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**Supporting Second-Generation Youth in a Protracted  
Urban Displacement Setting  
in Cartagena**

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DPHIL IN MIGRATION STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES  
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September 2018

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>AUC</b>	The United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
<b>BACRIM</b>	Criminal Bands
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>CRC</b>	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>DFID</b>	The Department for the International Development, United Kingdom
<b>DRC</b>	The Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>ECHO</b>	The Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission
<b>ELN</b>	National Liberation Army
<b>FARC</b>	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GP 20</b>	20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles
<b>ICRC</b>	The International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NSA</b>	Non-State Armed Group
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OHCHR</b>	The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PRS</b>	Protracted Refugee Situations
<b>TSI</b>	Transitional Solutions Initiative
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	The UN Refugee Agency
<b>UNICEF</b>	The United Nations Children's Fund
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>WRC</b>	Women's Refugee Commission
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Program
<b>WHS</b>	World Humanitarian Summit

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to many individuals and institutions for their priceless support throughout the enriching journey of conducting my doctoral research.

My deepest gratitude is due, first, to the research participants who generously shared their time and their stories with me, and without whom this thesis would have not been possible. I admire the creativity, resilience, hope and wisdom of the inhabitants of the Nelson Mandela community in Colombia.

I am fortunate to have had Dr. Pamela Kea and Dr. Alison Phipps as my supervisors, both of whom offered valuable guidance during all phases of my dissertation. Their encouragement and feedback stimulated my thinking and helped push the limits of my analytical capacity. They have been constant sources of inspiration throughout the journey of earning my PhD. While enrolled as a Junior Visiting Fellow at the Global Migration Centre in Geneva, Dr. Geraldine Ruiz and Dr. Katarzyna Grabska kindly welcomed me into their academic communities and gave me valuable advice on my work. I would also like to thank my fellow PhD students at the University of Sussex and at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva with whom I brainstormed, and also for those who provided valuable feedback and support. My sincere appreciation extends to the scholars working with the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford who inspired me and helped solidify my desire to pursue doctoral studies in the field of forced migration.

I would like to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for partially funding my studies and Andreas Wigger, Pierre Gentile and Linda Besharaty for changing my working modalities so that I could combine my PhD studies with my work. I would also like to acknowledge the administrative staff at Global Studies who helped me navigate through the process of PhD study.

I wish to acknowledge Tanio McCallum, Leubis Bravo Atencio, Maarja Kadajane and

Sara Saylor whose support and comments helped shape this work. In addition, I am grateful for the *Terre des Homme* teams in Switzerland and Colombia and in particular Antoine Lissorgues, for providing important contacts of people in the Nelson Mandela community. Many thanks to Aida Ramirez for taking care of my son Lev while I was carrying out interviews, as well as others who provided childcare that allowed me to work on my dissertation. I would also like to mention my painting teacher H  l  ne Burgi for encouraging my creative aspirations.

My friends, in their different ways, have supported me and provided emotional support throughout the process of my doctoral studies. Thank you all! My sincere thanks also go to my parents who always believed in me and instilled a love of learning in me. I appreciate their help looking after my three boys. My heart-felt gratitude also goes to my two grandmothers who, through their stories about deportations to Siberia, ignited an interest to work with and for persons affected by forced displacements.

Finally, the lives of my husband and my three boys have been strongly impacted by this research – without their love and patience, this project could not have been accomplished! I owe my deepest gratitude to my husband, Jim Hershkowitz, whose precious encouragement and support allowed me to finish this work.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

VERONIKA TALVISTE-HERSHKOWITZ, PhD IN MIGRATION STUDIES

SUPPORTING SECOND-GENERATION YOUTH IN A PROTRACTED URBAN DISPLACEMENT

SETTING IN CARTAGENA

## Summary

This thesis explores youth protection in the context of protracted internal displacement in Colombia. In particular, it sheds light on the rarely studied issue of female adolescents' perspectives on protection and displacement, including second-generation internally displaced persons (IDPs). This study was conducted in an urban neighbourhood in Cartagena and focused on adolescents' identities and pathways to adulthood, employing a combination of critical ethnography, narrative, and arts-based inquiries.

I argue that the use of dominant concepts of global protection policy leads to humanitarian programming that reinforces existing labels and dichotomises displaced populations. Policies based on these dominant concepts often remain disconnected from the realities of youth affected by displacement and from the field of academia. The current policy approach to youth affected by displacement is also divided within policy, leading to compartmentalised programming. Through applying some unifying analytical concepts, a more accurate understanding of young lives can be reached. Specifically, the concepts of multiple identities and of the interplay between agency and oppression could lead to a more de-labelled and de-dichotomised implementation of protection policy. In the final empirical chapter, this argument is crystallised through an in-depth exploration of two young people's lives. The first young person is affected by sexual exploitation and the second by gang engagement—both situations defined by existing policy as protection issues. This study investigates how policy could better connect with youth in protracted displacement situations.

This research highlights the embedded and relational nature of displacement-affected adolescents' protection. It reveals that, under certain circumstances, displacement could enhance protection—a link that is rarely acknowledged. By contributing in particular to the debate on durable solutions, this study suggests that practitioners work holistically with life stories in order to reach better policy outcomes for youth affected by displacement. The proposed approach could support young persons' social navigation, strengthen connections between policy and academic research, and lead to better policy coherence.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Years of enduring conflict and exposure to violence and displacement, often paired with abuse and marginalization, can leave adolescents with extreme psychological stress and at risk of exploitation and engagement in political violence. Yet, recent analysis suggests that adolescents, specifically girls, are the age group most frequently missed by international assistance (Ki-Moon, 2016, pp. 21-22).

Although adolescents affected by violence and displacement need to be protected from exploitation and engagement in political violence, these protection issues—as well as many others—remain everyday experiences for many young persons worldwide. In many cases, the implementation of global protection policy still fails to assist these young people effectively, as is evident in previous UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s report for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

In the policy world, the term ‘protection’ envelops the young lives uprooted by conflict. Yet these individuals’ interpretations differ significantly from the way ‘protection’ is typically defined in policy and law: “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)” (ICRC, 1999). This work explores how these different interpretations could be better acknowledged in order to ensure that these young persons do not remain neglected in protracted displacement situations.

### 1.1 Research Rationale and Scope

This research examines the disconnection between global protection policies and youth perspectives, focusing on transitions to adulthood among young persons who have been affected by internal displacement in Colombia. More concretely, this thesis investigates adolescents’ identities and experiences in relation to displacement in a community created in Cartagena due to forced migration. It focuses particularly on how adolescents comprehend and experience the concept of ‘protection,’ a policy term surrounding their lives.

My thesis will show some ways in which these young persons exercise agency and use various types of power, guided by their own identities and aspirations. Their social navigations are often accomplished from a liminal space—between youth and

adulthood, and between different identities—in the context of challenging structural circumstances. Yet, the policy concepts typically applied in practice for understanding these young person's lives are reductive, producing often static knowledge that does not reflect the lived realities of displacement-affected adolescents in Colombia. This static and disconnected knowledge in turn hinders the design of more efficient policy interventions, which could lead to more positive social change for these young people.

The context I chose for my research is Colombia, mainly since it is the site of a major internal displacement crisis. After Syria, Colombia has the second highest number of IDPs<sup>1</sup> in the world, with 6.5 million IDPs reported as of the end of 2017 (IDMC Overview, 2018). The reasons for this displacement are manifold, but main causes include personal threats, selective homicides, armed confrontations in populated areas, violent land appropriation, destruction of farming assets due to aerial fumigation of illicit crops, and avoiding forced recruitment of children into illegal armed forces (Ibanez and Velez, 2008). The International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2015, p. 16) notes that “spreading criminal violence has also forced people to flee their homes.” Research indicates that internally displaced female adolescents become engaged in sexual exploitation and suffer from gender-based violence in Colombia (Alzate, 2008; Geisler and Roshani, 2006); both of these are considered important protection issues by international humanitarian policy.

I chose in particular to research the lives of female adolescents affected by forced displacement for several reasons. First, there is a scarcity of studies exploring these individuals' experiences. Although a significant body of research focuses on refugees<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> IDPs (internally displaced persons) are defined as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border” (Deng 1998, p.5).

<sup>2</sup> According to Article 1 of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention) refugee is a person who “owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” Given the geography involved, it is also important to mention the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees that expands the refugee definition and states: “Hence the definition or concept of a refugee to be recommended for use in the region is one which, in addition to containing the elements of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, includes among refugees persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public

in the field of forced migration, research about those who do not cross an international border—IDPs—seldom appears (Buchenrieder *et al.*, 2017). Although some researchers have examined IDPs in general (e.g. Vincent and Sorensen, 2001; Riaño-Alcala, 2008; Oostermon, 2016), adolescent refugees in the global South (Chatty and Hundt, 2005; Hart, 2008), and refugee and migrant adolescent girls (Grabska, 2010, 2014, and 2016), studies of internally displaced adolescents remain a rarity. This dissertation is one of the first studies to focus on the second generation of internally displaced female adolescents.

Studying the second generation of IDPs is important. For first-generation IDPs, the journey to adulthood is chiefly shaped by their own dislocation, but second-generation IDPs inherit the shadows of the uprooting that their parents faced. Their lived experiences and interpretations thus differ from those of their parents (Sulava, 2010). These distinct experiences need to be analysed so that we can better understand the specific challenges faced by second-generation IDPs and develop durable solutions for this population (IDMC, 2014). Just as exploring the experiences of second-generation immigrants advances understanding of their integration and assimilation processes (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Thomson and Crul, 2007; Vathi, 2011), research on second-generation IDPs can support their local integration, which has been identified as one durable solution (Brookings Institute, 2010). Nonetheless, with a few exceptions (e.g. Sulava, 2010), research regarding second-generation IDPs remains scarce.

It is necessary to understand these young lives in order to improve their situation. As IDPs are excluded from much of the protection that refugees receive under international law, they are often particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses and neglect. They are faced with threats to their physical security as governments frequently fail to guarantee their rights (IDMC, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Female adolescents experience additional vulnerabilities. According to Freedson (2002), adolescents are among the most vulnerable persons in situations of armed conflict: “particularly girls face increased threats from trafficking, exploitation and gender-based violence” (p. 37; see also Berry, 2004; Swaine and Feeny, 2004; Hart, 2008). Research shows that, with few exceptions, the international community has failed to systematically identify and address the distinct needs of female

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order.”

<sup>3</sup> For example, the number of IDPs considered at high risk of falling victim to physical violence rose by 1.5 million to an estimated 15.6 million worldwide during 2006.

adolescents (Women's Commission, 2000; Casey and Hawrylyshyn, 2014). Furthermore, policy investigations and interventions related to protracted urban internal displacement situations are rare, and Colombia is one of the “forgotten contexts” (Moszynski, 2008). It must be acknowledged, however, that during the process of this research, the concerns of female adolescents affected by protracted displacement have gained importance in global policy discourses (e.g. Kälin and Chapuisat, 2017; Walicki, 2017; OCHA, 2018). Additionally, an historic peace treaty was signed in Colombia in September 2016 (Renwik and Felter, 2017), allowing us to hope that the decades-long IDP situation in the country will change for the better. These evolutions have led to a certain momentum for these young women; thus, more than ever before, the findings of this study have an opportunity to contribute to supporting these young women.

Policy literature frequently fails to capture the nuances and complexities of the situations it targets. In the study of forced migration, scholars tend to have cited dichotomic approach as to agency versus victimisation (Boyden and de Berry, 2004) and forced versus voluntary migration (Zetter, 2000; Betts, 2009). Zetter (1991) and Powles (2000) have argued that displaced persons' narratives are stereotyped through such policy labelling. Other scholars have critiqued the “universalisation of childhood” and the UN (United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Boyden, 1997; Valentin and Meinert, 2009), in which dominant discourses privilege an understanding of youth that is not shared by many societies in the global South. However, critical analyses of global protection policy related to internally displaced youth are not common. My research will contribute to this gap in policy-related literature. To avoid “dehistoricizing universalism” (Malkki, 1996, p. 378), this work provides a case study, exploring the temporal specificity of how some policy concepts relate to youth's everyday lived realities in Cartagena, with a focus on factors of internal displacement, gender and age. This thesis also contributes to scholarly debates on the links between academia and policy (Bakewell, 2008; Coleman, 2015), durable solutions (Bakewell, 2008; Zetter, 2011), labelling (Zetter, 1991; Cole, 2017), and the definition of protection (O'Callaghan and Pantuliano, 2007; Landau and Amit, 2014; Lyytinen, 2015). Since I am myself both a scholar and humanitarian practitioner, I am well-positioned to explore these issues.

My theoretical framework is based on ideas of identity, agency and power. Since 1990s,

the international community began to perceive displaced women and children as active participants in their own survival, rather than as passive aid recipients (Byrne and Baden, 1995; Malkki, 1995; Honwana, 1999). In-depth studies of refugee women's identity and agency have emerged (e.g. Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2013). Nevertheless, displaced female adolescents are often positioned within the discourse of victimhood and seen as needing to be saved, especially from being lured or forced into exploitative activities (Heiberg, 2001; McClain and Garrity, 2011). When these adolescents' agency is considered in policy, a reductive dichotomy of agency and oppression prevails; few accounts have acknowledged or explored the complex interrelations between these two concepts. Research on various forms of power is abundant, as is exploring alternative conceptualisations of power (Fromm, 1947; Starhawk, 1982; Kreisberg, 1992; Miller *et al.*, 2006); however, few studies have specifically examined how young people negotiate various power relationships and experience transformations between dominating and more life-affirming types of power. This research also provides new insights on intersections between age and gender identities in youth and provides a different perspective to the dominant view of displaced identities as rather powerful labels (Zetter, 1991; Malkki, 1995; Duffield, 2002), including for second generation IDPs (Sulava, 2010).

While exploring youth identities, the concept of liminality is applied. Adolescence is often described as a liminal phase between childhood and adulthood, which are seen as the more 'stable' stages of life (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2001). Various authors have explored liminality in relation to identity construction (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Beech, 2011). Beech (2011, p. 287), for example, argues that "liminality can be defined as a reconstruction of identity (in which the sense of self is significantly disrupted) in such a way that the new identity is meaningful for the individual and their community." For Beech (2011), liminality is related to ambiguity and uncertainty. Indeed, the term 'liminality' has already been used in studies of forced displacement, but mainly in relation to a place (Camino, 1994; Krulfeld, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Den Boer, 2015). As shown by this research, however, this concept could be applied in many more ways to explain and contribute to social change.

Forced migration is a complex phenomenon. Castles (2003) and Colson (2003) emphasise that interdisciplinary approaches need to be used in order to accurately study

this topic. At the same time, many scholars in diverse fields agree that increasing disciplinary specialisation and insularity have limited their research results (Hoagwood and Olin, 2002; Pfau, 2008; Wright, 2011). An interdisciplinary approach to studying young persons would also avoid falling into what Rattansi and Phoenix (2005, p. 98) call “the disciplinary division between psychology and sociology (exemplified by the categories of ‘adolescence’ and ‘youth’ respectively) and the prevalence of conventional approaches to identities.” According to the authors, this division

has frequently resulted either in the individualisation and decontextualisation of young people’s identities, has tended to omit their subjectivities, or has failed to grasp the multiplicity, fluidity and context-dependent operation of youth identities and identifications. (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005, p. 98)

Thus, referring to Newell and Klein (1996), an interdisciplinary approach is needed to analyse the protection issues facing female adolescents who are affected by internal displacement. This work “draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective” (Newell and Klein, 1996, p. 395). I employ synthesis, a technique inspired by the integrative approach of Szostak (2007), to identify weaknesses in disciplinary approaches and seek compensating knowledge from other bodies of literature or from beyond academia. My research is situated in the interdisciplinary field of forced migration scholarship and has implications for the study of childhood, youth, and gender, as well as Latin American studies. In addition, it contributes to research on sexual exploitation of adolescents and gangs as well as methodological studies. The overall goal of such an approach is to find a common ground for analysing the protection of adolescents affected by forced displacement.

The aims of the study are thus multifold. First of all, going beyond a mere policy critique, this interdisciplinary action research approach allowed me to examine the adolescents’ lives with one overarching objective: to determine how their situations could be improved. This effort entailed such specific aims as critically analysing the relationship between global protection policies and displacement-affected youth perspectives and understanding youth identities, as well as their experiences and protection situations, in relation to displacement.

More concretely, my study investigates the following three main research questions:

- 1. How do current protection-related policy categories help in understanding and improving the lives of young people in a community affected by protracted internal displacement in Colombia?*
- 2. How do adolescents and young people perceive and experience protracted displacement and protection in an urban neighbourhood in Colombia?*
- 3. What can we learn from how young people understand and negotiate displacement and protection-related issues in their daily lives, and how can their situation be improved?*

These were the overarching research questions, but all of these were “unpacked” during the research process and were accompanied by more detailed questions, as also noted by Vathi (2010). For instance, due to the protracted nature of the displacement, many young persons had not physically experienced displacement, or they experienced it only in early childhood. However, they were still identified by the IDP label, designated to them by national policy. Thus, two sub-questions of the second main research question were: What does IDP identity mean for young people in the urban protracted displacement situation in Colombia? How do they perceive their own IDP status in relation to their other identities? The empirical chapters of this study will address these and other related sub-questions.

Embedded within the participatory paradigm and inspired by critical ethnography, this study used mixed methods research. To learn about participants’ experiences and perspectives, I conducted focus groups, semi-structured interviews, life story interviews, and art-based focus groups. In addition to interviewing young people and members of their parents’ generation, I also spoke to a number of key informants, such as local practitioners who offered valuable insights into the issue of displacement.

## **1.2 Thesis Summary**

This work starts with an introduction that outlines the scope of the research and provides a thesis summary. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on policy related to internal displacement, protection and displaced youth. Chapter 3 proposes an analytical framework to address some current flaws in policy implementation. Chapter 4 discusses the study’s methodology, and Chapter 5 introduces the Colombian context and Nelson

Mandela community, where the research was conducted. Chapter 6 reviews various youth identities that Mandela residents discussed during interviews and focus groups. In this chapter, I argue that existing dichotomous labels fail to capture the complexity of who the young people are, while an approach emphasizing multiple identities could better show the richness and mobility of young femininities and masculinities. Chapter 7 explores the interplay between agency and oppression in young lives, again challenging dichotomous representations. Chapter 8 examines two life stories in more depth, applying the integrative concepts introduced in this work. This empirical chapter reveals sides of two protection problems—sexual exploitation of adolescents and gang violence—that remain mostly concealed in policy implementation. This chapter explores how policy could be better connected to the lived experiences of people affected by internal displacement. In the conclusion, I will discuss this study's significance, implications, and applications with regard to both academic debates and policy issues.

## **Chapter 2: World of Policy: Protection in the Context of Protracted Urban Displacement**

This chapter critically explores the current global policy context related to internal displacement and protection. Other related concepts, such as ‘protection problems’ and ‘self-protection’, are also discussed. The chapter concludes by describing the focus of my research: the protection of female adolescents affected by displacement.

### **2.1 Forced Displacement – Opposed to Voluntary Migration**

Christensen and Harild (2009, p. 4) define ‘forced displacement’ as “the situation of persons who are forced to leave or flee their homes due to conflict, violence, and human rights violations.” This work uses the terms ‘forced migration’ and ‘forced displacement’ interchangeably. A global increase in forced migration during and since World War II and related policy developments have prompted considerable research. As Black (2001) and Bakewell (2008) discuss, policy categories have strongly influenced research on refugees and forced migration. Early research focused largely on refugee movements, but later, other categories of forced migrants gained more attention (Richmond, 1993; Black, 2001). A debate on internal displacement in the late 1990s, strongly influenced by the work of Deng and Cohen (1999), significantly expanded the field. Debates on the relationship between policy and analytic categories have also played a significant role in shaping the field (Van Hear, 1998; Jacobsen and Landau, 2003; Bakewell, 2008).

The longstanding connection between policy and academia notwithstanding, the opportunities this may provide for more in-depth understandings, policies related to forced migration remain often disconnected, in fact, crippled by binary vision. This disconnect is often manifested by the use of policy labels that represent dichotomies. The distinction between voluntary and forced migration is one of the most dominant binaries—a pillar of policy—but academic research finds that the causes of migration are generally mixed and exist on a spectrum (Zetter, 2000; Betts, 2009). King (2002) describes new mobility strategies that have emerged to address economic and non-economic goals, such as student, retirement, love and lifestyle migration (King, 2002; Benson and O’Reilly, 2009). Referring to this changed situation, King (2002, p. 89) states that “the old dichotomies of migration study—internal versus international, forced

versus voluntary, temporary versus permanent, legal versus illegal—blur as both the motivations and modalities of migration become much more diverse.”

## **2.2 Protracted Internal Displacement in Urban Settings**

This research took place in Nelson Mandela, a neighbourhood in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, which residents typically refer to as just ‘Mandela’. From a policy perspective, the Mandela community is a protracted internal displacement situation in an urban setting; some residents were displaced as many as 20 years ago. The concept of internal displacement emerged in the 1990s and was widely adopted by policymakers (Black, 2001). It refers to a particular category of forced migrants: those displaced within their country of residence (OHCHR, 2018). Therefore, policies label people as refugees, IDPs, or non-IDPs depending on whether or not they crossed an international border or left their place of residence.

Like other dichotomies that shape current global policy, the IDP versus non-IDP dichotomy is problematic. Indeed, the policy focus has been increasingly on host communities and people left behind (Lopez *et al.*, 2011; UNDP, 2016). The wider and more overarching term could be thus ‘persons affected by internal displacement’. This term is consistent with the “ICRC approach” that “does not distinguish between IDPs and other civilians affected by conflict” and “will give priority to those with the most urgent needs, regardless of whether they have been forced to move or not” (Brun, 2010, p. 339). In addition, the UN has recently recommended using the term “displacement-affected communities” when addressing protracted IDP situations (Kälin and Chapuisat, 2017). However, in practice, most assessments and interventions that I witnessed distinguished IDPs from non-IDPs and typically prioritised the former.

Christensen and Harild (2009) identify three kinds of different displacement situations: crisis/emergency, initial displacement, and protracted displacement. The impact and particularities of protracted forced displacement have been examined more in the context of refugees (Loescher and Milner, 2004; Crisp, 2003). Yet increasingly, IDPs in protracted situations have also received attention (Mooney and Hussain 2009; Walicki, 2009, 2017; Brun, 2010). Regarding refugees, The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) considers the cases where refugees have been in exile more than five years as protracted refugee situations (Refugee Studies Centre PRS Project, 2014). Protracted internal

displacement is defined as “a situation in which the process for finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons is stalled, and/or IDPs are marginalised as a consequence of a lack of protection of their human rights” (IDMC Global Report, 2014, p. 8). The notion of durable solutions mentioned in this definition is an important element of the policy architecture surrounding prolonged displacement contexts. For IDPs, there are three durable solutions: return to place of origin, local integration, or settlement elsewhere in the country (Brookings Institute, 2010).<sup>4</sup>

Various authors (Bakewell, 2008; Zetter, 2011) have critically examined the existing “sedentary bias” in durable solutions. Mobility is sometimes discussed in connection to forced migrants’ livelihoods (Gale, 2006; Scalettari, 2009; Lindley, 2010). One can argue that in the context of forced migration policy, mobility is often assumed to be problematic and opposed to idealised sedentary durable solutions. Yet in some cases, mobility can be seen an asset, not a problem to prevent (Scalettari, 2009). When durable solutions are not found and protracted situations endure, a second generation of displaced persons emerges, bringing another layer of complexity to the issue. Yet with few exceptions (e.g. IDMC, 2014a), research related to descendants of IDPs remains scarce in policy settings.

Another dimension of displacement is the trend that internal displacement happens within cities, or people from rural areas go to urban centres (Tibaijuka, 2010; Zetter and Deikun, 2010; Crisp *et al.*, 2012). This so-called ‘urban displacement’ has become an increasingly prominent issue, replacing the earlier trend in which IDPs relocated to rural settings and organised camps. In Colombia, 93% of IDPs live in urban areas (Albuja and Ceballos, 2010). Previously, the policy world in general mainly worked with IDPs in rural settings. It has become clear, however, that the approaches used to address IDP situations in rural camps are not fully compatible with tackling urban displacement (Crisp *et al.*, 2012). Policy now focuses on better understanding what is labelled ‘urban displacement’ and the possible solutions that may work in such settings (Zetter and Deikan, 2010; Crisp *et al.*, 2012).

The abovementioned illustrates the labelling, dichotomic, and disconnected tendencies

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<sup>4</sup> “A durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement” (Brookings Institute, 2010, p. 5).

in policy. Instead of acknowledging that internal and cross-border movements have similarities (IDMC, 2017) and protracted and emergency situations could overlap, policy practitioners have generally kept programming for refugees separate from programming for IDPs and often oppose emergencies and protracted situations. In a similar vein, being sedentary in a certain location is contrasted to being on the move, but for many displaced persons, the lived experience and desired solution is to be mobile between various locations as “displacement stimulates new patterns and processes of mobility” (Zetter and Long, 2012, p. 34). Another common binary in policy is the rural-urban distinction; IDPs are often labelled based on their location in urban settings or in camps (Loescher and Milner, 2004; Crea *et al.*, 2015). To conclude, protracted internal urban displacement is a construction that was founded upon several binary labels.

### **2.3 Internal Displacement and Protection**

In the world of policy and practice, internal displacement is inherently linked to the concept of protection. Protection for IDPs is the core aim of *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, which opens by stating that “the international community is confronted with the monumental task of ensuring protection for persons forcibly uprooted from their homes” (Deng, 2001). The next paragraph continues to highlight the importance of protection: “the Principles identify the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of the internally displaced in all phases of displacement.” Although these standards elaborated in 1998 are not legally binding for governments, the document has strongly shaped policies addressing the situation of those displaced inside their country of residence (*ibid*). Thus, in most circumstances in the policy world, speaking about internal displacement also means speaking about protection.

What is protection? Jaspars, O’Callaghan, and Stites (2007, p. 43) state that, “put simply, protection is about seeking to assure the safety of civilians from acute harm.” However, ‘protection’ represents a conceptual challenge (Talviste, 2009) for a number of reasons. First, many humanitarian actors apply a concept of ‘protection’ tailored to their own needs, which has resulted in a multitude of existing definitions. Second, scholars and humanitarian organisations emphasise different sides of protection. While some use the term to focus on legal safety (Chimni, 2000; Goodwin-Gill and MacAdam, 2007); others, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), speak

of physical security (WFP, 2006; Hastie, 2007; World Vision, 2007). Third, the notion of protection is still evolving (Landau and Amit, 2014; Lyytinen, 2015) and lacks firm conceptual boundaries. As O’Callaghan and Pantuliano (2007) argue, it has evolved from legally-oriented diplomatic engagement with state authorities to advocacy at the international level and implementation of projects with local communities.

Despite a vast variety of approaches to protection, the majority of main policy actors, however, have agreed upon a definition that provides an overarching normative framework, outlined in the Introduction of this work. According to the definition proposed by Jaspars *et al.* (2007) ‘protection’ incorporates more than solely preventing and mitigating acute harm. It also refers to preventing violations of civil, political, social and economic rights, as well as threats to people’s life, dignity, and integrity. However, these definitions do not account for the meanings of protection that research participants in Mandela put forward.

## 2.4 Self-Protection

There is a gap in the policy literature regarding what ‘protection’ means to the people who are targeted by protection policies. Only a few studies (e.g. South *et al.*, 2011) have explored this issue. For instance, in Burma, people did not see protection as a legally based concept and had very limited expectations regarding the protection given by the authorities. They perceived the term in a more capacious way, associating it with religious rituals, amulets, tattoos, and practices of traditional medicine (South *et al.*, 2011)<sup>5</sup>. However, literature has not examined perceptions of protection among forcibly displaced girls or compared these to other groups’ perceptions, despite the fact that young persons’ experiences in forced displacement ought to be explored and understood within a family and community context (Chatty and Hundt, 2005).

There has been a rise in research related to self-protection, both in academia and in policy (Vincent and Sorensen, 2001; Bonwick, 2006a and 2006b; Barrs, 2010; Corbett, 2011; Baines and Paddon, 2012; South, 2012). In relation to communities affected by conflict, Baines and Paddon (2012, p. 234) define self-protection as “the ability of civilians to assess and determine the best strategies to avoid, mitigate or thwart violence

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<sup>5</sup> It is also noted in several writings that people do not make difference between immediate protection and long-term livelihood activities (South *et al.*, 2011; Horsey, 2011).

by armed groups.” They categorise the various types of self-protection strategies they encountered in Uganda as neutrality, avoidance, or accommodation. In addition, Barrs (2010) divides self-protection into three main categories: physical safety, life-critical sustenance, and life-critical services. South (2012) and Corbett (2011) explore self-protection strategies in Burma and Sudan, respectively. Gorur (2013, p. 4) defines self-protection measures as “any activities that conflict-affected communities undertake with the intention of countering, mitigating, deterring or avoiding a threat (regardless of whether those measures are successful).” Gorur also discusses the success of various self-protection strategies, focusing mostly on how peacekeepers can support communities’ self-protection in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Regarding forced displacement, for instance, the UNHCR is increasingly emphasising and implementing community-based protection (UNHCR, 2013a). The ICRC has also made growing use of community-based activities to build upon the self-protection of affected populations, including those in displacement situations (Talviste *et al.*, 2012; Cotroneo and Pawlak, 2016). Yet few researchers have discussed adolescents’ practices of self-protection or their perceptions regarding protection; the focus is more on adults and their activities. In practice, I have observed that the tendency is to contrast self-protection with protection that is provided by authorities and various organisations, instead of approaching self-protection as an integral part of protection.

Another disconnect that hinders humanitarian practice is the fact that much humanitarian action often happens in silos. For instance, livelihoods are considered to be a separate issue from protection (Jaspars and O’Callaghan, 2010). Yet, in people’s lives, livelihoods and protection are intimately connected. Displaced persons may, for instance, go in groups to a market (Jaspars and O’Callaghan, 2010). Indeed, multi-sectorial approaches are increasingly emphasised, as is protection mainstreaming (Jaspars and O’Callaghan, 2010; Mahony and Solutions, 2013), but in reality, compartmentalisation leads to interventions that are constructed based on dichotomies (or vice versa – dichotomies contribute to compartmentalisation). To illustrate, in policy a clear distinction is made between adult sex work and sexual exploitation of persons below age 18. As a result, child protection services have their own programming to assist adolescents who become engaged in sexual exploitation; the psychosocial sector carries out its interventions while a livelihood specialist does his/her work. The protection policy is thus in large part divorced from other parts of young people’s lives

that are touched by displacement.

The disconnect between concepts of protection and livelihood is also evident in academia. For instance, several studies have examined coping mechanisms among the internally displaced. Hamid (1992) and Young *et al.* (2005) have researched IDP livelihoods in Sudan. Vincent and Sorensen (2001) compiled a collection of ten case studies, using the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* as a research framework. These studies divide survival mechanisms into protection and subsistence strategies, thus reinforcing a conceptual distinction between protection and livelihoods. Stichick and Bruderlein (2001) examined the survival strategies of children and their families who face insecurity. They outline four important dimensions of the protection of children during conflicts: physiological necessities, safety, communal relationships and opportunities for personal development. The authors also emphasize that coping strategies of children and their families ought to be considered as a roadmap for protection. While the categorisation of self-protection is important for facilitating understanding in some ways, it should be noted that this categorisation could also work as a divider.

## **2.5 Female Adolescents Affected by Internal Displacement: the Case of Their Protection**

I now turn to the focus of this study: female adolescents affected by displacement and their protection. It is often argued that female adolescents have specific gender-based vulnerabilities (Hart 2008b) or ‘protection problems’. As the humanitarian world grows increasingly specialised (Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2014), it seems likely that a particular policy category—‘female adolescent IDPs’—is about to emerge. Thus, in this work, I explore whether this policy category is “sociologically significant in the sense of describing a set of characteristics that are innate or defining features of a theoretically distinct population group” (Black 2001, p. 64). The objective of this section is to further demonstrate how various disjunctions characterise the policy world that aims at improving the protection of these young women.

### **2.5.1 Problematicizing Adolescence**

Referring to widely-used CRC, most programming for displaced adolescents is mainly based on the label of ‘child’. Some exceptions exist; for instance, the UNHCR also

collects adolescent-specific indicators (Evans *et al.*, 2013) in forced migration contexts and often uses both terms, ‘children’ and ‘adolescents’ (UNHCR 1997). Therefore, unlike the CRC, UNHCR tries to make a distinction between childhood and adolescence. However, I observed that much programming for adolescents remains primarily based on the CRC, and actors often label adolescents as ‘children’. Thus, adult/child is another binary that still strongly shapes policy.

According to the CRC, being 18 years old constitutes an important milestone, but adolescence as such is not considered a legally relevant age category. From an anthropological perspective, however, reaching the age of 18 does not constitute a significant milestone across all cultures. As discussed in my previous work (Talviste, 2009), various scholars (Mead, 1943; Bame Nsamenang, 2002; Hart, 2008a) have examined adolescence, and many see it as “a socially constructed stage of life that characterises the transition to adulthood, which occurs in the second decade of life and varies from context to context” (Talviste, 2009, p.7). This research considers as the entry point Schlegel’s rather broad definition of adolescence: “a period between childhood and adulthood during which its participants behave and are treated differently than either their seniors or their juniors” (Schlegel, 1995, p. 16).

The CRC is not only criticised by those exploring adolescence, but the document has been evoking discussions on its merits and faults, including the definitions of ‘childhood’ and ‘child’. Valentin and Meinert (2009), for instance, argue how CRC has individualistic and egalitarian views of children that are often in opposition to children’s status within generational hierarchies in many societies in the global South. According to them, the CRC could be seen as aiming, with the help of NGOs, to export the dominant model of childhood in the North that tends to see children as innocent victims. However, Valentin and Meinert (2009) argue that several countries in the South want to maintain certain practices that are condemned in the CRC, since their understanding of childhood is different from that of the CRC.

While exploring adolescence, it is also important to consider the concept of youth. Kehily (2007, p. 3) defines youth as “a life stage between childhood and adulthood, the transitional period between being dependent and becoming independent.” Thus, as defined by Schlegel (1995) and Kehily (2007), ‘youth’ and ‘adolescence’ refer to the same age period; this study uses these terms interchangeably. The UNHCR published a

review document related to forced displacement of youth (Evans *et al.*, 2013). This organization utilizes the UN definition of youth (15-24 years old), but the review document also describes youth as a context-specific social construct. The UNHCR has no specific policy for IDP youth, although the organization does classify youth as “persons of concern” and carried out Global Refugee Youth Consultations (UNHCR, 2018c). This age group is covered by policy documents designed for either children or adults. Thus, compared to ‘child’ or ‘adult’, ‘youth’ does not seem to have become so widely used policy label. As a result, young people remain rather invisible in UNHCR programming, and they often see themselves as “living in limbo” (Evans *et al.*, 2013). Policies and programming for displaced adolescents and youth are still rather new and not dominant in general humanitarian practices. To conclude, although policy has increasingly recognized adolescence and youth as a distinct category to some degree, most policy affecting displaced adolescents remains based on a child-adult dichotomy.

### **2.5.2 Displaced Female Adolescents’ Protection – Affected by Gender Binary**

In addition to the child-adult binary, displaced female adolescents are also affected by the gender binary. Mainstream policy representations often emphasise gender as an additional vulnerability (Tamburlini, 2015), a reason to prioritise women and girls in programming. In the policy world, gender is still often represented in binary terms, even though since few decades this has been acknowledged as a danger in academia (e.g. Butler, 1990).

Indeed, people face certain challenges based on their gender. Uprooted female adolescents may have specific anxieties regarding returning to their country of origin (Hoodfar, 2008), or they can be at risk due to their social context (Berry, 2004). Uprooted adolescent girls might also suffer from particular protection issues (Hart, 2008b) and, as mentioned in the introduction, may be more prone to gender-based violence, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, being married before 18 years of age, and having more limited education opportunities (Berry, 2004; Swaine and Feeny, 2004; Hart, 2008). Chatty (2009, p. 329) argues that “the experiences of female Palestinian refugee youths differ from those of males in terms of opportunities, constraints, and responsibilities within the family, household, and community.” The difference in social freedom is also discussed, among other issues. In the case of Somalis in Ethiopia, displacement meant that more women started to be married to

older men and became a second or a third wife, instead of being allowed to marry a young man without wealth. For young males who could not marry, this shift sometimes resulted in seeking alternative ways to make the transition to adult manhood, such as illegal economic activity or enrolling in the militia (Evans *et al.*, 2013).

Gender permeates everything. Its influence is extensive and complex, and it creates particular vulnerabilities. Building upon Hart (2008a and 2008b), Shahar (1990), and Hoodfar (2008), I claim (Talviste, 2009) that in addition to other factors, such as class and ethnicity, gender has a considerable role in shaping the experience of adolescents. The length of adolescence may vary between boys and girls. In some contexts, there may even not be a transition period for girls, who may be viewed as women after their first menstruation. Yet policy has a tendency to merely see females as victims, as more vulnerable than men (Monte 2009), much like children, who are also seen as inherently more vulnerable in relation to adults. Grabska (2011) argues that gender-specific approaches to policy implementation for forced migrants over-simplify and essentialise gender differences by emphasizing feminine vulnerability and overlooking differences between women in Kakuma refugee camp. According to Grabska, such policy promotes reductive views of women as vulnerable and men as powerful, instead of exploring the various changes that displacement introduced in regard what being a woman or a man means within a particular community. My experience as practitioner showed that in some contexts, it may be young men who are more vulnerable to disappearances and killings. Vulnerability is not inherent to a certain gender; rather, it is related to concrete risks in specific contexts.

Gender and age are significant factors in the lives of adolescent IDPs, due in part to these categories' relational nature and the power dynamics they encompass. In some contexts, adolescent girls may live with overlapping subordination. For instance, referring to Thorne (1987), children wield less power in relation to adults and are most often characterized as learners and victims. In similar vein, Kea (2013) describes the generational hierarchy between girls and older women in Gambia. Despite inter-generational bargaining and shifts in girls' attitudes, they "generally continue to do as they are told," and "those children who refuse to do so are simply beaten" (Kea, 2013, pp. 114, 111). Second, women have historically been viewed as subordinate to men (De Beauvoir, 1953; Bullough, 1973). Thus, female adolescents could be viewed as

suffering from both patriarchy and the hegemony of adults.

Protection policy aiming at addressing female adolescents' concerns is inherently built upon this assumption of double subordination. Protection only enters humanitarian organisations' agendas when it is lacking (or, as practitioners say, when, protection problems/risks/issues exist). Female adolescents, like other persons, can be victims of a variety of human rights abuses, including violations of international humanitarian law and refugee law. However, since practitioners mostly regard adolescents as children, adolescents are often seen as suffering from particular 'child protection issues', including, for instance, "commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage" (UNICEF, 2018). Research by Machel (2001), Boyden *et al.* (2002), Swaine and Feeny (2004), and Hart (2008b) asserts that girls disproportionately face threats of sexual exploitation and abuse; domestic violence; and psychological persecution. They often become unaccompanied minors or adolescent heads of households and become engaged in early marriages (WRC, 2000).

Internal displacement is often seen as intensifying female adolescents' protection issues. For instance, if a community already tends to subject girls to early marriage or sexual violence, these problems are often aggravated in the context of forced displacement (Benson, 1994; Krulfeld, 1994; Swaine and Feeney, 2004 Hoodfar, 2008). For example, in Syria, the site of one of the world's major current displacement crises, early marriage was already common in rural areas but has grown even more common among uprooted populations (Anani, 2013).

When policy is based on the assumption that young women are innately less powerful and more vulnerable than young men (and that displacement only worsens this gender disparity), it does not succeed in building on young people's contextualised, lived experiences. Young women are not powerless victims, and their lives are not always worsened by displacement. For instance, Hoodfar (2008) discusses how many young Afghan refugee adolescents had the opportunity to study in Iran, an activity that is unconventional by Afghanistan standards, and became the first generation of literate women in their families. These girls also changed their views of marriage after observing that their Iranian peers had more freedom to choose their husbands.

### **2.5.3 Protection Policies for IDP Youth: Momentum to Challenge Endemic Disconnects**

One can argue that the majority of the policy binaries described above are actually manifestations of a broader dichotomy between agency and oppression. In the context of policy, children, forcibly displaced persons, and women are associated with lack of protection and with various forms of victimhood and oppressions. Conversely, an adult male, ‘voluntary migrant’, or ‘non-IDP’ is more likely to be automatically regarded as a person with power and agency. Even geographical binaries (such as international versus national, camp versus urban displacement) are significant, as policy discourses tend to classify people on one side of these geographical binaries as more victimized than those on the other side. However, ideas of which side is more vulnerable may shift over time. For example, in the 1950s, when the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention) was produced, people crossing international borders were seen as more in need of protection than people displaced within their home countries. However, in the 1990s, IDPs were found as ‘more vulnerable’ compared to refugees who had the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the *Guiding Principles* emerged. A similar shift has occurred in the camp-urban binary; displaced people in urban settings are increasingly described as in greater need of humanitarian attention than those in camps.

Protection policy in the context of forced migration makes extensive use of binary labels that are often divorced from young people’s perspectives. Although binary labels do not adequately capture the complexities and subtleties of lived experience, they may be useful and pragmatic in some contexts—such as providing a compelling policy discourse where time is limited and simplifications are necessary. Yet for the purpose of connecting with young persons in the context of policy implementation, these binaries have more negative effects. Specifically, they compartmentalise our understandings (Field, 2012), leading to child protection interventions that are based on false assumptions and are often unhelpful (Bissell *et al.*, 2006) or allow female adolescents affected by displacement to fall into policy cracks (WRC, 2000). Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) (2014, p.8) report on adolescent girls states: “The commonplace, one-size-fits-all approach that bundles adolescent girls’ needs and vulnerabilities with those of younger children or adult women relies on misplaced assumptions that

compromise girls' access to services and their protection from violence." This decontextualisation and disconnection hinders policies' ability to bring about meaningful social change for marginalised youth.

Some may also argue that *all* labels (not only dichotomous ones) oversimplify complex things for the sake of making communication possible; indeed, language itself operates in this way.<sup>6</sup> For Derrida (1997, p. 216), language is "a structure —a system of oppositions of places and values and an oriented structure. Let us rather say, only half in jest, that its orientation is a disorientation. One will be able to call it polarization." Language itself necessarily uses structures, including binary structures, so some degree of 'polarization' is inevitable in the process of communicating. In critiquing the negative effects of binary labels and seeking to imagine alternatives, my thesis engages with the challenges of non-dualistic thinking described by Eve Sedgwick (2003, p. 1-2):

A lot of voices tell us to think nondualistically, and even what to think in that fashion. Fewer are able to transmit how to go about it... of course it's far easier to deprecate the confounding, tendentious effects of binary modes of thinking—and to expose their often stultifying perseveration—than it is to articulate or model other structures of thought. Even to invoke *nondualism*, as plenty of Buddhist sutras point out, is to tumble right into a dualistic trap.

While recognizing the abovementioned challenge, and acknowledging that such alternative terms as 'spectrum' and 'continuum' remain shaped by binary logic (since a continuum has two opposite ends), my work aims to explore the often-excluded middle. It also aims to consider what could exist beyond (or, in Sedgwick's terms, *beside*<sup>7</sup>) these binaries.

In recent years, significant steps have been taken to address several of this project's key concerns at the level of global policy development. The notions of 'adolescence' and 'young person' have increasingly become used in policy discourse and documents. Some examples include the UN Secretary-General's report for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 (Ki-Moon, 2016), the *Agenda for Humanity*, the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action (OCHA, 2018), and the CRC General Comment focusing on adolescents (UNCRC, 2016). In the frame of 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Guiding Principles*, the international community has taken steps to "bring IDPs out of the shadows" with a special plan of action that emphasizes the importance of humanitarian-

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<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Sara Saylor for this observation.

<sup>7</sup> See also Chapter 7.

development cooperation for addressing protracted internal displacement situations (OCHA, 2018). These developments give us reason to hope that the divide between emergency and protracted situations could diminish. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report on protracted internal displacement has also contributed to a more hopeful outlook in this regard (Kälin and Chapuisat, 2017). Perhaps less directly, the Sendai Framework, the New Urban Agenda, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also constitute important possible avenues for improving the situation of protracted urban IDPs (Walicki, 2017). In a similar vein, UN Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants have been drafted (Ridge and Smith, 2018), setting the issue of migration high on the international agenda.

Thus, at the level of international humanitarian policy, there is currently a momentum for female adolescents affected by protracted displacement to achieve better protection and solutions. However, it would be premature to assume that historically dominant binaries have disappeared, as these policy developments have occurred only very recently. Moreover, such policy developments like the CRC General Comments and the Compact on Migration are not legally binding (Ridge and Smith, 2018), yet the states are those who have the foremost responsibility for protecting and assisting IDPs. Additionally, a dualistic approach remains evident in many of these new commitments. For instance, two separate compacts have been developed, one focused on forced migration and the other on ‘voluntary migration’ (Ridge and Smith, 2018). Thus, despite some promising advancements, the global approach remains based on the dominant divides that I have analysed in this thesis. Finally, some are sceptical about the outcomes of the commitments made at the WHS, stating, among other critiques, that “prospects are bleak” and they refer to “expensive talking shop” (Hoffmann, 2016, p. 3).

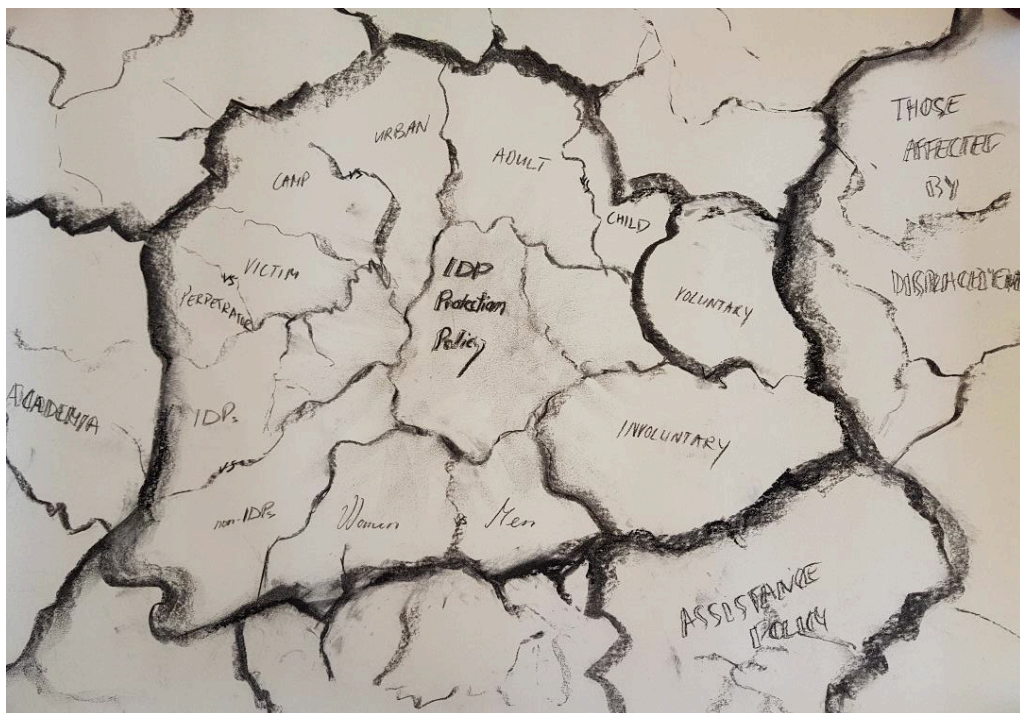
Although I have raised numerous concerns about the effects of policy language throughout this thesis, my intention is not to set up a binary of ‘policy versus affected persons’. Policy is not a monolithic entity; nor is it uniformly divorced from affected persons’ perspectives. It is important to acknowledge that many policy interventions also yield real benefits for youth and displaced persons. For instance, the *Terre des Hommes* teams assisted more than one million vulnerable children and their families in 2017 (*Terre des Hommes*, 2018). The UNHCR protected and assisted 36.6 millions of

IDPs in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018b).

In this work, I focus in particular on two types of divides concerning policy: first, the excessive use of dichotomous labels, and, second, disconnections based on different meanings and perceptions, such as the various definitions of the concept ‘protection’ outlined in the beginning of this work. This thesis explores these disconnections at three levels: first, the cleavage between policy implementation and affected youth; second, divisions within policy, such as the gaps between protection and livelihoods programming; third, divides between protection policy and academia.

I argue that the divide between policy and affected persons is intrinsically related to disconnections within policy and between policy and academia. As demonstrated in the following chapters, academic research has been more successful in understanding youth realities. Hence, as policy grows more connected to people’s experiences, it will concurrently grow more connected with academia. In similar vein, I will illustrate how young lives are not unfolding in silos. As policy succeeds in better understanding young lives and building upon existing linkages, its own internal compartmentalisation will likely diminish. For this reason, the disconnection between youth and policy is the main focus of this study.

Figure 1: My Interpretation of the Current State of IDP Protection Policy



Contemplating current disconnections and binaries shaping protection policy made me think of earth that has been affected by drought and is cracking seriously... By using only white and black, I sought to highlight policy's tendency toward stark oppositions and the lack of other shades and colours. The location of labels in the drawing is random, without any definite aim except to emphasize the cracks between these labels.

## **Chapter 3: Integrative Tools for Approaching Displacement and Protection**

As critically reviewed, the policy world tends to approach young lives affected by displacement with various labels and binaries: forced/voluntary and internal/international migration; urban/camp displacement situations; child/adult; victim/perpetrator; and female/male. These all reflect manifestations of the agency/oppression dichotomy. Many scholarly accounts indicate that policy labels and binaries do not truthfully reflect lived realities; in the case of my study, this means that a young person's own understanding of his/her situation is likely to differ from the understanding articulated in protection policy. This chapter argues that three analytical concepts—multiple identities, agency and oppression interaction, and a comprehensive approach to power—have a potential to expand our understanding of young persons' protection in protracted displacement settings. As I will demonstrate, these concepts have been more successful in explaining youth realities (e.g. Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005; Utas, 2005) and thus connecting better academia with its subjects. If applied by policy, these integrative concepts may contribute to a less dichotomous approach that better connects policy perspectives to affected persons' experiences.

### **3.1 Multiple Identities to De-Labelise Policy**

Identity is a connector by nature. McAdams (1989, p. 161) states that "Identity is a life story – an internalised narrative integration of past, present and anticipated future which provides lives with a sense of unity and purpose." Identity helps in "understanding individuals as situated in social interaction and embedded within society" (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 2). Rattansi and Phoenix (2005), however, contend that it is not possible to separate various identities within a person. Drawing upon Foucault's work, they argue that social institutions influence which identities are considered 'normal' or 'sub-normal'. Research has demonstrated the indeterminacy and situational contingency of youth identities; during youth, a range of identities exists always in process of being reconstructed, and some may be more prominent depending on context (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003; Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005). Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou (2003) advise not to explore one specific identity in isolation, but rather to focus on the co-construction of plural identities. For

example, Hedge (1998) explores the relationship between ethnic and gender identity and demonstrates that modifications in one are accompanied by changes in the other. Thus, one can speak of “hybridisation of identities,” the importance of positioning (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005), and interconnections between various identities. The concept of multiple interconnected identities provides a more integrative way to explore how parts of a person (woman/adolescent/IDP) interact with each other, in contrast to the binary labelling traditionally practiced by policy scholars. Furthermore, although the UNHCR review related to youth (Evans *et al.*, 2013) explores the connection between youth identity and displacement, critical analysis of the complex concept of identity remains extremely rare in policy.

Speaking of multiple identities, it is important to speak of individual and collective identification and the role of categorisation, the process behind multiple identities. Jenkins (Jenkins, 2014, p. 18) defines ‘identity’ as “the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their relations with other individuals and collectivities” and ‘identification’ as “the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference.” Individual identification takes place within the continuous interaction between self-image and public image. As to collective identification, Jenkins (2014) speaks of group identification and categorization. The former is the internal moment of collective identification and categorization refers to the collective external definition. When one approaches policy with labels, the focus is more on the external moment of individual identification and on certain categorizations, not on internal and group identifications, or on the consequences of identifications—how these labels are internalized or resisted (*ibid*). Exploring multiple identities thus calls for examining also these other “processes of identifications, trajectories of *being* and *becoming*,” and how they are related with each other as “we identify ourselves in the internal–external dialectic between self-image and public image, but we identify others and are identified by them in turn” (Jenkins, 2014, pp. 97, 42).

The process of *becoming*, the constant reconfiguration of multiple identities, is important to understand, now more than ever. This process is one of the characteristics of what Bauman (2013) calls “liquid modernity” and to what Gellner (1995) refers as the functioning of “the modular man.” Specifically, Bauman (2013, pp.7-8) states:

Ours is, as a result, an individualized, privatized version of modernity, with the burden of pattern-weaving and the responsibility for failure falling primarily on the individual's shoulders. It is the patterns of dependency and interaction whose turn to be liquefied has now come. They are now malleable to an extent unexperienced by, and unimaginable for, past generations.

He continues to argue that people are not anymore “‘born into’ their identities” (2013, pp. 32, 31) and speaks of “individualization” that “consists of transforming human ‘identity’ from a ‘given’ into a ‘task.’” For Bauman, identity is seen as “an unfilled project,” and “identities are more like the spots of crust hardening time and again on the top of volcanic lava which melt and dissolve again before they have time to cool and set. So there is need for another trial, and another” (Bauman, 2013, pp. 29, 83). Gellner’s “modular man” is a similar concept: according to Gellner, the human being of modern times is like a modular unit of furniture that could be constantly assembled and disassembled and that has no predefined profile. The figure of the modular man is characterized by forging links with others that are “flexible, specific, instrumental” and “without prolonged and fearful rituals, without involving the honour of all his kin” (Gellner, 1995, p. 42).

Identity is today a cross-disciplinary concept, a major focus throughout the social sciences; many studies have explored how adolescents construct their identities. Youth has been considered a critical period of identity formation (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005). The fields that have explored adolescent and youth identities, for instance, include psychology (Erikson, 1968; Katsiaficas *et al.*, 2011), sociology (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005), youth studies (Willis 1977; Amid-Talai and Wulff, 1995), linguistics (Bucholtz, 2002; Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003), and anthropology (Mead, 1928; Schlegel, 1995; Bame Nsamenang, 2002). Although Rattansi and Phoenix (2005) note that sociology and psychology have often failed to engage in collaborative research on identity, I believe that the concept, broadly understood, has a potential to unite diverse disciplines. This belief is based on Szostak’s (2007) who emphasises the importance to seek common ground between disciplines and build upon these. In the late 1970s, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) emerged, making it possible to advance beyond the individual-society duality that had previously characterized the

study of youth identities (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005). Referring to what sociologists call “hybridisation of identities” (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005) and psychologists approach as “hyphenated selves” (Katsiaficas *et al.* 2011), the notion of multiple identities in a young person is a shared foundation for further research. This should also be embraced by practitioners who implement protection policies, in order to reduce the disconnect stemming from the use of dichotomous labels.

Although ‘identity’ can be defined in numerous ways, this work utilizes a broad definition that incorporates psychological, anthropological, and sociological perspectives. Drawing on Stryker and Serpe (1994) and Holland *et al.* (1998), this work defines identity as an individual's answer to the question “Who am I?” In other words, this work defines identity as self-understanding, based on what people say about themselves—to others and to themselves.

### **3.2 Approaching Youth Identities with Intersectionality and Liminality**

In this work, I adopt an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005; Phipps, 2016) when exploring youth identities because this perspective acknowledges the complexity of life (McCall, 2005) that policy often overlooks. Although intersectionality has informed some research on children (e.g. Ecklund, 2012), it has not been extensively explored in relation to displaced adolescents. Etherington *et al.* (2018) identify several possible reasons for the lack of intersectional research on children:

There are many factors and/or assumptions that may explain the absence of intersectionality in this area. First, there may exist an assumption that the category of “child” transcends all other distinctions. This is certainly evident in the homogenisation of children that typically occurs in the existing literature. Similarly, there may exist particular beliefs about children and identity that inhibit considerations of intersectionality. For instance, children’s social statuses are often assumed to be captured through information about their families without recognising how children might identify with or be affected by these statuses. (Etherington *et al.*, 2018, p. 66)

Thus, the fact that protection policies often label adolescents as ‘children’ may hinder the application of intersectionality. Additionally, Kea (2013, p. 103) describes the “analytical invisibility of children” and attributes this invisibility to feminist research privileging conjugal relationships among adults. Yet intersectionality is useful in approaching adolescent femininities, as it offers ways to explore how multiple aspects of identity (e.g. gender, ‘race’, class, and ethnicity) intersect (Crenshaw, 1991). A single-factor explanation does not account for the complexity of how an individual’s

multiple identities interrelate, which remains a contested question among researchers (Čadová, 2013; Freeman, 2003). Referring to McCall's (2005) categorisation, I use an "intracategorical approach," in which female adolescents affected by displacement in the Mandela community constitute the intersectional core. I try to "analytically unravel one-by-one the influences" of some main categories of relevance (McCall, 2005, 1787). Moreover, intersectional analysis also considers how aspects of identity are connected to various forms of oppression and disadvantage (Cole, 2009; Mahalingam and Reid, 2007), another theme explored in this work. Intersectionality is particularly valuable for understanding marginalised youth, such as those affected by displacement. For instance, the young women in this study are assigned to multiple subordinate categories: female, adolescent, person of colour, low socioeconomic class, displaced. Finally, intersectionality aligns with the interdisciplinary nature of this work, as it diminishes fragmentation among academic fields (McCall, 2005).

In addition to intersectionality, my analysis applies the concept of liminality. According to Van Gennep (1960), a person moves from one identity phase to another through rites of passage in three successive phases: separation, the liminal phase, and aggregation. The separation stage refers to "detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in social structure or a set of cultural conditions" (Turner, 1987, p. 5). The liminal stage is an ambiguous state that shares minimal characteristics with either the previous or subsequent phases. In the aggregate stage, the ritual subject regains stability, and "the passage is consummated" (Turner, 1987, p. 5). Turner (1967, 1987) built on Van Gennep's theory by exploring the liminal period in initiation or puberty rites of passage, focusing thus on adolescents. Turner describes the liminal phase as an "interstructural" period in which individuals are "betwixt and between" and become largely invisible, "structurally dead" and lacking rights. After this phase, one returns to community with a new identity and new responsibilities.

Within forced migration literature, many argue (e.g. Kunz, 1973; Krulfeld, 1994; Camino, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Hynes 2011) that displaced persons are in a liminal state, in transition between old and new surroundings. Existing studies have thus referred to various liminalities: adolescents not seeing themselves as children nor yet considering themselves as adults (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2001), simultaneous multiple identities sharing a meaning or moving towards a common ground (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets

and Serpe, 2013), the dangers of gender binaries (Nayak and Kehily, 2013), the ambiguity of displaced status (Camino, 1994; Krulfeld, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Sulava, 2010), and peri-urban liminality (Smith, 2015).

To sum up, the concept of liminality invites us to approach transitions as related to what happened before and what comes next; this perspective could potentially facilitate a more integrated and holistic interpretation in policy implementation.

### **3.3 Main Identities in Adolescence and Youth**

Like all people, adolescents have a variety of distinct yet inseparable identities. This study focuses on the interplay between three of these identities: gender, age, and IDP status. This focus is based on the fact that gender and age emerged as central concerns in youth narratives, while displaced identity is of particular interest within forced migration scholarship. Additionally, in policy, the category ‘female adolescent IDPs’ is constructed based on these three identities. My aim was to understand Mandela residents’ perspectives in comparison to policy frameworks. As Hoodfar (2008, p. 166) observes, humanitarian action often overlooks “the ethnic, political and social identities of the young.” To avoid this problem and to remain faithful to my participatory worldview I also considered other identities that young people discussed, such as being a parent or student.

Sociological research has historically explored youth identities in relation to deviance, particularly working-class youth identities (Bucholtz, 2002; Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005). Scholars have analysed young male sub-cultures in relation to class identity (e.g. Willis, 1977) but have devoted less focus to the study of young women (McRobbie, 1991). Miles *et al.* (1996) explored how fashionable commodities influence self-esteem and identity among young women. Rattansi and Phoenix (2005), however, argue that in addition to considering social class, researchers must attend to the multiplicity, fluidity, and hybridity of youth identities, including gender and ethnicity. These authors examine how young women have shifted from marginal to central positions within youth sub-cultures, challenging “the previous dichotomous positionings of male/female-centre-margin structuring of youth cultures” (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005, p. 115). Cohen (1996) has explored young people’s racial and ethnic identities in relation to concepts of safety, territories of identification, and geographies of loss and alienation.

In addition, although mainly explored in relation to aging, while studying youth some scholars have also examined in more depth the age identity - “the subjective evaluation of person’s age, which is subject to individual and historical experiences” (Kaufman and Elder 2002, p.169). Shanahan *et al.* (2005) explored changes in the milestones that traditionally signified passage to adulthood, such as finishing school, leaving home, starting a job, marrying, and having children. They argue that since later marriages and childbearing and longer educational path have become more common, the beginning of adulthood would be better defined through individual and subjective indicators, such as feeling autonomous, being financially independent, or having a strong sense of personal responsibility (Shanahan *et al.*, 2005). Although life stages are subjectively experienced (Plummer, 2001), age 18 constitutes a definitive landmark in policy. This thesis thus examines the relationship between chronological and subjective age; chronological age is based on the question, “how old are you?,” while subjective age denotes how old a person feels.

Kehily (2007) describes three complementary perspectives for studying youth: cultural, comparative, and biographical. In this study, I employ a cultural perspective by positioning young women as active meaning-makers and exploring how they exercise agency in their everyday lives; this analysis is based on Kehily’s definition of culture as “everyday social practice” (Kehily, 2007, p. 12). I also use a biographical approach, in that I describe individual processes of identity formation and emphasise the importance of critical moments in the course of a lifetime.

### **3.4 Displaced Identity**

In order to resist the international and internal displacement binary and to emphasize the similarities that refugees and IDPs share (IDMC, 2017), in this study I explore literature on both IDP and refugee identities. Numerous studies have explored the impact of displaced status on identity, often demonstrating the power of the refugee and IDP labels, even among the descendants of those uprooted. For instance, Zetter (1991 and 2007), Krulfeld (1994), Malkki (1995) and Lacroix (2004) have analysed the social construction of refugeeness. Zetter (1991) discusses the power of the label ‘refugee’ to form and transform institutional identities; he argues that labelling displaced persons with refugee identity may lead to a situation in which refugee identity dominates their behaviour.

Lacroix (2004) explores the process of becoming refugee in Canada, arguing that this process is often marked by an important “point of rupture” that engenders a completely new identity: in becoming a refugee, an individual becomes “someone *other* than who they were previously” (Lacroix, 2004, p. 164). Krulfeld (1994, p. ix) also outlines the profound changes that refugees experience: “all aspects of their lives are called into question, including ethnic and national identity, gender roles, social relationships and socio-economic status,” and this upheaval creates new identities. Hadjiyanni (2002) and Markowitz (1994) also discuss “identity crises” among displaced persons.

In the same vein, Malkki (1995) examines the influence of refugee status on identity. Based on her research with Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Malkki argues that in some locations, the refugees were proud of their refugee identity and even regarded it as heroic. They felt it had increased their moral and political value. However, in other settings, they negated the refugee label and used multiple identities as a strategy of invisibility. Malkki (1995, p. 158) observes that, in camps, refugeeness was “a protective legal status and a politico-moral condition” that was idealised, but in towns, this status “was neither particularly useful nor desirable.” Moreover, for many people, refugee status was linked to memories of insults, stigma, and violence, as well as feelings of shame. As Malkki (1995, p. 160) states, “they hated the name of ‘refugee’, among others, also because it meant for them lacking liberty.”

Compared to refugee status, less has been written concerning the personal and cultural significance of IDP status. However, some authors have also explored this displaced identity. Duffield (2002), for instance, takes a critical look at the use of IDP identity by aid agencies in northern Sudan, mostly focusing on how this identity dehumanises and homogenises displaced persons coming from the southern parts of Sudan. According to Duffield, the IDP label conceals the ethnic, social, and religious identities of uprooted persons. One unplanned consequence of aid in this region is a governance relationship that uses IDP identity to subjugate Dinkas, an ethnic group from South Sudan. Like refugee identity, the IDP identity is a powerful label that considerably affects the lives of those who carry it. For instance, this label “help[s] to maintain the low cost of Dinka labour” (Duffield, 2002, p. 97).

Stepputat and Sorensen (2001) explore the effects of introducing the IDP category in Peru. They argue that “the local humanitarian field was transformed significantly with

the introduction of the IDP concept” (Stepputat and Sorensen, 2001, p. 775). While people initially found the IDP label insulting and did not identify with it, the label suddenly became very popular among the affected population due to the material gains that were attached to this identity. The authors also describe tensions between displaced persons’ multitude of fluid identities and the vision of NGOs in the area, which aimed at a fixed and strengthened IDP identity.

Not surprisingly, Colombia is one of the few contexts where more data is available regarding lived experiences and IDP identity (Delgado and Laegreid, 2001; Meertens, 2001; Zeldin, 2011). The literature on IDP status in Colombia demonstrates that many displaced people avoid registration as IDPs and seek anonymity instead. While Meertens (2001) and Ibáñez and Velásquez (2009) note that many people in Colombia avoid IDP status for reasons of security, Zeldin’s (2011) work in Medellín and Uribe (2000) describe the stigmatisation related to IDP status. According to Uribe (2000), IDPs are mostly seen as *desplazado damnificado* (displaced victim) or *desplazado bandido* (displaced criminal). The *desplazado damnificado* is not perceived by the host community as a fellow citizen and is thus excluded from the demos and denied equal rights (Uribe 2000; Zeldin 2011). The *desplazado bandido*, however, carries the stigma as “politically subversive” (Global IDP Project 2002: 10) or as having committed some harm and is seen often as a guerrilla (Uribe 2000; Zeldin 2011).

Zeldin also links the stigma of IDP status to racism, as many IDPs are indigenous people or Afro-Colombians. Again, it seems that IDP identity is a strong ‘tag’ that significantly influences the lives of people who have been uprooted.

### **3.5 Displaced Identity and Second Generation**

The experience of being displaced may not always include a physically leaving one’s home; displaced status may be assigned to children born in situations of protracted displacement. Within the field of voluntary migration, an important body of literature (e.g. Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waldinger and Perlmann, 1998; Thomson and Crul, 2007; Vathi, 2011) has emerged related to the second-generation migrants. However, the second generation has been much less researched in forced migration scholarship (Hadjiyanni, 2002). This may be partially due to the fact that forced migration is, in general, a more recent topic of scholarly interest than voluntary migration. In addition,

the concerns of the first generation of forcibly displaced people—those who experience dislocation and major life changes—are mostly acute and extensive. The main exceptions in academia are studies of Palestinian refugees, where even the third generation (Chatty, 2007) has been examined, as well as studies of forced migration in Cyprus (Hadjiyanni, 2002) and in some industrialised societies (Camino, 1994; Knudsen, 1995). Hadjiyanni (2002) refers to a particular identity that refugee children who have been born after displacement not only adopt, but even cultivate. This identity, known as “refugee consciousness,” has also been discussed by Hirschon and Thakurdesai (1978), who found this mentality even among third generations.

Significant research has addressed refugee identity among Palestinian youth. While popular discourse represents Palestinian people as sharing a strong collective identity transmitted from generation to generation, research reveals a more complex picture (Hart, 2004; Chatty, 2007). For instance, Hart (2004, 2008a) explores adolescent masculinity and Palestinian identity among those born in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. Hart (2004, p. 177) claims that although the youngest generation identified strongly with the Palestinian national community, “Palestine was a more distant and abstract concept” for them; unlike their parents, many had not heard the stories of exodus, and their identities were not exclusively or primarily tied to being Palestinian. Hart (2008) further argues that a multitude of masculinities co-existed in the camp. However, Peteet (1995, p. 177) states that “Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon do not refer to themselves as refugees, but use the term ‘returners.’” Similar to Hadjiyanni (2002), Hart (2004) emphasises that the generational differences of those born into protracted displacement situations deserve more attention. In addition, Chatty (2007, p. 273) discusses the existence of multiple identities among Palestinian refugee youth: “this ambiguity and sense of contested identity—being a refugee, a Palestinian, yet born and raised in another country than Palestine—conflicted with the unified identity maintained by their parents and older kin.” The following generations of Palestinians feel certain degree of refugee identity, often strongly linked to their national identity, even if this is not always their dominant identity.

In some cases, second and additional generations have turned away from refugee consciousness. For instance, Malkki (1995) found that Hutu adolescents who had been young children when their families fled felt embarrassed when called ‘refugees’ and

rejected this label. In such cases, the label ‘refugee’ influences young people by alienating them.

Sulava (2010, p. 18) explores the self-perceptions of protracted IDPs in Georgia, including second generations:

IDP youth born in displacement also possess territorial attachment to Abkhazia. Their sense of belonging is mostly generated by the stories narrated in their community and an imposed obligation to remember and never forget.

According to Sulava, as the second generation of this displaced community adapts to their new urban culture, the first generation, fearing that their own traditional culture may vanish, “applies the tactic of transferring collective memories to children from an early age to preserve their identities and the sense of belonging to their ‘homeland’ (Sulava, 2010, p. 18).” Sulava also finds that IDP status often has a negative and insulting connotation for multiple generations in this community. The author discusses the multitudinous and sometimes contradictory identities expressed in IDPs’ narratives as “dilemmas of IDP identity.”

Hence, a significant body of research demonstrates the power of categorising labels to affect the identities and daily lives of the displaced people to whom they are applied. The second and third generations of descendants are strongly influenced by these categories as well, though to a lesser degree. In the case of Cypriot refugee children, who embrace refugee consciousness, or young Hutu refugees in Tanzania, who avoid the refugee status in order not to be stigmatised, the status of being displaced seems to exercise significant influence on young people’s identity as well as their actions. As discussed by Novak (2008), Colombia is no exception in this regard, even for the second generation.

In this work, I follow Hadjiyanni’s (2002) suggestion and regard ‘displaced identity’ not as a single, defining identity, but rather as one of the multiple identities of a displaced person, similar to age and gender. In addition, it can be seen as an identity that people can choose to affirm or reject.

### **3.6 Agency and Oppression Interplay as an Integrative Tool**

A critical focus on the interplay between agency and oppression could strengthen the

policy implementation by shedding light on the relationships between individual and social structures. In policy, internally displaced female adolescents are often regarded as passive victims, vulnerable to being lured or forced into exploitative activities (Heiberg, 2001). In the case of early marriages, this implied victimisation is evident in the widespread use of such labels as ‘forced’ and ‘arranged’ marriage. Rosen (2007) explores agency in adolescence, focusing on child soldiers, and argues that from a humanitarian perspective, children are often not treated as if they have legally relevant agency. In addition, Scalettari (2009, p. 58) discusses that:

Refugees are seen as lacking agency, mostly not doing but being done to; they are forcibly displaced and in need of protection. Migrants are seen as voluntarily migrating and not in need of protection.

This point applies equally to IDPs, who, like refugees, are forcibly displaced. Many practitioners in the policy world have historically shared this perception of forcibly displaced populations as lacking agency.

This view began to shift in the the beginning of 1990s, as the global community started to consider those who were displaced as active participants in their own survival instead of approaching them as passive aid receivers (Byrne and Baden, 1995; Malkki, 1995; Honwana, 1999). Various authors (e.g. James *et al.*, 1998; Jans, 2004; Liebel, 2004) state that children are persons of equal rights who have agency and need to be viewed as social actors in their own lives. Hart (2008) examines personal agency among conflict-affected and displaced adolescents. In addition, Boyden and Berry (2004) analyse the victimisation of female adolescents, as well as their response to sexual abuse (Berry, 2004). With the rise of self-protection programming and research that represents displaced persons as active agents in their own protection, it is more recognised that affected persons exercise agency to be safer or to attain the respect of their rights. In relation to displacement, Omata (2017) and Purkey (2016) argue that agency is now widely promoted by policy.

The reality, however, is that when the concept of agency is used in the policy world, the agency and victimhood dichotomy prevails (Archambault, 2011). In her research on female adolescents, Archambault (2011) critiques rights-based approaches in policy that apply binary frameworks, including violator versus victim. She argues that these often morally unambiguous and emotionally charged dichotomies obscure the real underlying

factors of early marriages, rather than advancing understanding of these marriages and their effects. Ayre and Barrett (2000) explore youth sexual exploitation, a ‘protection problem’ also considered in this study. They note that perceptions of youth sexual exploitation in Britain are also shaped by an offender/victim binary; adolescents involved in sexual exploitation in their study were often portrayed as delinquents.

Over the last several decades, policy discourses and some scholars have positioned prostitution of adolescents as a form of child maltreatment and characterized those engaged in prostitution before age 18 as victims (Phoeneix, 2002; Mitchell *et al.*, 2010). In response, policy critiques have focused on emphasising sex workers’ agency. For instance, Kempadoo (1999) discusses agency among sex workers in the Caribbean, referring to the work of Brennan (1998), where sex work was seen as a “strategy of advancement.” Many women see sex work strictly as work and Paul (1997, p. 153) suggests that sex workers be viewed as “self-employed individuals who decide the location of business, the services to provide, the fees to charge, the hours of service provided per day, and how to avoid work-related risks”. The agency of those involved in prostitution is not only asserted for those over age 18, but has also been identified as an important factor to consider when analysing sexual exploitation of children or their sexual abuse in the context of conflict (Montgomery, 2001a; Berry, 2004). Thus, the current dominant dichotomy is no longer perpetrator/victim, but rather agency/victimhood. Although policy language has evolved in some respects, a dichotomous mindset persists.

Academic, in particular anthropological accounts of the complex interplay between agency and oppression offer a more truthful and promising perspective. To demonstrate, Utas (2005) discusses how young women affected by conflict in Liberia can be simultaneously victims and agents. He suggests that some young women in this setting adopt a tactic of “victimcy” when they self-stage as victims in quest for protection, social mobility or economical reasons. Utas (2005) explains that appearing as a victim opens up possibilities for girls, but they use various tactics to carry out what he calls social navigation in the face of constantly changing opportunities and constraints.

Researchers beyond forced migration scholarship have also offered more nuanced perspectives. For instance, Asad (2000) approaches pain and suffering not as passive

states, but as a type of agency, citing the behaviour of martyrs in Christianity and women's decisions to face childbirth without anaesthetics. Within the context of protection of female adolescents affected by displacement, a focus on agency is especially important in order to avoid the rhetoric of salvation. The Western 'saviour mentality' has been widely critiqued by postcolonial authors. Abu-Lughod (2002) analyses the rhetoric of saving in the case of Muslim women and the politics of the veil. She argues that differences among women worldwide lead to different desires about the future. Abu-Lughod (2002) also outlines that instead of focusing exclusively on the issue of the veil, we should devote more attention to addressing global injustice. Abu-Lughod (2002, p. 786) also emphasizes that "veiling itself must not be confused with, or made to stand for, lack of agency." Hoodfar (2008) interprets veiling as an "adaptive capacity" that enables young women to reach extra-religious objectives.

Bilge (2010) challenges binary perceptions of the veil as representing either subordination to men or resistance to Western hegemony. She argues that seeing agency as solely connected to free will and focusing on minority gender relations hides other oppressions related to 'race' and class division. She proposes an intersectional approach to move beyond the antagonistic conceptions and understand agency as relational and context-specific.

Thus, a body of literature demonstrates that even those experiencing dire situations have the capacity to respond to events in many, often subtle and creative, ways. Conflict-affected, internally displaced adolescents can simultaneously be victims and exercise agency. Holland *et al.* (1998, p. 42) define agency as a "realised capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it." Miller *et al.* (2006) highlights agency as a creative capacity, and Bilge (2010) analyses how notions of divine agency also constitute nature of power. Mahmood (2001), however, defines agency as a "capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (Mahmood, 2001, p. 203) and speaks of "docile agency." Mahmood claims that equating agency with resistance to subordination is too simplistic, leading to analysis that overlooks many motivations and desires. She sees agency, rather, as the "capacity to endure, suffer and persist" (2001, p. 2017). Drawing upon these concepts, I define agency as people's realised spiritual and creative capacity to act upon their world—a capacity that is enabled and constrained by

specific structures and power dynamics. By ‘specific structures’ I refer to historical and cultural contextuality and to the structures of norms and of institutions.

Referring to the other end of the dichotomy—oppression—Young (2009, p. 57) defines this term as “structural phenomena that immobilise or diminish a group.” Crenshaw (1991, p. 1245), however, understands oppression as various factors that hinder a group’s “ability to create alternatives.” This work employs both of these interpretations of oppression. As to victimhood, this study recognizes that “victimhood is a social construction” and “ideas of victimhood may vary across time and space,” thus emphasizing the importance of politics of victimhood (Druliolle and Brett, 2018, p. 2). Yet exploring it in depth in case of Colombia was beyond the scope of this project. When I use the term “victimhood” in this thesis, I follow the conventional way in which policy typically applies this term, which is shaped by legalistic perspective (*ibid.*). However, this general approach to victimhood has been rightfully problematized because it often tends to “lock one into the role of powerless individual overwhelmed by grief, a passive object of compassion and a recipient of aid. In other words, victimhood as a state may in fact negate agency” (*ibid.*, p. 7).

An integrative approach emphasizes the interplay between agency and oppression. On this view, agency is not divorced from victimhood and suffering, but instead calls us to explore the connections, to look at what lies between the binary extremes. In the context of protection, this integrative approach means exploring people’s methods of self-protection in connection with protection policy context, which has been more focused on oppression. Like identity, the concept of agency also invites connection between academic disciplines.

### **3.7 Power – Another Missing Piece in the Protection Puzzle**

Despite a growing body of scholarship on self-protection, policy continues to regard displaced people chiefly as victims, in need of protection from duty bearers or the international community. This view is particularly prominent with regard to the protection of people under 18 years old. According to Valentin and Meinert (2009, p. 26), dominant models of childhood incorporated into the CRC portray “children as innocent victims in need of protection.” This conventional trend is evident in perceptions of female adolescents as solely victims in need of legal protection (Bunting,

2005; Burr, 2002). Power is integral to the issue of protection and power relations are underlying features of protection policy; those who have power can provide protection to those who lack it. Yet power is not given the attention it deserves in discussions and definitions of protection.

In some contexts, displaced female adolescents' lives may be significantly shaped by other types of oppression. For instance, these adolescents may experience overlapping subordination as children and as women, but also as subjects of labelling by humanitarian policies (Zetter, 1991). As stated in my earlier work (Talviste, 2009, p. 16):

Although adolescents carry out adults' responsibilities particularly in conflict-affected situations, they have less social power compared to adults (Hart 2008b; Swaine with Feeny 2004). It is also a widely known fact that many adolescent exploitation cases are a result of coercion, intimidation or indoctrination carried out by adults.

Forcibly displaced female adolescents' protection is also about power since their protection issues are often masked value conflicts; their view of 'protection issues' differs from humanitarians' views and may also differ from their parents' perspectives (Talviste, 2009). It is therefore important to understand a community's power dynamics when exploring possible value conflicts resolutions while implementing protection policy.

Power has been studied within development contexts and post-conflict environments by various authors (e.g. Kabeer, 1994; Honwana, 1999; Pantazidou and Gaventa, 2016). Kabeer (1994) provides a relational analysis of power in her study of women's empowerment strategies and experiences of gender inequality. She applies Lukes' (1974) dimensions of power to examine how certain organisations have tried to empower these women. Lukes (1974) identifies three dimensions of power: overt power, which is observable; indirect power, which is more covert (used to set agendas and to manipulate the rules of the game); and subtle, hidden forms of power, which can prevent demands from becoming recognized as political issues. Pantazidou and Gaventa (2016) also explore applied power analysis and the importance of various typologies of power in development contexts, and Luttrell *et al.* (2009) review existing conceptual approaches to empowerment.

Of particular interest for this work is Honwana's (1999) study of child soldiers (including female adolescents) in Angola, which examines these young people's agency in connection to the limited power they possess. Honwana argues how power is inherent to agency and introduces the concepts of "tactical agency" and "strategic agency." The first refers to the ways in which a person who is subordinated (and thus has limited power) can respond to events in his/her life, mainly in the short term. Those exercising tactical agency often live in often live in certain societal intersections, under complex, difficult conditions and may have multiple contradictory identities (e.g. child and adult, victim and perpetrator). Strategic agency means having more power over events and mastering a wider horizon and long-term consequences. It also means not considering ones' actions as 'lost time,' but rather seeing them as long-term goals related to some sort of gain. Despite some authors exploring power dynamics in forced migration scholarship, (e.g. Grabska 2010; Zetter and Morrissey 2014; Omata 2017), the life-affirming and integrative nature of power has not been sufficiently explored in the context of displacement.

More concretely, power connects, since it permeates everything (Foucault, 1984). As such, power should not be explored as a monolith. In their discussion of revisioning strategies for justice, equality, and peace, Miller *et al.* (2006) describe various forms of power, the best-known of which is 'power over', which "operates to privilege certain people while marginalising others" (Miller *et al.*, 2006, p. 5). Such power can be visible, hidden or invisible.<sup>8</sup> The concept of 'power over' often has negative connotations associated with repression and force, Miller *et al.* also describe more collaborative approaches to power, including "life-affirming power," associated with "the renewal and regeneration of life with all its energies, forces, creativity and chaos" (2006, p. 6). The authors speak of three positive ways of using power. The first is 'power with', which is based on solidarity and respect: "finding common ground among different interests in order to build collective strength" (Miller *et al.*, 2006, p. 6). This power can strengthen a sense of community and spiritual connection. The second, 'power to', denotes "the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world" (2006, p. 6). The third, 'power within', refers to a "person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge, as well as "the capacity to imagine and have hope." According to

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<sup>8</sup> While the first refers to institutions, policies and laws, the category of hidden power encompasses 'unwritten rules' and the intentional exclusion of certain concerns from political agendas. Invisible power has to do with controlling information and shaping meanings.

Miller *et al.*, “spirituality, storytelling, music, dancing and critical reflection can affirm people’s ‘power within’, which can serve as a nourishing force” (2006, p. 6). This conceptualisation is not completely new; it extends the work of such authors as Starhawk (1982), Fromm (1947) and Kreisberg (1992), who also explore alternative conceptualisations of power.

Forced displacement is often an instance of ‘power over’. For instance, in case of Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) might have exercised its ‘power over’ local populations when seeking access to strategic territories to cultivate drugs, forcing residents to flee their homes (Alzate, 2008). Indeed, as discussed above, the forced/voluntary displacement dichotomy often obscures more complex and mixed displacement causes. When the movement is closer to the voluntary end of the continuum, other types of powers will be present. In cases where a person moves mainly due to pull factors (Kunz, 1973), such as relocating to join family members who have already moved to Cartagena, one can refer to the dynamics of ‘power with’. In such cases, if the reasons for migrating still involve a certain degree of coercion, then ‘power over’ remains applicable, interwoven with ‘power with’. Therefore, whatever type of migration is explored, one cannot escape power dynamics.

A holistic understanding of displaced people’s experiences requires an analysis that accounts for transfers and transformations among various types of power, including life-affirming ones. Power is highly malleable and pervasive, constantly transforming. Gaventa (2006) argues that advocates for social change need to understand how power shifts and transformations happen in order to determine how to engage in ways that will significantly change power dynamics.

My work draws on Gaventa’s interpretation of power as “pervasive, embodied in a web of relationships and discourses which affect everyone” as well as “fluid and accumulative,” available to “be used, shared or created by actors and their networks in many multiple ways” (Gaventa, 2006, pp. 23- 24). While Gaventa emphasises public spaces for participation, I focus on more private, intimate spaces to explore the invisible and internalised power dynamics in people’s everyday lives. I do not see power as a ‘zero-sum’ phenomenon (where power is seen as finite, such that when one gains power, some others need to give it up). As to various forms of power, I draw on the typology of Miller *et al.* (2006), which matches my creative participatory worldview,

discussed under the methodology section. I explore ‘power to’ together with ‘power within’ as both having a strong link to a person’s internal world.

Thus, while exploring the research questions with participants, I found it essential to examine how young people and their communities understand and relate to power. In particular, I considered how young people transfer ‘power over’ from one relationship to another, how they transform ‘power over’ into ‘power with’ or ‘power within’ in their daily lives, and how others can support these transformations. I also studied adults’ ‘power over’ adolescents, exploring the inter-generational relations that have been less examined than conjugal relationship in the family setting (Kea, 2013). I also researched how men’s ‘power over’ women is currently operationalized in the lives of internally displaced female adolescents in Cartagena. I sought to understand how these female adolescents cultivated ‘power within’ and expressed ‘power with’.

This chapter has demonstrated how the concept of multiple identities, an understanding of agency and oppression interplay with one another, and a holistic approach to power can enrich our understanding of displaced communities. These concepts can illuminate deeper, more complex themes than have been evident in policy context. The aim of this study is to explore whether these concepts could help policy to adopt a less dichotomous more integrated approach to protection. As suggested by Rattansi and Phoenix (2005) and Szostak (2007), these conceptual tools ought to be applied in an integrated way, using interdisciplinary methods, to explore young people’s experiences and address their protection issues.

Figure 2: De-labelising, De-dichotomising and Connecting IDP Protection Policy



As I thought about how to visualize the ‘repairing’ of the policy cracks under observation in this work, an image of a hand stitching the cracks together appeared. I thus used green thread to represent the analytical concepts that can mend the cracks. The location of labels and analytical concepts in the drawing is random, without any definite aim except to emphasize the cracks and the process of mending.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

In the previous chapter, I argued that policy could adopt a more holistic approach to young lives through the application of three analytic concepts: multiple identities, the interplay between agency and oppression, and an integrated sense of power dynamics. These concepts may help mitigate the endemic disconnect between the policy world and the experiences of displacement-affected female adolescents.

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodological framework and strategies that I used to answer my research questions. First, I will explain the epistemological and ontological premises of my research, as well as my chosen strategies of inquiry. Next, I will discuss how I negotiated access to the Mandela community and review the logistics of my fieldwork and research sampling. After discussing my methods for data collection and analysis, I will examine the issue of representation and address the ethical considerations underpinning this research.

### **4.1 Research Paradigm and Strategies**

#### **4.1.1 Participatory Paradigm**

A sound and holistic research design must be coherent with and well derived from a matching research paradigm. Having a participatory worldview, I chose the participatory paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) as the overarching frame of my research. The participatory paradigm emphasises practical experiential knowledge and the belief that different forms of knowledge, when brought together, can bring about transformation in the world (Heron and Reason, 1997). This paradigm provides a suitable foundation, as I believe that knowing can also happen through art-making—a medium I have employed in this research.

I also chose a participatory paradigm because my focus was on exploring the perspectives of young people. Inspired by co-operative inquiry, this paradigm helps to put youth in a more central place in the research process. A participatory paradigm emphasises democratic participation between the researcher, often seen as facilitator, and the participants. Reason and Bradbury (2011, p. 7) state:

A participatory worldview places human persons and communities as part of their world—both human and more-than-human—embodied in their world, co-creating their world.

Figure 3: My Interpretation of Participatory Paradigm



Each circle signifies a human being and the knowledge that he or she contributes in order to transform the world. The names represent the research participants and myself. I am situated among participants to emphasize a democratic concept of participation between researcher and participants. The location of names in the drawing is random, without any definite aim, except that I put Valentina and Ricardo in central places as their life stories were chosen to be presented in the Chapter 8 in this research.

Another reason why I chose this paradigm was that it does not contrast with other main paradigms. In fact, the participatory paradigm is all-encompassing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Reason and Bradbury, 2011). It encompasses constructivist and feminist perspectives (both also relevant for my research). The conceptual framework of this

dissertation recognises a multitude of social constructions which are contextually situated, and it explores how persons and groups accommodate these constructions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Since my research focused on a community-based analysis of protection, it included elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR): research conducted by, with, and for people who are affected by a certain problem (Kindon *et al.*, 2008). Inspired by PAR, this work is applied research that has an action purpose both in its underlying philosophy and in the way it is carried out. Walter (2009, p. 2) states that “although nearly all social research has some form of social change as motivation, only PAR has change and action as an embedded and critical element of its approach.” However, my research had certain limitations regarding participation. Usually, a key element of PAR is that the problem researched should arise from, and be prioritised by, the community. The research design should also be created in collaboration with the affected people. However, this was not possible due to my physical distance from the community being researched and the practical limitations inherent in a DPhil project.

Drawing on qualitative methods, I applied interpretive and political bricolage. Qualitative research entails the use of multiple methods in order to capture the depth, breadth and richness of the target of the inquiry (Flick, 2002). Thus, I found it to be the most appropriate way to examine young people’s experiences and perceptions. As stated by Asima (2010, p. 71):

It [qualitative research] offers the opportunity to listen to the participants and place them at the centre of the analysis, observing them in their own surroundings and emphasising the gendered accounts of their lived experiences. The qualitative research strategy recognises humans as active and creative, and constantly negotiating, through their actions, to construct and sustain meaning for the world around them.

Qualitative research also seemed the most suitable for analysing identity experiences of the second generation displaced persons (Jones-Correra, 2002), a group of people who constituted an important part of my research sample. Finally, my professional experience suggests that qualitative research is more appropriate for the conflict-affected areas, where challenges of security and access hinder the application of more quantitative methods.

#### **4.1.2 Research Strategies**

I employed an interdisciplinary, multi-method approach. I applied mainly two strategies of inquiry: critical ethnography and life history. In this section, I briefly define these strategies and discuss why I chose them.

##### ***Critical Ethnography***

According to Anderson (1989), critical ethnography is the result of a certain combination of interpretivist, neo-Marxist, and feminist viewpoints. Anderson summarises the essence of critical ethnography as follows:

Critical ethnographers seek research accounts sensitive to the dialectical relationship between the social structural constraints on human actors and the relative autonomy of human agency. Unlike other interpretivist research, the overriding goal of critical ethnography is to free individuals from sources of domination and repression. (Anderson, 1989, p. 249)

Within this study, critical ethnography enabled me to better explore the dialectical representation of human agency and the enabling and constraining structures that influence agency. Through this approach, I explored the agency of female adolescents in relation to their social setting. Due to their age and gender, these adolescents are often characterized as victims in the policy world. My choice of research subject was driven by my desire to make some contribution, however small, to the improvement of these young people's lives. Inspired by feminist emancipatory research strategies (Lather, 1988), I sought to build youth empowerment into my research design through emphasising dialogue and reflexivity in theory generation, and also approaching my research as praxis.

I viewed this research as a "reciprocally educative encounter" (Lather, 1988, p. 571), and my data collection process was shaped by my overall aim of improving these young people's lives. Yet in some ways, I got lost, as Lather (2007) discusses in later work. As I was unable to stay in Cartagena for as long as I had planned (for personal and security-related reasons), I was unable to build enduring relationships with these young persons. Our encounters were too brief to visibly and directly empower these young women. Consequently, it became my principal aim to inform policymakers about the power dynamics that affect young persons' lives and protection in order to advocate for change

in this social context. Yet drawing from Opie (1992), I also tried to empower the youth in more subtle ways, such as avoiding textual appropriation, acknowledging the limitations of this research, looking for contradictory moments, and using analytic reading. I abstained from direct political involvement (Foley and Valenzuela, 2005) during my fieldwork, but my work remains motivated by the desire to raise awareness of the forms of oppression that shape adolescent females' experiences.

### ***Narrative Inquiry and Life Story Approach***

Finally, my work was shaped by narrative inquiry, particularly the life story approach. I used this approach partly because I agree with Atkinson (2007, p. 224) that “we are a storytelling species... We think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story.” Adolescents are no exceptions to this. Indeed, life stories are often associated with the elderly and the need to review one's life in retrospect (Butler, 1963; Erikson, 1964). However, some scholars argue that the capacity to narrate a life story emerges in adolescence, the period when young people often find themselves in identity crises (Habermas and Bluck, 2000). Others say that in childhood, a certain type of life story already exists (Chase, 2005; Dunlop and Walker, 2013). Dunlop and Walker (2013) explore the link between life story, adolescence, and identity. They state that a sense of identity can be reached through narrating a life story. Others (e.g. McAdams, 2003) have explored the relation between identities (particularly their formation) and life story.

As I searched for holistic methodological tools to help mitigate the disconnections characteristic of policy, the life story approach emerged. Life story approach uses narrative, which can be defined as “meaning making through the shaping or ordering the experiences, a way of understanding one's own or other's actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Chase, 2011, p. 421). I believe that a life story approach allows researchers to understand many connections related to young lives that have not been sufficiently considered in the policy world. One such connection is between adolescence and other phases of life.

I also believe that stories are important in an ethical and participatory sense, as they place participants at the heart of the research and reduce the inherent power of the

researcher. Indeed, some young people appeared far more engaged while telling me their stories than while participating in semi-structured interviews, perhaps because storytelling gave them the power and flexibility to choose which aspects of their own lives to emphasize. It was, as Atkinson (2007) discusses, about the respect of young people as storytellers. Finally, narratives also contribute to social change in various ways, whether through narrating one's own journey or through giving voice to others' "silenced lives" (Chase, 2005). Storytelling can lead to the discovery of new insights and inspire change.

My study explored how young women construct their lives through story, emphasizing the storied nature of identity and meaning-making. I also applied the life story approach to comprehend the social realities beyond the stories (Blumer, 1969). I focused on youth perceptions of significant events in their lives (e.g. joining a gang, involvement in sexual exploitation of adolescents, becoming an adolescent mother) and also on their social relations with others.

Participation and transformation are at the heart of my chosen paradigm. My research strategies—critical ethnography and a narrative life story approach—helped link this paradigm to the methods of inquiry discussed below in Section 4.3.

## **4.2 Fieldwork, its Logistics and Negotiating Access**

### **4.2.1 Why Colombia and Cartagena?**

Many factors shaped my decision to conduct research in Cartagena. One was that the country continues to experience one of the most significant IDP crises in the world. Unlike Syria, Nigeria, DRC, Iraq, or Sudan, where numbers of IDPs are also incredibly high, Colombia was safe enough for me to carry out independent research. At the same time, the country does have a certain level of insecurity, which was also important for meaningful research on protection.

I chose Colombia because I was looking for a research position that could "contribute to striking a balance between proximity and distance in the informant–researcher relation" (Carling *et al.*, 2014, p. 51). Inspired by feminist ethnography, I valued a certain sameness that would also help in building proximity, yet I was also looking for further in-depth explanations that are mostly not provided to researchers from the same

ethnicity (Morosanu, 2015). I felt that my age, nationality, gender, and life experience enabled me to bring a combination of various “third positions” to my research in Cartagena (Carling *et al.*, 2014). Referring to the archetypal ethno-national insider/outsider divisions, I am not Colombian and do not have firsthand experience with internal displacement, so I was neither insider nor outsider, but could be seen as a third party (ibid). Yet, being from Estonia, I share with these girls a history of turbulent adolescence affected by ‘protection problems’ in a country that was in transition in 1990s. Moreover, in 1949 my grandparents were deported to Siberia, where my father was born, and my adolescence was shaped by my grandparents’ stories of their uprooting. At the age of 23, I left Estonia and have lived and worked since then in six countries (places where I lived for at least nine months at a time). Thus, I could also be seen as an insider by proxy, since I share the experience of family migration with descendants of IDPs and share other challenges, such as starting from scratch in a new context, with first-generation IDPs. My youth affected by protection issues also could be seen as creating some sameness with research participants if I decided to share my personal background (ibid).

I initially considered conducting research in the Northern Caucasus or Central Asia, more familiar regions where I had worked previously and could communicate with residents in Russian. However, I realised that these locations might give me a false sense of ‘insiderness’. The idea that I could somehow relate to what research participants are experiencing is actually illusory and would likely become a hurdle in my research. Thus, it was important to conduct research in a place that was as unfamiliar to me as possible. Colombia was one such place, as I had never visited it before.

My focus on Cartagena allowed me to study the protracted dimension of Colombia’s internal displacement situation. The situation in Cartagena was different from that of Bogotá, where IDPs continued to arrive. To counterbalance practitioners’ tendency to focus on recent displacement and conflict, I sought to focus on protracted displacement situations (Loescher and Milner, 2009a; IDMC, 2014). These situations are often forgotten, despite that they involve a majority of IDPs worldwide. For instance, in 2011, the majority of the world’s 27 million IDPs were in chronic displacement situations (Loescher and Milner, 2011). Crawford *et al.* (2015, p. 1) write that “in two-thirds of

countries monitored for conflict-induced displacement in 2014, at least 50% of IDPs had been displaced for more than three years.” In order to ensure independent work, I also wanted to conduct my research in a place where the ICRC — my employer when I first started this research—was not active. Last but not least, Cartagena, being a major tourist destination, has also unfortunately become a suitable setting for sexual exploitation among adolescents to develop (Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999). This issue is not unique to Cartagena, but because of the tourism industry, the issue of sexual exploitation of adolescents was more visible and higher on humanitarian agendas in Cartagena than in other Colombian cities. Since I wanted to explore this important dimension of female adolescents’ protection in more depth, Cartagena seemed the most suitable location.

#### **4.2.2. Planning of My Fieldwork**

I conducted fieldwork in the Nelson Mandela community from September 2013 until December 2013. I anticipated that gaining access to research participants would be difficult, especially since I had never visited Colombia before and was seeking to interview people who were affected by various types of violence. Access did indeed prove challenging. Goodhand (2000, p. 8) emphasises that the “right local knowledge, contacts and access through local partners” are crucial for research in conflict-affected countries. Thus, I established contacts in Cartagena from distance. After contacting a Swiss NGO (*Terre des Hommes*) that has an office in Cartagena, I connected with a person who was familiar with the Nelson Mandela community and provided useful information that helped me prepare to move to Cartagena with my son, who was then five months old. When I arrived, he also put me into contact with community residents, who then helped me to find additional participants for my study.

In Cartagena, youth spoke very differently from the classroom Spanish that I had learned. In order to understand participants’ slang and conversational nuances, I sought translation help from an English- and French-speaking research assistant. Yet “ethnography is a kind of translation” by itself (Sturge, 2014, p. 5), with its own limitations. Asad (1986) critiques the presumption of authority among ethnographers who seek to expose underlying truths rather than adopting the research participants’ own perspectives; this form of ethnography constitutes an act of translation that is strongly shaped by hierarchies of power. Therefore, using an interpreter could also be

seen as adding another layer that takes the researcher one step further from communicating participants' perspectives.

However, working with a research assistant also had its advantages; in addition to translating, she helped me address security concerns and facilitated access to participants. She was also a key informant (Edwards, 1998). With her outgoing personality and communication skills, my interpreter gracefully put participants at ease and helped build trust between us. Since she was younger than I, she also helped to bridge the age gap between myself and the adolescent participants. Thus, as emphasised by Edwards (1998), a research assistant can have a significant influence on a research project. This assistant was an active presence, rather than an unseen intermediary; I was clearly researching *with* her, not *through* her.

#### **4.2.3 Security and Getting to Mandela**

I had anticipated that I would need to consider the issue of security. In some ways, my fieldwork was conducted in an “after the fire” situation (Grabska, 2010), as I researched in a community that had escaped conflict and violence. Yet I was aware that many Colombian cities remain troubled by gang-related violence. The encounter with violence when conducting fieldwork in this part of the world has been discussed in detail by Rodgers (2007).

Mandela residents held diverse perceptions of the area's security. For most participants, and as mentioned by Bradley (2012) and Rodgers (2003), current insecurity is attributable to gang violence. Non-political crime was clearly dominating all other types of violence in Mandela. Luis Fernando, age 42, stated: “I was brought up in the streets of Boston, one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in Cartagena, and I think Nelson Mandela is a quiet peaceful place.” Adolescents who attended school in Mandela mentioned *pandialles* (gangs) as their main security concern but said that they mostly felt safe, except for certain places and times. A female adolescent participant remarked: “At home or with family, one feels protected, but in the street or another place, one does not know what could happen.” A male adolescent said that he feels safe at home but added, “For me, it is dangerous at school, and in front of school and in the evening, because many fights have happened.” Those who were out of school and involved in gangs felt more at risk.

The presence of gangs affected my study more than I had anticipated. Everyone agreed that I should not walk alone and should only visit the *barrio* (neighbourhood) during the daylight. Gangs also altered the design of my research, since I put more focus on them once it became clear that they were perceived as the top threat to protection for young women. Although not as remarkable as in Rodgers' case (2007), my study thus had some elements of what Rodgers calls "involuntary research." I could not ignore gangs, as they directly affected my security as well as that of my research participants.

Decisions about security became easier the longer I stayed in Cartagena, as I started to understand that the *barrio*'s reputation for danger was somewhat exaggerated. My research assistant also offered helpful insights. Although she was not from Mandela herself, but from a middle-class neighbourhood in Cartagena, she was 'local' enough to read cues about security, and she soon developed a good sense of what was safe for us to do.

After discussions with locals, I decided to use a mixture of transport methods to travel the 1.5-hour distance between Mandela and my apartment in a safer district. First, I travelled by *collectivo* (shared taxi) to the centre, where I met my research assistant. Together we took a bus for the last 20-30 minutes of the journey. To travel by private taxi—as some NGOs initially suggested for security reasons—would have meant significantly fewer trips, due to the cost. It was important for me to spend as much time as possible within the community, especially considering that my access was restricted to daytime only.

#### **4.2.4 Negotiating Access in Mandela**

Like many researchers focused on conflict-affected populations (Goodhand, 2000), I worked through a local organisation to recruit participants. The local leader I met through *Terre des Hommes* and the leader of a grassroots organisation spread the word about my research, helping me to recruit participants.

I also met participants through local schools. My research assistant's mother, who worked as a teacher in a school in Mandela, set up meetings with several schools in the community. This provided a precious opportunity for me to diversify my sample (most participants I had already recruited were not enrolled in school) and reduce selection

bias. Other scholars have also used schools as a way to recruit adolescents (Chapman and Maclean, 1993; Fuligni *et al.*, 2005).

The other way of finding participants was the snowballing technique, where people used their social networks to recruit more participants. Snowball sampling has been widely used for researching at-risk and marginalised adolescents (e.g. Petersen and Valdez, 2005; Seth *et al.*, 2005). Having these three different entry points for snowballing—the local leader, the local organisation, and the school—allowed me to recruit a more diverse sample of community members.

Two months into my fieldwork, it became apparent that I could not access the adolescents and young women who were involved in sexual exploitation in Mandela because of the stigma attached to that profession. Since speaking to young women involved in sexual exploitation was important for this study, my assistant and I approached young women who worked on the streets in the city centre. This “researcher in the square” approach (Vathi, 2011) is often used to gain access to difficult-to reach populations (Abrams, 2010; Vearey *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, I also asked some people from outside of Mandela to participate. I chose these participants because of their experience being involved in prostitution or working with organisations that fight child sexual exploitation in Cartagena. These participants’ insights and perspectives helped to situate my research in the wider context of the city.

#### **4.2.5 Sampling and Respondents**

Since this was a qualitative study, I did not aim for statistical representativeness. However, certain ‘representativeness’ was important, as I wanted to reflect the age and gender differences that are typical for any community. Therefore, I aimed for “symbolic representation” as discussed by Ritchie *et al.* (2003). For that reason, I used defining features of my non-probability sample, which were identified prior to data collection, as my criteria of selection. I therefore knew that I would be interviewing adolescent girls and boys, both IDPs and non-IDPs, as well as younger children, the ‘parents’ generation’, and service providers. I had also decided to talk to adolescents who attended school and led a more ‘typical’ life, as well as those who constitute more ‘extreme cases’ from a protection perspective. Referring to Patton’s (1990) categories

of sampling, I tried to use a hybrid approach when approaching the sample of adolescents. First, I used typical case sampling, meaning that I chose to “illustrate or highlight what is typical, normal, or average” (Patton, 1990, p. 182). Second, for exploring sexual exploitation of adolescents, gang affiliation, and early motherhood, I drew on intensity sampling: “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely” (Patton, 1990, p. 171). Plummer (2001) proposes both intensity sampling and critical case sampling as ways to determine whose stories to focus on. Indeed, I also used the latter method, as I looked for stories that exemplified and gave rich insight into certain experiences. In Plummer’s (2001) terms, I sought “marginal cases” for the life stories: young people who live between two worlds.

My sampling was purposeful but also had opportunistic elements. As mentioned, when the fieldwork showed me that I would not be able to speak of some ‘extreme cases’ within Mandela, I decided to include those involved in sexual exploitation or sex work from other neighbourhoods. While designing the research, I expected that there were more adolescents who had arrived in Mandela in the years prior to my study. However, my fieldwork revealed that most adolescents in Mandela were second-generation IDPs. I welcomed this unexpected change as an opportunity, though it altered the focus of my research.

I determined sample size in the field using theoretical saturation. When I stopped interviewing participants, I felt confident that I had included enough constituencies and the necessary diversity. My sample size was also connected to the methods that I used; as narrated life-stories were among my main research methods, I focused on identifying persons with whom to undertake the intensive study that life story requires, not on recruiting the highest possible number of participants.

I interviewed a total of 58 participants (Table 1) through different types of interviews. Out of these, 72% (42 persons) were females and 28% (16 persons) were male. 26 participants (44% of total participants, 22 girls and 4 boys) were under the age of 18 years during the interview and 24 of them enrolled to school. All research participants were Colombians; 50 persons lived, had lived or worked daily in Nelson Mandela community, 8 were from other neighborhoods (key informants or women involved in sexual exploitation or sex work). In total, 38 interviews were carried out: eight were in groups; ten were life stories and the rest semi-structured interviews.

**Table 1: Research Participants by Category**

	<b>Name of Category</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
1.	Adolescent girls and young women	19
2.	Younger girls (less than 12 years old)	9
3.	Adolescent boys and young men (12-24 years)	12
4.	Adults (all parents themselves of adolescents or older children)	4
5.	Key informants, including service providers	9
6.	Women outside Mandela involved in sexual exploitation or sex work	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>

It should be noted that some participants were interviewed twice; for instance, some participated in a group discussion followed by a semi-structured interview or life story.

Although some participants could have fit into multiple categories (such as ‘parents’ and ‘boys’), I decided to classify each individual into just one category in the table above to give an overview of the sample. In the case of multiple overlapping categories, the chosen category was based on the nature of the information the participants shared. More often than not, the data that key informants shared was strongly influenced by their function (e.g. psychologist, community leader).

Although policy sees 18 years of age as a milestone and adolescents fall in a category below this age, in order to reflect participants’ perspectives, I decided not to have a separate category of ‘adolescent’, as the boundaries where this period begins and ends were fluid for youths. I also deliberately asked young adults about their retrospective perspective on adolescence.

#### **4.2.6 Places and Time of Interviews**

Like many other scholars (e.g. Maxwell, 1997; Shafiei *et al.*, 2015), I asked participants to choose locations where they would feel most comfortable for interviews. Some chose their own homes or relatives’ homes, while others preferred offices or public places, such as cafes or restaurants, that were all outside of the community. One girl wanted to

meet in front of her school prior to her classes. Most participants who were involved with the community organisation that I discussed above chose to be interviewed in the building where this grassroots group met regularly. I also conducted one interview in an NGO office in the centre of Cartagena and two in my rental apartment. The focus groups all took place in the school, in a room provided by the school management. Like Herzog (2005), who explored the meaning of interview locations, I considered the influence of place as part of my interpretation of findings.

I conducted a group interview with women who were involved in sexual exploitation or sex work on a private corner of a city square. I suggested a café nearby, but the participants preferred to talk outside. Individual interviews with those involved in sex work occurred in bars or cafes in the city centre, at the participants' suggestion. One of these women also wanted to speak in the street. It seemed that those who wanted to speak outside were concerned about losing some clients, an interviewing concern that other researchers have also discussed (e.g. Gomez, 2014). They may also have feared that a café would not allow enough privacy, although these women did not seem to be concerned about hiding anything.

I feel that location *per se* did not have a significant influence on most of my interviews. However, during two interviews in participants' homes, I felt that the presence of family members close by might have affected the participant. The possible impact of family members on research results has been considered and discussed as well (Aquilino, 1993; MacDonald *et al.*, 2006). In order to address this impact, I proposed coming at another time, and one of the girls agreed. We later met in a more private setting. The other girl preferred to continue, despite her relatives' presence.

I conducted two interviews in the evening and all others during regular office hours, as I could not visit Mandela at night due to safety concerns. Similar to other studies (Hopkins, 2006; Hussain, 2013), I often needed to reschedule interviews and sometimes ended up interviewing different people than I had originally planned to speak with that day.

I recorded the interviews with my mobile phone, after asking for participants' permission and explaining the purpose of the research. It was better to use a phone than an official recorder with a distinct microphone, which is used by some journalists. The

phone allowed a less official and more trust-building setting for the interviews.

### **4.3 Data Collection Methods**

For data collection, I used a mixed-method approach that included semi-structured and life story interviews as well as group discussions. During some focus groups, I also used an arts-based method of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). I also used participant observation and relied on some written sources, such as local newspaper coverage of events in Mandela.

I chose mixed methods because each method brings a different type of insight, so together they complement each other. For instance, group discussions allowed me to use arts to generate ideas and raise issues, while semi-structured interviews deepened my understanding of the complexity and underlying meaning of issues. Observation allowed me to better comprehend “how events or behaviours naturally arise” in context, as discussed by Ritchie (2003). Written sources complemented these methods by highlighting community’s history and image within Cartagena. Life stories provided valuable insights into the values of young people.

As most of my research participants were young people who communicate in many different ways, a mixed methods approach seemed most appropriate (Barker and Weller, 2003; Morrow and Richards, 1996; Sapkota and Sharma, 1996). Participants had the chance to be involved with various methods. This increased their participation by giving them more occasions to collaborate and contribute to the study.

#### **4.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with all different sub-samples, except younger girls, with whom I preferred to interact solely in-group discussions. For ethical reasons, more general and less sensitive questions that I asked in a group setting seemed more age appropriate.

I applied semi-structured interviews to facilitate a good balance between focused structure and flexibility so that participants could choose to bring up other issues beyond those addressed in my questions (Schensul *et al.*, 1999; Legard *et al.*, 2003). This was a way to produce data that was co-created by researcher and participants.

Sondhi (2013, p. 61) expresses it well:

This method facilitates the agency of the respondents, by encouraging the subject to shape the agenda of the research as much as the researcher, within the predefined framework of the overall research project. This participation of the research subject is important if research is to be conducted ‘with’ or ‘for’ the participants rather than ‘about’ them.

The guide I used for semi-structured interviews is available in Appendix A.

#### **4.3.2 Focus Groups**

I employed group discussions or focus groups (I use these terms interchangeably) for several reasons. First, focus groups were consistent with my study’s participatory worldview, which recognizes the importance of collective experiences. Additionally, focus groups enabled me to understand the experiences and agency of internally displaced adolescent girls more effectively than I could have done through individual interviews alone. I hoped that for these young women, hearing each other’s perspectives in our focus groups would contribute to potential change, including more self-protection. Madriz (2003) argues that focus groups may empower women more than individual interviews by validating their everyday experiences and survival strategies. Some feminists consider focus groups one of the most suitable methods for collecting data, as they reveal the complexity of resistance narratives (Madriz, 2003). My experience confirmed this view; for example, those involved in sex work shared resistance narratives as they described their responses to male clients who had hurt them. Group interviews can also encourage free expression of opinions and diminish the power disparity between researcher and participants (Frey and Fontana, 1993; Wilkinson, 1998).

In addition to these ethical reasons, I also used focus groups for practical reasons. First, I agree with Madriz (2003) that group discussions may foster a less intimidating interaction with the researcher than individual interviews. Since adolescent girls are often more shy than adult women, a group setting may encourage some of them to open up more than they would otherwise. Second, as I had only three months in Colombia, focus groups enabled me to gather a significant quantity of data in a shorter time than one-to-one interviews would permit. Finally, I had been using focus groups in my own work for seven years and felt confident with this method.

Since I aimed to strengthen connections between policy and academy, I explored whether data collection methods used during my doctoral research could also be valuable for practitioners in their work with internally displaced adolescents. My experiences with the arts-based method and the life story discussed below may be of interest in this regard.

I utilized two general types of focus groups. The first were small, spontaneous groups of up to five participants—usually people who were related or knew each other well. On two occasions, I met with groups of boys who had been involved in gangs together. I also met with a family, a small group of service providers, and a group of women who work in the street providing sex services. The second type of focus group was larger and more organized. I conducted these group discussions in the school, where the school management mobilised interested participants whose parents had given their informed consent for group interviews.

These groups discussed themes based on my four research questions. For the interviews conducted in the school, I used a pre-designed topic guide (see Appendix B). In the smaller groups, I followed the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) that was longer and did not include arts-based tasks. I shall now explain, in more detail, the arts-based methods that I used during the larger and more structured focus groups.

#### **4.3.3 Arts-Based Inquiry**

As McNiff (2008) has argued, art-making may be simultaneously considered a method of inquiry, analysis, and representation. McNiff (2008, p. 36) states:

All of our senses and ways of communication play an integrated role in the process of understanding experience, and it offsets the idea that words and subsequent interpretations conceal the essence of an experience.

I agree with McNiff (2008) and Bochner and Ellis (2003, p. 506) that art is “a means of producing knowledge and contributing to human understanding.” I also draw on Eisner (1998), who states that research is more complete when it incorporates various ways of examining, interpreting and representing the world. Thus, I encouraged participants in the focus groups to express what protection meant for them through painting and collage-making. This activity lasted about half an hour and was followed by a roundtable, where participants could choose to describe and reflect upon what their

artwork represented. I kept this systematic design consistent to allow comparisons across all of the school focus groups, as I wanted to understand the distinctiveness of adolescent girls related to other groups (e.g. younger girls and adolescent boys).

In general, drawing has recently gained prominence as a research method and a way to enhance participation and psychosocial support among war-affected children (Mitchell *et al.*, 2011; Literat, 2013; Akesson *et al.*, 2014). My rationale for incorporating this approach was that it would increase the level and quality of participation while further minimising the researcher's power and maximising the role of young people in the research process. Lincoln (1995) links arts-based inquiry to participatory action research, and Finley (2005) argues that it is an appropriate way to include communities and contribute to political activism. Feminists have also used arts-based inquiry to emphasise empowerment through art-making (Clover, 2011).

I applied arts-based inquiry only in the school focus groups. I found this method enriching in that it opened up a much wider and deeper understanding of the concept of protection than the other discussions. Art-based focus groups also brought me closer to young people in a short time because art -making is such a powerful ice-breaker.

#### **4.3.4 Life Story Interview**

I invited ten young people to tell their stories. As mentioned above, this selection was made through theoretical and intensity sampling based on the outcomes of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Thus, I conducted life story interviews during the last part of my fieldwork and contextualized them with data collected through other methods. I initially planned to only include girls, but participants' concerns about protection were so strongly linked to the behaviour of young men that I decided to include some young males' stories as well.

I used a semi-structured approach to the life story interviews. I asked participants to imagine their lives as a book with various chapters, a method discussed by McAdams (2007). Specifically, I invited participants to describe the title of each main chapter in their lives so far and to imagine future chapters. This was especially relevant since these young participants still had the majority of their lives ahead of them. After naming the chapters of their lives, participants were asked to tell me about each chapter. To

minimize surface-level answers, I used high- and low-point questions, also used by McAdams (2007). In other words, I asked them to identify the high (happiest) points and low (most painful and difficult) points of each chapter in their lives (see Appendix B).

With only one exception, my life story interviews occurred in single sittings and usually lasted about one hour. Referring to Plummer's (2001) categorisations, I used short and edited life stories. These were not comprehensive, but topical. For instance, particular themes were introduced—such as gang involvement, adolescent motherhood, or sexual exploitation of adolescents—and participants chose what they wanted to emphasise among their experiences.

#### **4.3.5 Observation and Written Sources**

Inspired by ethnography, I hoped to carry out participant observation as a complementary data collection method. However, after arriving in Cartagena I realised that this would not be possible because, due to security constraints, my access to the Mandela community was more limited than I had anticipated. Various scholars have carried out participant observation in dangerous social contexts and discussed how they managed danger (Sluka, 1990; Lee-Treweek Linkogle, 2000; Nilan, 2002). For my research, participant observation would have meant staying overnight in the neighbourhood and visiting dangerous places with young people involved in gangs and sexual exploitation. While assessing the level of risk I could accept, I realised that as the mother of five-month-old who was with me in Cartagena, I was not ready to immerse myself in the community in these ways.

Nevertheless, I did carry out observations while visiting the community during the day, drafting field notes between my interviews and in the evenings. This decision was motivated by the hope that adding observation to my methodological toolbox would strengthen the rigor of my research (Adler and Adler, 2000; Vathi, 2011).

I carried out observation while walking to the bus on my way to or back from Mandela, exploring the streets of Mandela, and sitting in cafes or restaurants. The consequent recorded field notes were categorised chronologically by my visits to the community and interviews outside of the community. The field notes were particularly useful for

capturing the context and recording the events and my feelings on the data collection process, as well as ideas for data analysis.

In addition to observation, I used newspaper articles that a member of the community had collected. This introduced the possibility of bias, as this person most probably cut out the articles he found of interest related to Mandela. The articles were all collected from *El Universal*, a local Cartagena newspaper, between 2001 and 2010. However, the majority of articles referred to events between 2004 and 2007.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis and Representation**

I conducted data analysis continuously through different stages, using a combination of various methods to process the collected information. First, preliminary analysis was interwoven into the fieldwork; based on this analysis, I drafted a thematic report that outlined the first key themes. Then, I began a more in-depth analysis based on several readings of the interview transcripts (Johnson *et al.*, 2004; Riessman, 2012). My approach to analysis combined elements of constant comparison from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Boeije, 2002; Ezzy, 2002;) and narrative analysis (Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 2012). This analysis was accompanied by participants' own self-analysis, our dialogue about their collages (Capous-Desyllas, 2010; Greenwood, 2012), power analysis (Kreisberg, 1992; Miller *et al.*, 2006), and using art-making and writing as analysis (O'Leary, 2004; McNiff, 2008; Rapley, 2011). I will discuss these further below.

Other researchers have also used 'layered analysis' within the framework of a PhD thesis in Migration Studies (Sondhi, 2013). Combining multiple analytical approaches enabled me to develop a more comprehensive understanding and to assure coherence between my chosen epistemology, research questions, data collection methods, and analytical tools.

##### **4.4.1 Preliminary Analysis**

While carrying out my fieldwork, I took notes by hand in addition to recording most interviews. I did this in order to have a back-up in case, for some unforeseen reason, recorded data could not be used. Handwritten notes also enabled me to carry out a preliminary analysis, confirming or rejecting analytical ideas both during and between

the interviews (Rapley, 2011).

#### **4.4.2 Analysing Transcripts and Arts-Based Data**

In total, 36 interviews were transcribed. Approximately one-third was transcribed during my fieldwork by a person I hired locally for that purpose. The same person transcribed more interviews after my fieldwork was completed. Later, I used the online company Odesk to hire transcribers who were from Latin America and were familiar with the slang used by young people. Since I had limited knowledge of Spanish (and particularly of regional slang), I decided that this approach would produce higher-quality transcriptions

Drawing on Johnson *et al.* (2004) and Riessman (2012), I completed several readings of transcripts and compared categories of data for conceptual similarities and differences (Boeije, 2002). I also practiced “analytic reading” (Opie, 1992) and looked for marginal, contradictory aspects that could expand theoretical knowledge.

For analysing art-based data, I used the following process. First, I asked participants to share their own interpretations of the art they had created. Second, I applied the method of constant comparison to arts-based group transcripts, just as I had done for the other transcripts, to explore emerging themes in participants’ paintings or collages. Once, I also used the participant’s own self-analysis of her life story. Another participant read part of her life story transcript and outlined certain paragraphs and then explained to me why she had chosen to emphasize these sections of her story.

I believe that writing is a “creative act in what knowledge is produced” and that we “write for discovery” (Rolfe, 1997, p. 442). I share O’Leary’s (2004, p. 206) belief that “ideas almost always evolve as you write” through “iterative engagement with narrative, discourse and/or text.” Writing was key for the evolution of my ideas throughout my research. Since I view writing as a form of thinking and analysis (Rolfe, 1997; O’Leary, 2004; Rapley, 2011; Kamler and Thomson, 2014), ‘writing up’ was not just a way to report my research findings, but also a process of “coming to understand” (Rolfe, 1997, p. 444). For instance, while I reviewed transcripts and wrote the first draft of this dissertation, the processes of thinking and writing were inherently linked. In this sense, writing was not principally about communicating, but about thinking: “the

construction and interpretation of meaning” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 206), “a breaking down of knowledge in order to understand it” (Rolfe, 1997, p. 443) and an exploration of how disparate concepts converged to create a whole experience (Singh, 1997). While writing the second draft, however, I moved back-and-forth between analysing ‘raw data’, reviewing my first draft, and revisiting other scholars’ claims about similar issues. Redrafting was about moving “from the production of specific descriptive understandings, through to broader synthesis, and on to crafting significant, relevant, logical, and coherent storylines” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 206).

Writing was thus integral for my analysis; in addition, I created drawings and other artwork to conceptualise my ideas (McNiff, 2003; Rapley, 2011;). I used this method to support reflexivity (Capous-Desyllas 2010) and to achieve clarity and harmony in my ideas. Like Davis and Butler Kisber (1999), as well as Capous-Desyllas (2010) who conducted arts-based inquiry with sex workers, I saw art-making as a powerful analytic strategy. Referring to Eisner (1998), I experienced that there are many ways of knowing and that knowledge is not merely discovered, but produced. In short, drawing on various scholars (Guillemin, 2004; O’Connor and Petch, 2012), I regard both art-making and writing as embodied and contextualised ways of knowledge production that are interwoven with thinking and reading in the process of data analysis.

#### **4.4.3 Data Representation**

Participation and creativity are the vital threads of my work. Since I believe that data representation is just as important as data collection and analysis, I sought to employ non-traditional and creative approaches at all stages of my research, including data representation through art-making (Eisner, 1997; Capous-Desyllas, 2010; McNiff, 2003). For instance, I incorporated some of the adolescent girls’ collages and paintings into my thesis. I also included artwork that I created while analysing data, so that I, too, could approach art-making as a form of knowing (Bochner and Ellis, 2003). Upholding my commitment to co-creation, I present in the Epilogue an artwork that combine participants’ and my own creations. Drawing on Banks and Banks’ (1998) work on fiction and social research, I also used fictionalised material for confidentiality and protection purposes. Confidentiality as a motive for fictionalising has also been mentioned by other scholars (e.g. Kamler and Thomson, 2014). I did this by applying various elements of fiction, such as character, plot, description and figurative language.

For instance, the characters who are introduced in the vignettes are fictional; however, they were created based on data collected during my fieldwork, including my field notes. These vignettes are used to describe the community and its people. Harris and Johson (2000, p. 4) state that "ethnography literally means 'a portrait of a people.'" Fettermann (1998, p. 1) states that "ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. The description may be of a small tribal group in an exotic land or a classroom in middle-class suburbia." As Chatty and Hundt (2005) maintain, while examining adolescence in the context of forced displacement, youth experience needs to be explored within a family and community context. Therefore, these fictionalized vignettes represent genders and generations who shape this community but were not the main focus of my study. I was also inspired by Powles' (2000) narrative ethnography that represents refugee life through stories.

My data collection was strongly contextualised by my position as a foreigner and a new mother, with my first-born accompanying me in Cartagena. In later stages of the project, my data representation was embedded into the social contexts of being a humanitarian practitioner and a mother of three children (by then) living in Geneva. I see data analysis as a bridge between these two forms of situated knowledge, embedded within the contexts of both data collection and representation.

## **4.5 Ethics, Reflexivity and Positionality**

### **4.5.2 Obligations to Participants and Others**

I chose *Ethical Guidelines of Social Research Association* as my study's framework since these guidelines accommodate a variety of disciplines within social research and are thus particularly suited to my interdisciplinary work. I also draw on the work of Leadbeater *et al.* (2006) that discusses the ethics of community-based research with youth.

In keeping with my participatory worldview, I based my research on core global values such as: respect, equality, justice, participation, creativity, interdependence, and responsibility. Related to the latter are concerns for the wellbeing of others, applied through preventing harm and benevolence. These principles also guided my methods. For example, arts-based inquiry enabled me to practice respect, equality, participation and creativity during the research process by increasing group participation, diminishing

researcher/participant power inequalities, and inviting all participants to cultivate and share their own creativity.

Prior to my fieldwork, I prepared an informed consent form (see Appendix C) in English and Spanish (that also contained a section on parental consent in cases when participants were minors). In addition, I provided an information leaflet that included my photo, contact information, and a written explanation with frequently asked questions about my research objectives and the meaning of ‘informed consent’. Prior to each interview, I orally explained the form, what it meant to sign it, and why it was necessary to do so before participating in the study. While working with minors, I put particular emphasis on explaining, in child-friendly lay terms, the purpose of my work and the importance of the form.

Leadbeater *et al.* (2006) draw attention to the complexities of informed consent when there are multiple stakeholders. To assure that various risks and benefits are well-considered and addressed, I initially negotiated the consent of the school management team, who then discussed my research and asked for parents’ approval during a parents’ meeting. It was thus agreed that minors whose parents had attended the meeting could participate in this research. The young people themselves always agreed to sign the written form. In addition, I asked a separate informed consent for the use of children’s and adolescents’ artwork.

My aim was to facilitate maximum participation by finding the most appropriate medium of communication with all participants. For instance, I was flexible with appointment times, locations, and length of interviews. In addition, I used communication aids appropriate to participants’ age, such as drawings. As discussed by Boyden (2004), I also ensured that my research did not undermine a young person’s security in any way. I was aware that some adults in Mandela mistrusted one another as a result of violence that had permeated social relationships in this community. As Boyden (2004) observes, some participatory methods that work well in peacetime may not be appropriate in insecure contexts; I sensed this concern in Mandela as well and avoided certain questions and preferred with some gang members to speak individually, instead in groups (Leadbeater *et al.* 2006).

In my work, confidentiality was strongly linked to safety and ethics. All possible

measures were taken to ensure participants' safety, starting with storing data in such a way that respondents' identities could not be traced. Thus, I used fictionalised names and places to preserve information safely and prevent disclosure of participants' identities. I also decided not to reveal the name of the school or community organisation where I recruited participants. As for those involved in sex work and in gangs, I only interviewed them outside of their community.

The ethics of caring includes being prepared in case some participants wanted and/or needed to be referred to specialised services, whether in the medical, social or legal domains. Similarly to Jansson and Benoit (2006), who conducted research with street-involved youth, including young persons involved in the sex trade, I worked closely with *Terre des Hommes*, a service provider and reference in relation to local child protection legislation about sexual exploitation. Therefore, I prepared contacts and phone numbers in case this was necessary, and indeed, one participant was interested in such information. In general, I tried to be vigilant in order to avoid undue intrusion and selected questions carefully to avoid causing distress. My research assistant helped with this effort; being Colombian, she captured all shades of the conversation and helped to ensure that the ethics of caring were well applied during the interviews.

One ethical challenge was my feeling that I was not 'giving back' enough. My work aims to contribute to transforming young people's lives at a policy level, but at the individual level, I often felt that these young people gave me more than I was able to give them. One girl, who had her first child close to the time I had mine, asked me to be her child's godmother. After some reflection, I turned down this request because, among other reasons, I felt that I could not make this decision without being influenced by the sensation that I was not giving enough to the community. During my stay, it helped to keep in mind that this feeling was most probably haunting me because of the contrast between my research in Cartagena and my former humanitarian work with the ICRC, where my interviews had often led to concrete tangible gains for the people.

I also remained mindful of my ethical obligations to colleagues, particularly in regard to using an arts-based method. In order to keep this method open to assessment and scrutiny by my colleagues, I attached the topic guide I used (see Appendix B), along with examples of participants' collages.

Another consideration was my previous employer and funder, the ICRC. In order to avoid a conflict of interest (Leadbeater *et al.* 2006) and to assure researcher independence, Cartagena was a good choice, since the ICRC was not working directly in this city. I also had internal conversations with colleagues to assure that my research would be independent and that the ICRC would not need to withhold the publication of my findings. Our mutual obligations were also clarified through a training agreement. I took a study leave while conducting my research in order to ensure my independence as a researcher.

#### **4.5.3 Reflexivity**

Drawing on feminist ethnography, my research was built on continual reflexivity (Sondhi, 2013). I agree with Berger (2015, p. 219) who states that “reflexivity is a major strategy for quality control in qualitative research, understanding how it may be impacted by the characteristics and experiences of the researcher is of paramount importance.” In this research, reflexivity is understood as “an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). Referring to Hsiung (2010), reflexivity is thus about exploring both oneself as researcher as well as the research relationship. I shall below focus on exploring my “conceptual baggage,” my assumptions, and how my preconceptions impacted my research decisions, such as the selection and wording of research questions (Hsiung 2010). In the subsequent section about positionality, I will turn to examining the research relationships in more depth.

Kirby and McKenna (1989, p. 32) define conceptual baggage as “a record of your thoughts and ideas about the research question at the beginning and throughout the research process. It is a process by which you can state your personal assumptions about the topic and the research process.” As I reflected on my research questions and how they evolved, I realized how strongly my practitioner background had shaped them. The research interest of my thesis emerged significantly from my work as Protection Adviser, during which I became increasingly aware of existing disconnection between the way that policy practitioners understood protection and the way that displacement-affected persons perceived this concept. The reflexive process revealed that I had some

assumptions about protection and displacement—probably shaped by my practitioner background—that shifted considerably throughout this work. For instance, I believed that internal displacement constitutes another level of vulnerability in relation to protection and that IDP status is a powerful label. Both of these preconceptions were challenged during my research in Mandela. Making my conceptual baggage more explicit enabled me to revise my research questions and re-frame the research topic (Hsiung 2010). For instance, I realized that young men needed to take a much more central stage in my research than I had initially planned.

Similarly to Sondhi (2013), I kept in mind throughout my analysis that I “interpret” research participants’ experiences and tried to be aware of how my own background, as well as theirs, might affect this process. Among other strategies, I practiced reflexivity through writing field notes that allowed me to capture my understandings, the challenges encountered, and how my subjectivity affected the research process. I explored how I was “connected to the research theoretically, experientially, emotionally” (Haynes, 2012, p.78). I remained aware of my own personal motivations inspired by feminist research (in addition to my academic aims). Due to these motivations, I experienced internal conflict during some interviews as I considered how much to disclose my personal experience; this challenge has also been discussed by Haynes (2012).

One of the challenges that I noted in my reflexive practice was the question of what language to use in this work. Exploring the disconnect between youth and policy practitioners meant working with several ‘languages’: local youth vernacular, academic discourses, and policy language. As discussed in more depth in the 6th Chapter, a considerable amount of effort went into determining whether I should use the terms ‘adolescent’ and ‘youth’ interchangeably or whether, for instance, female adolescents should be called ‘girls’ or ‘women’ or both in this work.

In a similar vein, I needed to make choices about what language to apply in relation to female adolescents’ transactional sex, because these word choices matter and impact the research context. Among others, such terms as sexual exploitation (used by service providers) and prostitution and sex work (put forward by female adolescents and women selling sex) emerged in the interviews in Cartagena. In keeping with the participatory paradigm, I wanted to foreground the perceptions of directly affected

persons; this effort was central to the purpose of my research. Yet I was aware of the dangers of using such terms as ‘prostitution’ and ‘sex work’, in particular for those under the age of 18 (Barrett and Melrose, 2003; Dodsworth, 2015; Interagency Working Group, 2016). I was also aware of the shift in thinking and discourse from “‘child prostitution’” towards “‘child sexual exploitation.’” that has taken place over the last decades (Melrose, 2013). In addition, several authors discuss how young people who are sexually exploited do not initially see their own experience as a form of exploitation (Dodsworth, 2015; Pearce, 2017). Pearce (2017, p. 156), for instance, discusses how “‘children’s disclosure of sexual abuse and exploitation is inhibited through lack of awareness’”; thus, young persons may not realize that they have been exploited. Dodsworth (2015, p. 13) also emphasizes that using ‘prostitution’ involves referring historically to a distinction as being “‘unlike us.’” This could thus produce a victim-blaming perspective toward youth selling sex. Therefore, although in general I used individuals’ chosen terms whenever possible (and for those above 18 years, I thus apply mostly the term “sex work”), I avoid using the terms ‘sex work’ and ‘prostitution’ when speaking of adolescents involved in selling sex. Yet I also abstain from applying ‘child sexual exploitation,’ as I agree with Melrose (2013) that using this term, among others, reproduces dominant discourse of Western understanding of childhood, ‘infantilizes’ young persons, and does not allow us to fully consider the agency of young persons. Considering the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Interagency Working Group, 2016), the abovementioned shift in thinking, and the change that many young persons experience when they come to perceive selling sex as exploitation later in their lives (Dodsworth 2015), this study mainly uses the term ‘adolescents’ sexual exploitation’ and ‘youth sexual exploitation.’ Because this thesis aims to reduce the disconnection between affected persons and policy practitioners, these two expressions represent the closest ‘common ground’ I could find between policy and participants in my study. Yet, following Melrose (2013, p. 15), I do not use the term ‘sexual exploitation’ uncritically; I concur with her view that one needs to be aware that this term “‘establishes in language that young people concerned are always, and inevitably, passive objects or ‘things.’” This is because the verb ‘to exploit’ is transitive verb, requiring a direct (the thing that is exploited) and an implied subject—‘the exploiter.’” However, as this work and previous research shows (e.g. Melrose et al., 1999; Montgomery, 1998), young persons have agency and make “‘constrained, but rational, choices within the context of highly

diminished circumstances and opportunities” (Melrose, 2013).

#### **4.5.4 Researcher Positionality**

My understanding of researcher positionality is influenced by Wolf (1996), who argues that positionality is about the identities of the researcher in relation to the research participants. It is important to be self-reflective regarding one’s positionality in the research process because this affects the research findings, including co-created and situated knowledge (England, 1994; Rose, 1997). Positionality is thus part of a reflective process, examining in particular the research relationship.

Acknowledging that my research is situated in the “space between” ‘insider/outsider’ dichotomy (Dwyer and Buckle 2009), I initially thought that this work might have some characteristics of what was previously considered as ‘insider scholarship’ due to my position as insider by proxy. By this, as mentioned beforehand, I refer to a certain sense of shared history with the girls with whom I carried out my research—that of a turbulent adolescence, influenced by stories about my family’s displacement and by everyday life in a country that was in transition as well as my experiences as new to a location due to my many international moves. My own adolescence was full of difficulties, and I felt that I could relate in some ways to the struggles of adolescents who live on the margins of their communities, facing stigma and exclusion. These factors are important for insider research (Anyidoho, 2008). However, although I sought to relate to these girls as an insider, for them I remained an “outsider.” This is largely due to the fact that markers of my insider status were not visible (Carling *et al.*, 2014). Even on occasions when I described some of my own experiences as an adolescent, I did not often succeed in creating the proximity I desired. Because of the relational and context-specific construction of “insiderness” and “outsiderness,” I sensed that different understandings of these concepts existed between myself and research participants (Carling *et al.*, 2014). Despite my intentions to establish a sense of similarity, they perhaps experienced moments of outsiderness and did not recognize my challenges as similar to their own (Morosanu, 2015). I rarely shared these experiences, because the participants hardly ever asked me personal questions, and it did not seem necessary or appropriate to bring up my own past. I also wanted to assure that I separate my life experiences from the research participants’ ones (Kanuha 2000). My “outsiderness” was further amplified because I was a foreigner and did not speak fluent Spanish. I also felt I was privileged

because my socioeconomic status, the country I live and the level of education I have received (Kerstetter 2012) and this also set me apart from majority of research participants. My translator's presence also created a certain distance in itself. Thus, a disjunction in my positionality existed: I was primarily perceived as an outsider, despite my sense that I could relate to the participants emotionally more than they could have imagined.

I did feel like more of an 'insider' at some moments, I had certain "moments of insiderness" (Morosanu, 2015), such as during the final interviews when my research assistant was not present. I was also clearly more of an outsider among heterosexual men and boys, but I felt less distance from women. Some of these "moments of insiderness" were related to my status as a new mother. Although I did not take my son with me and my motherhood was not clearly visible, I had photos of him on my phone, and my research assistant, who had met him, often chatted with participants about him; this brought me closer to some participants who were also new mothers (Levey, 2009).

Being aware of the rather important cleavage between myself and research participants, I tried what Kerstetter (2012) calls "reaching across racial, ethnic and economic divides, among others." In my case I noticed it in particular in relation to economic aspects. For instance, during the second part of my research, in particular when I was interviewing women who sold sex services, the issue of me as a foreigner and having some money emerged for me. It was mainly initiated by my perception as what is appropriate and what is not. It felt when I asked these women who were at their work place and many clearly economically struggling to come to talk to me that I need to somehow return them economically. It was clear for me that I cannot pay to any participant in order to honour the ethical principle of voluntary participation and to avoid that participants participate for some financial incentive. This I explained also to the women and they understood that well. However, as a middle ground I decided to pay for their refreshments and consumption in the cafes or the restaurants where I carried out the interviews. It was interesting as I felt that not paying for that would be ethically wrong, as I doubt that many would otherwise go to these bars and restaurants to eat. It would have felt somehow exploitative and not socially acceptable, causing them even extra expenses. It was simultaneously tangible and symbolic way for me to reinforce my expression of gratitude that I felt and shared with them about their participation. This

ethical dilemma around money was also pre-occupying me a little when my research assistant could not accompany me anymore and I had to ask some participants to come to a commercial centre to meet me and have interviews. I felt that it was appropriate for me to pay for their transport expenses that would not have occurred otherwise. Yet at some unconscious level I think I used that also to feel closer to them and that they like me, to be less of an ‘outsider’ and to enhance the trust-building process (Kerstetter 2012).

In addition, I could feel that many heterogenous, complex and dynamic identities were engaged in my research work, also discussed by Anyidoho (2008). For instance, another active identity during the fieldwork was that of a PhD student, in particular during the first month of my fieldwork. While writing these lines, I could clearly sense and image me back to my balcony, where I wrote the field notes of my day in the hammock and read other PhD students experiences and struggles while carrying out the fieldwork. I remember feeling grateful as it had been difficult for me to really experience a PhD-student identity prior to my fieldwork. As I was part-time student, I was mostly far from my peers and preoccupied with my professional identity as the ICRC employee. Another aspect of my self-image that I experienced during the fieldwork was that of a single mother due to the long absence of my husband. It was a feeling that I had not experienced at all before. I feel that this facet of my identity gave me a certain strength and determination, I was emotionally less vulnerable as I knew I have to cope alone and a little new life depends on me. I felt it made me more driven and less doubtful in my research. During the last part of my fieldwork I gradually felt more as a researcher and less as a student and with my husband’s return my single mother’s identity disappeared. Thus, I could really sense the mobility of my positionality in time in the process of my research, as discussed by Anyidoho (2008). I clearly experienced that my mixed researcher positionalities were in constant movement (Mullings, 1999; Serrant-Green 2002; Srivastava, 2006) and that the “space between” insider-outsider dichotomy was a multidimensional one (Kerstetter 2012; Smith 1999).

I could also sense the various perceptions that participants had of me. In general, they seemed to perceive me as a foreigner researcher. Another identity that emerged in some occasions was my past as an ICRC employee, in particular, while speaking with service providers. Some of my identities, such as being student or a wife were never solicited.

Even my identity as a woman was somehow dormant, but this may be due to the fact that I was most of my fieldwork without my husband and as this part of my identity was not very actual for me, it somehow also did not get captured and mirrored back to me by participants. I had also opted for a very conservative and not very feminine dress code. I guess this was a mixture of habit due to my background as an ICRC delegate, a protective measure to avoid any possible sexually-motivated attention and perhaps also slightly in order to be perceived as a professional, a researcher with a serious task on hand.

Finally, I reflected on my research assistant's positionality, which I believe significantly shaped the outcome of the research. Her half-insider, half-outsider status in Mandela allowed her to combine the advantages of both social locations and avoid the disadvantages. In other words, as a young Colombian woman, she quickly developed an affinity with many participants, enabling them to feel at ease and open up. As she was not from Mandela and represented the majority population, they felt that it was safe to be honest with her, since the information shared with her could not affect their lives later on. Having a research assistant from Mandela would have considerably changed what the participants said since the community can be highly territorial and vulnerable to interpersonal mistrust, particularly when seen from young person's perspective.

Screening where do I and my research assistant stand in the multidimensional "space between" insider and outsider duality (Dwyer and Buckle 2009) allowed me to better comprehend how our locations influenced the process of the research and its outcomes (Serrant-Green 2002). For instance, if I had been perceived more as the 'insider', it would most probably had been easier to gain access (Kerstetter 2012). Yet the participants would have behaved and talked differently due to the 'interviewer effect' that makes interviewees to answer the questions differently, depending how the participants see the interviewer (Denscombe 2007). It might be that they would have taken for granted that I know some things and that these need not to be explained or that I should not be spoken so openly about some matter as I would have been perceived less neutral and as somehow a potential danger.

## **Chapter 5: Setting the Scene: the Colombian Context and Mandela Community**

In this chapter, I will introduce the context of my research location and discuss how the protracted urban displacement situation has affected adolescents in Colombia. I will then introduce the neighbourhood where my research took place.

### **5.1 Colombian Conflict and Urban Violence**

Colombia has experienced a long history of socio-political violence, which has become an endemic feature of Colombian society (Koonings and Kruijt, 1999; Pécaut, 1999; Meertens, 2001; Rodgers, 2003;). This violence is strongly linked to economic concerns. For instance, Richani (2013) argues that political and economic competition over land and natural resources is one of the main reasons for the enduring conflicts in Colombia. Thoumi (1995) claims that both political and economic institutions have lost their legitimacy, and that the country's political economy is covered by an illegal drug industry that promotes violence. Elhawary (2007) emphasises that agrarian conflicts have not been properly addressed by the nation's political institutions. This has allowed violent actors to emerge, which has led to the displacement of peasants from their land. Gray (2008) argues that material gains are a strong motivating force of conflict in Colombia, but one should not focus merely on rebels and illegal armies, but also on the role of civilians and legal firms in supporting violence.

These strong interconnections between political and economic conflict have led to a situation where violence permeates everything; it has been banalised (Pécaut, 1999) and reached all levels of society (Meertens, 2001). Kruijt and Koonings (1999, p. 11) describe the situation:

the deployment of violence has become so customary that to a certain extent the Colombian state has ceased to exist in its Weberian quality of the monopoliser of the legitimate use of violence. Not only the military, the paramilitaries, the guerrillas, and the drug cartels use violence as a matter of course; also at lower levels of society, violence can mean a career or an instrument for social mobility, or even an instrument for reversing traditional social hierarchies.

This multitude of violent actors emerged gradually over decades. Some (Rodgers, 2003) locate the roots of present conflict in the 1948-1958 period known as *La Violencia*, or

the rivalry between Liberals and Conservatives, which was “fought by the peasants on behalf of the parties’ elite” (Meertens, 2001, p. 135). Some state that the Colombian conflict has its origin in the 1950s when the government and insurgency groups fought for political power (Delgado and Laegreid, 2001). The actors who emerged then were, first, FARC, the country’s oldest and largest left-wing guerrilla organisation, formed in 1964 (Bellal, 2017). In its early years, FARC was based on Marxism; today, however, its involvement in the drug trade is more prevalent than its ideology (ibid.). Another main actor in the Colombian conflict is the Non-State Armed Group (NSA) called National Liberation Army (ELN) which also, although more recently than FARC, got involved in drug trafficking to fund its activities (ibid.). Since the 1980s, in addition to guerrillas, paramilitary groups have gotten involved in the conflict and fought against rebel groups (Delgado and Laegreid, 2001). The right-wing paramilitary, descending from vigilante groups that had been created by landowners to protect them from left-wing rebels, joined in order to support the army in its fight against the guerrillas. The main paramilitary group, The United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), was officially demobilised in 2006 (Bellal, 2017). Subsequently, criminal bands called Bacrim have emerged.<sup>9</sup> They carry out drug-trafficking and extortion (McDermott, 2014b). Although the Colombian government, led by President Juan Manuel Santos, made many efforts to resolve the conflict, government forces also perpetrated abuses against civilian populations (Bradley, 2012). State authorities have been linked with AUC national army and have contributed to atrocities against civilians carried out by paramilitary groups. Bradley (2012) outlines that while Uribe was president (2002-2010), Colombian security forces killed civilians and later dressed them in guerrilla uniforms so they would be counted as guerrillas killed in combat.

Over the last few years, Colombian authorities have taken many steps to resolve this conflict. Former president Álvaro Uribe defined the situation as being post-conflict, but the current president stated in his early years of presidency that the conflict was still ongoing (Bradley, 2012). Meertens (2010, p. 148-149) states that the years under Uribe were characterized by “parallel processes of conflict and post-conflict situations” and a

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<sup>9</sup> McDermott (2014) writes: “The name BACRIM was created by the government of former President Alvaro Uribe in the aftermath of the demobilization of the AUC. Then-President Uribe was keen to draw a line in the sand, to avoid undermining the AUC peace process. For this reason, any drug trafficking organizations post-2006 were not to be considered paramilitary groups, but rather, ‘criminal bands’, (for the Spanish ‘bandas criminales’ – BACRIM). Yet all but one of the BACRIM had their roots in the AUC.”

“confused array of measures pertaining to humanitarian, transitional justice and reconstruction discourses and actions.” During Santos’s term as president, in October 2012, peace talks began between FARC leaders and Colombian government; these led to a cease-fire in mid-2016 and a peace treaty in September 2016 (Renwik and Felter, 2017).

Colombians rejected the peace treaty in a referendum, mainly because voters felt that rebels would benefit from a too-lenient approach to the agreement. However, Colombia’s national legislature passed a reviewed peace treaty in December 2016, without a referendum. Renwik and Felter (2017) describe the terms of this treaty as follows:

Under the new terms, the FARC pledged to hand over all of its assets for reparations, and the punishments that former FARC members would face, short of prison time, were better defined. The provision allowing political representation remained, but former members were banned from running for office in former conflict zones.

The authorities announced that the conflict with FARC was over on August 15, 2017, when the last of FARC’s weapons were handed over to the UN. FARC is currently transitioning to a political party (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). Peace talks with ELN, the other main guerrilla group, began in February of 2017. According to Human Rights Watch (2018), “The ELN also agreed to stop certain abuses, including recruiting children under 15 and using antipersonnel landmines.”

Based on these developments, it might seem that Colombia has reached a historic moment that may lead to a durable peace. However, not all armed groups have participated in peace negotiations with government authorities, and violence continues. Nikolau (2017) writes: “attacks are on the rise against Colombia’s left-wing activists, indigenous leaders and members of the Patriotic March party amid a landmark peace agreement to bring an end to more than 50 years of civil war.” She attributes these killings to paramilitary violence that government is refusing to address (*ibid.*). Additionally, in June 2018, Ivan Duque was elected as a president, and he aims at reviewing the peace accord with FARC (BBC, 2018).

Before discussing the consequences of this violence, particularly forced displacement, it is important to examine its complex underlying causes (beyond the economic reasons discussed previously). Delgado and Laegreid (2001) state that competition for political power, fights against social inequality and political marginalisation, as well as land disputes, drug trafficking, and intolerance for different perspectives have all resulted in armed violence. Gray (2008) argues that a wider range of interrelated causes needs to be considered in the analysis of the Colombian conflict in order to implement policies that contribute to peace. She outlines six contributing factors: “economic forces, state weakness, landscape, U.S. policies, long-duration and spin-off violence, and malicious opportunism by non-combatants” (Gray, 2008, p. 63). In her view, the first three are most significant. Gray (2008, p. 83) concludes that:

This conflict is best described as prolonged power struggle among multiple groups using violence to further particular and group interests, strongly influenced by external forces and complicated by earlier episodes of acute violence, unresolved developmental conflicts, hard-to-incorporate terrain, and abundant natural resources.

In addition, Colombia is affected by urban violence caused by groups that are not directly linked to this prolonged conflict (Bradley, 2012). Rodgers (2003) regards crime as the dominant form of violence in Colombia; his study found that only 15% of all violence in the nation was political, and 85% was non-political. According to Rodgers (2003), the important agents of urban violence in Colombia are youth gangs, called *maras*, *bandas*, or, most commonly, *pandillas*. Moser and McIlvaine (2000) studied nine marginalised communities in Colombia and found that youth gangs were a problem in seven of them. Rodgers (2003) describes youth gangs as an urban problem that affects cities of all sizes. Rodgers (2003) draws on Perea’s (2001) research on youth culture in six neighbourhoods in Bogotá. Perea (2001) demonstrates that across these neighbourhoods, the youth gangs—mostly comprising young males under 20 years old—varied significantly, especially regarding where they recruited new members. These gangs often follow an honour code, have a very strong sense of territoriality, and engage in criminal activities.

Rodgers (2003) identifies several different types of gangs. While some are looking for delinquent opportunities without much planning, others, *bandas*, are more like “quasi-professional criminal organisations” with a high level of planning. Youth gangs are typically formed in poor urban neighbourhoods, but the reasons for this go beyond

poverty, as not all poor young people become members of gangs. Rodgers (2003, p. 117) states that gangs provide young people “with a stable anchor point around which to structure their everyday lives in the violently chaotic wider Colombian context.” Many also join gangs in order to acquire respect and power (*ibid.*).

Some urban violence actors are linked to the nation’s prolonged political conflicts. For instance, Bradley (2012) describes the case of Medellín, where combatants from the demobilised AUC created between 400 and 600 urban gangs. These gangs engage in drug trafficking and have other economic ties with parties of the national conflict.

In their analysis of the consequences of Colombia’s enduring conflicts, Jeffers and Milton (2014) argue that decades-long violence has led to the deaths of 215,000 Colombians. The conflict has also led to numerous other forms of violence and abuse, including forced disappearances, kidnapping, extortion, bombs, landmines, forced recruitment, death threats, and sexual violence (Bradley, 2012). Various authors (Rodgers, 2003; Gray, 2008) argue that Colombia’s society is very strongly affected by this long-lasting violence, creating a certain “banalisation” and a situation where various forms of collective violence influence each other over time and space. The effects of these various types of violence are far too numerous to discuss here, but the following section describes one of these effects—urban displacement—in greater detail.

## **5.2 Protracted Urban Displacement in Colombia**

Displacement has been an endemic feature of the violence in Colombia for decades. As stated by Subias (2001, p. 79), “forced internal migration in the aftermath of violent events is the most serious consequence of the present armed conflict in Colombia.” Thousands of people are uprooted from their homes every year; most of them are from rural areas, and most seek safety in cities as IDPs (Alzate, 2008). However, the internal displacement of inhabitants is not merely a consequence of war, but also a deliberate strategy (Global IDP Project, 2004a). Another, less known dimension is intra-urban displacement, which results from illegal armed groups fighting for control of territories (Alzate, 2008). This situation can be described as protracted displacement, as some people have been displaced for over 40 years. The state has been trying to address the IDP issue since the 1990s (Fagen *et al.*, 2006).

The reasons for Colombia's large internally displaced population are manifold, but the main causes of displacement seem to be: threats to people; selective homicides; armed confrontations in populated areas; violent land appropriation; destruction of farming assets due to aerial fumigation of illicit crops; and avoiding forced recruitment of children into illegal armed forces (Ibanez and Velez, 2008). The most significant displacement occurred between 1995 and 1996 and between 2000 and 2003 (Fagen *et al.*, 2006). Afro-Colombians constitute about one third of IDPs, though they only comprise 11% of overall Colombian population (*ibid.*).

Patterns of internal displacement in Colombia are rather anonymous and individual; exodus is rare, and IDPs are not gathered in camps, but rather live in poor neighbourhoods in the cities, often creating "districts of displacement." These districts include, among others, Cantacalaro in Montería, Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá, and Nelson Mandela (Subias, 2001). According to Fagen *et al.* (2006), the first flight usually brings people to a neighbouring community where they stay with family or friends. When the threat passes, they may return, though they are likely to be put into a similar situation again. If they cannot return, they move to a small or medium-size town in the same district. However, these places are often unprepared to accommodate displaced people, so they move on to major cities, which are at least slightly more prepared to receive them. In the cities, most IDPs initially rely on their family and friends' networks; then, for about three months, they rely on institutional aid from government authorities or aid organisations (Meertens, 2001). However, for many families, the journey is not over at this stage; they may continue to move within the same city, or from one city to another, due to urban violence or unfulfilled hopes for a better livelihood (Fagen *et al.*, 2006).

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the dichotomy of voluntary versus forced migration rarely matches the reality of migration situations. The literature on internal migration in Colombia highlights the importance of focusing on multiple forms of migration, not just involuntary migration. For instance, Albuja and Ceballos (2010) outline the mixed nature of migration's flows and causes in Colombia, especially in relation to rural-to-urban migration. They state that this is a common phenomenon in Colombia and therefore should not be completely divorced from conflict-related movements. Fagen *et al.* (2006) state that rural-urban migration in pursuit of socioeconomic opportunities and better access to social services has been present in Colombia since the early 1990s.

However, at that time, people mostly moved to towns and cities within their regions. This trend changed by the early 2000s, when the majority of displaced persons moved to Colombia's largest cities (Fagen *et al.*, 2006). During the same time period, people also started to migrate across national borders, particularly to Ecuador and Venezuela. Previously, migrating to Venezuela had only been an option for more affluent Colombians (Fagen *et al.*, 2006). The main international destinations for Colombians have historically been industrialised countries, particularly the U.S. and Spain, where more than half of displaced people are not legally registered (Fagen *et al.*, 2006). Albuja and Ceballos (2010) argue that migration and displacement can coexist, and both arise from mixed causes. For example, people often migrate both to avoid violence and to pursue economic opportunities. According to Fagen *et al.* (2006), while the first rural-urban movements in Colombia were more motivated by socioeconomic concerns, as of early 2000, political violence became the dominant cause.

Within an international legal framework, there is currently no clear consensus about the issue of IDP status for descendants of IDPs. Therefore, states can decide for themselves whether and how long to register IDPs. This has led to a high level of diversity among national laws (IDMC, 2014). Regarding Colombia, the IDMC (2014, p. 4) states:

Colombian IDPs may apply for IDP status within the first year of their displacement in order to be registered by local authorities and access the benefits attached to the status. Children born during displacement can be registered afterwards and are entitled to benefits together with their families until their socio-economic situation has stabilised, whether in the place of origin or in the place of refuge.

In the case of Colombia, descendants of IDPs have the right to claim IDP status and the corresponding aid benefits. The IDMC study also mentions that descendants should be considered as IDPs as long as they or their families have not received durable solutions.

In recent years, criminal violence has caused rising displacement and intra-urban displacement in Colombia. It should also be noted that many recent displacement situations have resulted from natural disasters, particularly flooding and landslides in poor urban housing communities (IDMC, 2014). On a positive note, according to Human Rights Watch (2018), "Nationwide, forced displacement has significantly decreased since 2015, although it remains high in many areas."

### **5.3 National and International Responses to Displacement in Colombia**

Colombia has one of the most elaborated legal frameworks and systems in place to respond to internal displacement (Castagna and Jeyte, 2011; IDMC, 2014). Since 1997, a special law on internal displacement—Law 387—has been implemented (Meertens, 2010). Another positive development of the last decade is the 2011 Victims' Law, which allows for possible restitution and reparations (IDMC, 2013). The Unit for Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation that was founded under the Victims' Law is in charge of moving 500,000 IDPs out of vulnerable situations (Kālin and Chapuisat, 2017). The estimated cost of implementing the Victims' Law is \$1 billion per year, yet the Colombian authorities do not have this money (*ibid*).

Also, the Constitutional Court and Colombian civil society have been important actors in the national response to internal displacement. Meertens (2010, p. 154) explains that the Constitution of 1991 created procedures to “demand and monitor of the effective enjoyment of civilian rights” and that the court has many rulings regarding IDPs. The Court reached a breakthrough in 2013, when it ruled that the government was obligated to recognise as IDPs people who were uprooted by organised crime and the activities of a new generation of paramilitaries.

Although this improved system of IDP policy now exists on paper, several factors have hindered its implementation in practice. These include underfinancing, understaffing, little accountability, vaguely-defined responsibilities, institutional tensions, mistrust, and parallel ‘peace’ and ‘conflict’ policies (Fagen *et al.*, 2006; Meertens, 2010). Moreover, authorities have mainly focused on emergency relief for several years (Meertens, 2010) and have only recently begun taking more long-term steps to help IDPs. Also, the process of land restitution based on the Victims' Law advances very slowly. “As of September 2016, the courts had issued rulings in just 4,100 of more than 93,000 claims received,” according to Human Rights Watch (2017). Although the authorities remain committed to supporting IDPs, many hurdles still exist, particularly regarding the implementation of new laws and policies.

For many years, internal displacement in Colombia was not in the international spotlight, but this humanitarian crisis began to gain international recognition in the late 1990s (Fagen *et al.*, 2006). Today, the international community provides important

support for the authorities to assist IDPs (IDMC, 2017). For instance, international actors are involved in protection, advocacy, emergency and medium-term assistance, as well as capacity-building, strengthening local institutions, and developing social services (Fagen *et al.*, 2006). The most prominent actors are UNHCR, ICRC, World Food Programme (WFP), International Organization for Migration (IOM), The Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission (ECHO), and many international NGOs (*ibid.*).

Currently, urban IDPs continue to live in precarious situations: their access to housing and livelihoods is limited compared to the general population, and at least 80% live below the poverty line (IDMC, 2017). Albuja and Ceballos (2010) claim that 98.6% of IDPs live below the poverty line and that 82.6% live in extreme poverty, while the respective figures for non-IDPs are 29.1% and 8.7%. Albuja and Ceballos (2010) also note that IDPs' average income in Bogotá is 27% lower than that of non-displaced residents who are considered poor. The general trend of rural-urban migration affects IDPs' access to registration and complicates the process of distinguishing IDPs from other migrants (Albuja and Ceballos, 2010). Corral and Flétcher (2010) also explore the issue of urban displacement in Colombia, focusing on IDPs' struggles to adapt to urban economies when they arrive in unfamiliar cities. Medina (2010), however, argues that the phenomenon of urban displacement within a city has received much less attention than rural-urban forced migration. According to her, significant intra-urban displacement occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Between 2000 and 2004, approximately 4000 persons in Medellín felt they had to escape from their homes (Medina, 2010). Both Sanchez (2010) and Bradley (2012) state that, while most IDPs from rural regions are registered, intra-urban displaced persons typically do not benefit from IDP status. Fortunately, in 2013, the authorities began registering those displaced by organised crime (IDMC, 2014).

Despite positive developments such as peace talks, the agreement between FARC and the Colombian authorities, the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI),<sup>10</sup> and the improved legal frameworks for IDPs' protection (particularly the 2011 Victims' Law), the situation remains protracted. Considering the slow pace of implementation of

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<sup>10</sup> A tripartite agreement between United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNHCR and the World Bank that is focusing on the achievement of durable solutions has been piloted in Colombia (IDMC, 2014).

restitution and the fact that many IDPs remain in limbo situations in slums, still awaiting durable solutions, Colombia clearly qualifies as a protracted displacement situation. IDPs' situation in Colombia is perhaps not as visibly unsettled as that of 'warehoused' refugees who are confined to camps—yet in the absence of sustainable housing, livelihoods, or reparations, their situation remains unresolved.

#### **5.4 Gender, Adolescence and Internal Displacement in Colombia**

Regarding gender relations among Colombian IDPs, Meertens (2001) researched differences between displaced men and women, including their gender identities, renegotiations of traditional gender roles, personal ambitions, and ways of coping with displacement. Meertens (2001) found that prior to their displacement, many rural Colombians upheld traditional gender roles, including a public-private dichotomy between men and women. More precisely, women had low mobility and low participation in communal organisations, so they tended to depend exclusively on primary relationships. This restricted participation in public life led these women to experience a more significant shift in their social identities once they became uprooted. After displacement, many women have become more autonomous relative to men, and they have found ways of coping in the cities, particularly in the urban labour market. Meertens (2001) attributes this resilience to the women's previous experiences of participating in informal support networks, which prepare them to root themselves in the cities more easily than men. Another notable change in gender roles is that men's participation in domestic work often increases after displacement.

A number of studies have focused on adolescents affected by displacement in Colombia (e.g. Alzate, 2008; Millán- Quijano, 2015). These studies define age 12 (or, in some cases, age 13) as the beginning of adolescence. Within policy, Colombian Law No. 1098 (known as the *Code of childhood and adolescence*) defines adolescents as people between the ages of 12 and 18. However, little is known about how Colombian young people themselves view this category. Research on adolescent IDPs in Colombia has been primarily focused on their reproductive health (e.g. Sanchez and Enriques, 2004; Alzate, 2008).

No study has yet focused specifically on the protection of internally displaced female adolescents in Colombia. However, several authors have researched Colombian IDPs in

general (Meertens, 2001; Jacobsen, 2011; Lopez *et al.*, 2011;), and others have focused on specific issues affecting adolescent IDPs (Alzate, 2008; Millán- Quijano, 2015). This literature suggests some general tendencies among adolescent girls affected by internal displacement. For instance, the Brookings Institution's research with urban IDPs (Lopez *et al.*, 2011) showed that there are many female-headed households as well as young parents among IDPs and that displaced youth are at risk of delinquency. Also, Alzate (2008) found that about 50% of IDP women are heads of households, over twice the national average in Colombia (23%). In addition, Lopez *et al.* (2011) mention that early pregnancies are a significant issue in Colombia (see also Alzate, 2007; Quintero and Culler, 2009; Millán-Quijano, 2015). Researchers have also explored child marriage (Clark *et al.*, 2006; Nguyen and Wodon, 2012), gender-based violence (Alzate, 2007; Meertens, 2012), and Meertens (2001) has researched adolescent girls who join militant groups to become wives for *guerrilleros*. Archambault (2011) discusses the strong link between early pregnancies and early marriages, both issues of concern for adolescents in Colombia (Clark *et al.*, 2006; Yepes, 2010; Nguyen and Wodon, 2012;). Also explored is how some families become displaced to avoid forced recruitment of their adolescent children, including girls, into militant groups (e.g. Hernández and Romero, 2003).

In Jacobsen's (2011, p. 92) study of urban IDPs in Colombia, the author argues that IDPs and non-IDPs share many challenges, but that "IDPs experience more security and protection problems than non IDPs." IDP status also has special links to adolescence within legal frameworks in Colombia; the previously mentioned Law No. 1098 states that children and adolescents are protected against forced displacement and also specifies that the authorities have the obligation to protect these populations from arbitrary displacement (Law No. 1098).

## **5.5 Nelson Mandela Community**

There is not much literature on the foundation and development of the Nelson Mandela neighbourhood, one of the 205 neighbourhoods of Cartagena (De Avila Romero, 2013). Although Veeken (1998) dates the creation of the *barrio* to 1996, research participants told me that the Nelson Mandela neighbourhood—a territory that covers about 170 hectares—was actually founded in 1994. Mandela neighborhood was started by people who came from very different places, but mainly from the following departments:

Antioquia, Choco, and Bolívar.

This *barrio* was created gradually by displacement. The influxes of IDPs were caused by a series of massacres carried out by guerillas and paramilitary groups. One that came up in conversation with Luis Fernando and others was the massacre of El Salado (or El Salao) that occurred in southern Bolívar in February of 2000 (Sanchez *et al.*, 2009). According to Luis Fernando, another major part of people came from Choco as a result of the Bojaya massacre, which is discussed by Fagen *et al.* (2006). This violent event happened in 2002 when the town was attacked by guerillas. According to Luis Fernando, IDPs chose Cartagena as refuge for various reasons, including its location close to the sea, its relative tranquillity, and its many possibilities for work.

According to a local leader, today there are 24 sectors, or subdivisions, of Mandela. They all have their own names, including the following listed by Luis Fernando: Primavera, Los Deseos, 18 Enero Los Robles, Los Olivios, Nueva Colombia, Las Colinas, 7 Diciembre, Las Vegas, Andres Pastrana, Villa Gloria, Francisco de Paula 2, Virgen del Carme, Francisco de Paula 1, Villa Hermosa, and more. Villa Hermosa is apparently one of the biggest sectors, together with Villa Coresta, Las Vegas, Los Deseos, and Primavera. Written sources (Camacho, 2010) add more names to this list, such as La Batea, La Policlinica, and Jesus Maestro.

Some authors have described the early days of Mandela. Veeken (1998, p. 1649), calls the neighbourhood a “settlement” and a “shanty town” and describes it thus:

The Nelson Mandela settlement has been in existence for two years, and still new people arrive. There is no shade anywhere. The people erect makeshift huts of plastic and wood. The sun beats down on the plastic—the only protection against the heat and rain— making it toxic.

Just two years after Veeken’s study, a team of researchers (Caceres *et al.*, 2000) explored the epidemiological profile of the IDPs in Mandela. In their findings, they describe several forms of instability in Mandela: deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, family disintegration, children deserting schools or enrolling late, child labour, and limited access to health services. Caceres *et al.* (2000) also mention that people with whom the study was conducted had directly experienced violence. For instance, 80% of respondents had been exposed to violence prior to displacement, and murder was said to be the cause of 60% of deaths among adolescents and adults.

Based on my field notes and the analysis of newspaper articles given by a research participant, I drafted the description of how I discovered Nelson Mandela, the document providing a short summary of history of Mandela and some vignettes inspired by some inhabitants and their life in Nelson Mandela, attached to the appendices (D, E, F) of this work.

## **Chapter 6: Multiple Liminalities – Youth Identities in Mandela**

In this chapter, I show how some currently-used main policy labels and dichotomies fail to capture the self-identifications of Mandela residents. I argue that the concept of multiple identities (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003; Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005; Katsiaficas *et al.*, 2011) offers a better way of understanding the experiences of youth affected by protracted displacement in this Cartagena neighbourhood. The critical application of intracategorical intersectionality analysis (McCall, 2005) and the concept of liminality (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967, 1987; Camino, 1994) makes it possible to go beyond binary labels and examine various interrelations among identities.

Building on Camino's (1994) research on the changing identities of female refugee adolescents, this chapter shows that female adolescents affected by protracted internal displacement simultaneously inhabited multiple internal liminal states in Mandela. Camino (1994) argues that refugee adolescents occupy two liminal states—those of adolescence and displacement—but in Cartagena, additional forms of liminality were also evident. In fact, many youth identities that participants acknowledged synchronously feeling were in a liminal state. Over the next pages, I will demonstrate that these multiple youth identities can be approached as various liminalities, some of which is interwoven and layered in relation to the others.

### **6.1 Neither Adults nor Children, but Gendered Becoming**

Placing the social group of female adolescents affected by displacement as the intersectional core (McCall, 2005) and by unravelling the age influence, the strong link between gender and age identities became apparent. The gendered transition into adulthood (Robb, 2007; Chatty, 2009), or what I call 'gendered becoming', emerged as a central implicit theme in most of my conversations in Mandela. Robb (2007, p. 109) states that gender identity is "central to young people's developing sense of themselves" and that "transitions to adulthood are inescapably gendered: they are about becoming a man or a woman, rather than simply an adult." Thus, conversations that initially focused on age quickly turned into reflections on becoming a woman or a man in Mandela. For instance, Sandra, a 15-year-old who attended Catholic school, explained:

Sandra: In other words, after adolescence is for me a woman. Not a woman as

definitive, but when a woman is already more or less adult, already knows more things...

Researcher: But about what age is it?

Sandra: For me it is about at 19.

Another female adolescent, a reserved 16-year-old named Paola, whom I met at a public school, echoed the same viewpoint: “I will be a woman... when I will realise my dreams and have my husband.” In addition, 16-year-old Luz, a more outgoing and defiant female adolescent from the same school, reflected that she identifies like an adolescent and not yet like a complete woman. Although she said that certain womanhood starts already when body changes, Luz also stated that “I think when a woman has children, she cannot be compared with me”. After an adolescent has a child, for Luz she seemed to be ‘more woman’.

I wondered whether these young women, who did not yet identify themselves as ‘complete women’, saw adolescence as a part of childhood—the current dominant view in many policy frameworks. However, the research participants clearly refuted this notion. For instance, in relation to adolescence, Sandra (age 15) stated: “You see, when one is a child, she thinks in one way, and when she is adolescent, in another. And when one is a woman, she has another mentality, not the one of a child.”

In the same vein, Gloria, a 19-year-old female participant who stopped school early and already had a baby at the time we spoke, insisted on the separation between adolescence and childhood:

Gloria: I do not feel as a child as I am not a child.

Researcher: Aha, how do you feel?

Gloria: I feel as an, an adolescent.

A 16-year-old participant Luz even stated directly: “an adolescent can never be associated with a child.”

In short, my interviews supported Nash’s (2008) argument that the use of binary categorisations raises the risk of exclusionary policies. Instead of identifying with any of the main policy categories—child, adult, girl, or woman—the participants saw themselves mostly as adolescents and what I call ‘women-in-the-making’; notions that are currently not well reflected through these most dominant labels in policy. These participants tended to use the terms ‘adolescent’ and ‘young person’ interchangeably.

For most female adolescents, the category of youth paralleled that of adolescence; both referred to the age identity that precedes becoming a ‘full woman’.

In addition to not relating to the main policy labels, these young participants also challenged many of the dichotomies that are common in policy discourse. This was especially apparent when we explored the significance of age 18, which policy treats as a clear-cut line and the basis of the adult/child dichotomy. Turning 18 did not signify a milestone for most youth in Mandela. With regard to subjective age in relation to chronological age (Plummer, 2001), quite a few of the participants above 18 years old still identified themselves as adolescents. For instance, Esther, a 20-year-old, stated: “Well, now I am feeling... first, as an adolescent. Because I am an adolescent.”

One 18-year-old participant, Miguel, further demonstrated the rather weak connection between most prevailing policy comprehensions and self-identifications in Mandela by describing himself as mostly a young person and saying that: “adult is when somebody has 25 years.” Hence, 18 years did not represent a clear-cut milestone of adulthood in this community; rather, the transitional categories of “adolescent” and “young person” appeared more significant to the participants in my study.

In short, youth perspectives in Mandela were not dichotomic as to adult versus child or girl versus woman, but reflected a feeling of not yet being fully grown up—being adolescents and young persons in the midst of a gradual gendered process of becoming. As outlined by Luz, many young persons approached becoming a woman or man as a gradual process where one through passing various milestones becomes ‘more woman’ or ‘more man’.

The quotations by Sandra and Luz also show that for youth in Mandela, age and gender identities are strongly interwoven, as also stated by Robb (2007). Thus, it was important for me to avoid examining specific identities in isolation (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003). Simultaneously, I needed to be able to unravel, one-by-one, various influences on my chosen core group as part of the intersectional analysis (McCall, 2005). To achieve this, I explored young people’s self-understandings (Stryker and Serpe, 1994; Holland *et al.*, 1998) in relation to these identity categories and their relationship with each other.

For instance, my discussion with 16-year-old Paula Andrea, a visibly pregnant female student at a public school, unfolded as follows:

Researcher: How do you feel now, like an adolescent, a woman, a child?

Paula Andrea: Well. Woman, as all we are women as it is our sex, that is, I also feel like an adolescent, but think, think differently, cannot think like a child, cannot think in that way, cannot think about it... In other words, I am adolescent, but need to think like mature people think, about studying, about my son and what is under my responsibility. [...]

Another participant, 18-year-old Ana Vanessa, also identified herself simultaneously as an adolescent and a woman:

Researcher: And when then is somebody a woman? From what age then?

Ana Vanessa: That is... Certainly at 13 and 14. That is I say.

Researcher: You say one is a child until what age?

Ana Vanessa: Well, a child until.... I would say until 15, certainly. And from 15 is a young person, 16, 17, 18. Now from 18 on is, if you see what I mean, I say is a woman. [...]

Researcher: When do you feel that the change to woman happens—when somebody has a first menstruation or when the body changes?

Ana Vanessa: When the body changes. [...] From childhood... It is as all, because the truth is we are all adolescents, certainly. Therefore, I say that changes to woman.

Both Paula Andrea and Ana Vanessa's quotes illustrate the complex and blurred intersections between various age categories and genders in Mandela. For instance, while some saw womanhood as something that starts after adolescence, others perceived womanhood and adolescence as happening simultaneously. Referring to McCall's (2005, p. 1782) intracategorical analysis and the blurred nature of the relationship between age and gender identities in youth in Mandela, the findings of my research indicate that the identity of female adolescents in Mandela "crosses the boundaries of traditionally constructed groups" (Dill, 2002, p. 5). This group is thus located at the intersection of multiple categories. The intersectional approach also emphasises differences within each group (McCall, 2005); this heterogeneity is evident in young participants' variety of opinions on the intersection between age and gender.

These young 'women-in-the-making' were not only at an intersection externally. They were also at an internal "crossroads" in relation to their meaning-making of their identities (Magolda, 2009). The quotation from Ana Vanessa shows certain contradictions and incoherent statements that were present in a fair number of the

interviews with young people in Mandela. Such ambiguity, contradictions, and confusion often seemed to characterize their opinions on age, gender and displacement identity. Young persons might have not spent much time reflecting on these questions of identity prior to our conversations and were developing their stance during our discussions. Abes *et al.* (2007, p. 5) argue that students find themselves in a transitional phase “dominated by tensions and unresolved conflicts between their developing internal voices and external influences.” They might have been affected by my presence and felt pressure to come up with the ‘right’ answer, as if they were tested.

Aside from the researcher’s influence, the following quotation from 20-year-old Esther reflects how internal voices and external influences by community members simultaneously influence a young person’s identity construction:

Therefore I feel adolescent and also because there are things in me that I feel that even stay, from my adolescence [...] For instance, my thoughts. Some of my acts. [...] There are things that I do, that I am told that are not normal for my adolescence. They say that I am very immature in this part. [...]

Esther’s words illustrate the reflective relationship between the individual and society (Stets and Serpe, 2013) and how subjective, interpersonal, and social age (Plummer, 2001) are inherently linked.

The young women I interviewed did not identify as children or as fully adult women, but rather saw themselves as ‘women-in-the-making’. This suggests that adolescence could be seen as a liminal life stage in Mandela (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner 1967, 1987), rather than a life stage in its own right beside childhood and adulthood. The liminal nature of adolescence is also salient because, although participants had many different understandings of what ‘adolescence’ means, most of them associated this stage of life with milestones and rites of passage. For instance, many associated adolescence with having their first menstrual period and experiencing physical changes. Moreover, confusion prevailed regarding when adolescence begins and ends. As demonstrated in 19-year-old Gloria’s and 20-year-old Esther’s quotes, some participants above 18 years of age classed themselves as adolescents. On the contrary, 16-year-old Carolina, a mother of a baby who had stopped attending school, stated:

I think my adolescence is already over. I am a woman, I have a baby, I think of him... [...] My adolescence started when I was 12, you see, when I played and these things, and my adolescence ended when I started to go out. Since I became part of a couple, it

has been over.

The ambivalence around the boundaries of adolescence is also visible in policy — while Colombian Law No. 1098 defines adolescents as those between the ages of 12 and 18, in global policy adolescents are seen these days as those between of 10 and 19 years of age (UNICEF, 2012).

These ambiguities make it possible to consider this period a liminal one, since liminality is often associated with ambiguity (Beech, 2011). Yet most of the quotes above also demonstrate that young people clearly saw themselves as adolescents and youth, or as having passed these life stages. Turner (1987) discusses the “invisible” ritual subject in the liminal phase and the notion that a person is not socially classified anymore and not yet either. In Mandela, the term ‘adolescence’ was clearly an existing category in the language and culture. All interviewees agreed that adolescence constitutes a distinct life stage for both boys and girls, even though they disagreed about the age boundaries of this life stage.

To conclude, on the one hand, adolescence and youth are liminal stages in Mandela: ambiguous states of being between childhood and womanhood or manhood, connected to rites of passage and milestones. On the other hand, they are also recognized as distinct life stages in their own right, similarly to childhood and adulthood. It is necessary to go beyond the binary approach and recognize the multiple, socially situated meanings of adolescence and youth. For instance, compared to older Mandela residents, young people saw adolescence more as an independent category—less connected to childhood, which came before, and adulthood, which follows. To illustrate, in most life story interviews, a separate chapter was dedicated to adolescence in addition to childhood and what came after. For older residents, these life stages were more marginal and even more liminal than young people perceived them to be.

Some may argue that liminality might not be a suitable concept to apply when analysing youth in Mandela, since a liminal state are widely understood as an “interstructural” period in which an individual becomes invisible, structurally “dead,” and without rights, until he or she returns to the community with a new identity and new responsibilities (Turner, 1967, 1987). Moreover, Beech (2011) discusses the significantly disrupted self that accompanies liminality. Yet the narratives of young people in Mandela did not

reveal these aspects of liminality. These participants emphasized transition and in-between states, but they did not feel that they were invisible or lacked rights in Mandela; nor were they treated as such. The conversations also showed that adolescents were not ‘without identity’. Rather, they have many simultaneous identities. Indeed, sometimes they were confused or voiced contradictory claims, but no sign was detected in our conversations to allow concluding that their sense of self, or their old identity, was significantly disrupted.

Even though the experience of youth in Mandela differs from some scholarly definitions of ‘liminality’ in some ways, the concept should not be altogether discarded as unsuitable. It remains highly useful because it highlights the ambiguous in-between states and transitions that policy has not yet fully grasped. One could argue that these findings in Mandela broaden the concept of liminality to accommodate the multi-faceted sense of in-betweenness that youth often face in the twenty-first century. The case of Mandela may help to situate the concept of liminality into a new historical context, where youth transitions are often shaped by the clash of various cultural norms concerning adulthood and the significance of age. Many authors (Benson and Furstenberg, 2007; Frändberg, 2014; King *et al.*, 2016) refer to a shift from traditional linear and fast youth transitions toward longer, more diverse, and more blurred routes to adulthood. This complexity is also well-described by Rozzi (2014), who explores contemporary sociocultural transitions to adulthood in Italy, and by Grabska (2010), who examines youth transitions in the context of Nuer displacement.

## **6.2 Challenging Gender Binary among Youth in Mandela**

The discussion above demonstrates that the child-adult dichotomy favoured by policy is not the most useful frame for approaching youth in Mandela. The findings of this research also challenge the gender dichotomy that often remains dominant in policy (Linstead and Brewis, 2004; Knights and Kerfood, 2004; Paterson, 2010).

Robb (2007, p. 109) states that “young masculinities and young femininities are worked out in relation to each other.” In Mandela, it was impossible to discuss female adolescents’ protection without touching upon male adolescents—those who were often seen as increasing insecurity for female adolescents. In order to effectively understand young femininities (Robb, 2007; Nayak and Kehily, 2013), I also had to consider young

masculinities and explore what adolescence meant for young men.

By identifying themselves only as young men or young women, it is true that youth in Mandela seemed more aligned with a binary understanding of gender than many youth populations today, perhaps due to growing up in cultures that value more traditional gender roles. None of the participants described themselves as having both masculine and feminine qualities, feeling ‘in between’ genders, or experiencing confusion about their genders; nor did they mention queer desires or sexual orientations. However, I was told that one participant whom I interviewed was homosexual, although he himself never mentioned this during our interview. One way to interpret that could be that although non-binary gender identities existed, young persons preferred not to speak about these due to local norms and stigma attached to non-binary gender identities (Aguayo-Romero *et al.*, 2015). I also did not explicitly ask youth regarding their sexualities.

Moreover, participants in my study seldom discussed substantive differences between females and males, although in policies the gender binary could appear through the tendency to emphasize how women and men’s needs and perspectives diverge, to essentialise gender differences (Paterson, 2010; Grabska, 2011;). My observation is that this mindset continues to prevail in many policy settings, despite the increasing attention paid to gender-nonconforming youth (Bilodeau, 2005; Rankin and Beemyn, 2012). In Mandela young men and women shared similar perceptions of adolescence. For instance, 21-year-old David, who used to be involved in sexual exploitation of adolescents, described adolescence as a “period of...rebelliousness you may say. I liked to do, I wanted to do what I wanted without somebody telling me anything.” In a focus group, another male participant (who did not share his exact age) said:

When we are adolescents, we want to experiment with life, to know what it feels like [...] One thinks, when one is adolescent very crazily [...] As if, one thinks while doing, while wanting to do all pranks all the time, to be involved in problems.

Female participants often expressed similar views of adolescence, associating this life stage with a certain defiance of authority and a desire for freedom in thought and action (Arnett, 1999; Van Petegem *et al.*, 2015). The quotation from 15-year-old Sandra (shared above) stated that adolescents tend to think in a different way. She also mentioned a change in thinking at the end of adolescence: “Yes, for me when we are

adults... [...] All is clear. We know. We then realise where we are in life.” Carmen, a 16-year-old female participant, mentioned: “That is to say that often when we are little, people say: No, I would like to be a doctor. No, I would like to be this. This changes when one is a woman.” 19-year-old Gloria, however, reflected on this change in thinking and behaviour as follows:

Since I was 16 I played with a few men over there; I was playing ball, all male games and lost myself, and came out pregnant and then calmed down [...] because I realised that I was not here to be playing with dudes over there.

This kind of change in thinking was also present in my discussion with 18-year-old Ana Vanessa:

Then already I did not want to continue to study; I was outside hanging around and not doing much as it is said here. In other words, I liked rumba<sup>11</sup> [...] I realised that rumba does not bring anything good to somebody, and what it brings to somebody are problems.

Although “gender stereotyping is rather common, with female youth identified as ‘troubled’ and males characterised as ‘troublesome’” (Ensor, 2014, p. 16), my research showed that approaching gender as a binary by opposing males and females does not reflect the reality in Mandela. Some behaviours and perceptions that young people have at this transition age are not polarized, but may be rather common.

The young females and males not only voiced similar ideas about adolescence. My interviews also revealed that participants of both genders shared views about a variety of themes, including relationships with parents, dreams for the future, relationships with peers, and the importance of parenthood. Other authors have emphasised the importance of exploring gender similarities and discussing parallel pathways in youth (Videaon, 2002; Storvoll and Wichstrom, 2002; Meadows, 2007). By emphasising the gender similarity, I do not mean to deny that gender is a highly important and influential category in adolescence, as previously argued in this work. Rather, I support Petersen and Howell’s (2013) stance that policies should account for both similarities and differences between genders. It is important to adopt a holistic approach, exploring continuities among genders (Meadows, 2007; Petersen and Howell, 2013) as well as the multiple masculinities and femininities that young people practise (which will be discussed further in later chapters).

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<sup>11</sup> Referring to going to a heavy party involving alcohol and dancing in Colombia.

### 6.3 Displaced or Not?

After trying to “analytically unravel one-by-one the influences” of some of the main categories of relevance (McCall, 2005, p. 1787) through intracategorical analysis, my next step was to explore displaced identity from an intersectional perspective. As many young IDPs were the second generation and had not experienced forced displacement themselves, my particular focus was on exploring the meanings of the IDP status that they had inherited according to Colombian law (IDMC, 2014) and through categorization (Jenkins 2014).

The interviews revealed that quite a few young people were not sure if they were IDPs or who in their networks had this status. That these findings were similar is not a surprise as “who we think we are is intimately related to who we think others are, and vice versa” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 12). Referring to Jenkins’ theory, the second generation of IDPs in Mandela was thus not a group but rather a category, as several members were “ignorant of their membership” (2014, p. 104). Various and even contradictory versions existed in adolescents’ minds regarding whether a child of an IDP is also an IDP. To illustrate, when I asked an adolescent boy whether he was an IDP, he first said that he was, but then added that he was not any more. Although I asked further questions for clarification, he was not really able to clarify the issue, and many contradictions remained in this regard. Some young participants felt that their parents were IDPs, but not themselves; others, however, stated that both they and their parents were displaced. On one occasion, an adolescent mother added that her new-born baby, the third generation, was also an IDP. One adolescent girl described the presence of IDPs in her community as follows:

Researcher: In your class, for instance, are there girls who are the same age as you and who are IDPs?

Participant: No, only me... No, that is, with whom I hang out, no.

Researcher: You do not know? Is it possible that there are, but you would not know?

Participant: Yes.

These young participants mostly did not perceive any difference between IDP children and non-IDP children. For instance, while conducting a group discussion with boys at school, I was clearly told: “I say there is no difference.” In the same vein, an adolescent schoolgirl stated during an interview: “I think we all are equals.”

Therefore, it was not easy to distinguish those who were descendants of IDPs from

those who were not. No clear-cut line existed, and instead, a variety of versions and opinions circulated. This could certainly have been due to the fact that some families were officially registered as IDPs, while others were not. It could also be that in some families, parents had decided to avoid the topic. Polzer and Hammond (2008, p. 421) state that “invisibility is a relationship between those who have the power to see or choose not to see, and on the other hand, those who lack the power to demand to be seen, or to protect themselves from the negative effects of imposed visibility.” As the first generation often associated IDP status with stigma and sometimes with danger (Meertens, 2001; Ibáñez and Velásquez, 2009), some may have chosen invisibility for their children. Some young persons might have also felt reluctant to disclose their IDP status to me due to possible fear or stigma. Growing scholarship on concealable stigmatized identities (Levin and Van Laar, 2006; Quinn, 2006; Quinn and Earnshaw, 2013) explores various responses to stigma. The relation between stigma and displaced identities has also been discussed (e.g. Malkki, 1995), including in case of Colombia (Zeldin, 2011; Uribe, 2000). While many first-generation of IDPs were initially unable to conceal their IDP identity (which was often made apparent by their clothing and rural behaviour), for the second-generation IDPs this identity was clearly concealable; thus, it constituted “a stigmatized identity that is not immediately knowable in a social interaction” (Quinn, 2006, p. 97). No difference was noted regarding gender and IDP status; both young men and young women shared a stance characterised by confusion.

Thus, ambiguity prevailed regarding IDP identity, with no clear consensus emerging. For instance, at the beginning of the interview, a young woman acknowledged that she, her mother, and her baby were all IDPs, and defined displacement thus: “a person who is displaced, they are... when they get into a bad situation and who then come, who get out when people are killed – these are displaced.” When asked about those who are born in displacement (like her), she did not agree that they are IDPs. These answers reflect a contradiction; on the one hand, she considered herself an IDP, but on the other hand, not really. Such confusion regarding IDP identity appeared in many interviews with those born in Mandela. The second generation thus saw themselves as inhabiting a liminal space in-between being an IDP and not an IDP. Ambiguity and liminality in relation to refugee or displaced status have been addressed by several authors (Zetter, 1991; Camino, 1994; Krulfeld, 1994; Malkki, 1995; Sulava, 2010). Although this issue is mostly discussed in relation to the first generation of displaced people, Sulava (2010, p.

20), exploring the second-generation identity, states that “while some IDPs strive to be perceived as the same members of the local society, rejecting labelling themselves as ‘displaced,’ at the same time, they acknowledge that they don’t belong here but elsewhere.”

Ambivalence about IDP identity also emerged when participants described their feelings about displacement. Indeed, as discussed above, many did not display any strong emotions in relation to this identity, often using definitions that seemed detached from their own experiences. This ambiguity might perhaps be explained due to their concealable stigmatized IDP identity as “compared to individuals with a chronically accessible stigma, individuals with a concealable stigma may be less likely to incorporate the stigmatized identity into their larger self-concept” (Levin and Van Laar, 2006, p. 4.).

Yet there were a few exceptions. For instance, 16-year-old Carolina, after saying that she, her grandmother and mother were displaced, stated: “I feel as displaced because in the neighbourhood, how we live, and (...) because we do not have the same comforts that some people have.” When asked what the term ‘IDP’ meant for her identity, she explained:

Sometimes it does not matter, sometimes, that is, I feel proud of my mom and of my grandmother, to think that they are displaced, that they tell me that they lived enough the war, that they are not depending on the help because they have not done the papers to become IDPs, that they have endured psychologically all that they lived through. That is why I feel proud of them.

Although Carolina took pride in her family’s displaced status, she also later added:

Yes, sometimes they mock me, my friends, when we are speaking about my family; some are from my group, among my friends there are some who are displaced, but some others, who tell me, Carolina, where is your mom from, and I tell them she is from Guajira, that are displaced, that is, they consider me to be from outside.

Thus, some participants expressed a conflicted relationship to IDP identity. The complexity and contested nature of this identity among second-generation displaced persons has also been noted by others (Hart, 2004; Chatty, 2007; Sulava, 2010). Yet while Sulava (2010) and Malkki (1995) discuss the negative connotations and feelings of embarrassment that the second generation may feel regarding the displaced label, my research found that most second-generation IDPs in Mandela felt ignorance or indifference, rather than shame, about this identity. It may be that since many were not

aware of whether they were IDPs, they had no strong feelings concerning this often-stigmatised label (Zeldin, 2011). IDP identity may also have become insignificant for this community because in Colombia, second-generation IDP status does not confer any of the tangible benefits that make forcibly displaced status desirable in other settings (Zetter, 1991). Alternatively, it could be that unlike IDPs in Georgia or Palestinians (Hart, 2004; Sulava, 2010;), first-generation IDPs in Mandela have not kept a ‘myth of return’ alive. However, more research is needed to explore these assumptions.

Thus, a multiple identities lens contributes to our knowledge of IDP identity by enabling us to better assess its salience in relation to other identities. The excerpts above show that, particularly for the second generation, IDP status seemed to be rather absent from Mandela residents’ identity, occupying no significant place in their self-concept. Although many authors have argued for the power of displaced identity (Zetter, 1991, 2007; Malkki, 1995; Duffield, 2002) and its important influence among subsequent generations (Chatty, 2007; Novak, 2008; Sulava, 2010), this power was not really evident among second-generation youth in Mandela.

Along with a multiple identities lens, an intersectional perspective also highlights the positionality of a person’s identity. Although Sulava (2010, p. 20) briefly mentions that “identities are contextualised to the situation and to the audience,” the positionality of second-generation IDP identity has rarely been explored in depth. Carolina’s example perfectly demonstrates the high positionality of displaced identity, which was also illustrated by other participants. Some believed it was beneficial to be seen as an IDP, while others regarded this status as something to hide. This importance of others’ perceptions indicates how IDP identity can function as a form of collective identity. Specifically, all young people were considered affected by internal displacement at the hands of outsiders (those not living in Mandela), they were categorized as such (Jenkins 2014). The whole neighbourhood remained strongly linked to IDP status in the minds of other *cartageneros*. This finding exemplifies what Bauder (2001) calls “imposed identities,” which occur on a city-wide scale and can be related to stigmatisation. Bauder (2001, p. 285) discusses how markers of self-identification can be negatively perceived by a community, as “youth identities transform from being members of community to being social outcasts.” Within the Mandela neighbourhood, however, residents seemed largely unaffected by the label, as it was rather irrelevant to their daily

social interactions.

The multiple identities lens also made it possible to explore the relation between age and displaced identity. Representatives of the first generation often related to the IDP identity with shame. For instance, one stated, “displaced, for me it means humiliation, yes, humiliation, humiliation, and means lack of opportunities, means persecution and stigma.” As emphasised by McCall’s (2005) intersectional analysis, first generation does not constitute a heterogeneous group in relation to IDP identity. Within the first generation in Mandela, perspectives on IDP identity often varied by age. Those in their 30s or above displayed a changing but rather “active” IDP identity. However, younger first-generation participants who had experienced uprooting at an early age tended to perceive IDP identity differently, regarding it more as something they had left behind. While Lacroix (2004) examines the process of becoming a refugee, many of my interviews highlighted the opposite process of becoming a non-IDP. For instance, one young woman (Gripina) who was displaced in her childhood stated:

To be displaced? At one time, to be displaced meant for me that we came from the village, basically without anything, with few things. And here we were, as somebody said, displaced, that we did not have anything to eat sometimes. But now at the moment, at the present, to be displaced for me is to know what was, and little by little, thanks to God, that is, to have overcome it.

While second generation in Mandela was rather ignorant and indifferent to the IDP label, the attitudes of first-generation participants who faced uprooting in their childhood mostly resembled Malkki’s (1995) findings concerning young Hutus living in urban settings; many attached a sense of embarrassment to the identity and wished to reject it. In line with Stepputat and Sorensen’s (2001) findings, IDP identity appeared to be fading among youth in Mandela. Youth inhabited a liminal ambiguous space as many of them were officially categorized as IDPs, but felt that they did not fully identify with this label or had left it behind, as was mostly the case for first-generation youth. In case where they were born in displacement, young persons used various methods to distance themselves from the IDP label. Although the second generation was more ignorant to the IDP label, both first and second-generation IDP youth felt a certain liminality in relation to IDP status.

While most studies of internal displacement highlight IDPs’ ambivalent sense of belonging in both their current and former communities, my research adds to this

knowledge by illustrating that ambiguities concerning IDP status can also exist within one physical place. In Mandela, liminality in relation to IDP status was never connected to belonging to any locality other than Mandela. Thus, beyond debates about how the IDP label is defined or whether IDP status should be a narrower or broader concept, the young inhabitants of Mandela showed what was important for them: the process of transition away from this status, in Jenkins' (2014) terms, the trajectory of *becoming* a non-IDP. I shall revisit this issue in later chapters of this work.

## 6.4 When is Urban Really Urban?

Another liminal space that emerged among youth in Mandela was the convergence of urban and rural identities. This liminality seemed to be conditioned by three aspects. First, the majority of IDPs in Colombia generally come from rural areas (Fagen *et al.*, 2006), and Mandela is no exception. Mandela is not only a crossroads because people from different geographical regions gather there; is also a meeting point of rural and urban ways of living. This was well explained by 42-year-old Luis Fernando, a father of adolescents:

Here (in Mandela) is a culture that is brought by people from the countryside. The people from countryside bring a culture that is nobler, like more humble, more humble than what we have here, when we are born in a city. In a sense that this is how people are brought up there, that is in this sense that they come with that, with this culture, but the young people who are here, they are brought up with other culture, the culture from here.

It is thus clear that today's young people in Mandela have been affected by both rural and urban identities. Their parents are from the countryside, and try to transmit their beliefs, but young people are also strongly shaped by the urban context where they have spent most or all of their lives. The second-generation IDPs mostly did not directly mention that they relate to rural identities. It seemed that the connections to certain rural values or behaviours received through parenting were often not acknowledged at the conscious level.

Second, the IDP label itself contains an implication of "being from the countryside," as suggested by 25-year-old Gripina's statement that "to be displaced meant for me that we came from the village." This impression that IDP and rural identities are interwoven was present in several interviews, as forced displacements have been strongly linked to rural-urban migration in Colombia (Albuja and Ceballos, 2010). IDPs are seen "as a

population that has carried the conflict with them from rural areas into the heart of Colombia's major cities" (McDowell and Van Hear, 2006, pp. 7-8). When I spoke to Cartagena residents who were not from Mandela, many of them linked IDP and rural identities when describing Mandela residents, whom they saw as 'coming from the countryside'.

Thus, differently from the second generation, Mandela's first-generation youth rather consciously renounced rural identity together with IDP identity. Gripina, who left the countryside at age 8, used terms like 'overcome' and 'starting from zero' to describe her displacement from the village. Moreover, 28-year-old Cristian spoke of: "young people who come from province, from the village. [...] Because one tells them at least 'do that'. And they do. That is to be fashionable." In short, many young people actively sought to overcome or hide their rural origins in an effort to belong—to be like those in the city. Yet many other Cartagena residents continued to associate these individuals with their rural roots, partly because of their parents' values. Youth had to accommodate different perspectives: those told or modelled by their parents, and those they encountered in the city. In this sense, they lived in a liminal space between urban and rural identities. The liminality was also evident in their attempts to transition away from rural identity. The latter statement agrees with Bauder's (2001) observation that youth may engage in "jumping scales," rejecting neighbourhood-based ideologies in order to accommodate city-scale norms. In other words, in the family and community, young persons may allow their rural identities to emerge, while when with local youth urban identity dominates. The production and contestation of urban-rural difference and peri-urban liminality have been discussed by other scholars (e.g. Smith, 2015). In his research on peri-urban locality in China, Smith (2015, p. 201) examines how residents embraced hybrid urban-rural identities, which "destabilised the very urban-rural distinctions that produced their marginalisation in the first place." As peri-urban liminality has not been sufficiently explored in the context of internal displacement, the present work adds to our knowledge on IDP identity by shedding light on its relationship with rural-urban liminality. The findings of this thesis also demonstrate that the concept of liminality is helpful for understanding the relationship between identity categories both inter- and intrapersonally. In addition to explaining the liminal stages of coming to age from an interpersonal standpoint (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1967, 1987), this work shows that young people also navigate the same liminalities within themselves through internal

processes of meaning-making.

Finally, residents of Mandela literally lived in an in-between locality. As previously noted, Mandela began only in mid 1990s with the settlement on a field outside of Cartagena –a rural area. It has now become an urban neighbourhood. When Mandela was first founded in the area where city met countryside, this sense of physical liminality was still in the air; even now, the neighbourhood remains rather peripheral to Cartagena. The mixture of urban and rural values, which sometimes causes tensions, remains very present in the narratives of Mandela’s inhabitants.

### **6.5. Layered Interwoven Liminalities—Interrelations between Youth Identities in Mandela**

I have argued above that adult/child, male/female, IDP/non-IDP, and urban/rural dichotomies constitute an inappropriate frame for understanding young people affected by displacement in Mandela. Building on Hedge (1998), Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou (2003) and Rattansi and Phoenix (2005), this research confirmed that a multitude of youth identities coexist in Mandela and that these identities are situational, contingent, and interconnected.

Research has not sufficiently emphasised the liminal, interwoven, and layered nature of identity among youth affected by displacement. Although Camino’s (1994) research supports displacement and adolescence-related liminalities, the present work adds to this literature by emphasising that in addition gender and urban-rural liminalities could be also present simultaneously in youth identities. In addition to perceiving themselves as ‘women-in-the-making’, these young women often saw themselves as ambiguously situated between IDP and non-IDP status, a condition embedded within a larger peri-urban liminality. In addition to the “policy-induced liminality” (Hynes, 2011) that many young persons faced due to their status as IDPs, their age placed them into liminal space, as well as their upbringing, which combined both urban and rural values.

These liminal relationships between multiple identities in Mandela could be understood as long-term transitions, e.g. from an adolescent into a woman. This is the process of gendered becoming, or new identity formation—an identity change (Stets and Serpe, 2013) that Abes *et al.* (2007) and Magolda (2009) describe as a confused transitional phase of development. In the case of protracted displaced youth in Mandela, additional

aspects of identity construction must also be considered together. The dominant view mainly portrays youth as being in a process of development—growing up to become adults, but other transitions, such as becoming a woman, non-IDP and an urban person, are not currently emphasised enough. This liminal nature of interrelations between identities may also explain the paradox that concepts such as child or adult can be contrasting categories, as well as overlapping ones (Bucholtz, 2002). It is hard for policy to capture the complexities of these young lives, as policy frames are mostly static, yet youth are in the midst of significant process of change. Indeed, other cohorts in Mandela also faced blurred intersections between identities, such as moving toward old age or becoming an urban person. Yet interviews hinted that these transitions did not generate so much ambiguity; their responses were less contradictory, their self-identifications clearer.

This research also showed that some youth liminalities are interwoven with each other. Robb states that youth gender identity is “closely interwoven with other forms of social identity” (Robb, 2007, p. 109). In the processes of gendered becoming that I observed in Mandela, age and gender identity also tended to interweave continuously over the long term. Another interwoven relationship this research considered was between rural and IDP identities. The liminal processes of becoming a non-IDP and an urban person were interwoven in Mandela. Thus, while speaking of youth age, gender and displaced identities, ‘interwoven liminalities’ would well convey the reality in Mandela, describing the nature of how some identities relate to each other. Some also speak of conflicting identities that move towards compromise over time (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013). Yet in the case of gendered becoming or rural and IDP identities in Mandela, participants did not describe a feeling of conflict between these identities or the desire to reach a common ground.

This research refutes the dichotomous relationship between various identities and instead emphasises the blurred boundaries and interwoven liminalities among youth femininities and masculinities. In addition, this research also contributes by demonstrating how some identities can become more dominant at any given time. For instance, participants suggested that gendered identity could start to dominate over age identity when a girl began dating, moved in with a man, or gave birth. Many community members expressed that when an individual reached one of these milestones, they

would regard her first and foremost as a woman, even if she was only 15 or younger.

Moreover, 16-year-old Paula Andrea, a pregnant student, responded:

Researcher: With what do you identify most – adolescent, young person or a woman?

Paula Andrea: Woman.

Although an adolescent who is pregnant or has children may mostly identify with her gender identity, this dominant identity can change. To illustrate, an adolescent mother, 16-year-old Carolina, reflected on the positionality of her identities:

Because, as I explained to you, sometimes I feel woman when I have him (her son). [...] I have to keep an eye on him and his things. But when I feel adolescent is when I go out without him, to enjoy adolescence.

It may be argued that young persons may be using “woman” as a marker of age identity, not gender identity. Specifically, they could be seen to contrast being a woman to being a younger person with fewer responsibilities, as young women do not contrast it to being a man.<sup>12</sup> Although referring to ‘woman’, they might be talking not about how feminine they feel, but about how old they feel. However, using ‘woman’ as a marker of age identity only confirms the interwoven nature of age and gender identities and does not change the fact that young persons decided to use the term ‘woman’, instead of ‘adult’.

Thus, in addition to the long-term mobility of interwoven liminalities, continuous ‘jumping’ between identities can also happen in the short term. This short-term reshaping of identities challenges the stance that “socially constructed identities are experienced simultaneously, not hierarchically” (McCann and Kim, 2002, p. 150). Various concepts have been applied to explain the internal ranking of identities within in the self, such as, among others, identity salience (Stryker, 1968, 2002; Wiley, 1991), role person merger (Turner, 1978), identity prominence (McCall and Simmons, 1978), and levels of control (Burke and Stets, 2009).

This research emphasizes that identities are experienced both simultaneously and hierarchically and that the hierarchy of identities in Mandela could be approached as layered (Risse, 2004)—a term that emphasises the high malleability and mobility of the

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<sup>12</sup> I am grateful for Sara Saylor for this observation.

order among identities. When Carolina is with her son, her self-identity as a woman seems to be the dominant layer. However, when she goes out, her adolescent identity takes over. As Rattansi and Phoenix (2005) have suggested, the movement of these malleable layers needs to be researched and understood in the frame of their positionalities. Contextual influences through others shape youth self-identifications, and “identity constantly shifts within a web of power relationships” (Yang, 2016, p. 9). Moreover, Maher and Tetreault (1993, p. 118) emphasize that “gender, race, class, and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities.” Many contextual factors, including family background, career, and life plans (Jones and McEwen, 2000) can induce shifts in these layers. For instance, 20-year-old Esther stated at the beginning of our interview that she felt like an adolescent. Yet just a few minutes later, she stated, “I feel adult now, I think that a person of my age is already adult.” This shift was not caused by positionality of identities, as it happened in the same physical context—during an interview with me, where no new person or location appeared. Yet a different identification surfaced when she started to speak of her life project.

These layers were constantly shifting, both in their importance for the self and in relation to others. Like layers of clothing, some of these liminalities feel closer to the skin, to the self, while others cover us more from outside. Additionally, we change the clothing in relation to our context, where we are, and who is there with us. This explains why Duffield (2002) emphasises the power of IDP identity to conceal other identities, while Malkki (1995) discusses how other identities can conceal the displaced one—just as clothing functions both to conceal and to project aspects of our personalities that we want to display.

Social identities transform in relation to changing contexts and relationships (e.g. Abes *et al.*, 2007). The present research advances our understanding of the intersections between youth identities by emphasising the existence of both short- and long-term identity mobility, which is currently rather under-acknowledged. The term ‘layered interwoven liminalities’ helps to describe the nature of this multitude of short- and long-term movements among youth identities in Mandela. Some scholars have suggested using continuums instead of binaries. For instance, Richmond (1994) and Scheel and Squire (2014) discuss the use of continuums instead of voluntary/involuntary migration

binaries. The process of gradual becoming, which appeared in relation to womanhood, youth, as well as becoming a non-IDP, could also be seen as a continuum. In the case of young people, the concept of liminality seems to even better emphasise, first, that many identities exist on this continuum, and second, that they are in constant motion.

The interplay between age, gender, and displaced status was also explored in relation to other youth identities in Mandela. For instance, Frosh *et al.* (2002) discuss how young masculinities in London vary along lines of class, ethnicity, sexuality, and 'race'. As most second-generation IDPs in my study were born in Mandela, they were mostly from the same class and 'race'. These two identities thus did not emerge as important markers, or layers, in my discussions with the youth. This might also have been related to the fact that the interviews did not explicitly ask questions about class and 'race'. The first generation stated that not so long ago, the situation was much more heterogeneous, as young people came to the community from different regions. Mandela was once a 'little Colombia', with people arriving from Uraba, Antiqueno, Choco and South Bolívar. However, when closely exploring the discussions in relation to IDP and rural identity, one can see that the core issues pertain to class identity.

The notion of generation itself needed to be problematized and contextualized in Mandela. Kohli (2006) states that generation can be defined in relation to society and family. In the first sense, Mandela residents clearly recognized first and second generation as important frames for identity, because members of each generation had been exposed to the same historically important events (Klecka, 1971). As to the second, family-oriented meaning, 15 years seemed to constitute a generation, given that early motherhood remained common in Mandela. I used both categorisations in my work. Moreover, many adolescents who already had their own children experienced ambiguity in this regard, sometimes identifying themselves both as parents and as children.

Analysing how identities relate is crucial for understanding youth behaviour, which is "rooted in the issues of self and identity" (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 34). The questions of why some young people become involved in sexual exploitation of adolescents or in the gangs cannot be well understood without considering in addition to structural factors also how exactly various identities "provide the meanings and standards that guide the selection and implementation of behaviour" (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 24). While some

argue that “having multiple identities can create competing demands and potentially lead to conflict and distress” (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 26), others (e.g. Thoits, 1983, 1986, 2003) argue that multiple identities diminish anxiety and depression while advancing positive beliefs and higher self-esteem. It is thus crucial to explore the interrelation between youth identities in the policy context. Since research has linked depression and distress to involvement in gang violence and prostitution (Kidd and Kral, 2002), understanding the interrelations between multiple identities may support the development of improved protection policies for youth in conflict-affected areas.

Understanding the interrelations between youth identities is also important for determining what to call research participants. Since Mandela residents mostly used the terms ‘youth’ and ‘adolescence’ interchangeably, I decided to use the term ‘young people’ most often throughout this work. I felt that this inclusive, less controversial term could best accommodate the various liminalities I observed. The term ‘young people’ was also suitable because this community did not regard age 18 as a significant developmental milestone. Although much literature speaks of ‘adolescent girls’ (de Berry, 2004; Swaine and Feeny, 2004; Grabska, 2016), I tried scarcely to apply this term in the present work as it did not match the perspectives of the majority of young female participants, who refuted the idea that adolescence is a part of childhood. For those out of school, ‘adolescent women’ seemed to best reflect how they saw themselves. In the spirit of seeking common ground between policy and people, I have mostly applied the umbrella terms ‘young women’, ‘women-in-the-making’, and ‘female adolescents’. The terms applied in this work differ from the dichotomous labels often favoured by policy in that they refer not to fixed identities, but rather to on-going processes of movement and transition.

## **Chapter 7: Embedded Protection: Navigating beside the Agency and Oppression Binary**

I previously demonstrated that the concept of multiple identities could unlock the interrelations among youth self-identifications more effectively than existing policy labels do. In this chapter, I explore the interplay of agency and oppression as an alternative to the dichotomous labels that often dominate discussions about protection policy. I switch to an external perspective (Thoits, 1983; Stets and Serpe, 2013) to examine how youth identities are related to social structure and how they are performed and managed through interaction. This chapter demonstrates how youth exercise agency within the context of protection in their everyday lives. I also illustrate how analysis of the interplay of agency and oppression reveals relational aspects of protection that are not well captured by static policy concepts.

Being inspired by Sedgwick (2003), I decided instead of looking at what is beyond agency/oppression binary to explore what exists beside this dichotomy. Sedgwick (2003, p.8) writes:

*Beside* is an interesting preposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. *Beside* permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. Its interest does not, however, depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relations, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings.

### **7.1 Contextualising Protection—Youth Constrained and Privileged within the Social Structures**

Although policy often tends to approach the protection of youth through working in silos (Jaspars and O'Callaghan, 2010; Dahrendorf, 2016), protection should not be divorced from the totality of a young life. Protection does not happen in a vacuum (Corbett, 2011), but is embedded into young people's daily lives. Youth's feelings of safety and security can only be well understood in the context of how they perform their identities, which are shaped by various structures of oppression and privilege (Hulko, 2009). Similarly, displacement and protection policies do not exist in isolation but are connected to evolving social dynamics.

From the perspective of structural intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), displaced female adolescents of colour in Mandela experienced multi-layered dominations. Nash (2008, p. 10) argues that “positions of dominance and subordination work in complex and intersecting ways to constitute subjects’ experiences of personhood.” In Mandela, key intersecting challenges include poverty, the stigma of IDP status, and limited educational opportunities. Racial oppression through marginalisation (Young, 1990) was also present. For instance, interviews showed that displaced young people of colour felt they had less access to information and the formal labour market compared to their white peers who were not displaced and lived in fancier neighbourhoods. Similar to what Crenshaw (1991) discusses, gender and class oppression affected many female adolescents in Mandela. Due to the dominant *machista* culture, these young women often lacked professional skills and were faced with childcare obligations.

Regarding class, the IDPs from rural areas were not economically well-off. They clearly faced more difficulties accessing employment opportunities compared to other historically poor and economic migrants (Pollock, 2013). White (2011, p. 409) defines agency “as social actors’ ability to create and enact options necessary to shape their future.” Many young people in Mandela had fewer options for their future compared to their peers in middle-class neighbourhoods in Cartagena, meaning that socioeconomic class constrained their agency. Juan Carlos and Liliana explained the impact that socioeconomic class divisions can have on family life and youth protection:

On the other hand, we find that due to the same poverty situation, to say it like that, parents need to go to work and children stay at home, alone. Therefore, they remain without protection, there is no time ... and then parents come tired, from a long day at work. And with that I want to say that there is no quality time for children. I do not want to say that it needs much, all day or two hours, but in reality they do not dedicate quality time for their children.

As discussed in more depth in the next chapter, lack of parental supervision and guidance emerged as important reasons why young people became engaged in sexual exploitation or get involved in gangs.

Although age oppression is mostly discussed in relation to old age (Twigg, 2004; Calasanti *et al.*, 2006), it is also important to consider it in relation to youth, as in some societies children could be seen as oppressed (Hearn, 1988; James *et al.*, 1998; Pringle, 1998). Some social structures in Mandela privileged youth. Although young participants

in my study agreed that their parents had certain power over their lives, they perceived themselves as holding rights and power. For instance, when asked if adolescents were somehow oppressed compared to adults, 16-year-old Carolina answered:

I don't think so. I mean, first adults have, yes, they have more power. I believe I don't feel it like that. First, because it is as if you want to be pressured by it. Secondly because you can do whatever you want with your life and your body, I don't feel it is like that for me.

Do adult persons have power over my decision? It depends. If it's my mom, she does, but others don't. But that does not bother me. I feel that I have enough power in my life, over my decisions.

Challenging the notion of age oppression (Thorne, 1987), these female adolescents did not feel dominated by adults. Many expressed a sense of agency, although they still felt somewhat constrained by their parents. Some, like 16-year-old Paola, even felt privileged due to their age:

Researcher: How is it here, for instance, young people and adults, how is power between these two?

Paola: I say that young people.

Researcher: Young people have more power?

Paola: Hm-um.

Researcher: And why?

Paola: Because young people, that is, the majority of young people are... In other words, the majority of young people work, that is, have work. Because they have also more force than adults and they have more opportunities...

Researcher: These young people; young men or also women? Is it that whole generation?

Paola: Yes () most young persons are... You see, most young people work, are doing work. And also have more physical force and have more possibilities.

Collins (1993, p. 556) notes that “white women are penalised by their gender, but privileged by their race.” Similarly, Paola mentioned feeling discriminated against due to her gender, as she was not able to play football. Yet she saw herself as privileged by age. Thus, youth can be seen both as a constraint and a privilege, depending on the context (Hulko, 2009). In Mandela, many regarded their youth as a privilege that gave them more opportunities. According to White (2011), more options could be seen as facilitating agency.

Moving from large social structures to more proximate ones (Stryker *et al.*, 2005), school also privileged female adolescents' agency in Mandela. The interviews showed that in-school adolescents practised femininity rather differently from those out of

school. They also had different perspectives on adolescence and protection. For instance, those in school mostly did not know anyone who engaged in sexual exploitation or was part of a gang; their social circles were different. Those in school were thus fairly isolated from these protection problems. They also had more career opportunities and could fully concentrate on their own hopes for the future. Referring to Bauman (2013, p. 83), they had greater “ability to ‘shop around’ in the supermarket of identities” and were more “free to make and unmake identities at will.”

As they rarely lived with a boyfriend, were pregnant, or had children, their agency was not constrained by boyfriends, in-laws, or their children’s needs and wants. 16-year-old Carolina, who was no longer enrolled at school, described how she felt when she moved to her boyfriend’s house:

First I felt bad, as it is not the same as to live in my house, to sleep, to wake up late, to do what I desire in my house. Now no, I have to respect, I mean, to come early, not to go out, ask for permission. I was not used to asking permission.

Another proximate social structure, family, could either constrain or support young persons’ agency. When larger structural and political oppressions converged with family constraints, youth had even fewer opportunities. If they had stopped their education, came from abusive families, or had been subjected to various types of abandonment and neglect, they experienced additional forms of disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1991). I will demonstrate this point in the next chapter when presenting two life stories from Mandela. However, if their parents were more educated and had been exposed to NGO culture and language, as in the case of Juan Carlos and Liliana, then their family environment could enhance both opportunities and agency.

Looking now at political and representational intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) – which is particularly important when focusing on policies—the dynamics of how oppression and privilege were maintained became clearer. Crenshaw (1991, p. 1252) describes how intersectional groups “often define as well as confine the interest of the entire group” and that the “discourses are often inadequate” for communicating the complexity of the situations group members face. For instance, policy discourses that represent female adolescents as children, or as women, mostly fail to encompass, respectively, their distinct gender and age identities. Consequently, female adolescents affected by displacement can often fall between the cracks of policy (WRC, 2000). In

other words, in programming activities, they are often seen as children, and their gender-specific dimensions are not well addressed. For instance, humanitarian information and services might be programmed to be delivered to adolescents like to younger children relying on the school, yet many adolescent girls may not attend the school (WRC, 2014). Alternatively, they are grouped together with women, and their age-related particularities are not appropriately considered. Crenshaw (1991) also speaks of strategic silences, and it seems that those designing policies for minors are sometimes afraid to acknowledge the gender and agency of adolescents, to see them as young women. Recalling Valentine and Meinert's (2009) critique of the CRC, these policymakers may fear that acknowledging youth agency would reduce their status as innocent children. Moreover, those fighting for women's empowerment may not like to incorporate age into their analysis, perhaps because they are afraid of loosening their stance on equality between men and women. Emphasising a woman's young age might lead to her being seen as having less power. Omata (2017, p. 113) also discusses how "refugees must be 'vulnerable' and 'innocent' people, as beneficiaries of international aid." Thus, pragmatic and political interests may motivate portrayals of these young women mostly as victims.

Regarding IDP status, Pollock (2013) discusses the "invisibility of IDPs" and argues that the authorities in Cartagena are not interested in publicising the severity of problems related to displacement because they seek to maintain the city's image as an attractive tourist destination. Juan Carlos and Liliana, local service providers from the community, also discussed how some politicians in Colombia are interested in keeping people poor, so that votes can be bought. My research found that the above-mentioned policies reinforced and contributed to maintaining female adolescents' oppression in this marginalised neighbourhood, while education-related discourse was seen as reinforcing youth self-esteem and enlarging their opportunities for the future. This was evident in the artwork created by female adolescent students, which strongly expressed their agency, dreams, and life plans 'beyond marriage'. This topic is examined in a later section of the present chapter.

In light of the above, one way to approach the interplay of oppression and agency in young lives is to look for instances when social structures limit or enhance agency. Referring to Collins' (1993) matrix of domination, the main axis of oppression for

young women in Mandela seemed to be class, but this also intersected with gender and ‘race’-related oppression. Emphasising the variability of social location (Hulko, 2009), displaced status constituted an additional axis of oppression outside the Mandela community, since displacement reduces socioeconomic opportunities. However, since IDP status was not generally stigmatised inside Mandela, being a second-generation adolescent in this community could be seen as a privilege vis-à-vis the first generation of displaced persons. Yet the analysis of agency and oppression should not stop at the intermediate level (Stryker *et al.*, 2005); it must be approached individually, as family circumstances also play an important role in magnifying or reducing agency. Policies—including displacement and protection ones—are not neutral, but are shaped by the structures of oppression and privilege.

## **7.2 Protection through Togetherness – Joining Agency against Oppression**

Exploring agency in the context of social relations (Alanen, 2009; James, 2009) and in particular family relationships, the latter often privileged youth agency through collective agency that emerged as a response to certain instances of protection-related oppression in Mandela. By collective agency, I mean “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477).

It is important to explore oppression in relation to protection in the context of internal displacement and with reference to such policy documents as *The Guiding Principles* (Deng, 1998) and to the overarching definition of protection (ICRC, 1999). Indeed, in said context, oppression refers to protection problems, threats, and violations of various bodies of law, be they human rights law, international humanitarian law, or refugee law. In the case of minors, violence, exploitation and abuse are given particular emphasis. Referring to Young (1990), there are agents of oppression who create protection threats; in Mandela, these are gang members. As mentioned, in the policy world, internally-displaced young people in general, and female adolescents in particular, are often perceived as lacking protection, with ‘protection’ mainly defined in legal terms (Burr, 2002; Bunting, 2005; Talviste, 2009). Yet this was not what the interviews in Mandela revealed, as participants put forward very different notions of protection. Moreover, instead of lacking agency and protection as victims, youth expressed their capacity to

act in response to violations through collective agency.

In the artworks featured below, four young women—Aida, Rosa, Paula Andrea and Melissa — expressed their perception of protection. These displacement-affected female adolescents in Cartagena emphasised the centrality of family in their notions of protection.

Figure 4: Rosa's Interpretation of the Term 'Protection'

The TV I chose for my  
brother, to protect him.  
Because when there are  
fights, he would not go out  
and would be protected as  
watching TV.

The singer is to protect her.  
As when I sometimes  
imagine, I will be a singer  
and I see and analyze and I  
say and I will protect me as  
she does.

(Rosa, participant in focus  
group with female  
adolescents from the  
community of Nelson  
Mandela, in  
Cartagena)



Figure 5: Paula Andrea's Interpretation of the Term 'Protection'<sup>13</sup>

Well, I chose this picture, as there is a mom with her son.

[...]

For me one of the best protections is what the mom offers to him, to the son whom she always keeps an eye on, so that nothing bad happens to him and that the son can always count on her, she with her son. And like that to avoid various obstacles, various problems. That always there is established a relation between mom and son.



(Paula Andrea, participant in a focus group with female adolescents from the community of Nelson Mandela, in Cartagena)

<sup>13</sup> *Si a la proteccion, no al maltrato (Yes to protection, no to abuse).*

Figure 6: Aida's Interpretation of the Term 'Protection'<sup>14</sup>



By Aida, participant in focus group with female adolescents from the Nelson Mandela community, in Cartagena.

<sup>14</sup> *Mi familia, mi paraíso, mi protección* (My family, my paradise, my protection).

Figure 7: Melissa's Interpretation of the Term 'Protection'<sup>15</sup>



Melissa, who created the artwork above, explained: “Engagement is because two people can provide each other protection, as she can tell him her personal stuff.” As to the second image, Melissa added: “It is because there is a mom, a grandmother, mother, and daughter, and it is possible to see a lot of protection among them.”

The same main themes were echoed through verbal communication during the semi-structured interviews. To illustrate, 18-year-old Ana Vanessa spoke of protection and security: “As always one should have a person, if you see what I mean, with whom to talk to [...] that is to say, when... I am with another person.” However, 27-year-old Nancy stated that: “Protection, protection for me means security towards a person, to protect her.”

Collective agency also emerged through parental guidance; participants of all ages linked this theme to protection, there was no difference noted between first-and second

<sup>15</sup> *La protección es un paso de nuestra vida personal.* (Protection is a step in our personal life).

generations. For instance, 45-year-old Maria B stated:

Protection, for me the concept is, at least that one needs to protect the child or son to make him see the things. The bad, the good; what he needs to do, what he should not do, and with whom he should be in relations. Because here one sees a lot what is a vice, in this regard.

As is clear, for those who were parents, protection essentially meant protecting their children.

The perspectives of policy and the affected persons differed remarkably in relation to what protection means. Instead of legal terms that emphasise authorities and international actors, for inhabitants of Mandela protection was related to togetherness, being with loved ones, and protecting each other. This was a common theme that appeared across adolescents' artworks. Although often portrayed as such by policy, they did not see themselves as victims who needed others to take care of them. More concretely, policy considers female adolescents affected by displacement as victims, because they are seen as innocent children (Valentine and Meinert, 2009), vulnerable since they are women (UNHCR, 2017), and without agency because they are affected by forced migration and lack of protection (Scalettari, 2009). In Mandela, female adolescents saw themselves as social actors in the community (James *et al.*, 1998; Jans, 2004; Liebel, 2004) and as protectors of themselves and others. For instance, during the art-making, most young female participants chose a picture of a woman and explained how she is protecting herself. In reference to agency being "the capability of individuals to both shape their own lives, and to influence their social contexts" (Baraldi and Iervese, 2014, p. 2), these youth also described the necessity of protecting others. For instance, Paula Andrea, soon-to-be-mother, explained how a mom offers protection and keeps an eye on her son. Additionally, Mayra spoke about protecting herself and her brother, while Melissa referred to protecting each other in a couple. All three saw themselves as active agents, protecting themselves and others (see also Harragin, 2011). Protection's links to close social networks, and particularly to family, were also noted in Harragin's research in South Sudan (2011).

Although not really outlined by the older first-generation research participants, younger participants also linked protection to being together with friends, another form of collective agency and of self-protection strategies. For instance, community members had set an informal curfew of 9 PM to avoid encountering gang fights or being robbed

by gang members—two main protection threats in the Mandela community. Some male adolescents would only go to a shop nearby with their parents at night, thus activating their bonding social capital through applying collective agency (Krishna, 2001; Granovetter, 1973). 18-year-old Ana Vanessa, a young woman, explained:

All morning when we see that there are people (in the streets). Then all people go home and then we are nearby the shop. And barely they start to close the shop, we will go home [...] There are more people at the night close by the shop.

Some people may argue that it would be problematic for policymakers to embrace the definitions of protection offered by these young women. In doing so, they would place responsibility for protection on individuals and families. This would also potentially erode the discourse the humanitarian actors have when emphasizing the states' responsibility to protect its citizens. However, when working as a community-based protection adviser, I saw that policy practitioners could simultaneously work on reminding duty bearers of their responsibilities to protect and supporting IDPs resilience through strengthening some of their self-protection strategies.

### **7.3 Gendered Becoming and Embedded Protection**

In addition to social structures, protection must also be contextualised in relation to important processes that affect young people's priorities. Gendered becoming was a prominent part of young lives in Mandela, as noted in previous chapters. I therefore explored agency and oppression interplay in relation to rites of passage and milestones—the frameworks often used to examine transitions from adolescence to womanhood. Within this discussion, I will demonstrate how protection emerged as deeply embedded into this gendered process of becoming.

I applied Van Gennep's (Van Gennep, 1960, in Turner, 1969, p. 94) definition of rites, which "accompany every change of place, state, social position and age." Psychologists have also researched these passages, exploring developmental milestones that "may be biological, e.g. the age of menarche, psychological, e.g. the attainment of a Piagetian stage in early cognitive development, or social, e.g. the age at first cohabitation" (Pickles *et al.*, 1996, p. 159). Given the interdisciplinary approach of this work, both the terms 'milestone' and 'rite of passage' are used.

Although some rites of passage and milestones (such as becoming a parent) were

common among both young men and women, other milestones varied by gender, as discussed by Benson and Furstenberg (2007). Female participants often mentioned first menstruation and cessation of play as transitions to womanhood, while male participants associated manhood with having a first beer, going to the streets, and no longer being dependent on their mother. Female adolescents also highlighted their first sexual intercourse experience as an important milestone, and this has also been seen as a milestone by others (Thapa, 2007; Ott and Pfeiffer, 2009; Ledford, 2010). Becoming a mother, having a husband, and living with one's husband were also mentioned. Very few mentioned having an ID or starting a career.

As protection is the focus of this work, I prioritised the exploration of the rites of passage in the lives of those seen as being at particular risk – such as adolescent mothers (Ehlers, 2003) – or those who had engaged with protection problems such as sexual exploitation of adolescents. What appeared was that as young women navigated towards womanhood, their agency was often constrained by loved ones. For example, 16-year-old Carolina, who was the mother of a baby at the time of her interview, explained:

One played, went for parties, for instance, went to play with friends, to the beach and all that; this is already different when one cannot go out as one needs to stay with dependants, to keep an eye on his sickness, so I did not have time to play, that is, time to go out with them. I did not have time to amuse myself, nothing like that.

Carolina seemed to express tactical rather than strategic agency (Honwana, 1999) once she became a mother. This quotation reflects her feeling of being constrained by motherhood. As Honwana states, this is often the case for people who have multiple – and often contradictory – identities, like many of the adolescent mothers in Mandela.

This sense of constraint was also reflected by 19-year-old mother Gloria, who described how her life changed at age 16: “Since I looked for a boyfriend and changed [...] I played with them, I had my boyfriend, but then my mother said you are very big, you are very old to be playing with these dudes.”

Anna Milena, a 40-year-old mother of seven children, explained that her adolescence ended when she started sex work at 19. This took place after the death of two nuns who took care of her: “To put her into a nursing home because I could not and there the other one died in my arms, already then I remained alone. Then I started to prostitute.” It does

not follow from Anna Milena's statement that she was forced into sex work. She acted upon her circumstances and, thus, exercised tactical agency (Honwana, 1999) within the constraints of her circumstances, her trauma, and her solitude.

Although having power or being oppressed are often seen in the policy world as dichotomies, this was not the reality in Mandela. Various constraints—such as political and structural factors, but also the influence of loved-ones—situate the marginalised young lives in Mandela in a state of in-betweenness. According to Hulko (2009), agency and oppression can be seen as a continuum of 'power over'/being oppressed and having free agency. In Anna Milena's case, we can speak of being compelled or influenced to engage in sex work by certain circumstances, but it cannot be said that she was coerced or forced into sex work. Though young people are influenced by various interlocking oppressions, they also have agency and enjoy privileges.

The internal liminal state of the marginalised youth in Mandela corresponded to external in-between spaces. This is evident when seeing agency, the capacity to act upon one's world, as "taking strategic actions towards goals that matter" (O'Meara, 2013, p. 2). Achieving goals, finishing studies, and pursuing one's dreams were likewise associated with the transition from adolescence. 16-year-old Paola stated: "I will be a woman when I have reached my goals and have a husband." On the other hand, 15-year-old Sandra referred to her end of adolescence as "when I finish my studies." These quotations demonstrate how agency is related to overcoming a liminal state and completing the passage to womanhood.

In addition to providing more information about a person's relationship with social structures, the exploration of agency and oppression interplay in the context of rites can also shed light on person's protection situation. The quotations above highlight the circumstances that led to protection problems—specifically, how early motherhood and sexual exploitation of adolescents were embedded into young women's navigations towards womanhood.

The link between protection and performing young femininities and masculinities also appeared in youth artworks. For instance, below is the artwork of a male adolescent, Cristian. He explained, "those who protect me the most are friends; here I have a photo where a friend is helping, is protecting the car so that it will not hit so she is protecting

her friend.”

Both female and male participants emphasised friendship when defining protection. However, boys’ artwork often linked cars to protection, a theme completely absent from female artworks. Various boys portrayed cars in their work, explaining that the car signified the driver’s protection from accidents. Furthermore, some male participants incorporated images of soldiers protecting their country. These findings show that although the core meanings of protection were similar for both female and male participants, some notions of protection were also gendered.

Figure 8: Cristian’s Interpretation of the Term ‘Protection’



In their research on masculinity and car culture, Walker *et al.* (2000, p. 153) show “how attachment to risk-laden car culture, which emphasises masculine powers and excludes women, is attractive to working-class youth marginalised by mainstream schooling.” In a similar vein, Grabska (2010), Theidon (2009) and Pollock (2013) refer to “militarised masculinities,” which Pollock describes as “pervasive in Colombia” (2013, p. 41). Pollock (2013, p. 41), referring to Theidon’s research, states:

Soldiering, whether in the state military or in another armed group, is tied to social and economic mobility, as well as ideals of citizenship. Lacking other viable employment options, a man's "bodily capital—and the high premium placed on physical force and prowess with a weapon—may be all they have to trade on the labour market" (Theidon 2009: 23).

The link between protection and gendered becoming also emerged in relation to participants' life goals. Their artwork suggested that they often associated protection with dreams and plans for the future. This was reflected in Paula Andrea's choice of a motherhood photo, Rosa's photo of a singer, and Melissa's focus on engagement. Protection was thus woven into the process of navigating away from liminality. The fact that many women used a photo of a single woman to express their notion of protection may signify that Colombian *machista* culture (Pollock, 2013) is changing; young women's aspirations can reach beyond marriage, particularly when they continue their education during adolescence. In her study of gender identities in the Nuer displacement context, Grabska (2010, p. 149) discusses the "weakening of men's position as household 'protectors and providers' (i.e. emasculation of men)" as a new generation of girls have been educated, empowered, and socialised "into role models 'beyond marriage'" (Grabska, 2010, p. 202). Grabska (2010, p. 203) also outlines the importance of schools: "Although girls still referred to marriage and children as routes to womanhood, they also saw other possibilities beyond 'being wives and mothers.'" Young women's power existed on a continuum, between fully realized personal agency and the oppression of *machista* culture.

The embeddedness of protection into young people's lives extended beyond gendered becoming and life goals. For instance, an ex-gang member defined protection as "hiding myself or putting myself into a place, in which no one can harm me. This sense of protection is inherently linked to the risks involved in his positionality as an ex-gang member. Some participants, who had been involved with NGOs and were familiar with policy language, defined protection in relation to authorities and police, who they felt were responsible for their protection. Others associated protection with a range of images: conversations with God, sexual intercourse with prophylactic, sleeping quietly, and a safe environment. Contextualising these responses, one can see how they reflect lived realities; a sex worker described using a condom as protection, while an ex-gang member referred to sleeping without worrying for his life.

The influence of particular identities on one's situation of protection was extremely

apparent in 17-year-old Roberto's answer: "And then it is protection because my mother may tell me to not go out because the neighbourhood is hot, thus I do not go out. Then she is protecting me." This quotation refers to fights between gangs, a particular danger for young out-of-school men, who are at risk of becoming involved with gangs. Roberto's sense of protection was thus strongly linked to his positionality in the community, which produced particular risks for him due to his gender, age, and social location (being out of school). His statement also suggests how protection through togetherness—his mother providing information on the neighbourhood's security situation—joins his constrained agency, as he decides not to go out because of gang fights.

#### **7.4 Victimcy and Moving Away from the IDP Identity**

Another facet of the interrelation between agency and oppression that emerged in Mandela was "victimcy", defined as "the agency of self-staging as a victim" (Utas, 2005, p. 403). Having discussed youth identities such as 'race', class, community, student, gender and age in relation to social structures, I will now explore victimcy in relation to IDP identity and protection.

As briefly mentioned, displacement constituted an additional axis of oppression, particularly outside of Mandela. As IDPs are "persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence" (Deng 1998, p.5), they can be seen as victims of oppression in the strictest sense: people affected by domination (Young, 1990). In addition, "oppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilise or diminish a group" (Young, 2009, p. 57). Therefore, not only did IDPs face domination in their place of origin; they also faced constant structural oppression after arriving in Cartagena. For instance, 42-year-old Luis Fernando, a first-generation IDP, stated:

The word displaced creates enough stigma in the city, and for this reason one speaks of stigma of Mandela as in Mandela 80% are displaced. [...] a person without culture and a person badly dressed. [...] For me is a person who lacks opportunities and persons who do not have anything, but nothing to envy for somebody who lives in Bocagrande, somebody who lives in Manga.<sup>16</sup> Has nothing to envy as they have land extensions, have all their comforts [...] That they have come here to beg then, they see us as beggars.

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<sup>16</sup> Well-off neighbourhoods in Cartagena.

These phrases express a feeling of being socially disparaged and excluded that most first-generation IDPs shared. For instance, 25-year-old Gripina also mentioned that non-IDPs recognize displaced people by their clothing and look critically at them. Thus, in the beginning of their displacement, their stigma was not concealable (Levin and Van Laar, 2006 ; Quinn, 2006).

Second-generation IDPs also occasionally felt oppression due to their displaced status, though not to the same degree. 16-year-old Carolina, for instance, stated: “I feel displaced because of the way we live in the neighborhood, and [...] because we don’t have the same utilities as certain people.” She also felt stigmatised in the community:

Yes, sometimes they make fun of it, my friends [...] some of my friends are displaced, but others who don’t, sometimes one of them tells me oh, Carolina, where is your mother from? and I respond, well, they are from La Guajira, and they are displaced, I mean, they consider me as if I were a pauper...

Indeed, 32-year-old IDP participant Andres also elaborated on how current adolescents feel about being IDPs in Mandela:

I don’t think they would admit it, because being displaced might be like something they would regard as low-class inside their group. It is not something they feel proud of. [...] Therefore being a displaced person for them is like “uh, you are low class”, or like you don’t wear brand name clothes.

In the language of protection policy, this structural oppression related to IDP status would be understood as discrimination, and IDPs would thus be seen as victims of discrimination.

Yet these victims of discrimination also exercised agency; structural oppression due to their IDP status met with their agency in what Utas (2005) calls “victimcy.” This was evident in the conversation with 32-year-old Andres:

Researcher: Displaced is not a good word here, for the people?

Andres: Well, it depends on what it is going to be used for. If for example it is used to take advantage of beneficence, or if you are going to give them something cool, or if you ask me if I am a displaced person and you are going to give me 500,000 pesos....Then yes, I am...I am displaced. But if you are going to ask me if I am displaced just to make me look ridiculous in front of the group and you are not going to give me anything, then I say “no, I am not displaced” and that is it, I am on the cool side. It depends on the scenario, it depends on what the situation is.

Additionally, 26-year-old Valentina, a young sex worker and second-generation IDP

from Mandela, said that the only time she had disclosed her IDP status was to get a cheaper rate at nursery school for her children. No gender difference seemed to exist as to using victimcy in relation to IDP status; both male and female participants brought this strategy up.

Self-staging as IDP was not only employed for financial benefits. 16-year-old IDP Carolina took pride in her IDP status but also mentioned that she was sometimes made fun of for it:

There are some that ask me, hey is it true that they (her mother and grandmother) saw all those wars, all that blood, and I say to them, they tell me it is true, yes, but I don't know and we get to communicate like that.

Carolina stated that she is proud of her mother and grandmother, because “they have psychologically endured all that they saw.”

Revealing one's IDP status can sometimes be advantageous, whether economically or socially. As Zetter (1991) argues, forcibly displaced people use various strategies to be seen as conforming to a label to secure material advantages. In Mandela, if the young people saw any advantage to IDP status, they would fully perform that identity; in other cases, they would hide or deny it. This aligns with what Levin and Van Laar (2006, p. 4) mention regarding stigmatized identities, such as IDP identity in Cartagena: “individuals with concealable stigmas have to choose to whom and when to reveal their stigma.”

Agency and oppression were also connected as young people in Mandela used their agency to move away from IDP identity. It seemed that most young people wanted to become non-IDPs as soon as possible, a tendency noted among both first and second generation of IDP youth. This result is consistent with Pollock's (2013) finding that IDPs in Cartagena were “renegotiating their personal and collective identities” as they sought to leave their past behind (p. 35). Pollock (2013, p. 45) also discusses how some in Cartagena make:

the distinction between being displaced and being in a situation of displacement. She [a research participant called Carmen], thinks that those who have been forcibly displaced should not let that single event come to define their entire identities and strip them of who they were or who they can be. “A woman is not displaced,” explains Carmen. “She is intelligent, she is hardworking, she is a fighter, she is a campesina (peasant), but she is not displaced. She is a woman in a situation of displacement.

Another way of moving away from IDP status was to say, as 32-year-old IDP Andres did, “I am not. My father, he is, my grandfather, he is, but I am not.” Although this strategy was not used much for first-generation IDP youth, several adolescent second-generation participants shared this view. For instance, 16-year-old Paola stated, “I am not displaced, but my mother is.” This research also revealed other methods for distancing oneself from displaced status; these methods are used more in case of first-generation IDP youth.

For instance, 22-year-old Ricardo, a young IDP man and ex-gang member, told me:

Researcher: Today, in your identity, what does it mean for you?

Ricardo: That... that for me would be like a story that stayed in the past.

During another period, Ricardo explained:

...displaced persons have been evolving, and like persons, have been getting education, becoming professionals[...] because today, now, a displaced person is well aware of his rights. He is aware of his rights and he knows where to go to claim them and demand them.

Others described similar processes of evolving IDP status. 25-year-old Gripina (introduced in the previous chapter), who was 8 years old when she was displaced, stated that she had ‘overcome’ her IDP status. She saw participation in various workshops and conferences as a means to move away from this status. She spoke of various steps that needed to be taken to overcome IDP status, such as learning about children’s rights, saving money, obtaining work, and obtaining various documents, such as identity cards and health-related documents. The interview with her demonstrated how “individuals and society are mutually constitutive” (Stets and Serpe 2013: 6) as her internal liminality regarding being or not an IDP was also externalised into social landscape. Using their agency, youth navigated an ambiguous liminal space between being and not being an IDP. For instance, Gripina stated: “I was a displaced person, I have been a displaced person for 6 years now, as they say, but since then I have been overcoming it... I mean, things have been improving for me.” On another occasion, Gripina said:

Now the point that remains for me is certificate of military service. I mean, these are like steps put on one’s path and one has to overcome these. And when one reaches the last one then one can, as said here, to state to have overcome it. I have already overcome being displaced.

Gripina's ambivalence regarding displacement is reflected in her actions; she still has some steps to complete, yet she also states that she has already overcome IDP status.

Although the strategies used differed partially among first- and second-generation IDP youth, both groups in Mandela used their agency not only to respond to oppression, but also to distance themselves from displaced status and the sense of victimisation it entails. Some, like Gripina, were fortunate to receive help from foundations and local NGOs (see also Pollock, 2013), which reflects the advantageous aspects of IDP status and its privileging impact.

Although policy represents these young people principally as victims, or (less frequently) as agents, the reality in Mandela was that youth affected by internal displacement were simultaneously victims and agents; these two concepts were not mutually exclusive. Bello (2001) discusses the importance of acknowledging when one is a victim without falling into a mindset of victimisation. Pollock (2013, p. 58) describes this challenge as "recognising agency to shape the future without forgetting about the tragedies of the past." For O'Meara (2013, p. 3), agency means regarding one's situation "as something that can be overcome." In Mandela, performing victimcy and distancing oneself from IDP status were two strategies that made the interplay of agency and oppression visible. Youth used the self-protection strategy of self-staging as an IDP (while simultaneously moving towards becoming a non-IDP) to move toward their goals while remaining as protected as possible. In other words, while obtaining all possible benefits related to IDP status, youth also aimed to minimize the amount of discrimination they faced due to that status.

## **7.5 Youth Protection in Mandela—Navigating in a Liminal and Changing Social Landscape**

Self-protection strategies effectively reflect the various ways in which agency is meeting oppression in the context of protection. Many self-protection strategies related to physical safety (Barrs, 2010) existed in Mandela, particularly actions taken to avoid robberies and gang violence. Examples included avoiding getting close to fights, not wearing visible jewellery, walking in groups, hiding one's phone and valuables, not carrying large amounts of money, and installing metal bars in front of one's windows. As discussed by Gorur (2013), while some strategies are aimed more at mitigating the

threats (such as carrying little money in case one is robbed), the objective of most mechanisms was to deploy agency to avoid oppression – (in this case, violence carried out by gang members). Young people sometimes demonstrated collective agency; at other times, they manifested constrained agency, as when they sought to distance themselves from oppression. Some strategies could also be viewed as a more short-term solutions emerging from “tactical agency” (Honwana, 1999), such as responding to gang fights by running home and “throwing myself to the floor and that is all I can do,” as explained by 25-year-old Marie Sol. Yet several participants also advocated more strategic, long-term forms of agency (Honwana, 1999), such as attempting to get to know the gang members. For instance, Daniela, a 53-year-old woman who sold water and other commodities, explained:

Yes, then I speak with them (gang members). And they are coming and I know who they are and they come into house. Then they come and say ‘Come, Daniela, give me a little bit water’, “Come, give me 200 pesos”, “Come, give me...” And then I deal... I deal with them so that they do not interfere with me, with my family.

Forging conscious relationships with those responsible for threats is a common self-protection strategy in many contexts worldwide (Horsey, 2011; Baines and Paddon, 2012). Thus, the relational nature of protection, currently under-acknowledged in research and policy, extends beyond closed social networks.

In contrast to Daniela, some participants stated that they prefer keeping a low profile to avoid attracting gang members’ attention. Juan Carlos, a 33-year-old first-generation IDP, explained:

I think one protection measure that we have had, but without really being conscious of it ourselves, is to have been participating, but less visibly than before, in community activities. We can say that today we have more discrete events with youth.

Juan Carlos was involved in a local organisation that had been threatened by gangs. Instead of big demonstrations and posters on the walls, the work had now become more specific, and more related to accompanying young people.

As I reflected on this variety of sometimes contradictory strategies and self-protection mechanisms, it became clear that these young people – both first and second-generation – often navigated issues of protection in an ambiguous liminal space. For them, concepts of protection were embedded into other liminal processes of transition:

becoming women or men, moving away from IDP identity, and embracing urban ways of life. Their situation was also characterized by ‘in-betweenness’ in the sense that security and insecurity existed on a continuum, without clear-cut distinctions. For instance, when describing their efforts to avoid the gang fights that occur at night, some Mandela residents stated that 7 pm was the latest they would go outside, but others said 8 or 9 pm; no single, clearly defined time marked the neighbourhood’s transition from security to insecurity. Alternatively, many residents used the self-protection strategy of keeping a phone with them and calling friends or family to let them know where they were. One young woman mentioned that she would call her friends before going somewhere, to assess whether it was safe or not. Many authors have noted the importance of phones in relation to self-protection (Harragin, 2011; Corbett, 2011; South *et al.*, 2011). However, there was also disagreement regarding whether phones had a positive impact on security; some participants saw them as a liability that might make them more vulnerable to getting robbed (see also Corbett, 2011).

Female adolescents in my study expressed particular ambivalence about how dangerous gangs really were and whether they could rely on their loved ones for protection. When asked to outline their main problems related to protection, these young women mainly mentioned the same concerns as other participants, such as robberies and gang fights. Yet security and protection in general did not appear to be the most important preoccupations for these female adolescents. Instead, they were chiefly concerned about their relationships with loved ones. For instance, 15-year-old Sandra stated:

First of all, one problem is from family. That many parents do not listen to their daughters. I mean, they do not give them advice, do not make them see that this is bad. That is, they do not speak of it...

Her friend, 16-year-old Rosa, followed this up:

One cannot say that they take responsibility for what may happen to girls. But as they do not have guidance about what the things are, always there is a difficulty in the families. If they, instead, spoke about all, about all that is needed to pass from a girl to an adolescent, there would be fewer problems.

Most young persons stated that they felt safe at home, protected by their parents, and while with friends, but not when they were in the streets. Yet for some, parents could be important stressors and agents of oppression, causing a mixture of feelings of security and insecurity.

Utas (2005) discusses how young women affected by conflict deploy various tactics—what he calls social navigation—amid constantly-changing opportunities and constraints. In the case of Mandela, youth navigated a liminal and ambiguous social landscape on their way to becoming young men and women, overcoming stigmatized aspects of IDP status, adapting to urban life, and pursuing their goals. Simultaneously, they tried to avoid gang violence and remain safe and protected. One could thus speak of ‘becoming safe’ to emphasise that protection is embedded into other aspects of one’s life and dreams—a connection that is currently under-acknowledged in research and policy. Self-protection cannot be considered in isolation, but is linked to multiple processes of becoming. Moreover, ‘becoming’ incorporates the notions of movement and liminality that characterize youth identities in Mandela.

As noted by Utas (2005), the opportunities and constraints related to protection in Mandela were constantly changing. For instance, 18-year-old Miguel described how gang members protected him in his sector:

Researcher: ...You have the system of protection, as they know you, so they protect you, but sometimes they do not protect, I am a bit confused about that.  
 Miguel: Because a person takes drugs and then this person does not agree with others, even if the concerned person is a friend.

Miguel continued to explain that under the influence of drugs, gang members were also dangerous to the inhabitants of their own sector as they sometimes did not recognize the person or they just picked up fights with everyone. Thus, although most research participants saw all other sectors as insecure and felt secure only in their own sector of the neighbourhood, this perception was subject to change. What is perceived as safe in one instance could be seen as unsafe soon after, and these changes contributed to participants’ ambivalence. Drugs created an ambiguous space between security and insecurity, blurring the insider-outsider distinction for gang members; this is otherwise a rather clear-cut line, as in relation to geographical borders, many young people stated that each sector of Mandela had its own *pandillas*. The case of Mandela thus exemplifies the contingent, context-specific, “temporal and spatial nature of oppression and privilege” described by Hulko (2009, p. 44). For instance, being a young out-of-school male may be a privilege, since it helps one to create friendly relationships with gang members; however, this identity can also lead to oppression, as the gang members may pressure young men to join them.

As already mentioned, Mandela residents responded to this ambiguous and changing protection landscape in many different ways. Smith (2015) describes how his research subjects made strategic use of peri-urban liminality, arguing that they “experienced their peri-urbanity as both a cause of precariousness and a strategic resource in the pursuit of stability” (Smith, 2015, p. 317). This was clearly the case for 33-year-old Juan Carlos, who managed to turn his IDP status into a privilege. Juan Carlos experienced many hardships due to his displacement in his adolescence both before and after his arrival in Cartagena, yet this same liability prepared him to build a career in international development, thereby becoming an influential figure in his community. A similar dynamic is evident in participants’ strategic use of “victimcy” (Utas, 2005), by calling sometimes attention to IDP status to claim material or nontangible benefits.

As the dynamics of oppression evolve, so do self-protection strategies. Referring to Ling and Dale (2013, p. 4), who mention that agency is “the capacity for creative action” and “innovative behaviour,” my research revealed several examples of creative self-protection mechanisms. For example, 18-year-old Miguel stated:

Researcher: How do you avoid being robbed? What strategies are you using not to be robbed?

Miguel: I mean, to have all camouflaged or when I go out to centre, I mean go outside, I will put them on, because imagine that...

Researcher: What are the things that you hide?

Miguel: For instance, I have at home, I mean I have one of these, a chain, rings.

Researcher: What else?

Miguel: Branded shoes, I always have adored these, I mean I always liked branded clothes.

Researcher: Where do you hide these? I mean you say you hide, but when you go out, where do you hide your branded shoes? In a bag?

Miguel: I put them on, and as you know I take mototaxi, I immediately tell, bring me to this part, then I go to this part of the city, but do not stop, do not stop, go fast!

This quotation shows that branded clothes and jewellery, which often indicate wealth and class privilege, can become a liability and make an individual vulnerable in some circumstances. This example supports Hulko’s (2009) view of oppression and privilege as context-specific. As a humanitarian practitioner, I have often observed that policy and humanitarian practice tend to see poorer populations as vulnerable and dismiss the well-off as less in need of humanitarian assistance. Yet from a protection angle, they may be the ones at more risk. For instance, I was working with communities where the well-off traders were particularly at risk of lootings by armed actors. As various social

groups were differently threatened, youth also tried to change their positionalities to protect themselves. For example, they often hid their valuables in order to appear less wealthy than they actually were.

In some situations, young people's identities determined their behaviour; in others, their behaviours in response to oppression led to changes in their identities. Bauder (2001), Breakwell (1986) and Holland *et al.* (2001) have also discussed the relationship between identities and agency, emphasising, for instance, that identity is fluid and responsive to context (Breakwell, 1986). These mutual influences are significant because they highlight that the relationships between protection and identities are constantly shifting, in ways that remain poorly understood in policy.

By comparing policy definitions of 'protection' to the alternative definitions offered by affected populations, I have sought to demonstrate how current policy categories fail to consider many important aspects of protection. In particular, policy overlooks the embedded nature of protection; its integral connection with young persons' lives and dreams; and the significance of personal feelings and relationships in relation to protection. As young Mandela residents – both first and second generation IDPs – navigated toward their dreams, they experienced various types of becomings: becoming a woman or man, becoming a non-IDP, becoming safer, and becoming urban. The concept of becoming is also applied in Worth's (2009) analysis of youth transitions. In the policy world, young adolescents affected by displacement have mostly be seen as victims (Heiberg, 2001; Rosen, 2007), or their agency has starkly been contrasted with victimhood (Archambault 2011); protection policy does not consider the shades and spaces between these extremes. For example, it is extremely rare for policy to regard adolescents as protectors of themselves or others—be they siblings, friends, children, or their community as a whole.

Like the research by Honwana (2000), Mahmood (2001), Utas (2005), and Bilge (2010), this work demonstrates that a binary approach to agency and oppression does not align with the reality of young lives. Although young people exercise agency within existing power relations, they do not always do so as an act of resistance to oppression. Rather, their agency manifests itself in a variety of contexts, beyond the having power/being oppressed continuum. This chapter has described numerous ways in which agency and oppression converge for marginalised youth in Mandela. For instance, these

youth may develop collective agency in response to conditions of oppression, or they may exercise more 'in-between' forms of constrained agency. Moreover, as this chapter demonstrates, young people may intentionally self-stage as victims of oppression, or they might strategically distance themselves from these same victimised identities to avoid social stigma. While other authors have outlined the interplay of agency and oppression (e.g. Honwana 2000; Utas 2005), this work adds to the discussion by demonstrating the various forms this interplay can take within the specific context of protracted internal displacement in Mandela. Holistic analysis of these interconnections reveals that the protection landscape in Mandela is characterized by forms of complexity and ambiguity that cannot be captured by policy binaries.

## **Chapter 8: Uncovering Concealed Connections: Sexual exploitation of Adolescents and Youth Gangs**

In the two previous chapters, I argued that by applying the analytical concepts of multiple identities and the interplay of agency and oppression, it is possible to reach more nuanced understandings of young lives and youth protection in the context of protracted internal displacement. In this chapter, I elaborate this argument further by applying these concepts to two concrete cases. In doing so, I also seek other alternative ways to overcome numerous forms of disconnection that have traditionally characterized policies of youth protection in the context of internal displacement, including: contrasts between policy and affected persons' perspectives, compartmentalisations within policy, and divisions between policy and academia.

Through the stories presented in this chapter, I highlight the importance of combining a careful attention to individuals' experiences and goals with an analysis of their surrounding contexts. In addition to applying the concepts of multiple identities and agency/oppression interplay, I call attention to the interconnected processes that shape young lives. The stories to follow provide concrete illustrations of how coming-of-age processes (and corresponding rites of passage), power dynamics, the positionality of protection, and the concealed advantages of displacement and of various 'protection problems' could be seen as overarching connectors, which are crucial from a policy implementation perspective.

Both sexual exploitation of adolescents and gang violence are highly contentious issues; it is important to clarify that this work does not engage in moral or legal debates concerning these protection problems. Rather, my aim is to show the nuances related to these issues at the level of policy implementation and propose ways to improve implementation processes. Regardless of one's moral perspective regarding sexual exploitation of adolescents or gang involvement, it is important to acknowledge that sexual exploitation and forced recruitment remain realities for many young persons worldwide.

### **8.1 Valentina and Ricardo – Summary of their Life Stories**

In her work on prostitution, Dalla (2000, p. 352) writes:

Undoubtedly, entry into prostitution and continued work in the sex industry results from the cumulation of multiple interdependent personal and contextual factors; none of which may exist in the same form or to the same degree for all women who prostitute themselves. A 'profile' of the prostituted woman (or one who will eventually turn to prostitution) does not exist.

Just as entry into prostitution is highly individualised, the process of leaving this work also varies widely, according to Dalla (2000, p. 345-346):

Many routes to prostitution exist, as do avenues for beginning the recovery process. Not all women wanting assistance will seek help, and not all women seeking help will leave the streets. Recognizing prostitution-involved women as embedded within unique social and ecological contexts is vital for intervention to effectively meet their individual needs.

An individualised approach that considers contextual factors is crucial not only for supporting those involved in sexual exploitation and sex work, but also for supporting those involved in gang violence (Descormiers and Corrado, 2016). I used life stories as a way to gauge individual perspectives. This helps to counterbalance the situation whereby forcibly displaced persons' stories are stereotyped through policy labelling and turned into cases (Zetter, 1991; Powles, 2000), rather than attending to the complex realities of their lives. Life stories also demonstrate and help to unlock the embeddedness of protection within everyday life. Thus, I situated Valentina and Ricardo's experiences of sexual exploitation and sex work and gang violence within the contexts of their entire lives; as Orchard (2007) argues, this holistic approach is important when studying sexual exploitation and sex work. To develop a more holistic understanding, I also locate these stories within the broader landscape of sexual exploitation of adolescents and gang violence in Cartagena.

At the time of our interview, Valentina was 26 and a mother of two boys; she came from a family holding IDP status, and she was a second-generation IDP. When Valentina was nine years old, her stepfather and two other people sexually abused her. She told her mother, who did not believe her and sent her to boarding school. Following this, Valentina went to live with her sister in another neighbourhood in Cartagena. She gradually became involved in sexual exploitation after turning 10. At 15, Valentina met the father of her children and had her first baby. She continued to have sex for money, but as this caused tensions with her partner, she stopped for a while. Valentina described her partner as a womaniser who mistreated her. Eventually, they broke up, and her boyfriend moved to Venezuela. Valentina went back to living in Mandela with

her mother.

When interviewed, Valentina mentioned that at that moment she was having sex for money only with one man whom she did not like—a relationship that her mother supported and encouraged. She dreamed of going to Venezuela to reunite with the father of her children, who had invited her to join him. She continued to live with her mother, but their relationship was difficult, and Valentina felt constantly criticised. If she did not move to Venezuela, she wanted to further develop the hairdressing skills that she had learned.

Ricardo was a first-generation IDP, and he was 22 years old when we spoke. Ricardo's father had left his family when Ricardo was one year old. When he was 10, guerrillas attacked his family's village and killed three of his uncles. His mother escaped to Cartagena with her four sons. At age 12, Ricardo started to hang out in 'bad company', to fight, and to rob. At 14, he did drugs for the first time. When he was 16, his mother was killed by the armed group *Paracos* in Mandela because her children were in a gang. Ricardo later joined the military to get out of gangs, and he became a father to a son. At the time of Ricardo's conversation with me, his son lived with his mother. Ricardo visited him on Saturdays—the best moments of his week. When he left the military, he became involved with gangs again; in order to quit indefinitely, he moved to Bogotá and worked there. Ricardo also met his father in Bogotá, but after trying to live at his place for 15 days, he left. After about a year being back from the capital, Ricardo got involved with a new woman, whom he visited at nights. At the time of my research, Ricardo was no longer in a gang. He had many enemies, was in hiding, and could not find a job.

Although my main research focus was female adolescents' protection, I have also included Ricardo's story because gender is a relational category; my analysis of young women's gendered experiences cannot be complete without some consideration of young men's experiences (Grabska, 2010). Exploring gangs is also highly relevant from a protection perspective, because female adolescents perceived gang violence as their number one protection concern. Moreover, issues of sexual exploitation and gang involvement are not always divided based on gender; in Mandela, boys also participate in sexual exploitation, and women participate in gang violence. In this chapter, Ricardo's life story is presented to complement and contextualize Valentina's story, which constitutes the chapter's main focus.

## 8.2 De-Labelising Policy: Building on Layered Interwoven Liminalities

According to dominant policy perspectives, Valentina would probably have been regarded as a sexually-exploited IDP when she was a child—a victim lacking protection. Ricardo would be considered a kind of displaced ‘urban child soldier’, forcibly recruited to participate in violence (Voss, 2005; Farina *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, according to the international legal framework, Ricardo would also be seen as a victim lacking protection since he was only 12 when he joined the gang.

These policy concepts reduce the complexity of Valentina and Ricardo’s lives, and they do not correspond to these individuals’ perceptions of themselves. Analysis of their life stories through a multiple identities framework may yield a more accurate understanding of how these individuals’ different identities are related to each other.

For instance, Valentina did not relate to the child-adult binary that defines age 18 as the beginning of adulthood; she showed a more nuanced understanding of age. She started her story by stating the main chapters of her life: “My childhood. My adolescence. Adolescent. Now young, now that I am like this.”

Ricardo also saw childhood and adolescence as two distinct life stages; he stated that “my childhood lasted until age 10.” Like Valentina, he described childhood and adolescence as different chapters of his life: “First chapter, my childhood. Second chapter – adolescence. Third chapter – present that I live now.” Thus, Ricardo did not see himself as a child when he engaged in gang violence at age 12. Both young persons’ statements confirm Valentin and Meinert’s (2009) critique of CRC. Both Valentina and Ricardo’s statements indicate that age and gender identity are interrelated. Both saw adolescence as part of the process of becoming a woman or a man. This connectedness between age and gender must thus also be reflected in the policy interventions which aim to help them. For instance, early marriage issue is not properly addressed as “it tends to fall between the Child Protection and GBV (Gender-based violence) Clusters” (Casey and Hawrylyshyn, 2014).

With regard to IDP status, Valentina neither refuted nor embraced the IDP label, but expressed ambivalence about the term:

Displaced? My mom. I was little. When that happened [...] I did not exist. I did not, my

sister did. The elder one. [...] My grandmother is also displaced. [...] For me it is like... Like... Because there are several displaced people. Here in Cartagena most people are displaced. For me this is normal. I mean, it's normal... It's not that I feel ashamed of it at all. [...] Yeah. No. I have never been asked about it so... My mom is the one who, the one who... She gets paid for that line. So she gets asked about it, my mom. And my grandmother... Yes, I have been asked about it. They asked me where they (her children) were studying. They asked me if I was displaced so they would not charge me the monthly payment. Because in their nursery, you have to pay a monthly payment.

This statement reflects Valentina's use of victimcy (Utas, 2005). She strategically used her IDP status when it was advantageous; otherwise, she tended to distance herself from the stigmatized label. As discussed previously, this was a rather common way for young people to navigate away from IDP status. The contradictions in her narrative also reflect her internal ambiguity and the in-between position in relation to the IDP status.

Like Valentina, Ricardo voiced ambivalence regarding IDP identity. Although Ricardo lived directly through an uprooting, he distanced himself from displaced status by emphasising that he had put his past behind him. Neither, however, stated that they are no longer IDPs at all.

A multiple identities framework reveals that Valentina and Ricardo navigate various liminal layers, like many of their peers in Mandela. In addition to liminalities related to age, gender and IDP status, some additional identity layers further reflect in-betweenness in their stories. For instance, apparent in several occasions in her story, Valentina sought to shift gradually away from her identity as a sex worker:

But not anymore, now I am only with him [...] It is different (nowadays) because now I am only with one man, not with many. When I was 10 years old I was with many, I mean, I was with several. [...] I mean, I have children already. And I don't do the things that I did before. Because when I was younger I did things... I sort of behaved badly and all that.

In reference to this, Kempadoo (1999, p. 28) defines sex work in the Caribbean as “an activity in which the persons providing the sexual labour do so with multiple partners, while publicly acknowledging their participation in this exchange.” Therefore, Valentina's behaviour with this one man she saw for money would not qualify as sex work, as she no longer had various partners. Yet at the same time, Valentina felt as though she was continuing the sex work:

I mean, right now I am with a man. But I don't like that man. I mean, I don't like the man. I only do it for the money. [...] Yes, I mean, I want to have a job to be able to

quit this kind of life... Like... I mean, anything. I want to work on anything, except that. [...] I mean, I have continued. I mean, because I did not have any help from her (her mother). So I kept on doing it, selling my body.

Hence, Valentina inhabited a liminal space in terms of her sex worker identity; she felt less involved in sex work at this stage of her life, but still acknowledged that she continued to have sex for money. It is important to apply intersectionality to explore how various stigmatized identities—such as being IDP, being poor, and being a sex worker—are related and how a person negotiates the situation of this layered stigmatization (Campbell and Gibbs, 2009).

Ricardo also underwent a gradual identity shift as he sought to extricate himself from the gang:

It was a great challenge as one does not get out of it, so that one decides, "I will leave here because I want". No. One comes out, but little by little. I went away. I went further away, I went to military service. I came back, I did the same. But still, I said "I do not want to continue here," and I went to Bogotá.

Even after his second attempt to end his involvement with gangs, Ricardo could not fully live as a non-gang member. He needed to hide out in a sector in Mandela where there were no gangs, and he was unemployed. He had not reached the stable status of other ex-gang members I met, who had jobs and moved about freely in Mandela. Ricardo also felt internal ambiguity about his identity as a gang member. On the one hand, he distanced himself from his past 'crazy' behaviour. On the other hand, his separation from gangs was somewhat involuntary; he had to go into hiding after a situation in which he almost killed a person. Ricardo's discourse sometimes revealed a certain nostalgia for his actions as a gang member; for instance, he enthusiastically explained the interlinked respect, power and protection he had enjoyed during this part of his life.

Applying the concept of multiple identities leads to a more inclusive and personalised analysis than applying dominant policy labels such as 'child' or 'IDP'. This concept enables researchers to map the identities that an individual defines as important. For Ricardo, identities including adolescent, son, gang member, IDP, victim, perpetrator, and father existed simultaneously, but with different degrees of importance, throughout his adolescence. The life story approach unlocks the relative importance of these

various layers for adolescents in Mandela. It is crucial to map the in-betweenness in young people's lives in order to gauge the next phases that youth would like to attain. This more nuanced analysis could help policy to better understand the continuums youth manoeuvres – young people's present experiences as well as their hopes for the future. Individual identity mapping could help policy to better assist youth in navigating towards their next steps.

The concept of resilience, which has been explored by scholars in relation to adolescence, and which has dominated policy and practice in the last decade (e.g. Coleman and Hagell, 2007; DFID 2011; UNICEF 2011; Ager *et al.* 2015;), emphasises helping people to cope with challenging circumstances. For young people affected by displacement, a multiple identities approach may complement the notion of resilience by acknowledging in-betweenness and identifying ways to move forward. In Valentina's case, this could mean helping her to rejoin her children's father (remaining cautious though that this was not always a supportive relationship for her) and separate from the man with whom she has a sexual relationship for money – another step away from sex worker identity. Finally, this approach would enable policy to expand better beyond labels that only present dichotomies. For instance, incorporating into programming the knowledge that parent identity is significant for both Ricardo and Valentina could reinforce policy interventions and make them more connected to youth.

### **8.3 Beyond Conflict- and Displacement-Related Victimhood: Navigating Family Oppression**

In addition to arguing how to de-labelise policy for stronger connectivity with youth experiences, I have also explored how policy could become less dichotomous and more integrated. As argued above, the agency/oppression polarisation is a key binary underlying policy. By mapping the interplays of agency and oppression, we can better consider the spaces in between these poles. Since agency is strongly linked to decision-making capacity (Baraldi and Iervese, 2014), I have explored Valentina and Ricardo's motivations for becoming involved in sexual exploitation of adolescents and gang violence, respectively. In order to design policies that effectively prevent and address these phenomena, it is important to consider young people's motivations and decision-making processes.

Policy mostly approaches youth prostitution in conflict and displacement contexts with an emphasis on ‘victims’ and ‘sexual exploitation’ (e.g. CRC), seeing the causes of sexual exploitation of adolescents often as inevitably linked to force or to the threat of force. This understanding foregrounds that there are perpetrators who force young people into sexual exploitation (Melrose 2013). Yet Valentina and other sex workers in Cartagena (see also Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999) worked independently. Valentina did not see herself as a displacement victim who was lured or forced into sexual exploitation (Heiberg, 2001). She stated:

So when I came here, to Cartagena, I started to hang out with older guys than me, and I started to hang out with girls older than me. I mean, young women older than me. So I started to hang out with ladies who had been doing this for a long time. I started on this by letting to be touched, my body, I mean, for money. [...] When I was like 15 yes, I wanted to experience, to see how it was. [...] When I was about 11 years old there were several (other girls who were involved in sexual exploitation). But now there is only one, who went with me. Because she also liked to do the same. I mean, we... We went together there... She also needed the money.

Through her language—e.g. “I wanted to experience”—Valentina presents herself as an agent, somebody making a decision, despite the existing constraints. This quotation also highlights the complexity and diversity of her motivations, which included various interwoven factors such as peers’ influence, looking for an experience, liking it at some ways and needing money in her adolescence. Yet her story gave no indication that conflict or displacement shaped her entry. The complex reasons for engagement in sexual exploitation, the interconnected problems, are also outlined by others (Barrett and Melrose 2003; Montgomery, 2001a; Orchard, 2007).

Valentina did perceive herself as a victim when describing the sexual abuse that she experienced as a child in her family:

When I was in my childhood my stepfather sexually abused me. () And two other people. They were there just once. I was 9 years old. This is the worst experience of my life. [...] My worst memory? What happened to me, that, the violation.

She was not an isolated case in Cartagena; many sex workers whom I interviewed had experienced sexual abuse, a link also discussed by other authors (Farley, 2003; Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999). Valentina explicitly linked her engagement in sexual exploitation to this abuse:

Because what happened to me. That stuck in my mind. So from that point I became weak...I mean, it is sort of the same thing. Considering that here I was not fucked by force or anything. For me, it's like the same thing. I feel the same.

According to Mayorga and Velasquez (1999, p. 179), “at least half of them (those adolescents involved in sexual exploitation in Cartagena who were interviewed) suffered sexual abuse or neglect and found no safe haven other than life on the street.” Thus, Valentina’s involvement in sexual exploitation was a meeting point between her agency and oppression; it was not a manifestation of the main conflict and displacement-related subordinations that policy highlights in displacement settings. Various additional forms of oppression, including sexual abuse and family oppression, influenced her entry into sexual exploitation. An exclusive focus on victimhood and sexual exploitation can lead to dismissing or deprioritising other factors that contribute to young people starting sexual exploitation (Montgomery, 2001a).

Many young people in Mandela—non-IDPs as well as both first- and second-generation IDPs—described family problems as a key factor motivating their entry to prostitution. For instance, Valentina’s story shows that her home situation was far from nurturing and stable. Moreover, Mayorga and Velasquez (1999) discuss stepfathers attempting to have a sexual relationship with youth involved in sexual exploitation and mothers refusing to believe the abuse, thus leading the adolescent involved in sexual exploitation to feel rejected and neglected. Feelings of abandonment, rejection, and neglect were common among sex workers in my study. Other scholars have also noted links between dysfunctional family settings and involvement in prostitution (Jesson, 1993; Weitzer, 2000; Lukman *et al.*, 2011;). According to Mayorga and Velasquez (1999), psychological environment of the family of origin is one of the main reasons why young people in Cartagena become involved in sexual exploitation of adolescents. Even those who were not involved in sexual exploitation themselves described family issues as fundamental in other young people’s entry into sexual exploitation. Common issues included parents’ alcoholism, mothers staying with new partners and neglecting children, conflicts, and abuse within the family.

Exploring Ricardo’s story, his account also shows that he does not see himself as somehow forcibly recruited into a gang; he explicitly stated that “I got involved because I liked that, I do not know the rest.” He emphasised his agency by saying: “when I was 12, it was that I started to hang around in bad company. Started the issue

of fighting. Since then I started to rob.” Ricardo does not refer to others’ forcing him to do these things.

Indeed, Ricardo spoke about the violence his family went through before they were displaced, particularly the killing of his three uncles. When asked about the worst experience of his adolescence, he stated:

When I was 16, my mother was killed, here in Mandela. Because of the issues of my brother and all. As we were hanging out in the gangs and all that, they told to my brother to get outside or otherwise they kill him. As he did not get out, in three days they came home. They were *Paracos*, the armed group. It was because we both were in the gangs. Yes, they warned us to leave, otherwise they would kill us and as we ignored that...

Although Ricardo is clearly a victim of conflict-related oppression, his account is far from emphasising victimhood. Like Valentina, he highlighted personal agency when narrating his actions and decisions, and he described gang involvement as a partly empowering experience, recalling how he gradually became powerful, well-known, and popular with women. As in Valentina’s case, no one was directly oppressing Ricardo or forcing him to become a gang member, but other, less overt forms of oppression conditioned his entry and shaped his agency. Ricardo himself never suggested a connection between his displacement-related victimhood and his entry into the gang.

In Ricardo’s case, agency itself, as manifested through his gang involvement, constitutes oppression of others; that is, Ricardo became an agent of oppression. Ricardo could be seen as a perpetrator, a juvenile delinquent (Cohen, 1955; Beresford and Wood, 2016). Some have argued, referring to Latin American contexts (Martín-Baró, 1996), that because of a pervasive culture of violence, traumatised victims see the use of violence as normal. Ricardo’s account confirms that one person can simultaneously manifest both sides of the victim/agent and victim/perpetrator dichotomies. A focus on the interplay between agency and oppression reveals that Ricardo is a victim, agent, and perpetrator all at once. Yet current dichotomous policy labels fail to convey this complex reality.

Although Ricardo had a good relationship with his mother, he stated that “my dad had left me when I was one year old” and “I went there where was the man who said he is my dad.” Thus, it is highly probable that feelings of abandonment and neglect in

relation to family members had affected him. Winfree *et al.* (1994) and Lahey *et al.* (1999) mention that gang members often come from single-parent families and lack adequate parental supervision. Research participants in Mandela also identified lack of family supervision as an important problem driving young people's involvement in both gangs and sexual exploitation. Family of origin conditions, often some neglect, have a significant influence on both of these protection issues.

In general, oppression within participants' families never reached the extreme of parents directly coercing or inducing young people into sexual exploitation or gang involvement. Although Baird (2011) states that youth often had family members in gangs in Medellín, and some participants mentioned that hereditary gangs existed in some neighbourhoods of Cartagena, this was not the case in Mandela.

Young participants described various ways of resisting and coping with family oppression. For instance, Valentina discussed her relationship with her mother:

The hardest moment for me, what is it? To fight with my mom. To argue with my mom [...] Because she says I am the black sheep of the family. Does she understand? I mean... Because I don't... I mean, because I... Why? I use her stuff. I mean, I use her stuff. I mean, her combs, her creams... I don't have my own stuff.

She does not passively suffer her mother's abuse but stands up for herself. Her agency in relation to her mother's oppression appears as resistance. In a similar vein, Ricardo described his stay at his father's: "in 15 days I said that I cannot be in his house, and I told him: 'well, ready, I will go.' And next day I grabbed my clothes and went."

According to O'Meara (2013) and Baraldi and Iervese (2014), the capacity to act upon one's world can be realised through communication and 'agentic perspective', meaning how people perceive situations and whether they feel able to shape their own experiences. Valentina exemplified agentic perspective by choosing specific language to describe her experience in sexual exploitation. She was well-versed in the language of policy concepts because of her stay at a boarding institution where the definitions of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation were explained to them in child-friendly manner. Yet in her story Valentina did not use the term 'sexual exploitation', which policy uses to refer to any sexual exploitation carried out by persons under 18. As a matter of fact, none of the sex workers in Cartagena used this term or presented themselves as victims. This observation reinforces Bakewell's (2008) finding that displaced persons do not

always relate to policy labels. For instance, instead of using ‘sexual exploitation’, Valentina decided to speak about “going around with various [men] for money,” “work,” “prostitution” and “selling my body” while explaining her involvement in sexual exploitation in adolescence. As in Montgomery’s (2001a) study of child sexual exploitation in Thailand, all participants in Mandela emphasised the choices they had made.

Dysfunctional family background has often been mentioned among the reasons for involvement in prostitution in the North (e.g. Schissel and Fedec, 1999; Dalla, 2001). Yet Although Valentina’s family situation significantly shaped her entry into sexual exploitation, this reason is rather absent from policy discourses regarding the global South. Instead, poverty, age-related oppression, conflict-related violence, and displacement are more widely identified as motivations (McKay, 1998; Machel, 2001). Valentina explained her entry into sexual exploitation after her mother disbelieved her and her grandmother made her leave home: “why? Because I did not have help from anybody.” Valentina’s need to provide for herself was not principally caused by conflict or displacement, but rather by her dysfunctional family situation.

Analysis of the connections between various forms of oppression and agency facilitates a more nuanced and multi-dimensional reading of youth experiences, which is necessary for improving policy interventions. If the agency manifested through engagement in sexual exploitation has linking capacity between different forms of oppression, including sexual violence and family dysfunction, then policy programming must address all of these dimensions. By examining dysfunctional family backgrounds in relation to other forms of oppression and alongside the constrained-agency perspective, rather than merely seeing youth as victims of their abusive caregivers, researchers may open up more avenues for solutions. This integrated perspective also further connects protection policy with other interventions; for instance, given the significant influence of family issues, psychosocial interventions need to be well interwoven with protection and livelihoods-related programming.

This more nuanced understanding that reflects the in-betweenness related to young lives could also support policy interventions to be better matched with local perspectives. For instance, although parents in Thailand were rather accepting of child sexual exploitation (Montgomery 2001a), parents in Mandela voiced more ambiguous

perspectives. On the one hand, interviews indicated that many parents found their children's involvement with older persons for money normal and did not disapprove of it. According to Valentine, also her mother was in favour of her being with this older man for money. On the other hand, a certain sense of shame, or "whore stigma" (Pheterson, 1996), was evident in Cartagena, selling sex meant having a stigmatized identity (Quinn, 2006; Campbell and Gibbs, 2009). Mostly those involved in sexual exploitation and sex work travelled away from their own neighbourhoods to work elsewhere each day, which was costly. This ambivalence in relation to acceptance of youth sexual exploitation was also touched by Cindy, a local psychologist working with those involved in sexual exploitation of adolescents:

it is very normal that a girl of 13 or 14 goes out to find her husband. Some parents may first refuse, but with money coming they would accept the situation. Yet some would say to parents that they work, for instance, taking care of children in a family or as a hairdresser

While the community maintained semi-secrecy surrounding sexual exploitation, service providers in Mandela sought to work against the secrecy and raise awareness of the issue. In order for policy intervention to be well-connected with affected persons, service providers' efforts to raise awareness must somehow be reconciled with some community members' preference for secrecy.

#### **8.4 Socio-Economic Status: Untapped Connector for Policy Coherence**

In addition to conflict and displacement, policy discourse emphasises hunger and limited livelihood options as principal reasons why youth enter into sexual exploitation in developing countries and conflict contexts, (Le Roux, 1996; Bosmans, 2007; Hoot *et al.*, 2007). Policy speaks of "survival sex" and reports that some young women enter sexual exploitation because they are single mothers (UNHCR 2013b). Yet in 2013 in Cartagena, hunger did not appear to be a significant factor in people's initial engagement with sexual exploitation. Like Valentina, all of the sex workers I interviewed had their children only after becoming involved in sexual exploitation. In a similar vein, several sources identify poverty as one of the main reasons why young people join gangs (Esbensen *et al.*, 1999; Barker, 2005; Dowdney, 2005), and Latin America is no exception to this global pattern (Goldstein, 2003; Berkman, 2007; Baird, 2011). However, like Ricardo, participants in my study did not describe economic

survival as a reason why they joined gangs in Mandela.

The vast majority of Mandela inhabitants—non-IDPs as well as both first- and second-generation IDPs, including those who became engaged in prostitution—were oppressed by poverty. Mayorga and Velasquez (1999) outline the socioeconomic background of the family of origin as another important reason for youth engagement in sexual exploitation. Yet for many Mandela residents, entry into sex work was not motivated by basic survival needs, but rather by the desire to improve one's socioeconomic status—a point that has also been emphasised in other studies of youth sexual exploitation (Ayre and Barrett, 2000; Montgomery, 2001a). Valentina, for instance, explained: “With the first money I earned (from sexual exploitation) I bought clothes. That's right. Sandals and more....” Moreover, 44-year-old sex worker Sofia used her first money from sexual exploitation “to go to bars, to places to buy clothes, to wear first time sneakers.” 40-year-old Anna Milena spoke about “liking money” and felt that this led these girls toward sexual exploitation. David, who used to be involved in sexual exploitation, added that “there are girls who want to be fashionable, to have the latest cell phone, to have the clothes, this kind, these are... Cell phone, for money, to keep up appearances.” Cindy, the psychologist who worked with sexually abused children in Cartagena, also noted that young people perceived sexual exploitation as a pathway toward higher status: “a girl or adolescent exploits herself not to satisfy her basic needs of hunger, sleeping, housing, but to buy a cell phone... to buy clothes.”

A parallel can again be drawn with gang entry, as various authors mention low socioeconomic status as a predictor of joining gangs (Winfrey *et al.*, 1994; Lahey *et al.*, 1999). Indeed, in Mandela, joining gangs was clearly a way for young people to exercise agency within the constraints of class oppression. Ricardo described gaining social status and respect through gang involvement: “I did enough mischief, and for that I am very recognised here in Mandela. For publicity or when I began to rise, when I began to have fame and all that.” He added: “the first fight, it is the first and the first challenges in a fight, it is stabbing. If you have courage to hit him, to stab another one here, you grab a lot of respect.” Other studies have also linked gang involvement to social status in Colombia (Esbensen *et al.*, 1999; Decker and Curry, 2000; Baird, 2011).

Instead of attributing youth sexual exploitation and gang involvement exclusively to poverty, policy could become better connected to youth realities by examining how

youth exercise agency in relation to class oppression. In forced migration research, class in general has not received sufficient attention (Van Hear, 2006, 2014). Focusing on youth agency in relation to social status makes it possible to move beyond more limited analyses that only consider economic livelihood. This focus would foreground a wider range of young people's motives and challenge policy to overcome its current compartmentalisation. A more nuanced approach would also mitigate the problem of young people approaching humanitarian organizations with a "shopping list" or "wish list" (UNHCR, 2013), repeating to humanitarians what has already been given to them or to others they know, or stating what they think those questioning them would like to hear. For example, Valentina stated at the end of the interview, when we spoke about the ways to help her to stop sex work, that "I want to work, anything except this [sex work]." Yet earlier, she had explained that she learned hairdressing and liked it, but she still did not decide to work in this field. This response sounded like what I would call a "wish list" response; it seemed somewhat inconsistent with her dream of going to Venezuela, and it suggested that she may have been influenced by what she thought I expected to hear. Looking more broadly at socioeconomic status and other motives makes it possible to design more nuanced interventions that go beyond the "wish list" problem and address such processes as the pursuit of heightened social status. Indeed, many humanitarian organizations are now making increased use of cash-based interventions (Mattinen and Ogden, 2006; Spiegel, 2015) as a more dignified option than providing things; cash enables people to buy what they really need. However, if an individual's motivation for sexual exploitation was to feel more womanly or to regain power over men (Finkelhor and Browne 1985; Ross *et al.* 2004; Puffer *et al.* 2011), then a cash-based intervention would have only a temporary effect. Hence, in addition to exploring agency in relation to family and class oppression, it is also important to consider some of the complex connecting dynamics of youth sexual exploitation and gang involvement that are currently under-emphasised in policy.

### **8.5 Sexual exploitation of Adolescents and Gang Violence – Unrecognised Rites of Passage**

One widely overlooked facet of sexual exploitation and gang involvement is that both can function as rites of passage on the path to becoming a woman or a man. Although participants readily described various milestones that marked transitions from one life stage to another, no real common *rite de passages*, as defined by Van Gennep (1960),

emerged during these discussions. The situation in Mandela was similar to the one described by Montgomery (2007): there was no publicly-recognised celebratory ritual marking young people's passage to adulthood. Moreover, while Montgomery (2007) suggests that bureaucratic markers of adulthood (e.g. consent to sex, driving, voting, standing for trial) have now replaced traditional rites of passage in many Western societies, this did not seem to be the case in Mandela. For instance, participants rarely mentioned obtaining an ID, and there seemed to be no real legal advantages to becoming an adult in this community. In the absence of traditional or legal rites of passage, some youth appeared to associate gang involvement and sexual exploitation with their transition to adulthood. This has also been discussed by Van Blerk (2008), who sees sexual exploitation as a risky alternative youth transition in Ethiopia. The emergence of alternative youth transitions in the context of migration has been examined by several authors (Frändberg, 2015; King *et al.*, 2016).

This view supports the findings of Mayorga and Velasquez (1999), who mention relationships with older men as one important factor that leads adolescents to enter sexual exploitation in Cartagena. Kempadoo (1999) also discusses the blurred boundaries between relationships with men and prostitution, noting that the latter may be embedded into romance and may evolve into long-term relationships. More concretely, she argues that the boundaries between sex workers and non-sex workers are not always clear, as many heterosexual relationships involve sexual-economic exchanges (Kemapadoo, 1999). Valentina's current relationship with the man who provides her with money could be situated into this in-between space. Older men who pay for sex are often called 'husbands' in Mandela. 25-year-old Marie Sol stated that:

there are kids who at 13, 14 and 15 look for a husband. Already stay with him and continue with him. [...] They vacillate with a young guy. [...] And they will get an old guy who drops them money. There are enough kids... who look for an old guy who looks at them, touches their boobs...

It seemed that, for most sex workers, the beginning of sexual exploitation or sex work and relationships with men started gradually; it was not planned and formal, but indeed happened in the frame of experimenting with relationships with the opposite sex, as part of becoming a 'full woman'.

For instance, 44-year-old sex worker Sofia stated:

Researcher: When you started to work in the streets how did you see yourself?  
 Sofia: Like a little bit already a woman.  
 Researcher: Woman?  
 Sofia: A little bit more a woman.

Sofia thus seems to feel that, by starting to be involved in sexual exploitation, she performed a certain type of femininity on her pathway to womanhood. During focus group discussions, many participants stated that their adolescence ended when they started sex work. Some mentioned that female adolescents think of themselves as adults because they are given adult responsibilities, such as managing their sexuality and becoming mothers. Having sexual relations early with older men could be seen by some as part of the becoming a woman process, in addition to taking on more domestic and child-care responsibilities. Sometimes, as with Valentina, family oppression interwoven with sexual abuse may shape one's entry into sexual exploitation; this abuse may be entwined with relationships with men. This was the case with Sofia, whose first sexual intercourse was date rape by her boyfriend when she was 12.

Participants emphasised numerous reasons for their entry into sexual exploitation. Valentina, for example, also mentioned her wish to experiment. Additionally, Sofia's involvement grew out of an adventure she experienced with her friends, experimenting with her sexuality. Similarly, David, who had sex for money in his adolescence, mentioned: "I say it is to explore more. Because... when one is adolescent, always come sexual desires, these kinds of things." Cindy the psychologist regarded sexual curiosity as one reason for young people's involvement in sexual exploitation; Ayre and Barrett (2000) also mention excitement as a motivation. Yet some argue that Western ideology, founding the CRC, sees children – those under 18 – as asexual (Kitziger 1997; Montgomery 2001b ).

Another reason for interpreting sexual exploitation of adolescents as a rite of passage is that many participants discontinued prostitution by the age of 20, either to study or find other work. Other scholars have also observed this practice of 'outgrowing' sexual exploitation. For instance, Montgomery (2001a, p. 89) mentions that in Thailand, boys become involved in sexual exploitation during adolescence and then "drift off in their late teens." Orchard (2007) found a similar pattern among children involved in sexual exploitation in India. Cindy described this transition away from sexual exploitation as follows:

I mean, I see that happening. I have seen it happening in girls who were abused. They deploy all their psychological force and elaborate their trauma and then move forward. Work in another field. They are secretaries, hairdressers, and stylists. Men who are shop assistants...

This shade of sexual exploitation of adolescents—namely, its function as part of the becoming-adult process—has not been sufficiently explored or recognised. Even more rare are studies examining how various motivations for sexual exploitation are interwoven. As I have suggested, these motivations involve a complex interplay between agency and multiple oppressions, such as gender, age and class oppression, in the course of an adolescent's overall process of becoming a woman or man. Many women communicated using an agentic perspective (O'Meara, 2013; Baraldi and Iervese, 2014), stating that their motivation to maintain a relationship with a certain man is merely economic. For instance, Valentina said repeatedly that her present relationship is for necessity and 'not more'. The use of emotion management strategies to psychologically distance and thus protect oneself from the negative effects of such relationships has been discussed by Pateman (1988) and Sanders (2005). Young women could also exercise agency by choosing to keep such relationships secret, whether by masking them with the words 'boyfriend' or 'husband', lying, or not disclosing any information. They "practice prostitution on their own terms as they negotiate before with clients the price, what type of sex they provide and sometimes if they do not like, they do not do certain things" (Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999, p. 181). Valentina also resisted economic and gender-based oppression by setting clear limits in her relationship. For instance, she refused oral sex and refused to move in together. Young women's agency also meets oppression through feelings; some young women were "feeling happy about making enough money to support themselves and their children" (Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999, p. 180), and some planned to start small businesses (ibid.).

These complex motivations for sexual exploitation are comparable to motivations for gang involvement, which is strongly embedded into the process of becoming a man in Colombia (Baird, 2011). Baird (2012) describes gang affiliation as a way of "doing masculinity" on a pathway to manhood; other studies indicate that the prospect of romantic and sexual access to women motivates many young men to join gangs (Palmer and Tilley, 1995; Decker and Curry, 2000; Baird, 2015). This was one important motivation for Ricardo:

I did not start being in gangs not that much for needing money, but because I wanted to walk, wanted to do mischiefs, the issue to hang out with many girls [...] Although one does not understand, but here women are rare. Here women are more amongst guys who are more crazy, more it attracts them. They like to change. More the guy fights, the more the guy steals, more he is involved in vice...and more he is stabbing... It is like that as this attracts them as they say about these guys: “No, this guy stands up,” “this guy confronts and is not afraid.” And they like most the guys who are more daring and bold.

Recent research has increasingly explored gang involvement in connection to masculinities (Hagedorn, 2008; Jensen, 2008; Baird, 2012). Although rites of passage are often discussed in relation to gangs’ initiation rituals for new members (Vigil, 1996; Rodgers, 2007), with some exceptions (e.g. Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton 1997) less attention has been paid to exploring the totality of young people’s experiences of gang involvement as a prolonged rite of passage toward adulthood. Some ex-gang members in Mandela stated that they stopped participating in gangs once they became ‘more men’. Sometimes it was their independent decision; sometimes an organisation helped. Like Ricardo, at some point these young men felt the need to get out of a gang, whether because of the birth of their first child, military service, or some lived experience.

If policy would also consider youth sexual exploitation and gang violence as alternative rites of passage, rather than regarding these issues only through the lens of ‘sexual exploitation’ and ‘forced recruitment’, it would better acknowledge the perspectives of youth in Mandela. Rites of passage cannot be easily compartmentalised into any existing policy silo; they are a cross-cutting issue. Thus, a focus on rites of passage may also lead to more integration between distinct sectors of policy. Thus, in addition to mapping in-between spaces, it is also beneficial for policy to examine overarching themes, such as rites of passage, which encompass a multitude of interlinked motivations for sexual exploitation and gang violence.

## **8.6 Gang Involvement and Youth Sexual exploitation as Sub-Cultures**

In some contexts, gang affiliation and sexual exploitation function as sub-cultures, through which “young people seek to address and comment on generational change and societal structures” (Kehily, 2007, p. 26). This aspect of sexual exploitation and gang involvement is also mostly absent from policy analysis. Kehily (2007) argues that a sub-culture is not just a site of adolescent rebellion; it is a way to explore youth activity and their relations to their surrounding culture. Adolescent sexual exploitation and gang

participation in Cartagena seem to align with the characteristics of sub-culture (Kehily, 2007). Both phenomena have an underground nature (e.g. women maintaining the secrecy of their sexual exploitation and secrecy around gangs), operate within a larger culture, and challenge the conventions of the wider society. For instance, despite that some parents may accept the involvement of their children in sexual exploitation and gangs in Mandela, in general, youth are expected to go to school and not be violent or take money in exchange for sex in Colombia, so their involvement in gangs or sexual exploitation goes against mainstream values. Research participants also described their efforts to conform to their sub-cultures through distinctive dresses, risky behaviour, and not seeing themselves as victims. Those involved in sexual exploitation or sex work often wore a distinctive dress and none of them expressed feeling victimised due to this activity. It was also important for gang members to be seen as different; they often joined gangs in order to be perceived as exceptionally brave and stand out. Rather than seeing themselves as victims, these gang members took pride in having the power to protect others.

Members of both these sub-cultures navigate at the boundaries of illicit worlds and live at the margins of society. In Mandela, many young people avoided making friends with those involved in sexual exploitation or with gang members so that they would not be mistaken for members of these groups. Kehily (2007) argues that members of a sub-culture may share a sense of belonging and community despite (or even because of) their marginal status in their communities. Again, in Mandela, those involved in sexual exploitation and gang members mostly had diminished social status relative to the wider community; at the same time, however, they increased their status among peers through their clothes, money, and for gang members, through the 'respect' they attained through violence. Both those engaged in sexual exploitation and sex work and gang members in my study emphasised their strong sense of internal fellowship. Sub-cultures are often connected to sense of place, and they develop over time (Kehily, 2007). Comparison to Mayorga and Velasquez's (1999) research suggests how sexual exploitation of adolescents in Cartagena may have changed over time. For instance, young women showed a clear preoccupation with virginity in the 1999 study, but this did not appear to be a significant concern for participants in 2013. Moreover, in 2013, Colombian gangs appeared more independent and less directly linked to conflict dynamics than they had been in the past.

The literature has explored gangs as sub-cultures (Cohen, 1995; Rodgers, 1999), but adolescent sexual exploitation has rarely been considered from this perspective. A number of studies (Delacoste and Alexander, 1998; Farley and Kelly, 2000; Dalla, 2002) mention prostitution as a sub-culture, but they mostly focus on adults. Dunlap *et al.* (2008) apply a sub-culture perspective when exploring child sexual abuse, arguing that certain activities that are typically considered deviant could represent sub-culture norms. Yet such studies are rather exceptional. The analysis of sub-culture's relationship to a larger society (Kehily, 2007) may shed light on broader changes within that society. What are the meanings behind these youth activities? According to Kehily (2007, p. 24), "subcultures can help us to understand and explain what people do." Literature exploring female adolescents and sub-cultures (McRobbie and Garber, 2002; Aapola *et al.*, 2005) could help policy to build on the 'power with' dynamic that sub-cultures generate.

These sub-cultures formed part of a larger dynamic of practising femininity and masculinity in Mandela's social landscape. No single hegemonic pathway to adulthood existed; some adolescents developed their identities through attending school, while others navigated toward adulthood outside of the school system. These parallel, sometimes conflicting worlds coexisted in the community. The out-of-school setting, in particular, drew youth toward sexual exploitation or gang sub-cultures. A similar pattern was found in Ethiopia, where the majority of children involved in sexual exploitation were school dropouts or had not attended school (Hoot *et al.* 2007). Yet ambivalent spaces exist between these different worlds of practising femininity or masculinity; for example, some young women became mothers while they were in school or some students became involved in sexual exploitation, and (as previously discussed) a number of young people eventually moved away from gang affiliation and sexual exploitation.

Policies focused on youth mostly adopt a 'one size fits all' approach, failing to consider this diversity of masculinities and femininities (Browne *et al.*, 2004; Myers and Bourdillon, 2012). Analysis of co-existing femininities and masculinities and the existing sub-cultures is important for contextualising the individualised approach to protection problems. This analysis would help us to understand more unusual youth trajectories, as well as the dynamics of successful departures from sexual exploitation

or gang violence. By learning from young people about how they have been able to navigate challenges and what has worked for them, policy programmes can become better connected to these populations.

### **8.7 Supporting Power Dynamics in Young Lives in Mandela**

Policy can also be enriched and better connected by a deeper consideration of power dynamics. Power is everywhere (Foucault, 1984), and I see it as a sort of energy, a force for motion (Ashcroft, 1987) that fuels agency. Agency is thus a manifestation of power: the link between power and action. Power is a means, a way to free agency (Pearce, 2013). In this section, I discuss how mapping and building on certain power dynamics—a topic that is currently rather neglected—is connective and could enhance social change for displacement-affected youth. The notion of ‘power over’ is inherent in the policy approach to forced displacement and sexual exploitation, which both emphasise coercion. Research and policy have tended to overlook the more life-affirming types of power and their movements while discussing and addressing youth sexual exploitation and gang violence. However, there are some exceptions; for instance, Van Blerk (2011) examines the empowering effects of sexual exploitation in the context of youth transitions. Additionally, Kempadoo (1999, pp. 8-9) discusses how “relations of power were subverted and reconstituted” and explores sexual labour as “a strategy of resistance to racialized relations of power and dominance” in the Caribbean.

As Mandela was founded by people from many different regions of Colombia, this neighbourhood was more diverse than many other marginalised neighbourhoods in Cartagena. Racial power struggles appeared less prominent in Mandela than in the Caribbean communities examined by Kempadoo (1999). Gender subordination did not seem to be the most significant ‘power over’ dynamic shaping youth sexual exploitation, as young boys were also selling sex. Although some of those involved in sexual exploitation seemed to be partly motivated by the desire to gain ‘power over’ past abuse and family members, the most influential power dynamic seemed to be their desire for higher socioeconomic status relative to their peers. This was particularly apparent among displaced/rural youth who embraced urban identities and sought to be perceived as belonging to a higher social class. Thus, generational and socioeconomic ‘power over’ dynamics seemed to influence entry into sexual exploitation more powerfully than gendered or racial oppression. Some young persons tried to obtain the

freedom of a certain class power that only provided poorly-paid labour and poverty, as also discussed by Kempadoo (1999).

To initiate effective social change, policy must consider the various types of power that manifest in people's lives—particularly at moments of significant change, when power is often transferred and transformed. My study identified such turning points through the life story approach (McAdams, 2007). One significant transformation of power in Valentina's life was when she was sexually abused by her stepfather and two other men, who used their 'power over' to commit the crime. Miller *et al.* (2006) argue that 'power over' privileges some individuals while marginalising others; from this perspective, Valentina lost some of her own 'power over', often approached in terms of a win-lose context (Kreisberg, 1992). Valentina herself offered some support for this view, stating twice that she became weaker after this experience of abuse. However, according to Finkelhor and Browne (1985) and Puffer *et al.* (2011), people who experience sexual abuse in childhood may later try to regain this lost power. The literature shows that victims of sexual abuse may become engaged in sexual exploitation (Farley, 2003; Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999) and may be motivated to do so, in part, by the compelling "illusion of power" (Ross *et al.*, 2004). One could thus argue that Valentina's entry into sexual exploitation might have been connected to her wish to reacquire some lost 'power over' from men—in other words, to replenish her power. Valentina outlines explicitly the connection between the sexual violence and her decision to start sexual exploitation. Young women may manifest tactical agency by having many sexual partners as a way trying to control others, to exercise power over others. This tendency, called by some as an "illusion of power" (e.g. Ross *et al.* 2004) is explained by Cindy, the psychologist, as follows:

But there are others who regrettably, their psychological force, psychological capacity does not lead to that (stopping sexual exploitation). Does not lead and they stay glued to this situation. This is what is called "psychological reduction." To say, they remain reduced into this traumatic event of sexual abuse or exploitation and what they do is trying to create that they have power, and this is when they start to be exploited. I mean, when it is not easy for me to overcome an abusive situation, what I do is to create that I have power, and I sell myself. But the power I have supposedly. Supposedly I have power because I look for the client, I extract from him money, I take advantage of him. It is a way that this situation does not hurt so much. I mean, I am not a victim.

As many scholars have argued (e.g. Fromm, 1947; Kreisberg, 1992), it is important to go beyond the dynamics of 'power over' and avoid approaching power as a zero-sum

game. In Valentina's story, a sense of 'power with'—defined as "power together, power emerging from interaction" (Surrey, 1987, p. 2)—emerged at several points. For instance, Valentina experienced a sense of power through togetherness with other girls who engaged in sexual exploitation. Many other sex workers shared this view, describing their informal networks as a kind of sisterhood. During a focus group, they stated that their main source of protection was being together, ensuring each other's safety. One participant explained this feeling of solidarity:

Between ourselves we help each other, we do not have help from no one... she, for example, has her four children, I have one in charge, she has her four kids, I have two. And now she is pregnant, is having difficult times, because... yesterday we had to hospitalise her and today we draw her out and this is what we handle.

Although this sisterhood was an important force in Valentina's life, it did not seem to bring about any major changes in power dynamics. However, Valentina's situation did change when she had her children. Once motherhood gave Valentina new motivation to change, she transformed some of the "power over" that had previously constrained her agency into 'power with'; her children gave her strength. This change after the birth of her children in power dynamics was evident when Valentina stated that she now had sex for money with only one man, instead of several; she saw this change as an improvement. In Honwana's (2000) terms, one could argue that when Valentina first began being involved in sexual exploitation with multiple men at age 11, she was expressing rather tactical agency, owning limited power. However, being with one man was more an expression of "strategic agency"; it was a step toward less involvement in sexual exploitation, which was one of Valentina's aspirations.

Valentina's shift from 'power over' to 'power with' affirms Kreisberg's (1992, p. 63) statement that "as we act for ourselves and with others, our need to control others diminishes." The more capable one is of 'power with', the less one will seek 'power over'. Thus, one may argue that Valentina, acquiring more 'power with' through her children, possibly did not seem to need to exercise as much control as before and switched to having only one client instead of many. Although many authors argue that 'power over' and 'power with' are very different and have distinct roots (ibid), Valentina's life shows that 'power with' and 'power over' are not only operating in parallel worlds, but are able to connect.

Starhawk (1982) describes another such power transformation in a situation where

imprisoned women confronted their guards. When a guard sought to catch one woman, the others surrounded her with their bodies to protect her. One woman started to chant, humming without words, while other women joined in. Rather than using their nightsticks to violently subdue the women, as they would usually have done, the guards withdrew. Starhawk (1987, p. 5) states:

What had taken place is an act that could teach us something deep about power. In that moment in the jail, the power of domination and control met something outside its comprehension, a power rooted in another source. To know that power, to create the situations that bring it forth, is magic.

Becoming a mother may have created a comparable internal effect in Valentina, leading ‘power with’ to become a new source of agency in her life. Such ‘magical’ transformations might be partially explained by the fact that although ‘power over’ and ‘power with’ differ in many ways, they are both intrinsically social, “described and defined by relationship” (Kresiberg, 1992, p. 69).

Yet individual psychology also matters, and it should not be overlooked in the analysis of social power dynamics. It is important to distinguish between social and personal power (Buscaglia, 1978; Tauber, 1985). Just as identities are not confined to the body but are extended into an individual’s social and material surroundings (Holland *et al.*, 2001), I argue that internal and external power dynamics are strongly connected.

In addition to ‘power over’ related to sexual abuse, which Valentina seemed to transfer to sexual exploitation, Valentina also experienced internal forms of more life-affirming power. Concepts such as Miller’s (1976) ‘power to’, May’s (1972) ‘power for’, and Starhawk’s (1987) ‘power-from-within’ may enable us to better understand the internal strengths that nourish young women like Valentina. A few themes emerged in Valentina’s account of what gives her joy and makes her feel proud of herself. One major theme was dreaming of the future; Valentina felt happy when she spoke of going to Venezuela to reunite with the father of her children. This aspiration may be a source of ‘power within’. Valentina also expressed pride in her shift to a ‘better’ version of sex work with only one man. Wing (1990, p. 196) argues that in addition to examining the multiplicity of black women’s oppression, we should also consider “the multiplicity of strength, love, joy... and transcendence that flourishes despite adversity.” A focus on ‘power with’ and ‘power within’ enables us to include these forms of flourishing in analysis of young people’s experiences.

The power dynamics of Ricardo's life resemble those of Valentina's life in many ways. Ricardo, too, was a victim of 'power over' in his childhood, when his family was attacked and displaced. He later decided to acquire his own "power over," in this case by participating in gang violence. Both Valentina and Ricardo gained 'power with' through solidarity with their peers. Both described parenthood as an important turning point and derived significant 'power with' from their relationships with their children. Hence, the underlying dynamics of sexual exploitation and gang affiliation have more in common than current policy has acknowledged.

These two life stories involve rather different forms of "power within." For Valentina, this power seems to be linked to dreams of reuniting with her children's father in Venezuela; for Ricardo, 'power within' could be seen as emerging when he voiced pride about changing his life and not "doing bad things" anymore. However, he expressed mixed feelings about moving on from gang involvement and, at times, seemed nostalgic for the 'power over' that he had enjoyed as a womaniser and socially powerful gang member. Moreover, while Ricardo also drew strength from his past, deriving 'power within' from idealised memories of his mother, Valentina focused more on dreams of the future.

A comprehensive analysis of power dynamics could provide additional insight into why Valentina started to become engaged in sexual exploitation and why she later decided to be just with one man. By drawing upon psychological studies of life-affirming types of power (Fromm, 1947; May, 1972; Miller, 1976), researchers can arrive at a more complex understanding of power relations that resist the binary logic of agency/oppression. An integrated and cross-disciplinary approach to sexual exploitation is crucial, as stated by Dalla (2000, p. 345):

Undoubtedly, entry into prostitution results from the cumulation of multiple interdependent personal and contextual factors. Efforts at teasing apart those variables, and the relative significance of each, have left many questions unanswered (...) what is abundantly clear is that many women are exposed to life experiences similar to those commonly reported by prostitution-involved women (e.g., childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, drug use), a large majority of whom never engage in prostitution-related activities (Bullough and Bullough, 1996). Potterat *et al.* (1998) argue for a paradigm shift; research emphasises on external circumstances (e.g., environmental

context), they argue, have left pervasive gaps in our understanding of internal mechanisms (i.e., psychological factors) which likely influence, to an as-yet unknown extent, female entry into the sex industry.

In addition to bridging disparate research fields, an integrated analysis of power dynamics could better connect young lives with policy. Such analysis highlights the sources of strength that motivate and put agency in motion. More concretely, if power is seen as fuelling agency (Ashcroft, 1987), one could argue that Valentina's experience of sexual abuse fuelled the eventual emergence of her tactical agency. Valentina appeared to manifest 'power with' in her relationships with her children, with other young women involved in sexual exploitation, and perhaps even with the father of her children (early in their relationship), although this relationship might have been conditioned by love addiction, discussed by Yoder (1990) and Sussman (2010), or co-dependency (Cowan *et al.*, 1995). Following this, Valentina exercised further strategic agency as she sought to move away from sexual exploitation after meeting the father of her children. Although this seemed to be entwined with the pressure from her partner who did not want her to be involved in sexual exploitation. Yet only when she became a mother she appeared to start to exercise strategic agency and 'power with' more consistently. From that point onward, her decisions, such as only sleeping with one man to move away from prostitution, were more focused on the long term.

Similarly, after Ricardo's family was attacked and displaced, his main driving force seemed to be 'power over'. Thanks to his strong bond with his mother and the brotherhood he experienced in his early years of being in the gang, he also experienced 'power with'. By idealising his mother and their relationship, he also manifested 'power within'. Like Valentina, Ricardo appeared to shift from tactical to strategic agency, and embrace more life-affirming forms of power, after the birth of his child. Despite Ricardo's occasional relapses of nostalgia for gang life, his long-term goal was clearly to leave it behind.

The examination of these interwoven power movements can help policy to discern the complex issues that affect adolescents' protection in a protracted displacement context. Awareness of transfers or transformations of power is important, as these substantially affect one's agency and relationship with others. In particular, by understanding the dynamics of life-affirming power, humanitarian practitioners can identify entry points

for cultivating young people's resilience, thereby further enhancing their lives.

Policy must adopt an approach that simultaneously addresses external and internal circumstances, leading also to better policy coherence (Picciotto, 2005; Carbone, 2013; Walicki 2017). To achieve this, it is important for scholars and practitioners across disciplines to collectively examine young people's experiences by applying the analytical concepts discussed in this chapter. Some practical ways for practitioners to implement policies that connect with young people's lives are discussed in Appendices H and G. As these appendices show, promising ways forward include the use of creative methods such as metaphors and allegories, along with attention to young people's life projects and aspirations. The notion of life project has already been used in Cartagena; several participants mentioned it during their interviews. In addition to considering youth vulnerabilities, support could include solution-focused coaching (De Scahzer and Berg, 1997) which is brief, client-centred, and focused on individuals' strengths. Metaphors such as "protection onion" (Berry and Reddy, 2010), "problem tree" (Weiss *et al.*, 2000) and "protection egg" (ICRC, 2001; UNHCR, 2013a) often help persons affected by violence to initiate and engage in discussions about protection policy. My experience as practitioner showed that without these metaphors, many see 'protection' as a rather abstract concept. Allegories have been considered as "engaging to an audience" (Oberholzer, 2006, p. 6) because they allow us to "externalize abstract ideas and translate them into tangible concepts" (Abedi *et al.* 2016, p. 281); thus, they are powerful tools for connecting with policy subjects.

## **8.8 Protection: a Commodity in the Multi-Dimensional Web?**

In addition to carefully considering the interplay of external and internal forces within an individual life, it is also important to examine this life in relation to its wider context. One way for policy to strengthen its connections to affected persons is to focus on the positionality of protection and insecurity. It is important to situate sexual exploitation and gang affiliation within the context of Valentina and Ricardo's identities and relationships, to understand each person's unique embeddedness of protection. Yet in order to fully comprehend the latter, to zoom out and to comprehend the positionality of protection, its relational nature and its connection to power are also of relevance. Each individual is situated into a web of relations. Within this web, protection could be seen to operate like a commodity that we do not have enough of in relation to some, that we

can take away from others and that we could also provide to some persons.

This view of protection as a commodity appeared strongly in Ricardo's narrative:

Protection? There are... I don't know. There are people that see it that way, like a protection, because if there is a gang here then other gangs won't come to rob here. It is like that, and it is all about respect, respect of your space, so that is not allowed. For most people, gangs are a sign of protection. [...] There are people who have valuable things in their houses, and they don't ever lose any of those things, that is because there are gangs. Those are protections for them. [...] It is not that I feel protected, but in that sense, I feel protected because I am in a place where there are no gangs. [...] When I was in a gang, I thought that I was protecting the neighbourhood, in the sense of protecting my space, as well as other mates, yes. And at the same time you are protecting yourself. [...] Was being in gangs safer for me than not being in gangs? For me it was safer. At the time it was safer, because if you give protection to yourself, how can you not give it to the community? That's right, because the day they come to kill you, no one is going to step up for you.

Although policy often describes a person involved in gang violence one-dimensionally—as a victim lacking protection, or as a perpetrator who takes protection away from others—Ricardo's perspective is more multidimensional. Ricardo felt safer and more protected as he gained prominence within a gang; this perceived protection has been analysed as a key reason for joining gangs (Vigil, 1988; Padilla, 1992; Lahey *et al.*, 1999; Miller, 2001; Melde *et al.*, 2009). Through gang involvement, Ricardo also saw himself as a provider of protection—for himself and for community members. Such contradictions were also present on a larger scale; for instance, participants in Cartagena expressed contradictory opinions about the city's current level of insecurity.

In order to understand these various, sometimes conflicting dimensions of protection, and since the violence addressed by protection policy is interpersonal, seeing protection in a relational context is essential. I have previously discussed the strong connection between protection and togetherness, or 'power with'; Ricardo's tale also emphasised protection's link to 'power over', expressed through what he called respect.

For many years, policy has considered women and children as inherently vulnerable (Boyden, 2003; Tamburlini, 2015;)—not as agents who might have and even provide protection. Recently, the policy world has emphasised vulnerability to something or to somebody as part of its increased focus on the closely related concept of resilience (Pain and Levine, 2012). It is important to consider who constitutes a threat to whom and explore their relationship and the context. Although this topic has been analysed

(Hynes, 2010; Mackenzie *et al.* 2014), the policy world could do more to approach the connections between vulnerability, threats, and identity through a comprehensive relational framework.

As I have argued in previous chapters, context influences which identities emerge at any given moment. For adolescents in Mandela, this means that some layers of liminality may dominate over others. Some identities which were of particular relevance to protection analysis included social leaders, gang members, or those with difficult family stories who were not in school. Each of these identities is associated with different protection risks. While social leaders may be particularly at risk for targeted killings, gang members are vulnerable to fights with police, other gangs, and *Bacrim*. Out-of-school youth with unstable family backgrounds may be more prone to becoming pregnant or participating in sexual exploitation or gangs in their teens. Ricardo's adolescent identity as a gang member made him feel more protected in some ways, yet he remained vulnerable to violence by paramilitary groups. Yet despite the mutually constitutive relationship between individuals and society (Jenkins, 2014; Thoits, 2003; Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 6), the power of perception should not be underestimated. An individual's self-perception does not match others' perceptions of that individual. Even as Ricardo increasingly identified himself as an ex-gang member, some other people still saw him as related to a gang and thus to insecurity. As Bauman states (2013, p. 90), "changing identity may be a private affair, but it always includes cutting off certain bonds and cancelling certain obligations; those on the receiving side are seldom consulted." Because of this positionality, protection policy must focus on persons' self-identifications or individual identifications (Jenkins 2014) and 'feeling safe' as well as others' perceptions of this person. The importance of mapping various perceptions from different social networks, various identification processes (Jenkins 2014), was especially apparent when I asked about the prevalence of gang violence and sexual exploitation of adolescents. Those involved in gangs and in sex work knew more people like themselves, so their estimates of the number of gangs or of those involved in sexual exploitation and sex work were higher. Conversely, some students did not know any person involved in sexual exploitation and gave low estimates of the number of gang members in their community. Most adults only knew of a few gangs, but gang-involved youth were aware of many more.

The positionality of protection in relation to place also matters at individual level. As many authors have argued, the issue of locality or territoriality is pertinent to youth gangs in Latin America (e.g. Rodgers, 1999, 2003; Perez, 2013). Ricardo felt unprotected in sectors in Mandela where gangs were active, but he felt safe in other neighbourhoods and sectors without gang activity. Many research participants felt more secure in their own sector and less secure in other sectors or *barrios*. This insider versus outsider perception of security was common in Mandela, as gang members mostly attacked strangers and left inhabitants of their own sector alone, following “the territorial logic of the *pandilla*” discussed by Rodgers (1999, p. 13). In general, Mandela residents rated the neighbourhood’s security much more highly than non-residents did.

One ex-gang member explained that “I prefer to walk in other neighbourhoods, than to walk in the other sectors to where I cannot go.” This statement shows that positionality ought to be considered in relation to time as well as place; due to a historic evolution in gang violence over last two decades, the gangs in 2013 were more sector-based than neighbourhood-based. Several participants noted that gangs inside the neighbourhood had multiplied, and fights were happening more frequently between sectors than between *barrios*. Therefore, gang members would now have more enemies in other sectors of Mandela than in other neighbourhoods. Ricardo’s story also demonstrates the positionality of protection and the power of perception in relation to time and space. At one time, belonging to gangs made him feel more secure, but this same identity became a source of insecurity later in his life.

The more policy comprehends the positionality of protection and the web of connections associated with it, the more closely policy interventions will align with youth realities. One way forward could be to focus on ‘fixing’ the threads of the web where a person most lacks protection. Various forms of in-betweenness characterize Valentina’s relationship with her mother. On the one hand, her mother failed to properly protect her in the past. Valentina also stated: “My mom wants me to live with the man [her current sexual relationship for money], but I don't really like him.” Yet Valentina also felt protected while living with her mother, and she trusted her mother enough to tell her secrets. As mentioned, this mother-daughter relationship could perhaps benefit from policy intervention—perhaps in the form of therapy to reduce the

internal tension that this relationship causes for Valentina.

### **8.9 Displacement: Not Always a Magnifier of Protection Problems**

It is not just policymakers' lack of knowledge that keeps policy disconnected from youth lived realities and perceptions, but sometimes they might choose to emphasise certain policy discourses, instead putting forward affected persons' perspectives. Referring to representational intersectionality, the policy makers and practitioners' fear of acknowledging sometimes the agency of youth (Valentine and Meinert, 2009) or of displaced persons (Omata, 2017), to emphasise IDPs plights (Pollock, 2013) could be seen as such occasions.

Ricardo claimed that gangs protect their members—a perspective also discussed by Lahey *et al.*, (1999) and Melde *et al.* (2009)—yet policy practitioners mostly refute this claim. Similarly, those involved in policy implementation tend sometimes to focus rather exclusively on gender-based violence rather than considering the possibility that some youth might decide to have transactional sex or perceive their age as a privilege rather than a form of oppression (Hulko, 2009). In this regard, policy perspectives on adolescent sexual exploitation resemble the politics of the veil as described by Abu-Lughod (2002). Various aspects of female adolescents' experiences and concerns are sometimes obscured by policy's omnipresent focus on sexual- and gender-based violence. Some of the advantages that displacement and “protection problems” provide for young people touched by protracted internal displacement might thus remain hidden by policy, thus leading to a disconnected and dichotomous vision. It is beyond the scope of this research to explore in depth the occasions and reasons why other perspectives (instead of those affected by displacement) are prioritized. However, for a policy that is better connected to youth, the best way forward is to acknowledge young people's perspectives, including the advantages youth perceive, and to consider how those perceived advantages might influence policy implementation.

For instance, dominant policy discourses often present displacement and protection as having a negative connection, emphasising how displacement decreases security and increases the prevalence of child recruitment (Achvarina and Reich, 2006) and sexual exploitation (Mooney, 2005; Anani, 2013). According to policy definitions, forced displacement could be seen to constitute an additional layer of victimisation by ‘power

over'. Yet my qualitative research in Colombia showed a more complex picture, revealing alternative perceptions typically overlooked by policy. For instance, no participant mentioned IDP status as a risk factor for becoming a victim of gang violence. Rather, participants saw gang violence as indiscriminate and believed that everyone in the community is at risk; victims were mostly those who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. When gang members were under the influence of drugs, even those they normally knew from their neighbourhood were at risk, as the drugs might impair gang members' ability to distinguish familiar neighbours from outsiders.

In addition, the majority of participants I interviewed said that being from an IDP family did not make a person more likely to join a gang. A finding that disagrees with the claim that young boys have been perceived as particularly vulnerable to being recruited or joining armed violence due to their condition of being displaced (Hick, 2001; Loescher and Milner, 2005a; Hart, 2008a). An ex-gang member in a focus group, for instance, disputed the notion that the majority of young people in the gangs are IDPs:

The majority of young people who are in the gangs are from here, based here in Cartagena, they are *cartageneros* and that when one joins a gang it does not matter if one is IDP or from here, the majority who join gangs do so because they like to be involved in the cause of gangs, they like to have more friendships.

Another ex-gang member, however, affirmed some sense of connection between IDP status and gang involvement:

They are more vulnerable because they are, ...are young people who come from the village. Therefore they want to adapt to the customs here, to the local culture, they also then want to be fashionable, to be like the groups here. To make friends with fighters of the neighbourhood where they live now. To hang out with them. And can end up falling into drugs and all that.

This willingness to do anything at any cost to be accepted, however, refers to the first generation of IDPs and is more connected to overcoming one's rural identity than to IDP status. For the second generation, which now constitutes the majority of youth in Mandela, the most common response was that once a person already knows the local culture, he or she no longer feels such an intense need to belong and be accepted.

The discussions in Cartagena also challenged accounts by Ampofo (2001), Mooney (2005) and Anani (2013), who argue that displacement renders youth more susceptible

to sexual exploitation. For instance, despite numerous probing questions, Valentina consistently rejected the notion that her family's displacement status led her to take up sexual exploitation. The majority of research participants also refuted the claim that IDP status made young people more vulnerable to involvement in sexual exploitation.

Participants mentioned links between IDP status and sexual exploitation of adolescents on two occasions, but in both instances, they situated this link in the past. First, in the acute displacement situation years ago, which affected the first generation of IDPs, the rate of domestic child sexual abuse increased as many households took in extended family members. Due to limited space and sharing of beds, children were more often sexually abused. Based on the established link between sexual abuse and later sexual exploitation (e.g. Mayorga and Velasquez, 1999; Farley, 2003), it is reasonable to conclude that youth who were sexually abused in these circumstances in Cartagena were more vulnerable to becoming involved in sexual exploitation later. Second, a participant mentioned that the struggles of current youth—including sexual exploitation—are consequences of what happened to the first generation. However, both of these links were indirect and were proposed by service providers—those who represented policy perspectives more than community visions.

The reigning perception among community members was that there is currently no significant link between being a displaced person and being vulnerable to protection issues, including sexual exploitation of adolescents. On the contrary, during the focus group, one sex worker who was not an IDP even argued that IDP status actually brings advantages, rather than vulnerability:

The IDPs are paid, we are not paid [...] for them, they pay monthly money and thus they do not need to be here as they get money, if you understand. Therefore, they do not need to come here when they are broke, fall sick...[...] besides, their rent is partially paid where they live...

The sex workers who were interviewed knew only one colleague who was an IDP. Hence, displacement was seen not to increase vulnerability to engaging in sexual exploitation in Cartagena. Instead, IDP status and the benefits that accompanied the label — although mainly in early phase of displacement — could even protect one from becoming involved in sexual exploitation. Although policy mostly emphasises that displacement worsens protection problems, displacement could have a certain positive impact on a protection situation—a consideration often omitted from mainstream policy

language.

### 8.10 More Security through Displacement

As the previous section demonstrates, the Mandela community had generally ceased to regard displacement as a magnifier of protection issues. In the eyes of some community members, displacement was instead seen as playing a beneficial role in increasing safety. Specifically, Mandela residents clearly refuted the idea that the presence of large populations of IDPs makes a neighbourhood less secure than other parts of the city. On the contrary, one IDP man, now living in Mandela, told me:

Here (in Mandela) is a culture that is brought by village people. Village people bring a culture that is nobler, like more humble, more humble than what we have here, when we are born in a city. [...] I think Mandela is a quiet peaceful place.

As discussed, because of the gangs' attachment to a territory (e.g. Rodgers, 1999), residents often saw other neighbourhoods as more dangerous than their own. Yet when asked to elaborate on the difference between life in rural areas and culture in some of the other urban neighbourhoods in Cartagena, Mandela residents explained that they were tired of violence, which they had seen back in their home villages. They only wanted to quietly go about their daily activities, most of which involved managing their small businesses. Hence, because of the rural way of life that IDPs knew from the countryside, and the values that shaped their communities prior to displacement, many first-generation IDPs felt that Mandela was safer than some other marginalised Cartagena neighbourhoods where the culture of hereditary or traditional gangs was more prevalent, meaning more parties, drugs, and vandalism. A participant from Mandela described these traditional gangs:

All the time, when the father is a gang member and remains active....As they are called old guards, and police considers them very dangerous [...] Is that when the father is in the gang, then most probably his son will be also. [...] gangs constitute a way of life. It is like a job. [...] these traditional and organised gangs plan criminal activities as they need to live from these, need to eat. Therefore, among their work tasks are holdups, homicides...[...] And hence the young people who come from these families make experience with such gangs.

Yet in Mandela, according to several participants, gangs mostly comprised adolescent boys who had grown up with city values and were trying to behave like the traditional gangs in neighbouring communities. As Achvarina and Reich (2006) demonstrated in the case of Liberia, IDP and refugee camps can also protect children in conflict

situations and reduce the prevalence of child soldier participation. Hence, displacement, which is usually considered as vulnerability, could, under certain circumstances, become a form of strength.

This is not only the case in the protracted displacement situations or for second-generation IDPs. As Zapater (2010), a policy practitioner, has suggested, flight and displacement could be regarded as a self-protection strategy—a way to increase safety. Zapater (2010) describes how UNHCR implemented workshops in southern Colombia to examine the issue of preventing forced displacement together with local communities. Yet community members were “unable to apprehend why forced displacement was presented as the central problem” (Zapater, 2010, p. 3). While people saw displacement as a solution to their problem, they had trouble understanding why the NGOs and international organisations wanted to prevent displacement from happening. There was thus a clash of perceptions; while service providers saw forced displacement as a major protection problem, local people saw it as a solution, a manifestation of agency rather than oppression. This is not unique to Colombia; conflict-affected people in southeast Burma, for instance, also opted for various types of forced migration to avoid threats (South *et al.*, 2011). In addition to Asia, internal displacement as a self-protection strategy is also noted in Africa. For instance, Horsey’s (2011) analysis of political violence in Zimbabwe argues that locals use internal and external displacement to escape protection threats, and Harragin (2011), explores displacement as a self-protection strategy in South Sudan. In addition, Harragin (2011, p. 51) writes that:

O’Callaghan and Pantuliano (2007: 4) note that in conflict situations “the most common strategy adopted by civilians is to escape through flight.” Jaspars *et al.* (2007: 13) describe how displacement can sometimes be the most effective as well as visible strategy in relation to protection threats...

As one of the most efficient means worldwide to protect oneself and to reach security, displacement could clearly be seen as enhancing security and protection in acute emergency situations. Yet although policy practitioners today are aware of this perspective, it is generally not enough considered in policy implementation.

Although displaced persons are often associated with increased insecurity, this widespread perception may not be based on real facts. For instance, Guild (2006, p. 233) states that “in none of 11 September and subsequent terrorist-related attacks have asylum seekers been directly or indirectly implicated.” Yet since the attacks in 2001, an

increasing number of asylum-seekers and refugees have been seen as possibly dangerous in Western countries. In a similar vein, Duncan's (2005) research in Indonesia revealed that locals blamed IDPs for increased crime rates and perceived them as a security threat. According to local police, however, there was no correlation, and IDPs were actually more likely to be victims of crime than the perpetrators.

This contradiction also exists in Mandela. While IDPs did not perceive themselves contributing to insecurity, others in Cartagena often saw them as dangerous or responsible for decreased security. In general, IDPs were perceived in Colombia "as criminals, as a collective threat to societal stability, and as a population that has carried the conflict with them from rural areas into the heart of Colombia's major cities" (McDowell and Van Hear, 2006, pp. 7-8).

In short, whereas displacement as a self-protection strategy seems to be a rather hidden dimension, displacement as a magnifier of protection problems has been emphasised in policy discourses that refer to heightened protection risks for IDPs (e.g. Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2010). Such a situation, nevertheless, may result in a limited and distorted understanding of forced displacement as a phenomenon. Valentina did not start sexual exploitation because she was an IDP, but she did use her IDP identity to avoid paying for her children's school fees. The multitude of linkages between protection and displacement—including the advantages for those affected—must be mapped and supported in policy. Only by acknowledging affected persons' perceptions and the advantages they may draw from a situation can policy practitioners achieve substantive steps toward more connection with those affected.

Participants in Mandela highlighted additional advantages that policy tends to ignore in relation to sexual exploitation of adolescents and participation in gangs. For instance, young people described how early parenthood affected involvement in sex work and gangs. In contrast to accounts that focus on early motherhood in the context of survival sex and regard it as another risk factor for young women engaging in sexual exploitation (e.g. UNHCR, 2013b), participants like Valentina and Ricardo described parenthood as a positive change that motivated them to move away from sexual exploitation and gang violence. This connection is rarely considered in policy but has been examined by other scholars (Bowen, 2013; Pyrooz *et al.*, 2017), which suggests that Mandela does not constitute an isolated case.

Survival sex is a reality for some people under certain circumstances, yet it seems have been overemphasized (to the exclusion of other important facets) in some policy discourses. Policy does not consider enough that sexual exploitation is often paid well in relation to other kinds of work available to young people. For instance, one service provider mentioned that a young woman can earn 500,000 Colombian pesos per night in Cartagena, which is approximately 160 US dollars. Valentina also decided to opt for sexual exploitation despite having hairdressing skills. Moreover, Kempadoo (1999) mentions that sex work is more lucrative than many other jobs available in the Caribbean; it can also be seen as less demanding and sometimes less hazardous. Likewise, Mayorga and Velasquez (1999) state that, in Cartagena, younger prostitutes make more money and can charge higher rates.

In order to connect with youth, policy actors must consider these realities rather than addressing sexual exploitation solely in relation to livelihood opportunities, which remain much less attractive than sexual exploitation for many young people. This is particularly true in developing countries and conflict-affected and displacement settings. Policy also focuses on sexual exploitation as a protection problem, a decontextualized view that separates sexual exploitation from other important children's rights and local stances (Montgomery, 2001a; Orchard, 2007). In Mandela, research participants did not describe sexual exploitation as a major problem for youth, and it was clearly not connected to what they understood by protection. As I have discussed in previous research on adolescents' early marriages (Talviste, 2009), affected persons might regard various protection problems as livelihood or protection strategies. They might also see these protection problems as value conflicts. Charles and Denman (2013) and Seymour (2012, 2017) also analyse adolescents' sexual exploitation as a livelihood strategy. Adolescents may engage in a sexual relationship with one person to be protected from others (De Berry, 2004), so even sexual exploitation could also be construed as a protection strategy in some situations. Similarly, some adolescent boys may join gangs as a way of self-protection, as also noted by youth in Colombia (Baird, 2012). Yet these connections remain under-considered by policy. If policy acknowledges and builds upon the connections young people identify as advantageous, policy outcomes will become more integrative and have more potential to initiate positive changes in these young lives.



## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

In this concluding chapter, I shall weave together the various themes evoked throughout this work. I begin by outlining my key findings and describing how they contribute to current debates in forced migration literature and beyond. Additionally, I explore some recommendations for strengthening youth protection policy in the context of protracted urban displacement. This work concludes by discussing limitations of the present study and highlighting directions for further research.

### **9.1 Synthesis of Key Findings**

This work demonstrates that many current protection policy concepts are inadequate frames for understanding the lives of young people affected by protected displacement. Protection policy regarding female adolescents is full of labels, reinforces binaries, and is hampered by various disconnections. Youth perceptions and experiences of displacement and protection differ from policy understandings, as others have shown (e.g. Seymour, 2012). To illustrate, my research in Mandela revealed several facets of protection that are largely absent from policy discourses. This work demonstrated that many young people from displaced families gradually distance themselves from the IDP label as they navigate toward adulthood. This thesis argues that the use of some integrative concepts could reduce the dominance of dichotomous labels, resulting in more unified and effective protection policies.

The multiple identities approach reveals the connections between various identities, how personal and social worlds are blended, and how the past is connected to the future. Young people do not think about themselves in terms of policy labels or dichotomies; rather, for them, many fluid and ever-changing identities coexist simultaneously. I have argued that by applying the concept of multiple identities, policy practitioners can better comprehend these young people's experiences. This approach revealed the liminal, interwoven, and layered nature of age, gender, and displacement status in youth identities in Mandela community in Cartagena.

Pain and Levine (2012) emphasise the importance of applying the concept of agency more consistently in policy. This work elaborates on their argument by highlighting the interplay of agency and oppression, a concept that enables us to move beyond polarized policy terms and understand the protection landscape in more depth. In addition to

ensuring that self-protection strategies—great manifestations of agency—are considered in analysis, the interplay shows how self-protection is connected with policy definitions that mostly focus on structures of oppression. In *Mandela*, among others, I examined the emergence of collective agency in the face of oppression, the strategic use of ‘victimcy’, and the practice of distancing oneself from an identity linked to oppression.

Analysis of the integrative nature of power can also yield important insights into the connectivity of young people’s lived realities. If policy can cultivate young people’s capacity to exercise life-affirming forms of power, such as ‘power with’ and ‘power within’, these youth may become less vulnerable to what policy considers ‘protection problems’. In general, if policy researchers and practitioners explore more liminal spaces and overarching connectors in young lives—such as the rites of passage linked to coming-of-age processes—they can develop a policy that is more coherent with youth perspectives, within itself, and with academia.

## **9.2 Linking with the Literature**

### **9.2.1 Some Alternatives to Connecting Policy with Academia**

As forced migration scholarship has been strongly interwoven with policy developments (Black, 2001; Bakewell, 2008), this thesis, which focuses on policy, is of significant value. By outlining how protection policy could be enhanced by some academic concepts, such as multiple identities (e.g. Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003; Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005), the interplay between agency and oppression (e.g. Honwana, 2000; Utas, 2005), and holistic approaches to power (Kreisberg, 1992; Miller *et al.*, 2006), this study illuminates new ways in which academia and policy, in relation to forced migration, could be better connected – a debate which has been on-going for years (Van Hear, 1998; Black, 2001; Jacobsen and Landau, 2003; Bakewell, 2008). Bakewell (2008), for instance, argues for oblique research and moving away from policy categories, while Jacobsen and Landau (2003) emphasise the need for greater clarity regarding definitions and more rigorous methodological and ethical foundations of forced migration research to work toward better policies. This thesis contributes to this debate by adding that policy should draw upon academic concepts in a different way from what is typically done at present. Many policy concepts have been borrowed from academia (Jacobsen and Landau,

2003; Bakewell, 2008), but as they turn into policy categories, they progress into bureaucratic labels (Bakewell, 2008). One way to resist this trend is to focus on the concepts' mobility and relational nature, and to consider how these characteristics could be effectively preserved and operationalized as concepts are incorporated into policy. For example, instead of merely using the terms 'identity' or 'agency', policy practitioners could use the terms 'multiple identities' and 'agency and oppression interplay'. By foregrounding complexity and interconnection, these terms would reduce the disconnections that currently prevail in policy, as evidenced by the multitude of dichotomous labels that characterize policy discourse.

Another example is the application of the anthropological concept of liminality in policy. This concept could aid in theorising humanitarian action and policy implementation by going beyond binaries such as child/adult, rural/urban, IDP/non-IDP, power/oppression, and security/insecurity. Indeed, the application of continuums has already gained importance (e.g. Richmond, 1994; Scheel and Squire, 2014; Krause, 2015) in the study of forced migration. Yet the concept of liminality improves upon that of a continuum (a more directionally 'neutral', less mobile concept) by incorporating notions of mobility and direction.

### **9.2.2 Emerging Scholarship on Second-Generation IDPs**

For forced migration scholarship, an in-depth study exploring second-generation urban protracted IDPs is in itself an important contribution, as this area has been rather under-researched. The findings related to second-generation IDPs in Cartagena contribute to debates surrounding the relationship between voluntary and involuntary migration, supporting the growing body of scholarship that critiques the application of this binary in the analysis of migration (Zetter, 2000; King, 2002; O'Connell Davidson, 2013). While previous scholars have mostly challenged the voluntary/involuntary migration binary by highlighting the mixed flows and diverse causes of migration, the present thesis extends this critique by arguing that this binary is inconsistent with the lived experiences of second-generation IDPs. In Mandela, members of the second generation regard their IDP identity as rather insignificant, and youth use various strategies to reject this identity—a tendency that has also been observed among second-generation immigrant youth (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994). Waters (1994) examined the ways in which poor inner-city second-generation immigrant adolescents in the US

attempted to assimilate to the local culture around them; this trend is also evident among marginalised second-generation IDPs in Cartagena. This thesis also supports the findings of Portes and Zhou (1993) that second-generation Haitian immigrants in Florida deliberately adapted to their new culture — such attitudes were noted in Mandela. While some argue (Hadjiyanni, 2002) that merging voluntary and involuntary migration too closely might lead us to overlook the trauma related to forced migration, this is less of a concern for the study of second-generation descendants, who did not experience this trauma firsthand. Forced migration scholarship could benefit from being more integrated with migration studies in general and from further exploring the relatively unexamined continuities between kinds of migration. The important body of research on the integration of second-generation immigrants' experiences could also advance scholarship and policy related to second generation of IDPs and intergenerational effects of forced displacement.

This thesis also complements the literature on youth transitions in the context of migration by emphasizing that in the case of protracted internal displacement and the second generation of IDPs, youth pathways to adulthood have diversified and become more blurred (Frändberg, 2015; Grabska, 2010; King *et al.*, 2016). Examination of those enrolled in education as a separate group in relation to youth traditions (e.g. King *et al.*, 2016) is also relevant in the case of the second generation of displaced persons.

In general, although first- and second-generation youth shared many similarities—including their wish to become non-IDPs as soon as possible—the second generation was more indifferent to the IDP label. Those who experienced uprooting firsthand had a stronger sense of shame in relation to IDP identity and used some different strategies to distance themselves from the displaced label. The difference between first- and second-generation IDPs in relation to stigma is also noteworthy. While those uprooted experience often what Quinn (2006) calls “conspicuous stigmatized identity,” second-generation IDPs are more capable of “concealing a stigma or ‘passing’ as a nonstigmatized person,” an additional coping response they possess (Miller, 2006, p. 53). Also, some divergences existed from a protection point of view. For instance, participants saw first-generation displaced youth as more prone to become involved in gangs, but they did not see any distinction between non-IDPs and those born in displacement.

### 9.2.3 Debates on IDP label, Protection and Durable Solutions

This work also contributes to the debate surrounding labelling that has shaped the field of refugee and forced migration studies for decades (e.g. Cole, 2017; Willner-Reid, 2016). By showing that the IDP label is not always a powerful one, and could actually be a rather insignificant one for some affected persons, my thesis adds a different perspective to the studies that emphasise the power of displacement-related labels (Zetter, 1991; Malkki, 1995; Duffield, 2002; Sulava, 2010). For instance, for many young persons in Mandela, some significant incentives would need to be connected to the IDP label for this label to really influence the behaviour of those labelled as IDPs. As to the debate surrounding the definition of IDP, my findings support Hickel's (2001) and Willner-Reid's (2016) claims regarding the lack of conceptual clarity about who exactly IDPs are; this lack of clarity was also evident in my discussions with Mandela residents. Marsden and Turton (2004) have criticised the homogenising effect of the IDP label; this criticism clearly applies in Mandela, where the label fails to encompass the distinct experiences and identifications of the first and second generations. Although first and second generation shared many similarities, for instance, they also used some different strategies in their move away from IDP label.

Moreover, given the privileging (Borton *et al.*, 2005) and stigmatising (Marsden and Turton, 2004) effects of IDP designation, it is possible to conclude that in a protracted urban displacement setting (and particularly when considering second generations), 'IDP' might not always be the most relevant policy category with which to approach those in need of support.

My analysis also contributes to scholarship exploring humanitarian action in the context of forced migration—particularly to debates about what protection is or should be (O'Callaghan and Pantuliano, 2007; Landau and Amit, 2014; Lyytinen, 2015;)—by revealing perspectives on protection that are seldom addressed in existing theories. For instance, the fact that power is an important facet of protection is rarely considered. Yet this work demonstrates that protection and power are very strongly linked; as such, analysis of power dynamics should always accompany protection analyses and interventions. This thesis also shows that protection is a relationship and a feeling, and that it is embedded into one's life and aspirations; these aspects of protection have rarely been theorised or explored in previous research.

In the existing literature, the concept of self-protection has been used to analyse various aspects of affected persons' agency (South *et al.*, 2011). However, research and policy have not sufficiently considered how this concept can function as a common language to bridge the gap between policy definitions and people's understandings of protection. This understanding of self-protection enables us to theorise protection in a way that accounts for individual responsibility as well as structural issues.

This research also shows that although displacement may worsen protection of young people in some situations (Hick, 2001; Loescher and Milner, 2005a; Mooney, 2013; Anani, 2013), it may also, under certain conditions, have a supportive effect and increase their protection. Displaced persons interviewed in Colombia did not see displacement as reducing their security or increasing their vulnerability to 'protection problems'. On the contrary, some mentioned that displaced status provided advantages in the form of added security and protection. These under-acknowledged sides of displacement call for re-theorising the phenomenon and its impact on young lives.

Finally, one of the most significant current debates in forced migration studies concerns durable solutions (Souter, 2013; Bradley *et al.*, 2016; Hansen, 2018). The present thesis contributes to this discussion by emphasising that instead of focusing on producing lists of durable solutions to what groups of persons need to be matched, policy and aid practitioners could adopt a more individualised and contextualised approach to identify the best solutions for each affected person. The aim of this approach is to recognize the complexities that shape young lives while simultaneously acknowledging structural patterns and reinforcing community solidarity. In this way, personalised solutions can be worked out in collaboration with affected persons. Thus, instead of focusing on prefabricating end destinations (e.g. current durable solutions), policy should concentrate on developing methodologies that support more individualised solutions.

#### **9.2.4 Strengthening Interdisciplinarity in Forced Migration Scholarship**

This thesis supports the argument that an interdisciplinary mindset is needed to understand the phenomenon of forced migration (Castles, 2003; Colson, 2003). Interdisciplinarity could be further strengthened by exploring power holistically. Although some studies have addressed power dynamics in forced migration contexts (Grabska, 2010; Zetter and Morrissey, 2014; Omata, 2017), this thesis extends beyond

this prior research on social and political power, by incorporating analysis of life-affirming types of power, in order to theorise the experiences of young people affected by displacement. Recent research has called increasing attention to the mobilisation of personal connections and social networks among IDP communities (e.g. Jacobs and Kyamusugulwa, 2017); I interpret these social connections as a form of ‘power with’. Life-affirming forms of power and agency have been discussed in studies of refugee women (e.g. Moritz, 2012), but more research in forced migration scholarship is needed to simultaneously focus on the dynamics of ‘power over’, ‘power with’, and ‘power within’. This work contributes to addressing this gap in literature by demonstrating how a more holistic approach to power could enhance knowledge and policy in relation to forced migration.

This work also contributes to interdisciplinary debates surrounding agency and oppression. This thesis reinforces the argument that agency ought to be understood as a complex concept that transcends the agency/oppression dichotomy (e.g. Honwana, 2000; Mahmood, 2001; Utas, 2005; Bilge, 2010). My analysis illustrates that while agency is often expressed in relation to some kind of oppression (or ‘power over’), people may also exercise agency in other ways—for instance, to realize their aspirations.

One of the important theoretical implications of this work is that it sheds further light on the links between analytical concepts such as identity, agency, and power. Some authors have explored relationships between identity and agency (Breakwell, 1986; Bauder, 2001; Holland *et al.*, 2001), and some explore connections between power and agency (Honwana, 2000; Holland *et al.*, 2001; Mahmood, 2001; Miller *et al.*, 2006). However, these connections are rarely studied all together. This research confirms the intricate link between identity and agency, arguing that identity is fluid and responsive to context, but also that agency in turn creates identities (e.g. Breakwell, 1986, 2004; Bauder, 2001). This work adds that the mutual constitutive relationship between identities and agency is rather visible in relation to protection. The latter is shaped by identities, yet individuals may also use agency to change aspects of their identities (e.g. trying to be perceived as poor to secure more safety). This work also confirms Bauder’s (2001) theory that processes of identity construction “operate simultaneously on different spatial scales, a particular form of agency is to represent identity in reference

to one or another spatial scale. In other words, agents choose and jump between scales of representation” (Bauder, 2001, p. 282). My research demonstrates how youth manifested this particular form of agency by moving between city-wide and neighbourhood-wide scales, shifting from IDP to non-IDP identities, and transitioning from rural to urban ways of life.

Regarding linkages between agency and power, this work supports Mahmood’s (2001) statement that power both enables and limits agency, as well as Honwana’s (2000) argument that individuals with more power tend to express strategic agency while those with less power manifest tactical agency. Early in their adolescence, marginalised youth held less power, and they exercised tactical agency through their choices in relation to protection, which were mostly framed by short-term vision. The present work expands on this knowledge by showing how different types of power can affect agency and, in particular, how life-affirming power is linked to strategic agency.

This thesis also contributes by putting forward the notion of ‘power within’, which could be seen as an under-studied connection between identity and power. As ‘power within’ is about persons’ sense of self-knowledge (Miller *et al.*, 2006) while identity can be understood as sense of self, the two concepts overlap. This thesis calls for analysis of power as a connecting thread between identity and agency—the fuel that generates forward motion (Ashcroft, 1987). Miller *et al.* (2006) refer to ‘power within’ as capacity, and Fromm (1947) and Follett (1924) define power as a capacity “developed by an individual through interaction with other individuals” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 71). This same term, ‘capacity’, is also often used to define agency (Holland *et al.*, 1998; Bauder, 2001; Mahmood, 2001).

Researchers have recently devoted increased attention to the connections between forced migration and gang activity in Latin America (Cantor, 2014; McNamara, 2017), yet their emphasis has mostly been on more organised criminal gangs that are causing the displacement. By exploring adolescent street gangs and examining displacement as one possible reason for joining these gangs, this thesis sheds light on a rather under-researched dimension, discussing motivations for gang membership that have not been widely considered. The connection between gang studies and forced migrations scholarship could be further widened through exploring such other linkages.

This thesis proposes to further connect the rites of passage perspective and sub-cultural theories that both emphasise the link with wider society for a better understanding of the factors that influence young people to join gangs and to become engaged in sexual exploitation in protracted displacement settings. Combining both perspectives would also contribute to furthering interdisciplinary research in migration studies; rites of passage have historically been studied by anthropologists (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1987), while theories of sub-cultures have been prominent in sociology and criminology since decades (e.g. Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955). I have sought to combine these inquiries with a holistic approach to power dynamics, which also incorporates psychological perspectives on ‘power within’ (Fromm, 1947). Simultaneous application of these various perspectives would thus support interdisciplinary collaboration, which is essential for effectively understanding forced displacement (Castles, 2003; Colson, 2003). This thesis has argued that protection is both a feeling and a relationship; thus, anthropology, psychology, and sociology all have complementary knowledge to offer. For instance, research on youth identities and women’s consumption (e.g. Miles *et al.*, 1998) and on ‘race’ and ethnicity (e.g. Cohen, 1996) in the North could both bring additional insights to exploring “protection problems.” Sociological approaches could also provide a frame for exploring how adolescents spend money earned through sexual exploitation and how youth gangs are related to territoriality in the South. Fluid individual identities and agency are important to consider, as emphasised by post-subcultural theory (Blackman, 2014). However, the collective nature of youth behaviour and youth identities should not be overlooked; nor should the structural inequalities that shape youth activities (Griffin, 2011; Blackman, 2014). In Mandela, education seems to be a pathway growing in importance for youth transitions, but young people did not seem to regard it as an adequate replacement for what traditional rites had once offered.

This investigation deepens our understanding of what constitutes sexual exploitation of adolescents in Cartagena—a question of interest for gender, youth, and Latin American studies, among other fields. My research found that numerous aspects of sexual exploitation of adolescents in Cartagena are consistent with Kempadoo’s (1999) definition of sex work. Based on additional findings that emerged in this research, the following aspects about adolescents’ having sex for money in Cartagena need to be addressed in policy implementation. First, sexual exploitation of adolescents is a

complex social activity that can be situated into liminal space between income-generation and experimentation, victimhood and agency, and it is carried out in the circumstances that are in particular characterized by socioeconomic and family oppressions. Second, youth often see sexual exploitation as simultaneously empowering and shameful, and it could constitute a sub-culture or a rite of passage for some in the vacuum of existing rites to adulthood. Third, adolescents who are involved in sexual exploitation often combine the use of tactical and strategic agency to escape the past or to pursue their aspirations for future. Adolescents engage in this activity to improve their economic and social status, and they may be motivated by a sense of solidarity and “power with” their peers. Fourth, sexual exploitation can be a way for adolescents to act on a psychological desire to regain “power over” that was taken away by traumatic past. Others may perceive this reclaiming of power as illusory, but it may remain a powerful motivating force for adolescents themselves.

Scholarship and policy have generally overlooked some of these facets of adolescents’ sexual exploitation, such as its potentially experimental and empowering nature, its connection to various types of power, its intersections with other stigmatized identities (Campbell and Gibbs, 2009), and its function as a sub-culture or rite of passage. But these facets are worth considering for several reasons. For instance, the rites-of-passage perspective emphasises liminality and the existence of a third phase concluding the rite, thereby enabling policy practitioners to resist binaries. This perspective invites us to consider phenomena like sexual exploitation as youth temporary strategies; many participants in my study affirmed this view, describing their shifts away from sexual exploitation (or their future plans to leave it behind). Dalla (2014, p. 352) writes about sex workers who participated in her research that “none reported prostitution as a long-term career goal.” Acknowledgment of these under-researched facets supports a more nuanced approach to these phenomena. Additionally, this acknowledgment enables us to better understand how young people themselves plan to navigate their transition to moving on from sexual exploitation or gang violence and to explore alternative ways of ‘doing masculinity or femininity’. Exploring the connection between the stigmatized identity of sex workers and the equally stigmatized identity of IDPs makes it possible to see that in Mandela, these interconnections were not seen as “reinforce[ing] the stereotyping of sex workers” (Campbell & Gibbs, 2009), as may be the case in other contexts. However, the rural stigmatized identity did seem to exacerbate the stigmatized

IDP identity.

This thesis has identified many commonalities between sexual exploitation of adolescents and gang affiliation that have rarely been discussed. Both might function as rites of passage and as sub-cultures; in addition, adolescents' engagement in both activities is often related to their family of origin and motivated by their desire to gain 'power over'. Therefore, scholarship on adolescent sexual exploitation may provide new insights for understanding adolescent gang affiliation, and vice versa.

This work also showed that the life story approach is another way to reinforce interdisciplinarity and address the lacunas that result from non-holistic approaches to sexual exploitation (Dalla, 2000). Every individual's life involves interwoven internal and social worlds. While psychology helps us understand internal mechanisms and power dynamics, anthropology could support understanding of social worlds. My research shows the advantages of interdisciplinarity also from a methodological perspective. For instance, by strengthening the link between arts and science using arts-based inquiry, or by connecting science and arts in data representation (Banks and Banks, 1998), we can enrich research findings.

### **9.3 Policy Applications**

The overarching goal of this work was to explore how social change for youth affected by protracted internal displacement could best be implemented and reinforced. By acknowledging that policy itself could never fully account for the full range of complexity in people's lives and needs to remain informed by academic accounts, I have sought alternatives to the dichotomous labels frequently used in protection policy and explored ways to make policy implementation more integrative. Since young people are central actors in their own protection and displacement, which both are fully integrated in a human life, youth navigations and the way they blend together various issues — such as protection, livelihoods, displacement —, still remain rather untapped sources of knowledge for policy. Referring to the recent policy developments and the current momentum in policy for female adolescents affected by protracted urban displacement (e.g. Agenda for Humanity, 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles (GP 20) Plan of Action), the findings of this research have a real potential to contribute to the change for these young women.

As integrating outside academia involves similar processes as interdisciplinary study (Newell and Klein, 1996), this research proposes several steps that could enhance policy relevance and coherence. Most of these steps involve integration, whether by applying concepts that enhance unifying approaches or creating a common language between affected persons and policy stakeholders.

If applied as analytical tools in assessments and situation analyses, the three integrative concepts discussed under key findings—multiple identities, agency/oppression interplay, and a comprehensive approach to power—can greatly benefit policy at several levels. Moreover, using the concept of positionality to explore insecurity (who is a threat to whom) would better enable policymakers to go beyond seeing women and children as inherently vulnerable (Monte, 2009; Valentin and Meinert, 2009). The increased application of the concept of liminality —due to the inherent notion of mobility that it incorporates — could also enrich assessments and analysis by minimizing the sedentary bias (Bakewell, 2008; Zetter, 2011) in forced migration, and also by helping policy to account for the constant change we all face as well as better incorporate aspirations and goals of affected populations. People working in humanitarian settings need to better anticipate and adapt to these changes (Scott, 2014).

If policy would situate all programming for adolescents in relation to their pathway to womanhood and manhood, more realistic and effective interventions could result. While the concept of mobility challenges us to consider the various interlinked trajectories that connect places, persons and things, the concept of liminality, with its three-stage nature and inherent direction, seems less abstract and more suitable for practical application in policy assessments. It is particularly appropriate for working with displaced youth, who often find themselves confronted with multiple in-between states, at least in Mandela. The concept of liminality allows us to map these in-between spaces and explore the next stages to which young people aspire, thereby incorporating mobility and anticipation of future changes into programming.

This work argues that various steps could address the divide in policy implementation between the perceptions of affected persons and other policy stakeholders regarding protection. In the process of establishing contact with young women in sexual exploitation, policy practitioners should first minimize the use of such labels such as ‘sexual exploitation’ and ‘protection problem’, as these might not be part of the usual

vocabulary of young women engaged in sexual exploitation, as was the case in Cartagena. To work towards a common language, one promising approach is to map what ‘protection’, ‘displacement’, and protection problems mean for affected persons, whenever possible, use vocabulary that is familiar to these persons. Policy implementation could better incorporate often-overlooked facets of protection, such as the possibility of young people protecting themselves (which is currently more emphasised for adults) and protecting others. This thesis shows that the concept of self-protection represents the main common ground between people affected by displacement and policy practitioners. This concept can provide a basis for policy programming that is better integrated with the lived realities of those affected by displacement. Additionally, use of metaphors and allegories could bring policy closer to affected persons’ realities, cultivating common understandings.

If policy recognizes that sexual exploitation and gang affiliation could function as rites of passage and sub-cultures, it could then examine other rites of passage to adulthood and explore what contradictions youth may face, and what aspects of their identities they celebrate, through these activities. This analysis would lead to interventions that are better connected to youth aspirations and thus have a higher probability of contributing to social change. By exploring protection as part of young people’s lives, including part of becoming a woman and a non-IDP, policymakers can reduce existing gaps in programming between various sectors and age groups. For instance, when protection is explored from a relational perspective, as one possible additional liminality that young people navigate, then the interconnections between various facets of protection become more under the focus. This holistic approach would better address the complexity and connectivity of young lives.

This research also complicates prevailing assumptions about gender by showing that adolescent boys also become engaged in sexual exploitation, and girls also participate in gangs. My discussions with youth in Mandela also demonstrated that the main preoccupations of young women and men share a surprising degree of similarity. It is important for policy to consider differences between adolescent boys and girls, yet it is equally vital to acknowledge the commonalities between genders.

The application of life stories, art-making, and solution-oriented approaches could also contribute to more holistic policy and programming. The life story approach allows

policy to reach more mobile and holistic implementation, showing better linkages in youth experiences; it also facilitates individualised solutions to reduce youth sexual exploitation (Dalla, 2000). When policy maps positive aspects of a protection situation—such as existing strengths, advantages, resilience, and solutions—it should also explore how these are linked to aspects that are often associated with negative connotations, such as displacement. As Zeldin (2011, p. 22) states, “despite the difficulties that IDPs face, there are two key areas in which life can be better for IDPs in the city than in the countryside: employment opportunities for women and educational opportunities for children.” More exploration of positive shades is needed to reach understandings that reflect the complexity of forced migration as truthfully as possible. This exploration would also allow for improved interventions and solutions that build upon affected populations’ existing resilience. Yet by emphasizing the positive—solutions, agency, and resilience—I do not mean to suggest that vulnerabilities and weaknesses should be overlooked. It is important to explore the combination of resilience and vulnerabilities when working with young persons (Boyden and Hart, 2007; Hynes, 2010).

Finally, when art-making is used with adolescents affected by displacement or other protection issues, more integrated results could be expected (Chilton and Leavy, 2014; Sarid and Huss, 2009). According to Chilton and Leavy (2014, p. 406), the “practical value” of art-making lies in its “ability to integrate and expand on existing disciplines and synergies between disciplines.” In art-making, they add, “a problem or research topic is considered comprehensively, without compartmentalizing different components of the issue based on artificial disciplinary boundaries.” Thus, using art-based inquiry in assessments makes it possible to approach issues without resorting to artificial silos of protection and livelihoods, for instance. Sarid and Huss (2009) emphasise that art-making can be therapeutic because it includes the senses and the body, as well as traumatic memories. Many of those affected by protection concerns and displacement have experienced trauma; since verbal expression often becomes more difficult after trauma, arts-based methods may facilitate these individuals’ self-expression (Johnson, 1987).

Life stories, solution-oriented coaching, and art-making also tend to reveal youth aspirations that, as I have argued, are integrative in themselves. Youth goals are not

compartmentalised; rather, they provide holistic pictures that can guide practitioners. In addition to highlighting youth aspirations, the conceptual tools I have proposed can also help to emphasise mobility—the movement that is continuously shaping young lives.

#### **9.4 Avenues for Future Research**

Despite addressing many important facets of protection of ‘women-in-the-making’ in the protracted displacement situation in Mandela, this thesis has its limitations, and certain areas of relevant knowledge remain beyond its scope. For example, I have suggested that in addition to seeing forced displacement as merely a violation of human rights, it is also important to explore whether it furnishes some ‘opportunities’ in relation to protection for those concerned and to other stakeholders. Yet this thesis does not extensively explore this possibility. In general, gaps in literature remain in this regard. Scholars have emphasised the more ‘positive’ aspects of forced migration (Grabska, 2006; Betts and Durieux, 2007; Betts *et al.*, 2014). To illustrate, Betts *et al.* (2014, pp. 13-14) speak of “empowering refugees to be a ‘benefit’ rather than a ‘burden.’” However, further research is needed to better understand the opportunities that displacement may offer for various stakeholders, including its more ‘beneficial’ impact on protection. For instance, future research should examine under what conditions (and for whom) forced migration exacerbates insecurity and vulnerability to protection risks, and when forced migration is perceived by some as having the opposite effect of increasing security and protection.

Second, the current work does not explore in depth the circumstances that enable some young people to transform ‘power over’ into more life-affirming types of power. For instance, more research is necessary to elucidate the relationships between early parenthood and involvement in sexual exploitation and gang violence. These relationships are typically described in negative terms (Ehlers 2003; Unruh *et al.* 2004; Martin *et al.*, 2010), but my findings revealed that becoming a parent can constitute a major source of ‘power with’ for youth, even motivating them to discontinue sexual exploitation or gang involvement. This work also discussed some linkages between power, agency and identity, yet further studies are needed to reveal more how these inherent linkages could be integrated at a meta-level in policy, facilitating holistic comprehensions than are possible when these three concepts are analysed independently. The power dynamics between youth who are and are not enrolled in

school are another area that should be explored further.

An additional limitation is that although this work explores the lives of the second generation of IDPs in Mandela, my focus was principally on the meanings that participants associated with the terms ‘displacement’ and ‘protection’. Other aspects of these young lives should be examined in much more depth; in addition, more knowledge is needed about their reasons for choosing certain self-protection strategies. For example, do young people in Mandela try to recreate the protection that they lack due to the absence of parental guidance, spirituality, or a sense of protection provided by authorities? What alternative ways forward might better accommodate youth needs and fill the vacuum left by the decline of traditional rites of passage? These are important questions for future researchers to consider, though they lie beyond the scope of this thesis.

Finally, this thesis proposes ways in which youth protection policy could be more connected to the lives of female adolescents affected by protracted urban displacement in Mandela. It also examines the internal coherence of protection policy as well as its links to academic research. A valuable future research project would be to follow up this study by conducting further participatory research with youth in Mandela; an organisation working in the community could apply the recommendations of this thesis and assess how these interventions impact young lives affected by protracted urban displacement.

## Epilogue

Figure 9: 'Protection' as understood by youth in Cartagena<sup>17</sup>



Co-created collage with youth from Nelson Mandela in Cartagena.

<sup>17</sup> *Si a la proteccion, no al maltrato.* (Yes to protection, no to abuse).  
*Todo persona tiene que ser protegida.* (Everyone should be protected).  
*Un paraiso en la tierra.* (A paradise on the Earth).  
*La proteccion es un paso de vida personal.* (Protection is a step in our personal life).  
*Mi familia, mi paraiso, mi proteccion.* (My family, my paradise, my protection).

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## **Appendix A - Topic Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews**

### **General Information**

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where do you live?

With whom do you live?

Do you study/work? If so, where?

Do you have children? If so, how many? How old are they?

### **Life-Stages, Rites of Passages and Identities**

How do you see yourself – as a child, an adolescent, an adult, a young person, a woman, something else?

If you see yourself as falling into several different categories, please explain and give examples.

How would you describe adolescence?

When and how do you think adolescence starts?

When and how do you think adolescence stops?

What signifies the change from one life stage to another? (related to adolescence)

What comes before and after adolescence?

When does a child become an adolescent?

When does adulthood start?

When does womanhood start?

What does being a woman/man mean to you?

### **Displacement**

Are you a displaced person?

Are any of your family members displaced?

Where were you born?

When did you move to Nelson Mandela? Why did you decide to move to Nelson Mandela?

Are you considered 'displaced' by the authorities?

Do you feel like a displaced person?

What does displacement and being displaced mean to you? Has this meaning changed?

If so, how?

How does/do you think displacement or being displaced ends?

Do you know anyone who would like to move back to where they lived before displacement?

Do you know anyone in your class/among friends who is displaced?

How many persons in your class/among your friends are displaced? How many persons are in your class?

How do you know that they are displaced?

Are displaced persons different than others? How?

Where did people who live in Nelson Mandela come from and when did they arrive?

Did everyone move to Nelson Mandela from the countryside? Did they move to escape violence? If not, what are some other places they came from and other reasons they left?

Do people continue to move to Nelson Mandela? If so, why? How many people per month?

Do people move away from Nelson Mandela? If so, why? Where do they move?

Does being a displaced person make persons more vulnerable to protection issues? If so, what issues and how are they more vulnerable?

Does being a displaced person make somebody more vulnerable to becoming a gang member or getting involved in sexual exploitation of adolescents?

Did displacement influence your adolescence/life? If so, how?

How do people who are not displaced view those who are displaced?

Is displacement related to power? If so, how?

Do people migrate for work? For other reasons? Who are they? Where do they migrate?

In relation to displacement, could you please explain the differences between people who had to physically move and those who inherited the status from their parents.

### **Decision-Making**

What decisions you can make for yourself in your own life?

Who influences your decisions? On what occasions have you been influenced? Please give some examples.

Who has power over you?

Who would you like to have less power over you?

Over whom or what do you have power?

How do your friends, boyfriends and parents influence your decisions? Please give examples. When their opinions conflict – who you listen to and how do you manage the conflict?

When do you listen to what your parents/boyfriend/friends tells you and when don't you listen?

If your parents do not agree, can you still do some things? Like what? For instance, if you like a boy, but your parents do not approve of the relationship, would you continue the relationship? Or if you want to go out in the evening, but your parents do not agree, what would you do?

Who has the most power in your family?

Do young people or the older generations have more power in the community? Explain your view.

Could you please explain the relationship between men and women in your family and in the community?

What about distribution of power between men and women in the family and in the community? Please explain.

Do gangs influence your decision-making? Do they have power over you?

## **Protection**

What does protection mean to you? How would you explain the word 'protection' to others?

Who protects you?

Do you feel safe and security? Do you feel like this everywhere and all the time? If not, where don't you feel safe or what moments?

What are your biggest problems now?

What are the main problems for young women/female adolescents in Nelson Mandela?

What are the main problems for young men/male adolescents in Nelson Mandela?

What are the main protection problems?

Who is the most vulnerable to these problems in the community?

What are you afraid of?

What do you do to be safer or to avoid the protection issues? What steps do you take or strategies you use in your daily life to be safer from gangs?

How effective are these self-protections strategies?

Are you afraid of gangs?

Do you have friends in gangs?

Do all sectors of Nelson Mandela have gangs?

What are the most dangerous places?

Who joins gangs?

What are the reasons people join gangs?

Do some people force/influence others to join gangs or start sexual exploitation in adolescence?

Do people stop being in the gangs? Why, how and when?

Is sexual violence an issue in Nelson Mandela? Explain. If so, how and why?

Do you know girls/young women in Nelson Mandela who sell sex themselves? Is it an issue in Nelson Mandela?

What are the reasons to start sexual exploitation in adolescence? When does it start?

Do young persons involved in sexual exploitation stop this activity? Why, how and when?

What are the reasons some may continue to sell sex and participate in gangs?

How do persons (e.g. those involved, their parents, friends) feel about those who are in gangs or engaging in sexual exploitation of adolescents? (e.g. shame, pride, fear)

What is the relationship between youth gangs and other armed groups? Between gangs and police?

Are there girls in gangs? What about adolescent boys being involved in sexual exploitation?

Are there any links between youth participation in gangs and sexual exploitation?

How are power and protection connected?

Are early pregnancies an issue? If so, why?

Do you know somebody who became a mother early? At what age?

What are the reasons behind becoming pregnant at young age?

Do parents and female adolescents think the same way about early pregnancies?

Do girls continue to study at school when they get pregnant?

How have things changed over the last ten years in the community?

What have authorities/organisations done to increase security and protection in the

neighbourhood? What has been successful and what has not been successful?

What should be done to improve protection and reduce youth participation in gangs and in sexual exploitation?

\*Not all questions were asked in each interview and more questions than are listed here might have been asked.. These questions served as a guide for the conversations/interviews. It was adapted during the fieldwork.

Note: the questions are not organized by the order they were asked.

## **Appendix B - Guides for Arts-Based Focus Groups and Life Story Interviews**

### **Arts-Based focus groups**

1. Please kindly take the pile of magazines and cut out the images that somehow in your view are related to protection. Please make a collage OR a painting that explains what protection is for you and how, in your daily life, you try to better protect yourself.
2. Please kindly explain your collage/painting to others in 3-5 minutes. (For example, why did you chose these images/colours and why did you arrange them like that?) (Roundtable among participants)
3. What actions and activities do you do in your daily life to be and feel safer? (Roundtable among participants)
4. How in your view could the protection of youth in your community be better supported? (Roundtable among participants)

### **Life Story Interviews**

1. If you imagine your life as a story in a book, what would be the names of the chapters in your book? Please tell me just a few words about each chapter. You can have as many chapters as you wish.
2. In each life chapter, could you please tell me about a key moment that stands out as a high point (a positive experience)? Please explain what happened and what you thought and felt. Why is this scene important for you?
3. In each life chapter, could you please tell me about your key moment that stands out as a low point (a negative experience) of this period? Please explain what happened, what you thought and felt. Why is this scene is important for you?
4. What are your goals/dreams for the future?
5. What would be the name of your book? Please explain.

## Appendix C - Informed Consent Form

**TO BE FILLED IN BY YOUNG PERSON (PART A) AND PARENT/GUARDIAN (PART B)**

**THIS FORM MUST BE FILLED IN AND GIVEN BACK TO VERONIKA TALVISTE IN ORDER THAT YOU OR YOUR CHILD CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

### PART A

I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and would like to be in (please tick one or more of the following options)

a group discussion

an individual interview

I have received, read and understood the information sheet. I understand that this research will remain confidential and that the information I provide may be cited anonymously. I understand that I am able to stop this line of questioning at any time. I give my written or verbal consent to participate in this research. I am also aware that all collages and paintings made during the group discussions may be published, but under a fake name to preserve my anonymity.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

### PART B

I have read and understood the information sheet and give permission for the child (named above) to be included.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researchers'  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D - Discovering Mandela

“This is where Nelson Mandela starts,” said Juan Carlos, stopping the car and interrupting my research assistant’s casual conversation. He had kindly agreed to introduce me his community. Maria, my assistant, was seated behind Juan Carlos, while I sat in the front. We had come to a stop on a busy street at the top of a hill. Down the hill, the Nelson Mandela neighbourhood spread out before us. What first struck me was that Mandela looked very green from above, greener than any neighbourhood I had seen so far in Cartagena.

Figure 10: Green Mandela



I wondered why Mandela was so green. Was it my vantage point? Or because the houses are low to the ground? Or because, as I had just learned, it used to be a field? I concluded that whatever the reason, I liked this green aura. It clearly stood out compared to the rest of the city. From the hill, the Mandela skyline seemed like a kind of invisible gate to the *barrio*—an impression that several other people would also point out to me later.

As we slowly meandered downhill and through the streets of Mandela, I was stuck by the state of the roads. Both the main roads at the bottom of the valley as well as the little side streets climbing uphill were clearly in worse condition than the roads in other parts of the city. This was a significant contrast even to the *barrio* that we had crossed just before, which was also not a wealthy neighbourhood.

“Why are there hardly any cars in the streets of Nelson Mandela? Is it because the

streets are so car-unfriendly?” I asked. In other neighbourhoods, the streets were packed with cars, but in Mandela there were mostly donkeys and countless dogs in the streets, along with an occasional motorcycle.

“Because of the security,” Juan Carlos replied. “Most people from other neighbourhoods refuse to enter to Nelson Mandela, and it’s the same for taxis. Although, the taxi-drivers, I think, also do not enter because they are afraid to break or spoil their cars. And because of our bad streets, even with fair weather.”

Indeed, I had heard a lot about the streets of Mandela during the few days I had spent in Cartagena. These streets are not merely a concern for local inhabitants but are also notorious for their poor condition among *cartageneros* from other *barrios*. The security and the terrible streets were the two issues that Cartagena residents raised most frequently when discussing the Mandela community with me. This road issue led to demonstrations and bus strikes while I was in Cartagena, and one local newspaper article reveals that such strikes were also happening as early as 2010 (Camacho, 2010). This article also mentions the issue of taxi drivers refusing to enter Mandela and suggests that poor road conditions, particularly when it rains, have been a problem for many years.

After a moment of silence, Juan Carlos added: “And of course, most of the inhabitants of Nelson Mandela just cannot afford a car.”

Gazing at the houses, I noted that some were made of wood, but the majority seemed to be made of concrete. Juan Carlos, seeing that I was looking at the houses, said: “During the first years after the creation of Nelson Mandela, almost all houses were made of wood, really precarious cheap shelters.”

“But people actually prefer the stone houses, I guess,” I added.

“Well, many think that wooden houses are better regarding the climate, making the otherwise very heavy heat a little bit cooler,” said Juan Carlos. “But if they can afford it, people prefer stone, because of security,” he added.

Indeed, security-driven construction was evident; one could not miss that almost all the windows and doors of the houses were covered with bars. While most houses were one-

story, single-family houses, a few larger buildings rose like castles above small towns from the Middle Ages. These monumental edifices, which seemed to be the only large constructions in the neighbourhood, were actually schools. There were four schools that Maria and I visited on this first day, meeting with the directors to see if we could carry out interviews with their students. The Catholic school stood out from the others: it clearly looked the best. It was like an oasis in a desert—a beautiful, harmonious, even clean environment, unlike the messy and chaotic *barrio* outside its gates. One school was made of red bricks. Without a doubt, it was the worst off. It seemed less organised and was not painted very well. It looked more like the rest of the neighbourhood. The other two schools were between these two extremes.

Figure 11: The roads of Mandela



Figure 12: Untitled



The main streets were lined with small shops or *tiendas*, which stood out from the houses, looking more like kiosks. I learned that these shops also constituted mini-gathering centres. Young people saw them as more secure places to meet, since there was crowd around them when it was dark. In front of the *tienda* where we bought water, a man made fresh *patacones*, smashed fried bananas that looked so tasty.

The colours inside Mandela were also striking. Once inside the *barrio*, it was not the green of nature that captured my attention, but the houses: inhabitants clearly seemed to like lighter green and blue, orange, pink, and yellow. Many houses were painted with these colours, and these same colours could be found in clothes shops or on people walking in the streets of Cartagena. I enjoyed this brightly coloured clothing, especially in contrast to the more muted colours of clothes in Europe.

What also caught my eye and otherwise affected my senses was the poor sewage system. Indeed, Diaz (2010) reported that Mandela had a new sewage and water distribution system constructed in 2010, but the community still lacked a proper drainage system to remove rainwater from the streets. A few tubes were the only obvious signs of drainage. These were placed in front of house entrances and under the small paths that linked homes with the street. There were some streets that I could only pass through while holding my breath.

On the first day, feeling hungry and wondering where to eat, we found a *panadería*, or bakery, close by. On other days, we returned to this location a few times for lunch. This *panadería* was painted green, with a covered terrace in front of it. Otherwise, it looked much like the *tiendas*, as it also had a central counter. There were various types of bread, some with sweet-looking fillings, others with cheese fillings, and even different kinds of cake. They did not look so tasty compared to the ones in bakeries in France, where I used to live as a student.

While tasting the bread few moments later, however, I changed my mind right away—it was delicious! I had at least four pastries in a row and wanted more. I also recalled thinking how cheap the prices were, not only compared to Juan Valdez, the ‘Colombian Starbucks’ where I had met Juan Carlos that morning, but also compared to all the other shops that I had previously visited. In addition to the baked goods, I also ordered water, served in small bags containing about a glass of water per bag. I had seen something similar while working in Africa.

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I clearly remember another of our early lunches in this bakery. We were the only clients who were sitting down to eat. Suddenly, it started to rain, harder and harder. While working in Africa, I had realised that in Europe, we rarely understand what power a rainstorm could have. The force of the rain in Colombia was reminiscent of the rain I had experienced in West Africa, not the light showers that are more common in Europe. At one point, the storm grew so loud that I could barely hear what Maria was saying, although she was less than a meter away from me. The terrace was not well-secured from the rain, and water soon started to gather on the terrace floor, despite that the woman working in the bakery was regularly wiping it away over the side of the terrace.

The woman's pre-adolescent daughter and older son were sitting at a table on the other side of the terrace. The woman and children looked very similar, which suggested that they were a family. I could also see another man in the kitchen, baking bread and looking at us, always with a big smile. I returned his smile and said "*Muy rico*," or "very tasty," a few times while holding up the fresh bread that I was eating, with a remarkable speed. My attention seemed to make him happy.

As the rain got stronger and stronger, the water seemed to be everywhere. That is when the woman asked us to come behind the counter and brought us two chairs. She told us that she was from another big city in Colombia and had only recently opened this bakery. When I asked her why had she come to Cartagena, she said she had moved so that her children could have a better future. Yet I could sense she was reluctant to discuss this in detail. Then I asked if the man baking was her husband, and she started to laugh and said no. By the way she reacted and responded to me, I realised that I had asked something a local would never have asked. Her body language was telling me something like, "No, not with *this* one, come on... I am not married to my worker! It is just a guy from the community, but I am the *owner*." She conveyed all of this through non-verbal communication. At the same time, the rain seemed to get only more powerful.

At one point some young people ran by the bakery, shouting something. The owner and Maria quickly went to the kitchen, asking me to join them. When I asked why, they said that *pandillas*—local gangs—were fighting with each other nearby. But the lady went right back out, and her kids had stayed outside as well; their curiosity clearly seemed stronger than any fear they had. Maria, I felt, was more scared than curious; it was still the first days of our interviewing, and we had not really comprehended the security situation in the neighbourhood. For some reason, it seemed that the owner also preferred us being hidden. When I asked how the gangs fight and whether they were using guns, the lady shook her head and said that they threw stones. The baker, mostly silent until now, said that the gangs always fought when it rained. During my fieldwork, quite few persons said that the gangs fought more during the rain, but no one knew why. The baker, after just few minutes, continued to make the cheese bread. I looked around and thought that these were not clean enough conditions to make bread. I would have preferred not to see the kitchen; I would just have had the beautiful first impression of

delicious-smelling, tasty bread. At 14:00, I told Maria that we had better go. I rolled up my trousers to start navigating the flooded streets. Maria followed me, and we crossed the street, looking for a bus to get us home.

Although there were bus stops, buses could be stopped anywhere if you signalled them. We soon caught one; Maria waved as soon as she saw a bus, and a few moments later we were inside. This bus looked like the others that I had seen in the streets of Cartagena, and apparently the price was also the same. This was my first time to ride a bus in Colombia. Until then I had only travelled in private or shared taxis. It was very old, with red curtains covering part of the front window. It reminded me of the buses and trucks that I grew fond of while in Pakistan, though I never got to travel on them. I looked around and saw people transporting many types of fruit and some birds on the bus, as well as many mothers with children. One baby was sleeping on her mother's shoulder, covered with a waterproof cap made of a black garbage bag. Another child, who was maybe three years old, was sleeping while standing and leaning on her mom, who was sitting. He wore a brightly coloured raincoat. Most people wore flip-flops, and I thought that these were indeed the best shoes for Mandela, when the rain could so suddenly inundate the streets. I found the bus seat very uncomfortable; I would learn that my back would start to hurt on these buses after about 15 minutes. But this was during the lucky days, when we had space to sit. Most of the time, we stood, packed like sardines in a can.

Figure 13: The Buses of Mandela



It felt like I was on another planet when I got out of the bus and found myself in front of the shopping centre Paseo de la Castellana, the place where I had met Juan Carlos. My first day full of discovery had started just that morning. Everything looked so modern and clean compared to Mandela. For the next three months, my life would be spent travelling and living between these two worlds: the messy and poor Mandela, and the splendid Cartagena, known to tourists around the world, and described by *Lonely Planet* (2014) as “the undisputed queen of the Caribbean coast, a fairy-tale city of romance, legends and superbly preserved beauty.”

## Appendix E - History of Nelson Mandela

I chose to base this appendix largely on the memories of Luis Fernando, the leader of one of Mandela's subdivisions and the review of some newspaper articles. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I reviewed a number of articles, about Mandela from the local newspaper, *El Universal*. Since these articles were compiled by an individual according to their own personal interests, they constitute a somewhat biased sample of news coverage. Nonetheless, these articles were still a good complementary source for me to learn more about the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Luis Fernando is a tall and rather reserved man with a serious aura. It immediately became clear that he meant what he said. My time in Mandela confirmed this first impression. He always tried to keep his promises to me concerning arrangements. I met him many times over the period of my fieldwork. In addition to helping mobilise many participants for the research, he also agreed to do an interview with me. Thanks to his position and knowledge of the neighbourhood, Luis Fernando became one of my main informants.

When we discussed the 'roots of the neighbourhood', he explained that most of Mandela's first residents had escaped from Uraba and the southern part of the Bolívar department. He continued to describe how these sectors were created gradually, one after another. For instance, Andres Pastrana was the second sector that arose. The sectors that emerged in 1994 and 1995 were mainly created by displaced persons from the Uraba region. Then, displacements in 1996-1997 led more sectors to be founded. This time, many people came from Uraba, but also from Montes de Maria. Simultaneously, however, people from other Cartagena neighbourhoods came to settle in Mandela, attracted by the available land to construct their own houses. Internal expansion of Mandela seemed to begin around 1999. At this time, there seemed to be a continuous flow of new arrivals, many of whom came and stayed with family members who had already settled in Mandela. This led to overcrowding; thus, in 1999, Villa Hermosa was created by people from different existing sectors of Mandela.

As of 1999, the massive displacement stopped; since then, mostly people from Bolívar have arrived. These new inhabitants usually have relatives settled in Mandela. However, during the fieldwork for this research, the influx was very small. According to Luis

Fernando, in late 2012 and the first half of 2013, only about 10 new families, mainly from Bolívar, moved to his rather large sector. This shows that there is very little current rural-to-urban displacement in this area.

In the last few years, urban displacement within Cartagena has increased. For instance, the Campo Bello sector in Mandela was created by people displaced from the San Francisco neighbourhood. Although San Francisco has a reputation for violence, the majority of inhabitants left this neighbourhood because of landslides.

The newspaper articles dated from 2001 to 2010 (with the majority focusing on the period 2004 to 2007). The main topics covered in these articles are the killings and death threats that happened in Mandela during these years. For instance, in 2007, over 12 (some other articles mention 22) leaders of Mandela reportedly received death threats. Some were killed after they spoke about the threats that the IDPs received from paramilitary groups or denounced the extortions carried out by criminal groups (Asesinado Lider social en Nelson Mandela, 2007; Banda de alias “El Pollo” mato a lider social en Nelson Mandela, 2007). One of these articles describes Mandela as “a sector born as a consequence of national tragedy: occupied by victims of violence and displacement, grown informally” (Asesinado Lider social en Nelson Mandela, 2007, p. 4). Quite a few articles report on the capturing of members from criminal bands. For instance, one article reports on the disbanding of a group of hired killers who also carried out extortions in Mandela and issued pamphlets threatening criminals and those selling sex. Those involved in sexual exploitation or sex work together with social leaders seemed to be among the most vulnerable to such killings. This is discussed in more detail in another *El Universal* article (Ratifican condena a sicarios de Mandela, 2007), which lists the names of sex workers who were killed.

These articles also indicated that ordinary people could also be victims of killings, sexual violence, extortion (particularly transport providers and shopkeepers), and looting. In 2007, authorities in Cartagena admitted for the first time that there were paramilitary groups in the city; violence by these groups led some people to leave Mandela, becoming the community’s first cases of intra-urban displacement (Cronica de una tragedia anunciada, 2007). During this time, urban criminal groups were drawn to informal gathering places, like areas where sexual exploitation or sex work occurred and marginalised neighbourhoods. The latter were of interest for money-laundering and

for hiding (ibid.). This article mentions that that as long as there is need for security, there are those who want to offer it. Displaced people are accustomed to violence in their areas of origin; therefore, demobilisation often leads to a situation where new groups are emerging and fighting for power. Often, local social leaders are seen as obstacles for criminal groups that seek to dominate an area (ibid.).

From 2009 onwards, the news about Mandela appears to have become less centred on killings, captured bands, and related forms of insecurity. My research participants also reflected on the shift from violence committed by paramilitary and criminal gangs to violence committed by youth gangs. According to several participants, these youth gangs have multiplied in recent years.

Juan Carlos (33 years old) explains the change in the security situation this way:

Yes, there is an increase in the number of gangs. And I think since there is an increase of gangs, there is a more invisible presence of actors operating on the margins of law. This is to say, today things happen and one does not know who the actor is. Whereas before one would say: These are Autodefensas...

Based on the excerpts on Mandela from newspapers that I received, since 2009, social issues seemed to have become more prominent in the local newspapers. For instance, as briefly mentioned in the last section, Diaz (2010) announces the installation of new sewage and water systems in Mandela, partially paid by for by the Spanish government. There was also an article reporting that Plácido Domingo sang in Mandela (Guerra, 2009).

Although Mandela was established by displaced people from various locations, today there appears to be little geographic separation between families from different places of origin. Everyone I asked said that people are generally very mixed in Mandela these days, since everyone claimed land wherever they could. Participants did not perceive that there were still pockets or 'islands' of people from the same place of origin living together.

To sum up, the history of Mandela is actually a story of migration. The neighbourhood was settled by desperate IDPs as well as others looking for better opportunities. In this rural landscape, Mandela's first residents created an informal settlement which was later officially incorporated into Cartagena as a neighbourhood—a phenomenon known as

conurbation, which is discussed by Albuja and Ceballos (2010) in the case of Bogotá. There was no urban planning; rather, the neighbourhood evolved through unstructured, organic creation. Shaped by interwoven layers of displacement, this neighbourhood has remained haunted by many forms of insecurity throughout the years.

## Appendix F - Mandela, a Community Embedded into Contrasts and Insecurity

Cartagena is full of contrasts; the city is home to luxurious tourist neighbourhoods as well as low-income *barrios* like the one explored in this work. In its own way, Mandela, too, reflects many of the contrasts that characterize Colombia as a whole. In order to convey how these contrasts are interwoven with signs of existing violence, set the scene of life in Mandela, and describe the variety of persons whom I met, I present a few vignettes based on scenes that I experienced in the neighbourhood's streets.

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I met Oscar in a large shopping centre outside of Mandela in order to ride out to his community together. When we reached his car, I was surprised to discover a jeep with a driver waiting for us. Yes, I knew that Oscar was a community leader, but I definitely did not expect to find a jeep—a type of car that I had not yet seen in Mandela. And with a driver! This just did not seem to match with my emerging picture of this economically marginalised neighbourhood.

As we travelled, Oscar explained me that this car, the quiet driver, and another not-so-talkative person in the car were protective measures due to death threats he had received. The men were his bodyguards, whom I later saw hanging out near his house on numerous occasions. For several days afterwards, I was bothered by the death threats against Oscar and asked myself whether I should have any contact with him at all, for the sake of both of our security. I decided to continue meeting with him, but due to issues of perception and security, I rejected all future offers to ride in his vehicle.

I remember another day with Oscar. Maria and I were standing in front of his office. From the corner of my eye, I saw Oscar's jeep pull away from the office, then suddenly stop a few meters away. Everyone on the street was now staring at the car. I sensed that something had happened, but I did not understand what until the driver, one of Oscar's bodyguards, got out of the car. And then I saw it: a tiny black dog, lying on the road motionless, surrounded by a puddle of blood. Just moments before, I had seen this little creature happily wandering the street, like the countless other dogs in the streets of Mandela. Now, it had been killed by the man who was there to protect Oscar. An outsider to the community, the bodyguard might not have known how to drive there, or

maybe he just did not care. A few minutes later I saw Oscar's son, a boy in his late teens, approach with a box that his mother had given him and put the dead puppy inside.

The boy brought the dead puppy to the person it belonged to, who lived across from Oscar's house. The neighbour, a young woman, cried as she took the box. Everyone else watched the scene with no signs of emotion, perhaps because such situations happened there every day, or because they were more accustomed to seeing more death than I was. Moved by emotion, I felt very close to the dog owner, and light-years away from all the others.

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One day, Maria and I were invited to Juan Carlos' home after spending all morning in another sector of Mandela. When we arrived, I was surprised by the clear difference between the sector we had just visited and the one where Juan Carlos lived. The houses here were much larger and nicer, and the roads looked normal for a city. It hardly looked like a poor neighbourhood at all. Actually, his house was better than what I had expected to ever see in Mandela. It was charming, with its orange allure. The outside walls were painted orange, and the internal decoration matched. Together, we watched some videos about Mandela and discussed the violence caused by gangs. Juan Carlos and his wife answered my questions in much more depth than other Mandela residents had. Having spent time working in humanitarian field, their answers were also more analytical, and I sensed that they had done considerably more thinking about the issues I was researching. It was clear they had been exposed to discussions about social, security, and development-related issues in their community. They spoke what I later referred to as 'NGO language'. Although they lived in Mandela, they somehow did not seem to belong to the community, so different was their way of speaking. This was the only well-off area in Mandela that I was able to see during my three-month stay.

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On a day when the bus drivers were on strike and it was a 'no-motos day' that happened twice per month at the authorities' request, Maria and I had difficulty accessing the neighbourhood in the morning. We finally found a taxi that brought us to the entrance of Mandela.

I was astonished when I entered Mandela, as it felt and looked like so different from what I was used to. The streets were empty and quiet, and there were very few people moving in the streets. The pace of the neighbourhood was different. It was much slower. Once in a while I saw a rare motorcycle passing by; I assumed some people could not do without these or did not care to have a punishment from whom authorities if the authorities punished them. In this somehow frozen atmosphere in the absence of buses and motorcycles, horses and donkeys became so much more visible.

I saw mothers carrying babies and siblings taking care of them. Many people seemed to be watching TV or cleaning their homes and the street in front of their houses. I concluded that Monday seemed to be a washing day in Mandela, as I usually saw a lot of washing machines set up and working in front of the houses.

Figure 14: Washing Day



Apparently, the no-motos Fridays were house cleaning days. This was also the day when men got their hair done, as I noticed quite few hairdressers working in front of the houses.

To kill time while waiting for my interviewee to arrive, I scanned the environment. My eyes wandered over the houses that were almost all fenced in on this street, protecting the small terraces behind them. I then noticed many dogs and cats that seemed to also be killing time, all sleeping in the middle of the streets by themselves. It looked like they had no masters to follow. In front of many houses, there was construction material lying around, and quite a few men were fixing up their houses. I had learned from Maria that it was because of the forthcoming All Saint's Day and Independence of Cartagena festivities, as was the custom to get your house all pretty beforehand. Some houses had flowers and plants in pots on their terraces, yet no flowerbeds. Pieces of some broken flowerpots and ceramic tiles had been resourcefully smashed into powder for the purpose of covering some holes in the street. Most people were clearly hidden in the houses, although local music was playing in the background in many streets.

The person never showed up for the interview, and two others who were scheduled for the day also cancelled. I decided never to go to Mandela during a strike or on Fridays when there were no motorcycles. I had learned the hard way that these are the days when the *barrio* rests and does not want to be bothered, like a bear in a deep winter sleep.

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It was time for lunch. We had discovered a local restaurant in the home of a rather poor family. It was painted violet, and in front of it was a small outdoor kitchen and four white plastic tables with blue and green chairs. The food they offered was typical of home-cooked meals in Mandela. It was rather crowded, and at first we had to share a table with two men, but we eventually got a table to ourselves. When Maria got a call that our afternoon appointment had cancelled, I improvised and asked whether somebody from the family who ran the restaurant—a nice IDP family with whom I had started to get acquainted—would like to talk with me for my research. It was first time that I spontaneously approached someone in the street like that. The family's grandmother volunteered, came to our table right away, and wanted to talk there. At first, I was not sure; I felt too exposed, sitting in public while strangers ate at the tables beside us. But she seemed very comfortable and keen to talk, so we continued. Although I was not recording and consciously avoiding touchy topics, I still sensed that we were gradually drawing more and more attention. When Maria whispered to me that

one man in particular from a table was trying to catch every word, I politely finished my conversation, and we left the restaurant. I realised that despite the rather relaxed atmosphere we had both grown accustomed to on our days in Mandela, deep down we were always alert, like frightened animals in an unknown territory.

Just before taking the bus, we started talking with two policemen who had stopped their motorcycle to buy something from a little shop nearby. Maria had just asked the shopkeeper to clarify the exact location of a place where we needed to go when the policemen jumped into the conversation and started explaining exactly how to get there. After doing so, they started to ask who we were and what we were doing in Mandela. Maria, used to introducing my research project, explained our purpose for being there, hoping to be dismissed and be able to catch the next approaching bus. But the policemen—who did not seem to be from the community—were clearly not happy about us wandering around Mandela doing research. They insisted that it was very dangerous and that we could easily be robbed in the streets. They proposed to accompany us if we would like. I kindly turned them down, horrified by the idea. I was already concerned about how their proximity was affecting our perception in the eyes of community members, who would mistrust us even more if we had a police escort! The police are not neutral actors in Mandela, and I had learned that residents are very opinionated about them. The policemen, however, did not want to let us go so easily; they insisted that they would like to have my passport and report me to their central office in order to assure my safety. I could not turn that down, so I handed my passport to them. Maria, perplexed, asked why they did not ask for her information as well, but the police said, no, only the foreigners. Maria, getting increasingly angry that her security did not seem to matter to the police, tried to criticise them, but they did not seem to care. We soon took the bus; Maria was still boiling from anger at the police's bold and barefaced indifference to their own citizens' security, and I remained speechless after this encounter.

## Appendix G - Youth Goals and Allegories as Unifiers in Protection Policy Implementation

### 1) Building on youth goals to achieve greater policy coherence

In order to thoroughly consider the embeddedness of protection in a life and for better policy coherence (Picciotto, 2005; Carbone, 2013), the representatives of various policy sectors could, together, explore how a young person can achieve his or her life goals.

In the case of Valentina, protection, psychosocial and livelihood specialists could work with her on her 'life project,' based on her real circumstances, aspirations and strengths. For instance, the practitioners could, together with Valentina, set goals. Based on what Valentina expressed during the interview, these goals might be:

- **to get out of the relationship with a man she relies on for money; then to identify what steps need to be taken to get her to Venezuela.**

A Psychosocial expert could perhaps help her, through referrals or otherwise, in order to improve her relationship with her mother and the father of her children. By falling in love with the latter, it seems that Valentina allowed the father of her children to have emotional power over her. Despite his maltreatment of her and her escape from him, she wants to be with him again. He was very strongly connected to her aspirations. Some may see these behaviours as love addiction, discussed by Yoder (1990) and Sussman (2010), or co-dependency (Cowan *et al.*, 1995). Psychological assistance, through therapy, could help her look into ways of addressing these issues (Sussman, 2010). As to the relationship with her mother, research participants often mentioned improving parents-youth relationships as a possible solution for increasing youth protection and well-being in the in Mandela community.

A Child protection specialist could look into her documentation issues to see if she and her children have the necessary travel documents. Moreover, the protection specialist could, building on existing self-protection, also support Valentina in connecting with other mothers in similar situations, or those who have moved to Venezuela, to further strengthen the 'power with' in Valentina's life.

A Livelihood specialist could help Valentina carry out skills assessment, teach her about saving money, and construct her ‘professional project’ – part of her life project that focuses on how she can generate revenue, in Venezuela. Such an integrated approach might be more helpful than providing her with a job in Cartagena – often protection policy focuses on ending sexual exploitation of adolescents (UNHCR 2014), yet not a person’s (in this case, Valentina’s) greatest desire.

## **2) Applying allegories in protection policy implementation**

In order to map the goals and aspirations of youth along with the power transformations in their lives, and to comprehensively understand their embedded protection situation, an allegory of being on the road and driving towards reaching one’s aspirations could be applied by policy.

As discussed, such metaphors as ‘protection onion’ (Berry and Reddy, 2010), ‘problem tree’ (Weiss *et al.*, 2000) and ‘protection egg’ (ICRC, 2009; UNHCR, 2013a) vulgarise more complex or abstract concepts and have become successful policy implementation tools. They unify practitioners and policy subjects, making communication and understanding easier. Oberholzer (2006, p.6) states that: “It (allegory) presents itself as entertaining and, as a result, is engaging to an audience or reader.”

Psychology has used allegory with adolescents. For instance, Abedi *et al.* (2016, p. 281) explore the use of allegory in cognitive therapy with children, and state that allegory “helps therapists represent seemingly complex issues through simple, objective recreation. Allegory allows us to externalize abstract ideas and translate them into tangible concepts.”

Together with youth, policy practitioners could then explore their desired destination and the obstacles youth have encountered on the road, to translate the rather abstract term of ‘protection’ into more tangible activities (Abedi *et al.*, 2016) that are reviewed as embedded in a young life. Important questions to discuss in the policy assessments could also include:

- What is the source of fuel that drives them, gives them power to move on daily?
- What do they use as a roadmap?
- Did they have any accidents?

- How did they recover from these to continue to travel?
- Is somebody forcing them to take other roads? Who and in what way?

It is effective to see oppression and protection as conditions that encompass the journey, much like weather and road conditions in the allegory. These can create turbulence or leave one stuck in a traffic jam. Such a way of questioning makes it possible to see protection as part of entire human life, but at the same time as much more concrete, simple and connecting.

In this research, the allegory of approaching a life as a book with various chapters was used effectively. Hence, using various allegories or metaphors in communication between affected persons and humanitarian practitioners could make finding a common language easier.

## **Appendix H - Some Questions for Protection Analysis in Protracted Displacement Situations**

Building on the argument of this dissertation: the majority of the questions asked as part of this research (see previous appendices) could be incorporated into protection assessments. As demonstrated, these questions allow for and encourage a more thorough understanding of young person's lives than many widespread policy concepts, which shape current protection assessments.

Additionally, the findings of this research suggest that the questions below might be helpful to keep in mind while analysing the protection situation of those involved in youth sexual exploitation or in gang violence. Discussing and analysing these in a participative manner could help to further diminish the disconnections between protection policy and its subjects who are in a protracted displacement setting. These are more 'second-level' questions that should be asked after having carried out the first protection assessment, using open-ended questions. First, the various types of power, the concept of rites of passage and subculture need to be explained to participants to have a participatory analysis. The language needs to be adapted to the age of participants and most of these questions are not for discussions with younger children, but rather with adolescents and young adults.

This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a short example of what kinds of questions might be tested in policy context where sexual exploitation of adolescents and youth gangs are issues.

- From where do you receive 'power within' and 'power with' in your life?
- Do you feel you are gaining 'power over' men or peers when having sex for money? Please explain your opinion in more detail.
- Do you feel you are gaining 'power over' peers and other community members when engaging in a gang? Please explain your opinion in more depth.
- Do you think that your participation in gang violence/sexual exploitation is a type of rite of passage on your way to womanhood/manhood? Please explain your opinion in more detail.

- What were and are rites of passages to womanhood and manhood in your locality? Please explain your opinion.
- Do you think that your participation in sexual exploitation/gang violence is part of certain sub-cultures in your locality? Please explain your opinion.
- Do you feel that you obtain certain 'power with' through belonging to the subcultures? Please explain your opinion.
- What issues/contradictions that you face could possibly be resolved by your participation in these subcultures/activities?
- Do you think that through gang involvement/sexual exploitation you celebrate certain aspects of your identity? Do you feel 'more woman' or 'more man'? Or do you feel something else?
- What steps have you taken, if any, to stop your involvement in gang/sexual exploitation?
- If you project stopping gang involvement/sexual exploitation, how you plan to proceed?
- Do you feel you recycle the same type of power in your life or do you feel the power has been transformed in your life? Please explain your opinion in more details. (An example of power transformation could be given).
- If you feel you had a powerful transformation, at what moment did it happen in your life?
- Do you feel joy and sense of pride from these experiences? Do they make you feel like you have more value?
- How has displacement affected your involvement in sexual exploitation/participation in gangs?
- Do you feel that being displaced affected your decision to become engaged in sex work/being in gangs? Please explain your opinion in more detail.
- How has displacement affected your life?
- Has displacement had some positive consequences on your life? If so, please explain?
- What steps have you taken, if any, to become a non-IDP?
- What are your plans to overcome your IDP status?

These were the questions that were generated in Mandela while doing this research.

Other links and facets of protection and displacement can emerge with open-ended questions in another locality. Then these should shape the analysis in order to diminish the possible influence of preconceptions. The questions above might be incorporated to discard/include certain possibilities. As mentioned, instead of using the term ‘sexual exploitation’, the local labels used for sexual exploitation could be used in initial assessments.