique: Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

Glennerster, R., Kremer, M., Mbiti, I., & Takavarasha, K. (2011). *Access and quality in the Kenyan education system: A review of the progress, challenges and potential solutions*. Nairobi, Kenya: Office of the Prime Minister of Kenya.

293

Government of Kenya (2007). *Kenya Vision 2030: Popular version*. Nairobi, Kenya: Government of Kenya. Retrieved from http://www.vision2030.go.ke/index.php/home/library

Government of Kenya. (2010). *The Constitution of Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya: Government of Kenya. Retrieved from https://www.kenyaembassy.com/pdfs/The%20Constitution%20of%20Kenya.pdf

Guguyu, O. (2014, August 23). Uhuru's promise to Kenyan youth. *The Daily Nation.* Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke

Heaton, J. (2008). Secondary analysis of qualitative data: An overview. *Historical Social Research 33*(3), 33-45.

Hicks, J.H., Kremer, M., Mbiti, I., & Miguel, E. (2013). Vocational education in Kenya: Evidence from a randomized evaluation among youth. Paper presented at Stata Texas Empirica Microeconomics Conference. Houston, Texas.

Hope, K.R. (2012). Engaging the youth in Kenya: Empowerment, education and employment. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth 17*(4), 221-236.

Jennings, L., Parra-Medina, D., Hilfinger Messias, D., & McLoughlin, K. (2006). Toward a critical social theory of youth empowerment. *Journal of Community Practice 14*(1-2), 31-55.

Johnstone, C., Nikoi, A., Krause, B., & Eschenbacher, H., with Chapman, D., DeJaeghere, J., & Pellowski Wiger, N. (2012). *Njia Youth Empowerment Program year 1 synthesis report baseline data.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Johnstone, C., Nikoi, A., & Kahihu, N. (under review). Uhusiano design for learning.

Joseph, M. C. (2012). Social agency of low-income 'young' women in Gaborone City, Botswana. *Studies of Changing Societies: Youth under Global Perspective 1*(5), 37-52.

Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change, 30*(3), 435-464.

Kabiru, C.W., Beguy, D., Mojola, S., & Okigbo, C. (2013). Growing up at the "margins": Concerns, aspirations and expectations of young people living in Nairobi's slums. *Journal of Research on Adolescence 23*(1), 81-94.

Kamwangamalu, N. (1999). Ubuntu in South Africa: A sociolinguistic perspective to a

pan-African concept. *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural and Media Studies 13*(2), 24-42.

Kelly, G., & Altbach, P. (1978). Introduction. In P. Altbach & G. Kelly (Eds.), *Education and Colonialism* (pp. 1-52). New York, NY: Longman, Inc.

Kenyatta, J. (1962). *Facing Mt. Kenya: The tribal life of the Gikuyu*. New York: Random House.

Kenyatta, U. (2016, January 19). Speech by His Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H. President and Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya during the swearing-in of Richard Ethan Ndubai as the new National Youth Service Director-General, Mombasa, 19 January 2016. Retrieved from http://www.president.go.ke/category/speeches/

Kiaga, A.K. (2007). Blaming the other woman: Rural housegirls and urban employers on identity, labor, and migration in Tanzania. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession Order No. 3280716)

King, A. (2013). Recognising adulthood? Young adults' accomplishment of their age identities. *Sociology 47*(1), 109-125

King, K. (2007). Balancing basic and post-basic education in Kenya: National vs. international policy agendas. *International Journal of Educational Development 27*(4), 358-370.

King, K., & McGrath, S. (2012). Education and development in Africa: Lessons of the past 50 years for beyond 2015. In CAS@50, 6-8 June 2012. Edinburgh, UK. (Unpublished). Retrieved from http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/1640/

King, K., & Palmer, R. (2006). Skills development and poverty reduction: The state of the art. (Post basic education and training working paper no. 9). Edinburgh: Centre for African Studies, University of Edinburgh.

Konadu-Agyemang, K. (2000). The best of times and the worst of times: Structural Adjustment Programs and uneven development in Africa: The case of Ghana. *The Professional Geographer 52*(3), 469-483.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Techniques.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Langevang, T. (2008). 'We are managing!' Uncertain paths to respectable adulthoods in Accra, Ghana. *Geoforum 39*(6), 2039-2047.

Lillevoll, K., Kroger, J., & Martinussen, M. (2013). Identity status and locus of control: A meta-analysis. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research 13*(3), 253-265.

Lippman, L.H., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K.A. (2015). *Workforce connections key "soft-skills" that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields.* Child Trends. Retrieved from FHI360 website: https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/workforce-connections-soft-skills-small.pdf

Mabala, R. (2011). Youth and "the hood" – livelihoods and neighborhoods. *Environment & Urbanization 23*(1), 157-181.

Mbithi, P., & Rasmusson, R. (1977). *Self-reliance in Kenya: The case of harambee.* Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.

Ministry of Education. (2011). *Free Day Secondary Education Programme*. Nairobi, Kenya. Retrieved from: http://www.education.go.ke/Documents.aspx?docID=2019

Ministry of Education. (2012a). Education Statistics: Facts and Figures [Data File]. Retrieved from http://www.education.go.ke/Documents.aspx?department=52&id=868 Kenya

Ministry of Education. (2012b). *Towards a globally competitive quality education for sustainable development.* Report of the Task Force on the Realignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Nairobi, Kenya.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2014a). *Directorate of Youth Training*. Retrieved from http://www.education.go.ke/home/index.php/2014-05-15-14-07-58/sci-tech/directorate-youth-training

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2014b). *Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority.* Retrieved from http://www.education.go.ke/home/index.php/2014-05-15-14-07-58/sci-tech/tvet-authority

Mukinda, F. (2016, February 22). NYS graft suspect demands for new probe. *Daily Nation.* Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke

Murphy-Graham, E. (2012). *Opening minds, improving lives: Education and women's empowerment in Kenya.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Mutua, R. (1975). *Development of education in Kenya: Some administrative aspects*

1846-1963. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Literature Bureau.

Mutuku, C. (2009). Youth perspectives on their empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Kenya. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association 67th Annual National Conference. Chicago, IL.

Mutuku, C. (2011). *Youth perspectives on their empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Kenya.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession Order No. 3464197)

Mwiria, K. (1990). Kenya's harambee secondary school movement: The contradictions of public policy. *Comparative Education Review 34*(3), 350-368.

Nalkur, P. (2009). Adolescent hopefulness in Tanzania: Street youth, former street youth, and school youth. *Journal of Adolescent Research 24*(6), 668-690.

Nikoi, A., Krause, B., & Foley, K., with Chapman, D., DeJaeghere, J., & Pellowski-Wiger, N. (2014). *Year 3 synthesis report for Njia Youth Empowerment Program.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Nikoi, A., Krause, B., Gebru, E., and Eschenbacher, H., with Chapman, D., DeJaeghere, J., and Pellowski Wiger, N. (2013). *Year 2 Synthesis report for Njia Youth Empowerment Program.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

Njia Foundation. (2010). Proposal for youth learning, earning and savings initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Njogu, K. (2013). Youth as leaders in Kenya: Transforming society by building bridges. In K. Njogu (Ed.), *Youth and peaceful elections in Kenya* (pp. 3-35). Nairobi, Kenya: Twaweza Communications.

Njonjo, K.S. (2010). *Youth fact book: Infinite possibility or definite disaster?* Nairobi, Kenya: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Njonjo, K.S. (2011). Introduction and overview. In A. Kitonga, K.S. Njonjo, & A. Ponge (Eds.), *Youth Research Compendium* (pp. 63-89). Report of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Nairobi, Kenya: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Nussbaum, M.C., & Sen, A. (1993). Introduction. In M.C. Nussbaum & A. Sen (Eds.), *The quality of life* (pp. 1-8). New York: Oxford University Press.

Nussbaum, M.C. (2000). *Women and human development.* Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

Nussbaum, M.C. (2003). Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice. *Feminist Economics 9*(2-3), 33-59.

Nyerere, J. (1971). *Ujamaa – essays on socialism.* London: Oxford University Press.

Ogechi, N.O. (2008). Sheng as a youth identity marker: Reality or misconception? In K. Njogu (Ed.), *Culture, performance and identity: Paths of communication in Kenya* (pp. 74-92). Nairobi, Kenya: Twaweza Communications.

Ogemba, P. (2015, June 23). NYS project burnt as Kibera youth hold anti-Waiguru demo. *Daily Nation.* Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke

Ohba, A. (2011). The abolition of school fees in Kenya: Responses by the poor. *International Journal of Educational Development 31*(4), 402-408.

Ojiambo, P.O. (2012). Partnering with students in school leadership: Lessons from Starehe Boys Centre and School, Kenya. *International Journal of Learning (18)*8, 115-126.

Oketch, M., & Rolleston, C. (2007). Policies on free primary and secondary education in East Africa: Retrospect and prospect. *Review of Research in Education 31*(1), 131-158.

Omolo, J. (2011). The unemployment casualties. In A. Kitonga, K.S. Njonjo, & A. Ponge (Eds.), *Youth research compendium* (pp. 63-89). Report of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Nairobi, Kenya: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Opinyo, C.O., & Agwanda, T. (2011). The demographic dividend: A gift or a curse? In A. Kitonga, K.S. Njonjo, & A. Ponge (Eds.), *Youth research compendium* (pp. 30-62)*.* Report of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Nairobi, Kenya: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Oyaro, K. (2008, March 26). Kenya: Free secondary schooling policy faces testing times. *Inter Press Service News Agency*. Retrieved from http://www.ipsnews.net

Posti-Ahokas, H., & Palojoki, P. (2014). Navigating transitions to adulthood through secondary education: Aspirations and the value of education for Tanzanian girls. *Journal of Youth Studies 17*(5), 664-681.

Powell, L. (2012). Reimagining the purpose of VET – Expanding the capability to aspire in South African Further Education and Training students. *International Journal of Educational Development 32*(5), 643-653.

Prins, E., & Drayton, B. (2010). Adult education for the empowerment of individuals and communities. In C. Kasworm, A. Rose, & J. Ross-Gordon (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 209-220). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ramavat, M. (2011, June 5). Empowerment is her watchword. *The Hindu.* Retrieved from http://www.thehindu.com

Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: A theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development 6*(1), 93-114.

Ross, H., Shah, P. P., & Wang, L. (2011). Situating empowerment for millennial schoolgirls in Gujarat, India and Shaanxi, China. *Feminist Formations 23*(3), 23-47.

Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning empowerment: Working with women in Honduras*. UK: Oxfam.

Saldana, J. (2003). *Longitudinal qualitative research: Analyzing change through time*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Seale, C. (2011). Secondary analysis of qualitative data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research* (3rd Ed) (pp. 347-364). London: SAGE publications.

Sen, A. (1993). Capability and well-being. In M.C. Nussbaum & A. Sen (Eds.), *The quality of life* (pp. 30-53). New York: Oxford University Press.

Shah, P. (2011). *Situating empowerment: Girls, education and development in Gujarat, India*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession Order No. 3456497)

Sheffield, J. (1973). *Education in Kenya: An historical study*. New York, NY: Teachers College.

Sommers, M. (2007). Creating programs for Africa's urban youth: The challenge of marginalization. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education 10*(1), 19-31.

Sommers, M. (2010). Urban youth in Africa. *Environment and Urbanization 22*(2), 317-332.

Sommers, M. (2012). *Stuck*. Atlanta, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Ssekamwa, J.C., & Lugumba, S.M.E. (2001). *A history of education in East Africa.* Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers.

Stromquist, N. (1995). The theoretical and practical bases of empowerment. In C. Medel-Anonuevo (Ed.), *Women, education and empowerment: Pathways toward autonomy* (pp. 13-22). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO Institute for Education.

Stromquist, N. (2002). Education as a means for empowering women. In J. Parpart, S. Rai, & K. Staudt (Eds.), *Rethinking empowerment: Gender and development in a global/local world* (pp. 22-38). London: Routledge.

Taylor, E.W., Duveskog, D., & Friis-Hansen, E. (2012). Fostering transformative learning in non-formal settings: Farmer-Field Schools in East Africa. *International Journal of Lifelong Education 31*(6), 725-742.

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Thieme, T. (2010). Youth, waste and work in Mathare: Whose business and whose politics? *Environment & Urbanization 22*(2), 333-352.

Tilley, S. (2010). Transcription work: Learning through coparticipation in research practices. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education 16*(6), 835-851.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (n.d.). *Education for All movement.* Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/browse/1/

UNICEF. (2014). *Kenya Statistics.* Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kenya_statistics.html#117

United Nations Development Programme. (2013). Kenya's youth employment challenge. (Discussion Paper). New York: UNDP.

United Nations. (2014). *We can end poverty: Millennium Development Goals and beyond.* Retrieved from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

United States Agency for International Development. (2014). Yes Youth Can national fact sheet. Retrieved from http://www.usaid.gov/kenya/fact-sheets/yes-youth-canmwamko-wa-vijana.

Urdal, H. (2006). A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence. *International Studies Quarterly 50*(3), 607-629.

Uwezo Fund. (n.d.). *Messages Uwezo Fund*. Retrieved from http://www.uwezo.go.ke/messages

Vavrus, F. (2000). Governmentality in an era of "empowerment": The case of Tanzania. In T.S. Popkewitz (Ed.), *Educational knowledge: Changing relationships between the state, civil society, and the educational community.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Vavrus, F. (2003). The 'Acquired Income Deficiency Syndrome': School fees and sexual risk in northern Tanzania. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education 33*(2), 235-250.

Vavrus, F. (2005). Adjusting inequality: Education and structural adjustment policies in Tanzania. *Harvard Educational Review 75*(2), 174-201.

Verspoor, A. (2008). *At the crossroads: Choices for secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Walker, M. (2012). A capital or capabilities education narrative in a world of staggering inequalities? *International Journal of Educational Development 32*(3), 384-393.

Wamuyu, M. (2013). Perspectives on youth policies in Kenya. In K. Njogu (Ed.), *Youth and peaceful elections in Kenya* (pp. 36-54). Nairobi, Kenya: Twaweza Communications.

World Bank. (2014a). Kenya Youth Empowerment Project. Retrieved from http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P111546/kenya-youth-empowerment-project?lang=en

World Bank. (2014b). World Bank data indicators: Health. Retrieved from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator#topic-8

World Bank. (2014c). World Bank data indicators: Urban population. Retrieved from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL

Wycliffe, A., Samson, G.O., & Ayuya, V.C. (2013). Can education system be repaired? Ideological dearth in Kenya's educational practice and its implications for reforms in the education sector. *Journal of Educational and Social Research 3*(2), 213-229.

Zimmerman, M. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology*. New York: Kluwer Academy/Plenum Publishers.

<div align="right">

The MasterCard Foundation
Learn, Earn, and Save Project

</div>

Youth Interview (2012 – Year 1)

This instrument was developed by faculty, staff, and graduate students at the University of Minnesota, with support from a cooperative agreement from The MasterCard Foundation, Canada. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors. This research was approved for study by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board, IRB No. 1108S03025.

Demographic Information
1. Date _____
2. Country
3. NGO Program
4. Sex ☐ Female ☐ Male
5. Age _____
6. Community where participant lives

   _____

First, I would like to ask you some questions about your participation in this program, personal goals, and your hopes for the future.
Youth Motivations for Participating in the Program and Youth Futures
7. Tell me why you chose to participate in **XXX** program.

8. Since participating in the **XXXX** program, what goals have you set for yourself?

9. Give me an example of a goal you have accomplished for yourself since starting this program.

10. How have other peers or adults supported you to achieve your goals?
(Probe/Clarify: Are these peers or adults involved in this program?)
(Probe: If not supported, what would you need to achieve your goals?)

11. Are you participating in any other program or activities (employment, financial, or vocational training) to help you achieve your goals?
(Probe: If yes, how does this (other) program help you achieve your goals?)

12. What kind of life do you imagine for yourself?
(Probe: What do you want to do in the future?)

Next, I would like to ask you about earning and working for money.

How the Program has Enabled Earning Money and Constraints to Working for Money
13. How do you currently earn money?
   Probes: (Ask what type of work, how they found or got the job, whether they like it or not, if they own their own business, why did they choose to start it)
   (If not currently earning money, what kind of job would you want?)

14. What challenges have you had in finding work (now or previously)?
   (Or, when relevant, in starting your own business?

15. What skills have you learned in **XXX** program that help you with your current or future work?
   (Probe: What other skills do you feel you need for your work?)

16. What concerns do you have about earning money (after this program or in the future)?

The next set of questions is about saving and borrowing money.

How the Program has Enabled Saving and Borrowing, and Constraints to it
17. Have you ever been able to save money?
(Probe: If yes, how do you plan to use the saved money? If no, why not? What difficulties have you had in saving money?)

18. Have you ever been able to borrow money?
(Probe: If yes, from whom or what institution, how was your experience in borrowing, what have been the requirements for borrowing money? If no, why not?)

19. What influences the financial decisions you make?
(Probes: How do family or friends influence you? How has the program helped you?)

20. On what do you usually spend your money?

Now I would like to ask you about challenges that young women and men face in your community.

Community/Family Supports or Constraints for Youth Livelihoods

21. What challenges do young women face in your community?
(Probe by asking: Are there any other challenges? (Looking to understand challenges related to working, managing/controlling money, in being educated, in owning property, in family and dating relationships)?

22. What challenges do young men face in your community?
(Probe by asking: Are there any other challenges? (Looking to understand challenges in working, managing/controlling money, in being educated, in owning property, in family, and dating relationships)?

23. How have you been able to overcome any of these challenges?
    (Probe/clarify: Are there any aspects of this program that have helped you overcome these challenges?)

Lastly, I'd like to ask you about your general thoughts on the program.

Summary of Program Outcomes

24. Which aspects of this program have been most useful for you?
    (Clarify or probe by asking specific aspects of the program, such as teachers, learning experiences, etc. Probe to understand how it is useful for own learning, for job, for future)
25. Which aspects of this program have not been relevant for you?
    (Probe to clarify: Not interesting or not helpful to your future work or life)
26. Is there anything more you'd like to say about **XXX** program?

Do you have any questions for me? Thank you very much for completing the interview!

Youth Interview: Year 4 – 2015

Name: _____ ID #: _____

1. Date	**General probes useful for all questions:**
2. Country	*Can you say more about _____?*
3. NGO	*Please tell us a story about _____.*
4. Sex	*Can you give us an example of _____?*
5. Age	*How do you feel about _____?*
6. Community	*Can you tell us about a time that _____?*

Life Changes, Goals and Aspirations
1. How have you been since we last saw you?
    a. Last time you told us about _____*insert information on an activity from memo here_____*, could you please tell us about this?
    b. Have you been doing any additional training or learning? Please describe.
    c. Since we last interviewed you, what changes have occurred for you?
    d. What changes have occurred for your family?
    e. How, if at all, has your role changed in your family?
    f. How, if at all, has your role changed in your community?

2. Can you please tell us what has happened with your goals (malengo zako) we last spoke?
    a. Last time you told us about ____*insert information on a goal from memo here_____*, could you please tell about this goal today?
    b. *Are there goals that you have successfully accomplished?*
    c. *Are there any goals you are still working toward?*
    d. What challenges have you faced in working on your goals? Please explain how you manage these challenges.
    e. What kind of support have you received as you work toward your goals?

        i. Who or what has supported you in working on your goals? Please explain this support.

3. What goals do you hope to accomplish in the next year?
    a. What goals do you hope to accomplish in the next 5 years?

Earning, saving, spending, borrowing and lending practices
4. Have you made money in the past year?
    (IF NO) Can you please tell us why you haven't made money?
    (IF YES) Can you please tell us about the ways you've made money?
    a. What do you like about this employment/business?
    b. What challenges do you face in this employment/business?
    c. Please describe how this employment/business has changed this past year (if at all).
    (Repeat these probes for each earning strategy youth states.)

5. Have you been able to save in the past year?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. Has your saving changed this past year. In what ways?
    (If youth has not saved, skip to question number 7 now.)
    c. (IF YES) How do you decide when or how much to save?

6. What do you use to save?
    a. What do you like about this way of saving?
    b. What, if anything, is challenging about this way of saving?
    c. What are you saving for?
    (Repeat these probes for each saving strategy youth states.)

7. What do you usually spend money on (kama kawaida)?

8. Have you borrowed money in the past year?
    a. (IF YES) Why and what did you do?
    b. (IF NO) Why not?
    (Repeat these probes for each example of borrowing-or not borrowing-described.)
    c. (IF NO) Have you ever needed to borrow, but did not borrow? (probe why they needed to borrow but either didn't want to or weren't able to)

9. Have you lent (umekopesha) anyone money or goods in the past year?
    a. (IF YES) Please explain who you lent to and the agreements you made.

Community context

10. We want to understand the opportunities, supports and challenges young people face in _____*community name here*_____.

    a. What challenges do young people face in your community?

        i. Last year we heard about ___*name challenge from memos here* ____, how have these challenges affected you or others you know?

        ii. Are there different challenges for males and females?

    b. What chances or supports are there for young people in your community?

        i. Last year we heard about __*name support or opportunity from memos here* ____, how have these (has this) been used by you or others you know?

    c. Are there other ways that youth overcome the challenges that you mentioned?

11. How has your participation in/completion of the _____ program impacted your life?

    a. Please give an example of how the program has helped you.

    b. What do you think the program did not prepare you for?

The next few questions ask you to think about what it means to be empowered.

12. Please describe for me what empowerment means.

    a. What are the characteristics (mindset) of someone who is empowered?

    b. What actions does someone who is empowered take?

    c. How do empowered people and their communities or families interact?

    d. If you look at you yourself (wewe mwenyewe), how do you understand empowerment in your own life?

(the next question should be asked only if these characteristics described were not discussed in the previous question. Characteristics should be asked one at a time and not all at once)

13. In previous interviews, we heard youth talk about the importance of

        i. Self-confidence - kujijua

        ii. Decision making – kuamua

        iii. Having hope for their future – matumaini ya siku zijazo

        iv. Relating to or working with people - kujihusisha na watu

in their lives. In what ways do you think this is part of being empowered?

a. (probe) Can you give me an example of how this has or has not been important in your life?

Is there anything else you would like add? Are there any questions you have for us?

Youth ID	Gender	Njia Center/ Vocational Area	Day Laborer	attachment	Casual contract	Contract	Long-term uncertain employment	Contract or Permanent position	Occasional small money-making opportunities on the side	consistent small money-making opportunities	Agricultural opportunities	Self-employment enterprises
pre-Njia	single parent		off-loader with cereal board as a casual laborer									
2012	M	Sukumiza - Automotive	on and off jobs before classes at Njia	at an automotive garage (no pay)								
2012-2013									helping friend with car wash			
2013	M						Manufacturing company					registered for a business but not yet viable (for a general store)
2013-2014												
2014	M						manufacturing company					Print Shop
2014-2015												the print shop w
2015	M						Manufacturing company				rents land in order to have a rice plantation	

Group enterprises	short-term/directed learning (like CAP)	Certificate	diploma	degree	marriage	child/ren	moving	family changes	support	other life event	Goals and Aspirations
											never thought of being engineer but in Njia decided want to be an automobile consultant
							lives with family friend who supports him				wants a charitable organization
	Empowering youth in business - Caroline for Kibera program										
									supports himself	built a home in the rural area	wants to be a role model for others
								dad became ill and he had to use his money for the general store on			
					got married		has his own house				would like to start schooling part-time
								mom was in a car accident and he had to take a loan to take care of			
	as robbed and his computer and printer stolen. He is still trying to rebuild										
									still supports family (parents and siblings) but less since he is married		aims to restart his printing business; has saved enough to ask his employer to allow him to be on day-shift so he can go back to school