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(Re)Formation of Social Youth Identities in Selected Kenyan Youth Fiction

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Abstract

This paper examines how different writers in Kenya portray characters who navigate the question of (re)formation of social youth identities in the face of intervening contexts among them; the emerging global and contemporary cultural trends; pressure for financial success; changing sexuality trends; HIV/AIDS prevalence and single parenthood. The study focuses on Elizabeth Kabui's Was Nyakeeru my Father (2014), Florence Mbaya's Sunrise at Midnight (2014), Bill Ruto's Death Trap (2005), Carolyne Adalla's Confessions of an Aids Victims (1993), Moraa Gitaa's The Shark Attack (2014) and Kingwa Kamencu's To Grasp at a Star (2005). The main objective is to examine the fragmented social identities that emerge in selected Kenyan youth literature. The paper employs sociological and postmodern theories in its enquiry. It applies the views of a few postmodernist theorists such as Fredric Jameson and Rorty in a bid to explain how these creative writers deal with the themes and the question of youth culture and social identities that are fragmented / unstable / shifting / fluid / fractured and quite ambivalent. This study uses qualitative research strategies to gather information on the selected texts. It applies purposive sampling of primary texts that give a reflection of the youth of the 21st C but it is also guided by comprehensive reading of texts and textual analysis. The study therefore raises an argument that youth literature not only lives and mediates the daily experiences in contemporary Kenya, but it remains one of the significant windows through which some of the problems that continue to plague the young adults can be analyzed and understood.

Keywords: Social identities, identity crisis, Spatial, identification, performative, fragmentation

1. Introduction

This paper examines the social identities of youths that emerge in selected texts. It discusses the sociological aspects of identity and attempts to explain how identity is achieved through identification with groups of individuals who share a common outlook and also through recognizable performative repertoires that are expressive and embodied.

Here, I argue that identity is also about spatiality. In part, this means that identity involves identification with particular places, whether rural or urban or whether school or home. This also means that certain spaces act as sites for the performance of identity. Through the creation of spaces as special, safe, comfortable, useful or violent environments, the youth construct, confirm and change aspects of their identity. These places simultaneously offer young people resources for constructing identities through imitation of peer or through socialization with members of their families. This at times may affect their emotions hence fragmentation of their identities.

Various scholars have defined social identity differently. Herrigel (1993), defines social identity as the desire for group distinction, dignity and place within historically specific discourses (or frames of understanding) about the character, structure and boundaries of the polity and the economy.

According to Wendt (1994), social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object...[social identities are] at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine 'who I am/ we are' in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations.

These two definitions will help to distill the meaning of social identities in two ways: personal and social. I argue that identity can be linked to two senses, which may be termed 'social' and 'personal'. The former sense is what the first definition tries to explain that identity simply refers to a social category, a set of person marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense of personal identity which relates to our second definition, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable. The paper discusses the influence attached to family set up in social identity formation and the impact of alcohol and drug abuse on youth social identities.

2. The Influence attached to Family Set Up in Social Identity Formation

Family set up has a lot of impact on the creation of youth social identity as witnessed in the analysis of the selected text. Literature in essence can play an important role in human life, since it not only reflects persistent change in the

family/community/society but also leads society to a better appreciation of its multicultural and ethno-centred fabric. It functions as an important source of understanding the contemporary society and serves as a repository of social and cultural values. It makes readers explore the sense of identity and belonging in the society. Therefore family set up in youth fiction may depict how this phenomenon impacts in the formation of social identities. Most youth literatures are preoccupied with the quest for social and cultural identities and the plight of the youth in attempt to establish their identity and emotional sensitivity in an impersonal and social milieu. This chapter highlights how family set up can be a place for the creation of social identities. It derives illustrations from major protagonists in the selected texts. These are: James Kirika in *Was Nyakeeru my Father?* Abigail in *Sunrise at Midnight*, Edgar Kazungu and Hannah Mulandi in *Death Trap*, Catherine Njeri in *Confessions of an Aids Victim*, Kadzo, Kenga and Issa in *The Shark Attack*, Makena and Muthoni in *To Grasp at a Star*. The protagonists exhibit the social identities that is influenced by the family, culture and their environment in totality.

According to identity theory, social identities are constructed through interaction with significant others and are largely influenced by social structures or contexts within which people are embedded (Stryker & Serpe, 1994; Erikson, 1998).

During childhood and adolescence, the family is a particularly important context of socialization. It has also been argued that initial identity content is based on feedback youth receive from their parents, although youth will incorporate new information and contexts into their identities as they grow older (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Eccles et al., 1993; Erikson, 1968).

The texts analyzed in this study portray the youth as young people who are still wallowing in the quagmire of identity formation. The protagonists are high school students who are between the ages 15 to 17 and who depend fully on their parents for both material and financial support but contrary to parental guidance, they tend to experiment with what their peers say and do at school hence interfering with their self-image. The protagonists, Abigail in *Sunrise at Midnight*, Kirika in *Was Nyakeeru My Father*, Muthoni in *To Grasp at a Star*, Kenga, Issa and Kadzo *The Shark Attack* come from a nuclear family while Makena, Malaika and Edgar Kazungu come from a single-parent family. Thus my analysis revolves around these two types of family set-up: a family with both parents and that of single parenthood.

The story in the novella *Was Nyakeeru My Father?* Starts by grounding itself in terms of temporal and spatial conceptualization. It starts by describing the first setting, which is Kirika's home in the urban area. The main characters in the novella are hereby introduced. They are members of Kirika's nuclear family. As the story begins, Kirika's family is engrossed in a flurry of activities as they embark on their journey to grandmother's rural home at Sheeba. This is the place where Kirika and the siblings spent their August holidays 'For as long as I could remember. Mother and father would spend just a day and leave us children to spend the rest of the holiday at grandmother's' (pg.1). To Kirika's parents and the extended family, this tradition was viewed as a very important social- cultural issue that would initiate the children and ground them in their cultural roots and heritage. This important undertaking is a panacea for rootlessness in modern Kenya where children, especially those in urban centers are completely uprooted from their social and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, in the introduction, the main characters and their social interactions are introduced. It is through the family's social interactions that the main conflict emerges. Kirika, the protagonist, is thrown off his emotional balance after inadvertently eavesdropping on his parent's conversation. From their conversation, he realizes that his identity as a child within his family setting is at stake.

'I have taken care of this boy all these years as though he were my son, but he just keeps disappointing me...!' Father said, agitated... 'How many years has it been?' Father went on. 'Fifteen! And every year he promises to improve. But you have seen for yourself; there has been no change!'(2)

This becomes a turning point in Kirika's life. Although the conversation comes to Kirika through chance occurrence, it is very hard to ignore for he had, 'turned fifteen just a few months earlier' (2). That is why he is seen wondering, 'Could father be referring to me?' I wondered. I then recalled father's disappointed look when I had handed him my school report form...But then what had he meant when he said '...as though he were my son?' (2). This episode introduces us to the beginning of identity crisis that later develops to the fragmentation of the protagonist's identity.

According to Erikson (1968), identity crisis is the failure to achieve ego identity during adolescence. He argues that the stage of psychosocial development in which identity crisis may occur is called the identity cohesion vs. role confusion. During this stage adolescents are faced with physical growth, sexual maturity, and integrating ideas of themselves and about what others think of them. Adolescents therefore form their self-image and endure the task of resolving the crisis of their basic ego identity successful resolution of the crisis depends on one's progress through previous developmental stages, centering on issues such as trust, autonomy, and initiative. For Kirika, his ego has been tainted by his 'father's words. What emerges in his mind is him being viewed as 'an academic dwarf' 'imbecile' and a good-for- nothing boy who is ungrateful to his surrogate father. For him to overcome his identity crisis he has to let go of these descriptors and try and understand who he really is as a person. If he understands who he is then he will never have doubts but still he has to look for his real paternal identity. What again emerges here is that his real paternal identity can only be revealed to him by his immediate family and more so his mother.

This therefore implies that identity can be looked into two senses which may be termed as social (or group) and personal (or individual) identities. Kirika exhibits both personal and social identities and it is important to distinguish between the two. This seems intuitively appealing, since an individual is evidently not the same thing as a group, and it also resonates with a broader tendency in western thought to consider individuality and sociality as opposed forces (Brewer, 1991; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994). Yet on closer inspection, the conceptual distinction between personal and social identity becomes less clear. In what sense is personal identity 'personal' and not 'social', and in what sense is social

identity 'social' and not 'personal'? One intuitive answer is that personal and social identity refer to different classes of identity content (Vignole, 2017).

Tajfel (1978) defined social identity as

'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (p.63).

Kirika's knowledge of his membership of his family and the emotions attached to it makes him become a member of that particular family as a social group. By implication although it is not mentioned in Tajfel's definition, his personal identity might be what is left over from this: those parts of the self-concept that are derived from the individual's knowledge of other kinds of self-attributes. In this view, then, personal and social identity are different subjects of identity content (Trafimow, Tiandis, & Goto, 1991).

In trying to understanding the relationship of the protagonist with other characters in *Was Nyakeeru My Father?* my argument is that social identity is 'social' not because of its content but because it is understood to be located in social interactions and cultural discourse that happen between people, rather than within the intrapsychic processes of each separate individual (Rattansi & Phoenix 2005).

At this juncture we need to put clear what we mean by social identity, personal identity and identity crisis in the context of youth literature. Wendt (1994), defines social identity as sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object....[social identities are] at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine 'who I am/we are' in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations.

The older characters are used as catalyst who advance the problems of the identity crisis among younger generation. Characters are virtual representation of people in a work of literature. This representation mirrors how individuals conduct themselves in their daily life within a given society. Moreover through characterization a writer carefully combines fictional characters in terms of age, sex, salient character traits and then assigns them distinct roles in a work of literature.

According to Ilieva and Olembo (2010) characterization is the way characters are presented and developed in a story to help bring out themes and imitate reality. It is therefore important to note that, without one or more characters there can be no story because it is the character's desire, feelings and actions that cause the story to develop.

Commenting on the role of characterization in fiction, Roberts E.V and Jacobs, H.E hold that, 'No story can be written without characters who are an extended verbal representation of Human beings and in every story it's possible to discern the speaker's point of view as he portrays his characters. Characters assist us to see the point of view and conversely point of view helps us to see how characters are used for special purposes' (241)

This section we can argue that characterization is part of Kabui's technique of presenting social identity and she therefore uses characters as vehicles in constructing meaning. We cannot fathom her views regarding relationship in the family without paying special attention to this vital aspect of her artistry.

We note for example that Kabui creates characters who act as her mouthpiece and as the embodiments of values, which she holds dear. She creates characters who are expected to be perceived as people by giving them names and specific cultural backgrounds and thus through their deeds and speeches and thoughts we are encountering human beings on script. Such human beings are skillfully chosen and portrayed by the novelist in order to give readers a slice of life thereby help them learn something: an in this case the problem of identity crisis experienced by Kirika.

Characters in a work of art are developed by the author of the work. The character traits of a character are drawn from three main sources. What the character says or does, what other characters tell us about the character and what the author tells us about the character.

Going by this postulation, Kirika's character traits in *Was Nyakeeru my Father?* may be summed up as insecure, sensitive, inquisitive and fearful. Yet Kabui does not give us these traits in a straight forward manner. We arrive at this characterization of Kirika, after a thorough scrutiny of grandmother and other characters accounts of Kirika, as well as what Kirika himself says and does in the novel, and Kabui's characterization of Kirika.

A novel normally contains two or three dynamic characters and a few characters that may strike us as somewhat static. A dynamic character is one who undergoes some kind of change in the course of the story while a static character remains more or less the same. In this section our interest in one dynamic character- Kirika, and several static characters who help in the creation of Kirika's identity.

It is through this character composition that a writer is able to express his subject matter in a literary text. E.M Forster states that:

The novelist, unlike many of his colleagues, makes up a number of word- masses roughly describing himself, gives them names and sex, assigns them plausible gestures and causes them to speak by the use of inverted commas, and perhaps to behave consistently. These word masses are his characters. They do not come thus coldly to his mind, they may be created in delirious excitement, still, their nature is conditioned by what he gausses about other people, and about himself, and is further modified by other aspects of his work (31).

Kabui is informed by the society in which she comes from and to pass her message she settles on closely knit members of a nuclear family which comprises of Kirika (the protagonist), Peterson Ngece (Kirika's father), Wario (Kirika's mother) and Vic and Penny (Kirika's siblings). This family unit is also a composite of the extended family that lives in the rural area and their lives are interwoven in such a way that they evoke obvious similarities and dissimilarities in a wide range of aspects. That they are members of the same family means that they are blood relatives with their relationship transcending social and filial bonds. Their lives are also inextricably interwoven since they occupy the same social and

physical space. The filial inevitability is manifested where their lives are interlinked to such an extent that what one member does or utters has consequential effects on the other members of the family. This is exemplified by James Kirika's private dialogue where we encounter the protagonist's mother telling her husband, 'Bear in mind that whatever you do will affect all of us' (3). The words of Kirika's mother in the ensuing dialogue echoes the indispensability of all the family members since they rightly belong to that particular filial unit. Whatever affects one member has a reverberating effect on the whole family. For instance what Peter Ngece says to his wife about paternal care affects Kirika and her mother psychologically. On the other hand, through grandmother's hallucination, Kirika is able to learn that his biological father is not Peter hence leading him begin searching for the same.

Kabui's choice of characters confines the action of the novella within the boundaries of a nuclear family although it finally spreads its tentacles to include some members of the extended family such as the grandmother, Aunt Shiku, Uncle Ken as well as Bernard and his son Zach who are servants at grandmother's place. Kirika's grandmother's love towards him points to the revelation of his paternal identity. Her special fondness for Kirika is however understandable since it owes its existence to the filial bond that binds them. For one, it is worth noting that Kirika is the grandmother's husband namesake, having been named after him (James Kirika). To his grandmother the young boy is the reincarnation of her husband. That is why the grandmother in her hallucinations-since she was suffering from '...a mild form of Alzheimer's disease ...' (64), is seen confusing the young man with her late husband whom she deludes to have come back to life. It is through his relationship with his grandmother that Kirika encounter's a substantial clue on his identity from his grandmother through her delirious apostrophe for in the presence of Kirika, the grandmother thinks that she is conversing with her late husband. In this 'conversation', she tells her 'husband' about Wario (Kirika's mother) and her situation that the protagonist thinks relates to her mother's past. For Wario had promised to:

...come but has not come yet...That daughter of ours – God has been kind to her...Her boy has grown big...he is almost a man now. I gave him the cow... That Nyakeeru who refused to take responsibility, he would be ashamed of himself if he saw the boy. But he will see him one day for he is still here, in charge of the tea. Did he think we would not survive? Did he think that we would crawl on our knees?' (P.50-51).

This earth-shattering clue invigorates Kirika's search for his paternal roots vis-à-vis his paternal identity. In this context, grandmother's apostrophe acts as an inadvertent symbol of revelation. It is through it that the shadowy image of Nyakeeru is revealed. It also introduces us to a new complication in the process of search for paternal identity. Nyakeeru, whose nickname symbolizes very brown or white complexioned man, is the new puzzle that Kirika must solve to unearth his identity.

One can easily note that Kirika is suffering from an 'identity crisis'. As mentioned before, 'Identity crisis' is Eriksonian term which has also made its way into the dictionary. In the dictionary it has been defined as 'the condition of being uncertain of one's feelings about oneself, especially with regard to character, goals, and origins, occurring especially in adolescence as a result of growing up under disruptive, fast-changing conditions' (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1979).

This statement implicitly defines 'identity' as one's feelings about one's self, character, goals, and origins. While it is much closer to our initial definition of identity in this thesis, this definition is also closer to 'self-image.' As we use it in this context, 'my identity' is not the same thing as my feelings, about myself, character, goals, and origins, but rather something about my definition of myself, character and so on.

The brief look at the dictionaries definition and Erikson's definition suggests that our current notion of 'identity' and more importantly 'personal identity', is historically fairly recent. James D. Fearon (1999), defines personal identity as a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person takes a special pride in or the person may not take special pride in, but which so orient her behavior that she would be at a loss about how to act and what to do without them; or the person feels she could not change even if she wanted to.

Fearon's definition is important here in understanding Kirika's identity. I argue here that for the usage of ordinary language, personal identity can typically be glossed as the aspects or attributes of a person that form the basis for his or her dignity or self-respect. Used in this sense, 'Identity' is viewed as one that has become a partial and indirect substitute for 'dignity', 'honour', and 'pride' This is exactly what James Kirika is trying to restore: his personal identity which is at the verge of annihilation. This has been triggered by his poor performance in school and his father's anger towards this.

Looking closely at the relationship in this nuclear family, the way they talk and how they relate to one another affects the protagonist's identity. James Kirika is only fifteen years old and much of the actions in the novel revolves around his predicaments. His mind is in a bedlam after he advertently eavesdrops on his parents' conversation. He is thrown into identity turmoil due to his sensitive nature. In the conversation, it is evident that Kirika's father is irked by the ungratefulness of the young man he has been supporting for fifteen years. This comes as a timely bombshell that lands without expectation and Kirika is thrown into a wave of confusion. The above utterances lead to the beginning of Kirika questioning his own biological identity.

Dennis h. Wrongs (2011) notes that:

Identity can be realized through the discovery of one's own self and not by the imposition of social expectations on the individual by the society. In general when an individual finds himself in a fortunate position to satisfy his needs and is able to play consistent roles in society, his identity is thought to have been established. Identity crisis results from negation of these factors (23).

The above statements are applicable in understanding Kirika's concerns about his identity. He feels that he may not be able to perform any societal role unless he discovers his real paternal identity. He begins to experience fragmentation of thought, alienation, identity crisis and search for authentic selfhood.

For him to find his authentic selfhood he needs first to ask himself the question 'who am I?' To answer this question from a reader's perspective one can use a second way of explaining what personal identity is. After reading the text and if asked who is 'James Kirika?' i.e. entirely in different circumstances in which he is portrayed. For instance depending on the context, one may answer that he is 'a student', 'an adolescent boy' 'son of Peter Ngece'. By this simple explanation it's clear that someone might have multiple identities. And what if Kirika himself was asked, 'Who are you?' Probably he would then answer that, 'I am a student'. Here we can as well argue that an identity is a predicate that applies to a person, that is, a quality or property of a person. But this isn't enough, since it allows things that clearly would not qualify as 'legitimate' identities, even taking a broad sense of the word. For example consider Kirika as a brown boy with ten fingers, or a boy who visited his grandmother during August holiday. So an identity must be a particular sort of predicate attachable to a person.

But what sort of predicate? It is worth noting that identity of a thing (not just a person) consists of those properties or qualities in virtue of which it is that thing. That is, if you changed these properties or qualities, it would cease to be that thing and be something different. For instance what would have to be different about James Kirika for him to no longer be who he is? What are the properties or qualities in virtue of which he is James Kirika? Fearon (1999) therefore reminds us that personal identity are those predicates of a person such that if they are changed, it is no longer the same person, the properties that are essential to him or her being that person rather than being merely contingent.

Kirika is no longer a child and his mental capacity has equally grown to note the changes in his life. He is now able to question his mother about his real biological father. This psychic growth again leads him in trying to define his true identity. Vignoles (2017) argues that much of the classical theories on social identity involves intrapsychic processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987), and much research and theory attest to the importance of interpersonal as well as cultural processes in the genesis of people's personal self-conceptions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Swann & Bosson, 2008). Thus, intrapsychic processes, social interaction, and wider sociocultural processes are all involved in identity construction and maintenance, and these factors matter a lot about Kirika's identity formation. From what he has always known about himself and in contrast to what he has heard from his father leads him to discover that he could be having multiple identities.

It is worth noting that the integration of identity is more than the identity performance of childhood. Identity is the increasing conviction about the evidence of the individual's self-identity corresponding with the identity and continuity he suggests (Erikson, 1968). Thus the formation of identity can be considered as a long interiorizing process (Buda 1986; Kelemen 1981; Merri 1989). Through the interiorizing process, the personality is exposed to different conflicts and imbalance that should be interpreted and processed by the individual so that he/she can develop. Kirika's sensitive nature is excusable as a result of his age. He is now fifteen years old and in the threshold of adolescence. As an adolescent who is overly sensitive, Kirika is easily affected by the actions and utterances of the other characters and this is normal for a young person of that age. Shaughnessy *et al* (1995) observes that:

Adolescents have a tendency to withdraw, particularly after they have been chastised or criticized by adult figures. Some are simply characterized as 'shy' and withdrawn. Many of these adolescents tend to repress their feelings and do not have the verbal skills to verbalize their feelings and emotional concerns (48)

The mental anguish unleashed by the protagonist parent's dialogue throws Kirika off balance. Out of that he becomes paranoid, forlorn and then withdrawn. Kirika's emotional distress is also observed when he responds to his sister's request.

Instinctively, I turned to attack her but stopped midway when I remembered the disturbing facts. This girl, ready to burst into infectious laughter was not my sister... I did not have the will power to argue. I did not want to talk. I just wanted to sit there and think over the predicament I had suddenly found myself in (6).

Kirika's withdrawal as described above is a symptom of fragmented identity. His mind is in turmoil and he suffers from emotional volatility which is common among the contemporary youths in Kenya. He develops a personal unique sense of 'I' and emotionally distances himself from the immediate family. While his father's words echoes through his mind, the journey to their grandmother's place proves to be eternity. To this he states that:

The journey to grandmother's seemed the longest journey I had ever made. It seemed to take hours and no matter how much I tried to sleep. I could not. Could it be truth?... I had heard my parents' conversation correctly and I was certain they had been talking about me (7).

It is this kind of reverting tendencies and suspicious nature that erects a psychological and a social wall between Kirika and the rest of his family, irrespective of whether they have wronged him or not. It is from this perception that he closely analyses members of his family starting with their physical appearance to their character. For instance he observes that he is fairer complexioned compared to his father (Peterson) although he acknowledges the fact that he cannot wholly put his father's skin colour into distinct perspective owing to his bearded face. 'I looked at father as he drove. Did we resemble each other?... I was of a fairer complexion than he was ...it was difficult to tell father's features distinctly. For Vic, he feels that he was the darkest in the family while Penny was of a very light complexion and her head was a perfect oval (7). This comparison of himself with other members of his family is a reflection of a soul enmeshed in eddy waters of emotional turbulence as a result of his fragmented identity. He is not able to identify himself physically with any member of his family.

The words of his father keep resounding in his mind therefore leading him to question the identity of his real biological father. This throws him to an identity crisis leading us to question how parenting can affect the growth of an adolescent. Kirika's father is an accountant working for a private company in the town the family lives. He does not act as a role model to the boy but keeps castigating him for his poor performances at school. Kirika is not particularly fond of his father who he describes as strict and indifferent. To cope with him he ascribes his character to the nature of his work as an accountant of a private company. He describes his demeanor and especially his face as befitting, '... his work as an accountant for the private company that kept him at work every day except Sunday. Much of our interaction on weekends was related to school work' (8). Could Kirika's take on his father have been influenced by his sudden discovery that he is not his biological father? This is not likely since Kirika seems to have observed his father's behavior for a long time. Owing to the sensitive nature of the youth, nothing seems to escape their notice. He realizes that his father does not love him and as a member of the family unit he feels out of place.

In this situation we can look at Kirika's family as his in-group and their neighbour's family as the other out group. Kirika in this in-group additional issues on identity come into play so that we are able to enlist them as self-perception, self-esteem or self –presentation which emerges from the family commitment to each other. We also have collective self and individual self.

At first sight, it would seem that processes associated with the collective self are often similar to those that occur for the individual self, except that they occur at the group level instead of at an individual level (e.g., a concern with positive esteem). However, the inclusion of group-based aspects of self and identity also implies that additional issues and processes come into play, so that theoretical and empirical insights on topics such as self-perception, self-esteem, or self-presentation cannot simply be transferred from the individual level to the group level (e.g., Schmidt et al. 2010, Schopler & Insko 1992). Moreover, the interaction and competition between the personal and collective levels of self-add a further level of complexity (Spears, 2004).

Whereas the personal self is defined as a unitary and continuous awareness of who one is (Baumeister 1998), it is not clear how we should conceive of the social self, which can be as varied as the groups to which we belong. Kirika has a range of different, cross-cutting, social identities, including those derived from his nuclear family, his extended family and from his schoolmates.

The character of Kirika's father contributes a lot to the formation of the son's identity. His nature and conduct at home is punctuated by indifference, aloofness and lack of time for the family, factors that can be considered as some of the postmodern issues that afflict many families and especially the youth in Kenya. The above problem is tenaciously recurrent in many middle class families in Kenya as epitomized by Kirika's family. In many such families, parents have no time for their family leaving the responsibility of raising their children to teachers, house helps or even grandparents which may end up exacerbating identity crisis among children and the youth an issue that might lead to delinquency. This predicament is poignantly manifested by the father's behavior towards Kirika. His behavior as he inquiries about Kirika's school grades – which is their only point of convergence – is seen as strict and devoid of filial warmth. His take on school work is that, 'A zero can make a world of difference in mathematics and in life' (8). As much as we cannot forgive Kirika's father's cold approach to issues, we are forced to share in his pain as he stares helplessly at the plummeting grades of his son. This happens when Kirika brings home a C- (minus) which is a reflection of Kirika's desperation and lack of ambition. In his role, Kirika's father acts as the catalyst that sparks the major conflict in the text; the identity crisis the protagonist suffers. This is caused by his utterances for instance; the conversation he had with his wife, negative attitude and the indifference with which he treats Kirika.

Parents being concerned with their children's grade helps in shaping their behavior. Similarly in *To Grasp at a Star* Makena's father warns her against her dream of becoming a 'professional model' and emphasizes on the need to study hard. He is devastated by the dismal performance that Makena brings home. 'Don't you remember you were admitted into your school with the highest grades?... You are only sixteen...I want you to read hard, pass your exams and aim to be something and someone of means (pg.8). This is brought to us through flashbacks and flash forwards of Makena's life both at the University and at Meru Girls High School. At the University, the author introduces us to a girl who is adamant to follow her friends' passion of going for auditioning to The Nairobi Star search at the Brickside Garden club. Makena, Leila, Shiku are roommates in the same university. Makena's adamancy to join them follows her reminiscence of the nasty experience she went through while at Meru Girls high school. We are informed that, 'It was true that during her years in high school she had been crowned the school beauty after a modelling competition' (p.3). After being crowned as Miss Meru Girls she is thrown off balance by her thoughts on whether to continue with education or to follow her passion of modelling. She wins this title under the tutelage of the Form Four girls. This in essence introduces us to conflicting issues in Makena's life. The novella *To Grasp at a Star* is set in an urban centre. The novel opens with the expectations of three University girls of winning in a star search talent competition. The fourth girl, Makena is not a party to their vision but the trio believe they will get empowered financially and become rich instantly. They are primarily focusing on earning money through their talents.

The author through flashback draws our attention to the experiences of Makena way back while in Meru high school. Makena a teenage girl is crowned Miss Meru Girls High School. After this success, she is convinced by Form four girls to carry on with her passion of becoming a model. From Silvia's party Makena hooks up with a rich man by the name Conrad Mshenzi whom she believes can help her explore her dream of modelling. She expects a lot of money from this venture and do away with her studies. Towards the end of the novella, Makena becomes frustrated and disillusioned when they meet in Mombasa only to learn that Conrad engages in drugs and human trafficking. Conrad is arrested and arraigned in court while Makena is sent back home to her father. This brief synopsis highlights Makena's dwindling identity. She

wishes to brush off her identity as a student and embrace an identity of modelling. Makena has false dreams and she is a character who is untrue to herself. For instance, she goes for modelling to please her friend, become rich and lead a luxurious life. She is materialistic and embraces false values in the society given that she attends a party meant for adults only. Once again towards the end of the story, the irony is revealed in the frustration of Makena's expectation. She fails to pursue her modelling career but still manages to go back to school which she had earlier abandoned and excel.

The novelist therefore implies that while the youth strive to maintain social identity, they may land into trouble and the parent figure should step in to put the youth on track just the same way Makena's father did by sending her back to school. The novelist further mocks the immorality brought about by a few male adults in the society. Conrad Mshenzi is a representative of such people. She condemns the exploitation and oppression of young girls in the society. On the other hand she cautions young girls who abandon schooling in favour of money and material things provided by unscrupulous human traffickers, to be very careful and concentrate on their education.

The second story 'Muddled Transition' in *To Grasp at a Star* depicts Muthoni as a student who is worried after scoring poor grades in school. She shares her predicament with her closest friend Malaika:

Dad is going to blow a fuse if he sees these grades... I never believed myself capable of failing exams so badly. And think of how highly dad regards exams and school work... Just look at it – Math D+, Chemistry E, Biology D and my highest grade is in English where I have miserable C. (pg.63).

As we continue reading the text we learn that her father has always taken keen interest in her school performance. She could remember him more than once telling her, 'We aren't very rich as you know, dear. A good education is the only thing your mother and I can give you. You have to exert yourself and emerge with the best from your education' (pg.63). This in essence gives us an example of a good parent who is concerned with the future life of his daughter. Unfortunately the poor performance has been as a result of negative influence from her friend Malaika who loathes studying. Muthoni is in a state of identity confusion with two choices to make: either to continue with her friendship with Malaika and fail or to follow her parent's advice and excel.

In *Confessions of an Aids Victim*, there is a poor relationship between both parents of Catherine and also between Catherine and her father. Domestic violence is evident in the text and it affects Catherine psychologically, 'I still recall how my mother sobbed all night after my father had proudly walked out of the house' (p.12). This happens after he has beaten Catherine's mother after a quarrel.

Decisions made by parents about their children also lead to social identity formation. The matters of decision making may include issue of which ethnic group to marry from. At all cost, parents may want their daughter to get married to a man from a certain ethnicity and if possible, from an affluent family. This eventually leads to withdrawal among the youth and breaking up of family ties as the girl may choose not to heed the parent's advice.

Adalla brings out this case clearly when Catherine gets pregnant but her parents decide Brian is not a suitable partner since he is from the Luo tribe. Brian moves to Stanford University in the United States. Catherine gives birth to a baby boy named Jimmy. This leads to her being upset and depressed by the decisions of her parents.

Catherine laments, '...I have never forgiven my parents for spoiling the one good thing I had in life... all hopes of entering the marriage institution went down the drain... (p.81). This explains what triggered Catherine to lead a promiscuous life since as she notes, '...had they allowed me to go ahead and marry Brian, chances are that I would not have met such a tragedy' (p.81).

During adolescent stage girls are faced with hard times in maintaining good parental-child relationships. This is because the girls haven't been exposed to matters of sex and how they can handle their emotions. Mothers are not able to sit with their daughters and talk to them about sex hence being perceived as poor sex educators.

It should be noted, however, that the level of parental supervision and monitoring necessary to promote healthy adolescent development can differ depending on the characteristics of the adolescent's peer and neighbourhood environments. For example, setting stricter limits may in fact be desirable for adolescents who live in communities where there is a low level of adult monitoring, a high level of danger, and higher levels of problem behavior among peers, such as in some inner-city, high crime neighbourhoods (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

Being the only daughter in the family, Catherine's parents set high academic limits on their daughter and they expect her to fulfill without fail. They are also concerned about her relationship with members of the opposite sex that is why they reject a fiancé who is not of her tribe. This elicits a lot of conflict between Catherine and her parents.

During adolescence, parent-adolescent conflict tends to increase, particularly between adolescent girls and their mothers. This conflict appears to be a necessary part of gaining independence from parents while learning new ways of staying connected to them (Steinberg, 2001). Daughters, in particular, appear to strive for new ways of relating to their mothers (Debold, Weseen, & Brookins, 1999). In their search for new identities and new ways of relating, daughters such as Catherine may be awkward and seem rejecting. Therefore Carolyn Adalla seems to be informing her readers that if parents can be reassured that the awkwardness their teen is displaying is not rejection then a new way of relating may eventually evolve that is satisfying for all and which may help to stabilize the teen's social identity.

Parent-teen conflict tends to peak with younger adolescents (Lauren, Coy, & Collins, 1998). Two kinds of conflict typically occur: spontaneous conflict over day-to-day matters, such as what clothes the adolescent is allowed to purchase or wear and whether homework has been completed, and conflict over important issues, such as academic performance. Interestingly, the spontaneous conflict that occurs on a day-to-day basis seems to be more distressing to parents than to the adolescents (Steinberg, 2001).

Through flashback Catherine says, '... Most of the girls I went to school with, complained of deteriorating relationship between their parents and themselves especially during adolescent stage... (p.21). This statement insinuates

that some parents did not want their daughters to socialize with boys due to fear of them falling pregnant with them. Parents fear that if their daughters get in touch with the boys then they will be tempted to have sex. Some parents go a step further to lock their daughters up in their rooms all day. This creates some sense of fear in the girls. Such fear can be seen in Catherine's recollections.

I also remember, while in high school, the sad story of a girl who was locked in the house, along with her sisters, throughout the holidays for fear that they would get to know boys and get pregnant. They were not allowed to socialize and their brothers could only meet their peers outside the compound gates (p.22).

Through Catherine as the main protagonist, the writer demonstrates to her readers that parents can be a contributing factor to the malformation of their children's social identities. This is because parent often give greater meaning to conflict-laden interactions, construing them to be rejections of their values or as indicators of their failures as parents. Adolescents, on the other hand, may see the interaction as far less significant – just another way to show mum or Dad that they are individuals or just as a way to blow off steam. Adalla highlights issues such as lack of proper parental guidance, sex education, depression, disgrace and HIV/AIDS as contributing a lot to negative youth social identities. There is need to guide the young generation in order to help them create a positive image for themselves in the society.

We can further argue here that identity is a social category. By it being a social category it is therefore socially constructed. This claim may remain somehow mysterious by socially constructed in this context means that identity varies over time, historically, and are the products of human thinking, discourse and action.

Catherine's identity changes overtime from childhood to adulthood and we may be most interested in her identity at teenage. At teenage doesn't really understand who she is. She falls in love with her step brother Maina. These two are represented as having feelings for each other that go beyond their romantic feelings. Their relationship is built on a friendship based on mutual respect. For instance although Catherine and Maina Kiss and write each other love letters, there is a mutual respect between them and sex is not mentioned by either of them. When Catherine contracts AIDS virus later from other relationships, she recalls this earlier relationship with Maina and offers it as a prototype of relationships that young people should engage in to avoid infection. Being infected with AIDS means that Catherine acquires a new social identity in the society. She develops self-esteem towards herself and regrets for not having followed her parent's advice.

We can arguably say that Carolyn Adalla's book is one of the Kenya's youth fictions that introduces chronic illness into fiction. Kenyan youth fiction dealing with HIV/AIDS came into existence as a result of and response to the emergent socio-cultural, political and economics in the Kenyan society. Besides engaging with other texts, this literature is also in dialogue with other competing discourses on HIV/AIDS circulating in Kenya and globally, through institutions such as the church, the media, the medical community and the state. Therefore, analysis of *Confession of an Aids Victim* here contribute to the construction of social and cultural meaning through its interdependence with other forms of cultural production which is analyzed fully in chapter six. It is therefore, part of the ongoing redefinition of the Kenyan private and public spaces through literature.

As I mentioned earlier, youth literature in Kenya dealing with HIV/AIDS is influenced by specific discourses in circulation in the society. This section attempts to show how these discourses contribute to the creation of social identities in the society. The study notes that the writers of AIDS fiction intervene by rewriting those structures and discourses that marginalize people infected with HIV/AIDS and the negative meanings linked with it.

Catherine's social identity is constructed through stigmatization. Through her letter to Marylyn, we learn that the community believes that HIV/AIDS is contracted mainly through sex. This raises the question of ones morality in the society.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault discusses the complex set of relationships among knowledge, power and pleasure and shows how these relationships are negotiated and contested at different periods in different circumstances. He shows that sexuality is produced in discourse and that the concept of discourse itself embraces a diffuse network of power relations that shape human lives. A question that has concerned this thesis has been how the body is implicated in accounts of sexual pleasure and the extent to which sexual pleasure accounts for body image. This study therefore shows that pleasure among the youth, is used to control the bodies and these young people should not ignore their parents advice on sexuality. For instance, Catherine is manipulated by men because men have better economic standings.

This argument is reinforced by citing another example from *The Invisible Weevil*. In this novel Mary Karooro Okurut looks at the problems that women face in Uganda under patriarchy; a society that believes that women should not strive to excel in areas such as education and politics that are thought to be a male domain. Okurut shows that such discrimination against women contributes to their infection with HIV/AIDS because men feel they have the right to have unprotected sex with them even when men have been involved in risky sexual relations.

Okurut's views are similar to Carolyn Adalla's. Adalla equally seems to be suggesting that sexual excess for youth like Catherine can lead to infection with STDs such as AIDS hence causing the death of an individual. Getting infected with AIDS gives an individual a negative identity in the community. It symbolizes having engaged in sexual excess or in promiscuous behavior and leads to society rejecting or alienating such a body as it is seen to stand for a dangerous sexuality. Society therefore tends to silence those who are HIV positive by eliminating them from the social equation of romance.

Contrary to this, Catherine refuses to be silenced and ostracized. In order to redeem her social identity, she sees writing as the only way of finding inclusion in the society because writing gives her agency to articulate her embodied experience of being HIV positive. She presents herself as a confessant and a victim in order to articulate her concern about HIV/AIDS and other factors that she supposes increase its transmission in Kenya. To assert herself properly in the society,

she reconstructs herself as someone to be remembered and her friend Marilyn as the one to do the remembering in case she passes on. Marilyn has to make sure that she is remembered by making the letter public:

'I have good reason to think that if this letter were to be made public after you have gone through it, it would help transform the sexual behavior of a section of the Kenyan society. I know I will bear the scorn and stigma but it is the only sane thing to do' (pg.83).

The letter is supposed to advise the youth to change their social lifestyles. It is also supposed to act as an archive of her memories and experiences, which she sees as representative of the experiences of many youths in the society infected with AIDS virus. Writing enables Catherine to represent what would otherwise not be verbalized. Catherine cannot confess publicly for fear of being ostracized hence destroying her reputation and social identity. Writing therefore affords her anonymity of authorship, it gives her power/ authority to initiate and direct public discussion or debates on HIV/AIDS. Her text is not just a confession: it is also an agenda-setting document that provokes and invites the Kenyan youth to reflect on the reality of HIV/AIDS. Her personal narrative is representative of the untold tales of many HIV/AIDS sufferers. The ability to write privileges her and makes some kind of spokesperson for the majority of 'silenced' sufferers. Other than seeing Catherine's confession as a means of reasserting her self-worth, it can be read as an important archive of HIV/AIDS youth literature because it shows how society could read HIV/AIDS bodies. She protests against readings that stigmatize and alienate those suffering from HIV/AIDS because such readings give them wrong identity.

In *Sunrise at Midnight*, the novelist introduces us to a nuclear family of Reuben, his wife Erika and their two children Thomas and Abigail. Thomas and Abigail are at their youthful age. Mbaya in this text appears to inform readers that family norms have got a lot of impact on the formation of social identities. Conflict among the parents only leads to psychological problems among the children.

Reuben Mugendi and his wife Erika have constant quarrels simply because their youngest daughter dies mysteriously. The quarrels can be attributed to life pressures that give rise to domestic problems as the society demands that a woman should give birth to many children. We learn this through Erika's stream of thoughts:

She had lost her first-born son in infancy, had had two miscarriages after Abigail, and she had lost a one-day-old little girl under circumstances that she could not understand. After this, Reuben, her husband of twenty years, had left home without a word. Now, how was she going to explain to relatives and friends where she was when her sixteen-year old was having under-age-sex? (pg.30).

The words above summarize the set-up of this family and the cause of distortion of Abigail's identity as a young girl. Her father disappears when she needs him most at a time when she is in class eight, candidate for the National primary examination. The reader easily notices that before Reuben's disappearance there is a serious bond between a father and his two children. 'Normally, he would ask Abigail and Thomas about school and the homework they had been given. He valued education and wished that his children never lacked anything as far as school needs were concerned.' (pg.33). We can infer from Reuben's words that education has got a great impact on the development of youth identity. He believes that success in the future life can only be achieved through education. His reasoning is similar to Muriithi's or Makena's father in *To Grasp at a Star*. Muriithi believes that the greatest achievements in life can be obtained through education. This achievement is what James Marcia (1966, 1976, and 1980) refers to as identity achievement which occurs when an individual has gone through an exploration of different identities and made a commitment. Parents in this case act as role models in the texts analyzed above while the youth appear to be looking for a niche in life that will make them become more recognizable. Thus, the formation of identity can be considered as a long interiorizing process (Buda 1986; Kelemen 1981; Merei 1989). Looking at the case of Kirika in *Was Nyakeeru my Father?* we can argue that through the interiorizing process, the personality is exposed to different conflicts and imbalance that should be interpreted and processed by the individual so that he/she can develop. This is also in line with Kelemen's views who argues that the development of individuals go through three important phases full of contradictions: the level of personalization, the level of socialization, and the level of individualization (Kelemen, 1981). All three phases are vital in the age of adolescence and their formation of social identities when, besides the learning of gender roles and the realization of community expectations, inner control more and more prevails. The values of an individual are closely related to his/her orientation as well as the sphere of interests and the motivation system choosing role models and lifestyle in accordance with them. The process of self-identification is called the crisis of identity when through an experimental period the testing of different gender roles, behavior types, ideologies and orientations are approved by the society (Atkinson, 1995).

Concerned by the parents with academic grades of their children is meant to bring about some kind of social control among the youth. Unfortunately the likes of Kirika, Muthoni, Malaika and Abigail are defiant and a big let-down to their parents who are concerned with their social behavior. They are tagged to social friends who misguide and confuse them into bad behaviours. This lowers their self-esteem and their identities become unstable.

Therefore we can argue here that self-identity should be based on self-esteem that is formed and developed through a long learning process affected by expectations of parents, school and work place as well as age groups (Merei, 1989). The rewarding value of how to live up to the expectations influences the choice of the individual in case of conflicts, and young adult tend to comply with the expectations of the age groups (McCandless 1976).

The other form of family set-up that is depicted by youth fiction writers is single parenthood. This is a new phenomenon that has been adopted by young adult writers and it is also a theme that needs to be addressed keenly due to the impact it has on social identity. Arguably, it is a postmodern phenomenon that has been highlighted greatly by these fiction writers and therefore it draws our attention to contemporary issues that produce a new postmodern society. Neo-Marxist theorists like Jameson and Harvey interpret the postmodern in terms of development of a higher stage of

capitalism marked by a greater degree of capital penetration and homogenization across the globe. These processes are also producing increased cultural fragmentation, changes in the experience of space and time, and new modes of experience, subjectivity, and culture. These conditions provide the socio-economic and cultural basis for postmodern theory and their analysis provides the perspectives from which postmodern theory can claim to be on the cutting edge of contemporary developments.

Society understanding and defining of a family unit is confined to pairs, couples, two - spouses - man and woman. Single parenthood or one parent family therefore defies the norm of society (Adams, 1984).

This is so single parent families increasing rapidly in many industrialized countries, particularly since the 1970s. Between 1971 and 1986 in Great Britain it single parenthood increased by nearly 80% (Ermisch, 1991). Marital dissolutions have been primarily responsible for this increase and low marriage rates can magnify its effect. Single parent families can, of course, be created by births outside marriage, the death of a spouse, separation of spouses as well as divorce, rape and/ or incest. In other words, single parenthood can be by circumstance or by choice (Adams, 1984).

A reading of the selected youth fiction in this study indicates that single parenthood is caused by both separation of spouses and death of one of the partners. For instance in *Confessions of an Aids Victim*, the father to Catherine Njeri moves away and then marries another woman with two boys. In *Sunrise at Midnight*, Reuben, Abigail's father leaves home without a word and disappears for several years leaving her mother to fend for the family. The mother to Makena in *To Grasp at a Star* dies when she is still young leaving her father to take care of her and her twin brothers. In *Death Trap*, Edgar Kazungu's mother dies when Edgar is still very young hence leading his father, a senior police officer to take him to her aunt's place. James Kirika, the protagonist in *Was Nyakeeru my Father?* is born out of wedlock and her mother gets married to Peterson Ngece who gets tired of taking care of him when he turns fifteen. Val in the same text lives with her mother, a single parent, who engages in drug trafficking.

Single parenting has been identified as one of the aspects that lead to the formation of youth social identities in Kenya. It denotes changes in family set up and society at large. Meaning that the society in which one grows determines his/her identity. For instance economic hardship - poverty is the most profound and pervasive factor underlying developmental problems of the young (McLanahan & Booth, 1989).

It has been noted that, single parent lacks some degree of control over the child, therefore posing a social concern. Social control efforts are normally intended to help reduce the gap between individual interest and collective group interest for the purpose of harmonious living (Peil, M.1978; Peil, 1988). Social issues include poor social adjustment, low educational attainments, lower socio - economic achievements, vulnerability to criminal offences and emotional disorders.

For instance, in *Was Nyakeeru My Father?* Val is a daughter to a single mother and the only other person she knows is her grandmother as revealed in the text. Her father is not known as it is later revealed. Val comes out as a snob and utterly spoilt. Her snobbish behavior comes out from the way she insists on being called Val instead of Valarie (92), for she thinks this to be more trendy and fashionable and a depiction of her 'higher' socio-economic class; for she pretends to be from a rich family.

Her arrogance is further portrayed in the way she lies about her parents' occupation. Through Kirika we learn that: Val had made it known to everyone at school that her parents were wealthy - her father was a researcher in America and her mother was a stewardess with a reputable airline. She always talked loudly of exotic places she had been to over the school holidays and of gifts her mother bought her from faraway lands. To be honest, I did not think she had time for those of us who only visited our grandparents or were obvious not from wealthy backgrounds (92 - 93).

The above description portrays Val's snobbishness that orchestrates a lot of tension among her classmates for the way she openly brags about her supposedly superior pedigree. Ironically this façade is shattered when her mother is arrested and charged with drug trafficking. This is reported via the TV news cast that 'a woman had been arrested at the airport with a consignment of drugs. The woman would be taken to the law courts the following week' (95). The above episode is a turning point in Val's life. It marks the end of her bragging and chastisement. It also reveals the fragmentation of her identity which leads her to lie about her parentage. According to Freud (1949) 'Identity is not stable or rational, but an ever-conflicted tension between Id and Ego, conscious and unconscious'. When the truth is revealed Val fears being labeled a criminal due to her association with the mother. That is the reason she says 'Everyone now knows that my mother is a criminal. People probably think I am a criminal too!' (97). She continues to tell Kirika 'Wait until the day your father commits a crime, you will know what embarrassment is!' (98). The last utterance is akin to placing a hot iron on a fresh wound. It shakes Kirika to the core for he is already suffering from identity crisis. The identity crisis that Val suffers compares favorably to that of Kirika. Like Kirika, Val is not sure of her paternal identity. This is revealed through Val's conversation with Kirika when she tells the latter:

My father is not in America... I do not have a father ...I once asked mother who my father is and she said I should never think of him. I think I assumed he must have been a terrible man and I hated him without even knowing him. In his place I created a loving father who longed to be with his only child but the pressure of important work could not allow him (105).

Indeed, Val's confession put her in the same shoes with Kirika. The two on an equal footing since both are not sure of their paternal parentage hence the identity crisis they suffer. Their only point of divergence lies in the fact that Kirika has a father figure in his life, although he is not sure whether father (Peterson Ngece) is his biological parent or not whereas Val does not know her father at all. More so, Kirika struggles to find out who his biological parent is whereas Val does not. More so, Kirika resolves his identity crisis when he realizes that his father has been taking care of a young man by the

name Ngece for 'for fifteen years' (137), after the death of the latter's father. He therefore realizes that he could have been mistaken. This is unlike Val's identity crisis which remains unresolved by the time the narrative comes to an end.

Here again we can still argue that Val's 'identity' can be linked to two senses: the 'social' and 'personal' identities. In the former sense, an 'identity' refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable (Fearon, 1999). At first Val wants the students to believe that she is a daughter of a rich father who lives in America and a well-to-do mother who works as an air hostess. This is what builds her personal identity as a proud girl who is snobbish but when things turn out that she is a liar she becomes apologetic.

Thus identity in this context has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity. There is no necessary linkage between these things. In ordinary language, at least, one can use 'identity' to refer to personal characteristics or attribute that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category, and in some contexts certain categories can be described as 'identities' even though no one sees them as central to their personal identity.

Another important character who is depicted as having cross-cutting social identities derived from the family and school is Makena in *To Grasp at a Star*. Her confusion and lack of concrete vision in life can be attributed to the fact that she lacks a mother figure in her life. We are told, 'Makena's mother had died of cancer a few years back. The two had been close and Makena had always relied on her mother as her support system (9)'. Her elder twin brother are also ever absent in her life. They are university students in the city. Makena appears as a youth who is trying to develop her own identity without seeking guidance from the grown-ups. She develops a negative attitude towards education, her family and her religion.

Makena does not really understand who she really is and her quest for her identity as a model is fully influenced by her peer group. Her problems are expounded when she sneaks out of the house one night without her father's permission to attend a part organized by Sylvia's mother. Later on after being misled by Conrad Mshenzi and finding herself in the hands of the police, she realizes how important a family is for her support and growth.

Makena, after behaving foolishly, internalizes a perception of herself as useless, irresponsible and worthless. She exhibits intense feelings of inadequacy, shame, fear and guilt. She finally learns that without her father she is still not good enough. Other characters who have internalized an unshakable belief that they are not worthy after falling into trouble include: For instance Abigail in *Sunrise at Midnight* who gives birth at teenage, Catherine Njeri in *Confessions of an Aids Victim* who becomes infected with HIV/AIDS and Malaika in *To Grasp at a Star* who becomes a victim of drug abuse. Young adults need a spectrum of different social learning situations, spanning a continuum from the peer group (without adults), to the mixed age group, even with adults as equal members to adults led groups to restore their shattered confidence. Adults' attitude towards young adults greatly influences their development. Two parents family is the most appropriate environment in which to raise children. Family dysfunctions are some of the major factors related to juvenile delinquency that have been identified in the West (Regoli and Hewitt, 1994). On the other hand, single parents can also produce happy, emotionally stable children if only they become committed in raising their children uprightly.

From the texts analyzed in this chapter, we realize that majority of parents lack time or have very little time to guide and counsel their children as per the societal requirements. In view of this, the school has been overburdened with the responsibility of controlling youths (Sommers, 1978). This lack of time is more pronounced among single parents who seem to be overwhelmed by the parental responsibility that they are shouldering alone. We can infer this from the description of Nelson Kazungu: the father to Edgar Kazungu, a teenager in *Death Trap*:

Nelson Kazungu, Edgar's father, was Kenya's commissioner of police. As a newly promoted police chief, Kazungu spent a lot of time at police headquarters trying to consolidate his position...Furthermore, his wife of twenty-two years was dead, making it even less and less attractive to return home early (pg.9).

Nelson Kazungu as a single- parent lacks social control over his son. That is why he finds it fairly difficult to enter into discussion with him on matters concerning his physical development and the moral problems that beset the boy. Edgar is therefore left on his own to learn and adopt behaviour from his peer group. Malaika in *To Grasp at a Star* undergoes a similar experience as Edgar Kazungu. We are told:

Malaika lived with her father and a housemaid; her mother had died long ago in childbirth when delivering Malaika. Her father was a wealthy and famous lawyer and was always so deeply engrossed in court cases and meetings with important clients that he rarely had time to monitor his daughter's movements or spent time with her (p.60).

Such parents as described above may not be available to help their children grow with a clear distinction between what is moral and immoral. Nelson Kazungu and Malaika's father are an epitome of today's parents who are very busy, in fact too busy to spare any time for their children. They are not aware of their children's problems or the kind of people they associate with.

Parents should create time for their children because it instils a sense of confidence, security and discipline in children and make them believe that their parent is there for them. It is, however, the quality of parenthood that is important. No matter how one became a single parent he/she should understand that he/she is the primary influence in their lives of their children. He/she becomes their social arbiter, their guide in belief and behaviour, their figure of authority and their friend. Parents influence children beyond their formative years. Positive influence will shape their lives.

When aggressively hostile behaviour in a child or youth becomes a matter of concern because it is habitual and destructive or threatening, one seeks clues in feelings and experiences of the child. A variety of circumstances may be evident: rejection by a parent, giving rise to a feeling that 'nobody cares', change in the family relationships; supplying a basis for feelings of insecurity; vicious and immoral home conditions or lack of appropriate standards of behaviour. In such a set up the parent has no time for the child, who in turn may turn to be drug dependent like in the case of Malaika and Edgar or even run away from home. The opportunity to identify with a gang having questionable moral standards but considerate peer prestige is evident. Adults are supposed to be role models of adolescents in this very impressionable stage. Poor modelling, especially parental modelling and lack of clear guidelines in homes on what constitutes proper behaviour can lead to situations where students have no regard for law and will consequently engage in antisocial behaviour (LeVine, 1971; Njoroge & Bennaars, 1986; Kombo, 1998). Some of these antisocial behaviors include drug abuse and trafficking which is discussed in the next section.

3. The Impact of Alcohol and Drug Abuse on Social Identities

Besides family set up, another focus on this research is on youth social identities such as gender class, and age. While acknowledging that social identities may also structure social interaction, the primary focus is on age (of adolescence) and how such social identity is continually constructed in practice, and specifically through drug and alcohol practices. The analysis of gender has been inspired both by a post-modern perspective (Butler, 1993) and by symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 1969). Gender issues play a significant role on how teenagers use alcohol in presenting themselves as mature and sexually attractive, though it is not the main focus in this section. According to the texts studied in this section, both male and female youths use drugs in almost a similar way. Here, I set out to explain how drugs affect the social identities of the youth and the broader society at large. This follows an argument by some scholars that intoxication may also be both a way to perform a culturally understandable gender position (Demant, 2007), as well as part of an active strategy of romantic relationships (Demant, 2009), although it is important to remember that intoxication may have very different consequences of risky sexualities for young girls as opposed to young boys (Demant & Heinskou, 2011). However, only more recently have issues of gender and attempts to develop a gendered theory of consumption begun to play a more prominent position in the interests of researchers. For example, Molony & Hunt (2012) examine how drug use can be viewed as a way of accomplishing or 'doing gender' and how precisely drug and alcohol consumption is utilized, displayed or negotiated as part of the performance or enactment of particular gendered identities. Contrary to this my study does not necessarily follow Molony's and Hunt's argument. The main interest here is to interrogate how Kenyan novelists portray the effects of drug and alcohol abuse on both male and female youths and also look at the challenges facing the fight against the abuse plus the interventions put in place to curb the menace. This section views both male and female youths as young adults who are equally affected by drugs and alcohol abuse. It further looks at youth as a social category that is independent from the mainstream society and as a group that is striving to gain autonomy yet reaching their maturity after a long period of experimentation with life. This is evidenced in the youth fiction studied in this section.

The issue of drug abuse and its centrality to identity formation among the youth can be seen through the description of characters in the selected texts. Some of the characters whose identities are affected by drugs in *Was Nyakeeru My Father?* are Zach and Valarie. Zach is the son to Benard-an old man who has been working for Kirika's grandmother for the whole of his life. Zach was born and brought up in grandmother's farm. He is portrayed as a sulky young man completely submerged in a quagmire of identity crisis. This is due to desperation, hard economic times and lack of clear goals in life, he turns to drugs for consolation. When caught by Kirika smoking bhang, he panics and tries to hide it unsuccessfully. Kirika describes the situation:

Zack tried to get the leaf out of view but the thick smoke betrayed its presence. 'Nothing', he lied. 'You are lying!' I said accusingly and skirted around him to get a better look. He turned, making sure I could not get a hold of the leaf in his hand ... soon it became like the game of shake-the game we used to play in school where one person tried to get past another without getting tapped. The 'game' however only lasted for a few seconds for soon Zach yelled and dropped the leaf, now flaming with the fire, on the ground. I jumped into action and with one foot stamped out the fire. (p.28).

Zach's action is a pointer to the sense of guilt associated with drug abuse and its effects in identity formation among the youth. Young people who are idle and have lost hope in life will many times turn to drugs leading to their destruction. The first time we meet with him, Zach is caged in a bush smoking bhang. When startled out of his rendezvous by Kirika, he guiltily replies that he, 'brought it... picking the now smoldering leaf... it is just that this leaf is overgrown ...' (29). Drug abuse as reflected in Zach's conversation with the protagonist is one of the contemporary issues that affect the youth in Kenya. It is a poignant sign of confusion and it affects the youth hence bringing the novella's important role in highlighting the effects of drug menace and a possibility of their eradication. These same views are raised by Moraa Gitaa in *The Shark Attack*.

Gitaa's *The Shark Attack* is a moving account of drug abuse and trafficking. The story draws attention to how the habit is nurtured by corruption and greed. It is told in the realistic and relatable voice of a teenage victim. The novella narrates the story of three teenagers: Kadzo, Kenga and Issa who are involved in drug use and peddling. They find the narcotic business to be fulfilling and enriching.

In this novella, Gitaa mainly focusses on the effects of drugs in the society especially among the youth in Kenya and how it affects their identities. She uses the three key characters to articulate her thematic concerns. Since literature is the mirror that reflects the dynamics in the society, Gitaa's sense of reality is overwhelming in the way she paints the society. The text portrays young adults as people who enjoy playing truancy from school and engage themselves in

unlawful businesses. In this dangerous trade, the trio is working for the drug kingpin by the name Mustapha Jilo alias Bigman alias Mono-eye. Things go wrong when Mono-eye decides to eliminate the trio after they decline to continue with the trade. By a twist of fate they are saved by a sudden explosion in the mother-ship mono-eye uses to ferry the drugs which includes heroin, cocaine and mandrax.

Gitaa uses the episodes of drug trafficking and abuse to clarify how youths can fall victims of drug peddling. Kadzo, Kenga and Issa are high school students and in the process of trying to find liberty and independence outside the family, they fall into Mono-eye's trap. This affects their identity as they remain muddled and without a proper sense of direction. When Mono-eye discovers that the trio wants to abandon the illegal business of drug trafficking, bombs the mother ship in which the youngsters are boarding.

The Shark Attack displays Moraa Gitaa's talent for writing lively stories depicting urban youth and societal problems in Kenya. The trio mentioned above engage in drug trafficking in order to acquire money and with the hope of bettering their lives. However they are unable to earn some good money due to exploitation by their employer.

Drugs are a real monster in the Kenyan society as illustrated by the suffering experienced by Kadzo. Kadzo is the embodiment of other Kenyan youths involved in drug use, her pain is a reflection of the tribulations that bedevil other youths who are hooked on drugs. It is due to drugs that Kadzo suffers the shark attack after the mother ship is bombed in the drug imbroglio, Kadzo loses her left leg after being attacked by a shark. 'The shark had bitten off her lower left leg! (6)'. Her right leg is amputated from the knee (pg.8). As if this is not enough, she suffers from withdrawal symptoms which completely mask her physical suffering. Thus we are told:

The healing stump that was all that had remained of her left leg started to ache, the pain mixing mercilessly with tremors in her nerves. The throbbing pain made her reach for the bell on the headboard frantically. She wanted to call the nurse for a pain killer. Unfortunately, she underestimated the distance between herself and the bell. Alas! She fell off the bed and landed on the cold tiled floor with a thump and jarring pain (pg.9).

It is not only Kadzo who is involved in a ship accident but also her brother Kenga and their friend Issa. The trio is thrown into a turmoil and a state of helplessness. A situation that can only be explained by trying to look at what rebelliousness can cost the youth.

In this work Moraa Gitaa emerges as a serious novelist and as a social critic who is out to challenge the corruption advanced by the government in pretext that they are fighting drug cartels. Indeed she understands her role as a creative writer. A creative writer in most societies rarely stays neutral. She draws her themes and sometimes formal features from her society and in doing so she takes a stand, whether positive or negative, on the experience she highlights. She addresses her message to her society to help members of the society in understanding themselves better. This section views Moraa Gitaa's role as a novelist and as a social critic as reflected in *The Shark Attack* which best illustrates manifestation of the sordid drug abuse and socio-economic problems that Moraa wants to expose and oppose. A justification for the treatment of this theme here is related to the conviction that art has a functional role in the postmodern world in awakening people's consciousness of the socio-economic condition for the purpose of rejecting all kinds of social and political abuse and justice.

In trying to generate their own identity of working class Kadzo, Kenga and Issa only realize that they have been wasting time. In a bid to create money for their upkeep without parental guidance the three find themselves in the mayhem of being attacked by hooligans who purport to be assisting them financially. The explosion of 'mother ship' saves them from the beast of death sanctioned by their boss Mustapha Jilo although they suffer a lot when they are thrown into the deep sea in Indian Ocean. Kadzo suffers most and we are told:

As Kadzo flailed against the strong current, she felt the shark head butt her twice and then a huge clamp close around her left leg. The pain was excruciating. She screamed. The shark yanked her below the water surface, swung and jerked her through the water like a piece of damp sea weed. Instinctively, her right hand lunged down and grappled over the shark's tough skin until she felt the soft hollow of the shark's eye socket and tore it with her fingers (6)

Kadzo's agonizing experience leads to both fortune and misfortune. The attack leads to amputation of Kadzo's leg at the knee causing her irreversible disability. Nevertheless the attack acts like a powerful jerk that bombards her consciousness hence her determination to fight the menace and redemption. This is a painful lesson to Kadzo who acts as the mirror for other Kenyan youths. Kadzo is affected by both physical suffering and the withdrawal syndromes during the recovery period. She experiences a lot of pain as a result of drugs-induced withdrawal syndrome that overshadows the pain from her wound. The author states that:

She had seen people suffer when denied cocaine or heroin but she had never imagined that she could also go through the same. She had seen them tremor, wade in mud in a bid to cool the body, undress and mutter incoherent speeches like people out of the world and somehow she never understood them. It was now her turn. The symptoms that had been the order of the day for the past two weeks were back with a vengeance (9).

Kadzo's suffering mirrors the experience that the addicts undergo. Her identity has been subsumed by addiction and her real identity is on the back burner until she recovers fully from the addiction syndrome. Kadzo's suffering mirrors the experiences that addicts undergo. This is a powerful indictment of drug abuse and a shocking reminder to young people entangled in this cruel web of drug abuse. Drugs interfere with youth identity and makes them become slaves of the same hence their fragmented identities and physical suffering. To put emphasis on the negative effects of drugs, the author portrays the excruciating pain experienced by the protagonist, Kadzo, as an individual problem and drug trafficking can also lead to physical harm. We learn that:

The healing stump that was all that had remained of her left leg started to ache, the pain mixing mercilessly with tremors in her nerves. The throbbing pain made her reach for the bell on the headboard frantically. She wanted to call the nurse for a painkiller. Unfortunately, she underestimated the distance between herself and the bell. Alas! She fell off the bed and landed on the cold tiled floor with a thump and jarring pain (9).

Kadzo being the quintessence of other youths in Kenya who are involved in drug abuse, her pain is a reflection of the tribulations that bedevil other youths who are hooked on drugs and drug vending is a shocking rebuke against the menace.

The accident did not only affect Kadzo but also her brother Kenga and their friend Issa. They were affected physically and emotionally. We are informed that while Kenga sat outside their house in the old town near Fort Jesus on an old overturned dhow.

He was in a trance- like state. He was engrossed in the thoughts about the day he had almost lost his sister in the shark attack. It had been horrific. The thought of how the shark had almost caught him and how it has managed to get his poor sister caused his heart to beat faster. He and Issa had watched from the beach in shock and disbelief as Kadzo fought frantically between life and death. The highness of the cocaine they had snorted earlier on had worn off because of shock (26).

This is an indication that drug abuse affects both the victims and other family members especially the close relatives as well as friends. Kadzo, Kenga and Issa's mastery of the intricacies of drug trafficking is admirable. This is explained through Kadzo's description as she narrates their escapades to inspector Korir. She says:

We knew every nook and cranny of the waters to the extent that we could not hit barrier reefs even if we sailed with our eyes closed. We would drop the cargo at points along River Galana, Kinango, Malindi, Kilifi, Mtwapa, Fomosa bay, Kipini, Lamu, Patta Island and Chambone among others (40).

The expertise displayed by the youth in drug trafficking as described above surpasses our understanding bearing in mind that these are just school going boys and a girl. Their secret dealings are never revealed to their parents. The trio is leading a double identity: the one of innocence that is known by their parents and the other of criminality that is only known by themselves and it is kept a secret. To their parents the trio is an innocent bunch of teenagers with no knowledge and expertise in drug peddling when in reality they are real connoisseurs of drugs. This serves to show the dichotomy between parents' understanding of their children's fragmented identities and their real identities. Most of these youths experience such forms of fragmented identities which is common in the postmodern society. The parents only learn of their children's predicaments after a serious damage has occurred.

The societal abhorrence of drugs is demonstrated when some benevolent residents of Mombasa organizes public demonstrations against this evil.

A day later, the streets of Mombasa were filled with the young and old. Kadzo and some community members had organized a peaceful demonstration against drug abuse and trafficking. They marched through the Old Town and ended up at the main police post where they addressed by the anti- narcotics police boss. Inspector Korir was simply fascinated as he followed the crowd along the narrow alleys of the town. He had been told by Kadzo that some anti-narcotics crusaders and sympathizers would be joining the protest march (67).

The demonstrators in Mombasa are symbolic of societal consciousness against the menace of drugs. These are men and women of good conscience who have not been tainted by the menace. This is a community that is ready to salvage and redeem the image of the youth which is in mortal danger of being annihilated by the drug barons.

The argument Moraa Gitaa seems to be raising is that many youths in Kenya indulge in drugs due to neglect by parents and family. A family as an institution is a basic unit in all the societies of the world whereby basic problems of child guidance can be solved. Parents need to spare time for their children and discuss pertinent issues pertaining their lives. Contemporary parents have time to accumulate wealth but do not have time for their children. This is exemplified by Issa's family.

Their parents combined their income and provided everything their two children needed but it appeared as if this was not enough. There seemed to be something that had always been missing. Their doctor father came home quite late in the night and left at the crack of dawn. Their mother was so busy in her law firm. She rarely found time for the family. They could go for days without seeing one another. The children never had time to sit down with their parents to talk (82).

That is why probably things have gone wrong with Issa. He has nobody to guide him through his physical, emotional and psychological development, bearing in mind that parental care has a lot of impact during adolescent stage. The case of Issa is a powerful indictment of parents who abdicate their parental roles at the altar of vocational commitment and avaricious pursuit of material wealth at the expense of their children's welfare. The irony here is that most of these parents are in pursuit of cash in order to fend for their children but instead they end up destroying the same children they love.

Many parents whose children take drugs do not like owning up the blame. Instead they go into a process of denial where they create scapegoats through which they project their guilt. This is depicted in the blame game between Dr. Abdul (Issa's father) and Mr. Karisa's family, where Dr. Abdul projects his blame on Mr. Karisa's family. He blames Kadzo and Kenga for misleading his son to narcotic business. He rebukes Mr. Karisa when he says, 'You! I should have known your children will be involved in this, vote on earth have they gotten my son into this time?' (pg.20). His utterance is typical of the contemporary parents who have abdicated their parental roles. These are the kinds of parents who are seen projecting their anger and weakness on others when their children go astray.

Drug abuse has adverse effects on the youths' achievement in education as well as other goals and aspirations in life as depicted in the dialogue that ensues between Dr. Abdul and his son Issa. Dr. Abdul admonishes his son 'How could you Issa? Vat on earth were you thinking?... is this your way of aiming for your medical degree?' (pg.23). The above conversation portrays Dr. Issa as a clueless parent who is out of sync with the current reality. He has no clue about his son's lifestyle, goals and aspirations. Since he is a medical doctor he assumes that his son would automatically follow suit. His assumption is fatal because a parent's input is very imperative in attainment of a child's dreams.

Issa, Kadzo and Kenga assume dual identities. While at home they appear to be very innocent. Behind the facade however, lie hardened drug users as brought out through dialogue. Issa confesses that when he talked to Kadzo and Kenga he 'discovered that they were way ahead. They were not only using the drug but peddling them too. They brought some valium and D-5 for me. Soon I was into mandrax. Soon than later, I realized that mandrax too wasn't enough for me' (pg.24). Soon he graduates to cocaine and heroin. Issa's confession helps unmask the dichotomy between parental perception of their children and the crude reality that informs their lives. This is a rude awakening to the parents that their children could be seasoned drug users behind the façade of innocence.

Kadzo and Kenga's redemption is a lesson to the contemporary youths in Kenya that positive behavior change and recovery from drug induced addiction is possible. Unlike Kadzo and Kenga, some contemporary youths like Issa finds it very difficult to change and redeem their personal identity. That is why inspector Korir observes that, although Issa had promised to change. 'He was the only one of the trio who was unrepentant and continued to peddle the drugs' (58). This observation reflects Issa's recklessness and unrepentant disposition. This is a hard to explain behavior since the boy comes from an affluent family where his father is well to do medical doctor and his mother a prominent lawyer. Contrary to Issa's involvement in drug trafficking and abuse, Kenga and Kadzo do it out of poverty. The description of their father Mr. Karisa attest to a man who has been weighed down by poverty.

His T-shirt and shorts were sodden with oil and there were lacerations on his arms and legs, where he had scratched himself on jagged metal...he could not go to the hospital as he needed all the money...to pay for his daughter's hospital bill(34).

Poverty acts as a magnet that draws them to drug peddling as a way of generating some income to support their family. Through inspector Korir's stream of thoughts we learn that 'poverty had forced that girl into being a courier for the barons on the fishing sites and now her leg was amputated' (47). The negativity of life that befalls Kadzo enables her to identify herself with whom she ought to be and what she can do best to redeem her image. She ought to shed her fragmented identity and acquire a new personality that she can use to salvage other youths who are still wallowing in quagmire of drug addiction. As an ambassador of change she says to Mrs. Christine her English teacher that : 'I am initiating a sort of rehabilitation Centre where we shall counsel other teens and help them come out of the habit that almost saw me get killed.'(54).

At this point Kadzo emerges as the paragon hope and role model to other youths in Kenya who are hooked in drugs. The essay that she reads before the president is like a lesson book on disadvantages on drug peddling and their monstrous effects on youth and Kadzo stands firm on war against this vice.

Redemption of the youth from their fragmented identity due to drugs is accelerated by inspector Korir who is attached to the anti- narcotics units in Mombasa. He has a specific assignment of unearthing and tackling a drug cartel led by Mono-eye. This is a high mission since the other officer sergeant Bilal- attached to this case was summarily eliminated by the notorious drug lord through police conspiracy (133). Inspector Korir is depicted as conscientious man especially when he rejects Mono-eyes' offer of a couple of millions (127). His rejection of these millions in exchange of the drug barons' freedom is a great shock to his juniors who were already salivating for the cash. As a young man, one of the few among the elite squad in the police force, Korir is the epitome of morality among the youth. He is up to the task to clear up corruption which is a wanton crime that is killing our nation and our younger generation.

To achieve optimum effect in her novel, Gitaa adopts a certain visionary ideal which pertains to the socio-economic and politics of her society. In a sense she is a committed writer who is revealing the menace of drug abuse and the corruption that comes with it.

Commitment as a literary concept connotes some attachment to, identification with or subscription to a recognizable set of goals or ideas. Writing on Jean-Paul Sartre, M. Adereth (1967) says that 'commitment is inherent in the act of writing. To write, [Sartre] says, 'is to talk, and to talk is to reveal an aspect of the world, in order to change it' (p.35). In other words, the writer's work can take the form of social criticism if he portrays the internal inadequacies of his society and the predicament of the individual in it. To A. Kettle (1988), the value of art lies on just in its capacity to entertain but in its power to increase our knowledge and understanding of the world whereby releasing new energy in us to change the world (p.120). Commenting on the importance of social criticism in the African novel, C. Amuta (1986) claims 'The writer is not only influenced by society; he influences it. Art not merely reproduces life but also shapes it. People may mould their lives upon the patterns of fictional heroes and heroines' (p.40). These explanations in totality justifies Moraa's vision as a committed writer and as a social critic. There is a possibility of influencing her reader's interest by the way she moulds Kadzo as her heroine in fight against drug abuse and how she moulds her hero Inspector Korir in fight against corruption. Inspector Korir's sense of self-drive towards tackling the drug menace in Kenya is like an obsession. However his zealotry does not completely mask his sense of reality. He is aptly aware of the obstacles that plagues his arduous assignment. We are told that:

Inspector Korir understood why it was said that 'kitu kidogo' had become a tradition in the force. Clean cops like him were fighting a losing battle. Magistrates who passed heavy sentences on drug moguls and traffickers were transferred to hardship areas to wrestle with bandits and cattle rustlers. He made up his mind. He had to arrest

this criminal there and then and ensure that Big Man was not granted bail or bond as he would most likely abscond and leave the country! What was he to do? (128).

Korir is prepared to fight corruption at all cost even if it means paying for it with his own life. He is portrayed as a heroic character who is ready to redeem the youth from a society that is riddled with greed, selfishness and self-centeredness. Finally, inspector Korir's efforts yield fruits when he succeeds in arresting the drug lords.

In an hour's time, Big Man, his stevedores, captain Andressano and his crew of six were put into the police launch. From the freighter, the detectives recovered 2000 kilogrammes of cocaine, several satellite phones, four pistols and 200 bullets. Kadzo was glad that she had done her best to help Inspector Korir and his colleagues carry out this sting operation. They had planned for operation for three weeks as they awaited the past couple of days' huge consignments (129).

The above episode marks momentary triumph for Inspector Korir, Kadzo and Kenga. However, we are brought to an ironical twist when Mono - eye and some 'members of his cartel escaped from custody (130)', only after three days. This is very demoralizing for inspector Korir and the youths. Their painful effort is however rewarded when Kadzo is awarded the head of state commendation (p.133) and a chance to read her essay on effects of drugs titled. 'THE KENYA I DO NOT WANT TO LIVE IN (133). Korir is also promoted to the rank of police boss, Mombasa County (139).

This essay that is read by Kadzo relays the author's thought on what should be done on fight against drugs in Kenya. A Daily Nation article dated Tuesday 10th November 2015, titled, 'Why drug abuse is on the rise among teens'. The paper presents an interview with Dr. Catherine Syengo Mutisya- a Consultant Psychiatrist- who is the head of Substance Abuse and Management in the Ministry of Health. In this interview Syengo states that young people use drugs due to pressure from academics, peer pressure, parents not supervising their children, easy accessibility to drugs, lack of role models in society and social media. This same view is what has been presented creatively by Gitaa in *The Shark Attack*. The main theme from her text is drawn from the real life situation in Kenya. This openness to intellectual development from other disciplines and real life situation implies that literature is receptive to cultural and scholarly impulses from not only literature material but also from the media houses and the government publications. Youth literature has become an arena where burning issues in the country can be shared and disseminated.

For instance, in the same newspaper, we read that in 2015, Kenyans were exposed to a growing up problem - underage boys and girls engaging in use of drugs and alcohol. In August 2015, 45 students found using bhang, alcohol and cigarettes were arrested in Nyeri as they were travelling in a matatu. Though there was outrage, it soon died to be revived again by two disturbing cases in October.

The first incidence is in Eldoret town, where 500 children and teenagers are arrested in a disco and found to be smoking bhang, drinking alcohol and chewing miraa. Hardly two weeks later, 200 children are arrested in a disco in Nairobi and they are also found smoking bhang (marijuana) and drinking alcohol. In all these cases the young boys and girls are engaging in sexual intercourse as part of the 'fun'. If it were not for the alarm raised by the community these cases would have gone unnoticed.

According to policy brief No. 55 published by the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) 2017, Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADA) among young people in Kenya is becoming a major social and public health problem due to its far reaching impacts on the individuals, families and communities.

The brief states that a number of research studies that have been conducted locally and internationally have shown that alcohol and drug abuse is caused by a combination of many factors: Individual, environmental, biological and psychological factors. The main causes of ADA among young people include; poverty, peer pressure, easy access to drugs and alcohol and breakdown of traditional values – leading to dysfunctional families and high unemployment levels (NCPD, 2017).

A recent survey by National Campaign Against Drug Abuse Authority (NACADA) indicated that youths aged 15-24 years had abused alcohol, drugs and other substances. These findings show that commonly abused drugs and substances by Kenyan youth include alcohol, followed by tobacco, *miraa*(khat) and bhang. Some of the newly abused drugs and which have been given new names include: *kuber*, *shisha*, *shashaman*, *mau*, *tambuu*, *jet fuel*, *kukumanga*, *mkorogo*, *shomoro* and *kamusi*. It was observed that the emerging drugs were mostly taken in combination with the usual drugs causing adverse health consequences (NCPD, 2017).

The information given above has been partly summarized by Moraa Gitaa through Kadzo's essay entitled: THE KENYA I DO NOT WANT TO LIVE IN. This essay portrays Kenya as a country that its youth has been adversely affected by drugs. In order to curb this menace, Moraa summarizes her book by proffering solutions that:

Each school in the country should have a teacher trained in drug and substance abuse counselling. The Ministry of Education should put in place mechanisms to ensure that all schools are drug-free zones. This should be done by ensuring that the schools are fenced off, strangers are kept out and drug abuse education programmes are initiated. Children, teens or young adult's programmes in the country should have a trained drug and substance abuse counsellor. Institutions should also be trained to initiate and offer professional courses related to drug to drug and substance abuse. This then will be the Kenya we all want to live in (p.136)

For intervention to Reduce ADA, the government of Kenya according to NCPD 2017, recognizes the threat posed by alcohol and drug abuse and enacted a legal and institutional framework within which the problem of alcohol dependency and drug abuse can be addressed. In 2007, the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse Authority (NACADA) was formed to co-ordinate a multi-sectoral campaign against drug abuse in Kenya. To take action to reduce ADA in Kenya, the government has come up with the following policies and law aimed at the regulation of production, sale and consumption of alcohol and drugs;

- The Dangerous Drugs Act Cap 245
- The Kenya National Drug Policy (MOH, 1994)
- The Tobacco Control Act of 2007
- Alcohol Drinks Control Act 2010 (Mututho Laws)
- Restrictions on advertisements promoting ADA.
- Establishment of The National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) Authority in July 2007.
- Infused ADA in the school curriculum
- Trained and posted Guidance and Counselling teachers to schools.

Much of these policies is what Moraa has outlined in chapter twenty five of *The Shark Attack* as a way of addressing the society on what the government should do to end the problem of drug trafficking.

Kadzo's zeal and vigour for rehabilitating the youths to form a rigid and very strong positive image in the face of drug trafficking gains impetus when she goes to the area chief and organizes a baraza. Kaya elders are also seen in full support of Kadzo's moves as they have realized that the youths have lost track in life and they '...wanted one thing in particular: to bring the youth back to social sanity that once existed before the current pollution' (104).

The sea has been used metaphorically to mean the turbulent and the unstable lives of the youth. The hostility of the sea with sea breeze, coral reefs and dangerous sea animals such as the snake and the sharks are a representative of ruthless adults who engage children in child labour, put their lives into risk and possibly kill them. *Shark Attack* uses the sea as its central symbol for the lives of the youths.

In order to convey her message effectively Gitaa uses quite a number of symbols as I have just mentioned. According to Northrop Frye (1957), the word symbol means any unit of any literary structure that can be isolated for critical attention. Frye asserts that when we are reading, we focus our attention for two directions at once. One direction is outward, in which we go outside with our reading, from the writers to the things they mean in the text. The second direction is the inward in which we try to appreciate and analyze the meaning from the word. Here Frye attempts to explain the concept of the symbol and its implication to the reading of a text. These two types of understanding take place simultaneously in all reading and which is also crucial in explaining the symbol of the sea in *Shark Attack*. However the final structure may be classified according to whether the final direction of meaning is outward or inward.

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), is an English Mathematician and a philosopher who gave his cooperation for many subjects but symbolism was his most significant subject. Whitehead believes that symbolism represents the human imaginations and thoughts. According to his perception word 'also a symbol that denotes the ideas, emotions and images with its usage. According to Whitehead 'symbolism is very fallible in the sense that it may induce actions, feelings, emotions and beliefs about things which are only notions without exemplification in the world which the symbolism leads us to presuppose (Whitehead, 1927).

The study at hand applies Whitehead's understanding of the concept of symbolism in the analysis of *The Shark Attack* basing on the argument that a symbol may have multiple interpretation depending with the context in which it is used and the readers interpretation. On the same breath Whitehead distinguishes between symbol and direct knowledge. He asserts that direct knowledge is infallible which means that there is no space for mistakes. It is correct and perfect. But symbolism is very fallible and it is open to mistakes. Within symbolism, it is possible to have wrong interpretation of the symbol we have and also we are not sure that it is correct (Whitehead, 1927). This means that we are going to have more than one interpretation of the symbol of the sea in *The Shark Attack*.

The first interpretation is that usually, the 'Sea' is used as a symbol in literature to represent life and its hardships. The sea, with its daunting width and depth, simply stands for life itself. It may be quite calm, but it becomes raging and even deadly in an instant, with the waves representing the sudden obstacles life throws away.

What I find to be the most important parallelism between the sea and life in general is the unpredictability of both. A sudden change in weather brings upon giant waves that make it impossible to swim forward, and the only solution is to go back to shore, much like a sudden obstacle in life makes it impossible to move forward and the only solution is to go back a few steps.

When Mustapha Jilo's men bomb the mother ship, Kadzo, Kenga and Issa swim back to the shore.

Suddenly, Issa, who was the poorest swimmer of the trio, flashed past both Kenga and Kadzo. He swam on towards the beach until his feet touched the shallow sea bed...Kadzo swam frantically towards the beach which now seemed impossibly distant (pg.4-5)

The point of course is not to give up, but keep going even if ultimately it doesn't give you what you struggled for so hard to attain. The trio struggled so much to acquire money through drug trafficking but it turns out that they are putting their lives in danger. In this sense the sea symbolizes the universe and the isolation of the youth in it. Though people have their own identity in their specific places, in the universe and to be specific, in Kenya the youths are helpless during their quest for material wealth. Kadzo, Kenga and Issa are a representative of such youths.

The title of the book *The Shark Attack* by Moraa Gitaa has also been used metaphorically to imply the destructive forces in the lives of many youths in Kenya and especially the young people in the coastal region. The metaphor of the shark is apparently realized at the sea attack scene displayed by the writer how Kadzo's left leg is mutilated by the shark. A shark is a huge and the most dangerous of sea fishes. Mustafa Jilo, 'drug tycoon' in line with the government officials are denoted as the major sharks in the coastal 'sea' and attack the youths by introducing them to drug peddling and trafficking leading to drugs and substance abuse by the coastal youths.

Mustapha attacks the youths by employing school going youth to peddling causing their lives to be in the ruins. Just as shark is noted to be a powerful and destructive animal in the sea, Mustapha arises to be the most powerful tycoon who engages some government officials into this unlawful business.

Some political figures and government officials also display the 'shark hood' by pretending of not being aware of drug trafficking in their ministries. For instance defense forces, some cabinet secretaries and some members of parliament are listed by Kadzo in her essay to the president. In this essay she advises the president to fight against drug trafficking and drug abuse by wiping out any drug baron who might be sitting in the audience that day or on the podium with him but to be masquerading as good members of parliament or cabinet secretaries since they are attacking the youth.

Moraa applies the metaphor to show that the problem of drug abuse in Kenya, particularly at the coast is no small matter and cannot be relegated to the fringes when issues that affect Kenyan youths are discussed.

This section of the study identifies the nature and the extent of drug and substance abuse among young people in Kenya and the contributing factors and effects of alcohol and drug abuse. It interrogates how novelists portray social identities while looking at the interventions put in place to address ADA and the challenges facing the fight against drug abuse. The issues raised in this section need urgent attention for reduction of alcohol and drug abuse among the youth in the society. Gitaa seems to be suggesting that youth fiction writers ought to act as eye openers to the youth by exposing vices such as drug abuse which interfere with their livelihood.

4. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the aspects that contribute to the formation of youth social identities that emerge in the selected texts. Through the analysis of the texts it notes that social identity is achieved through identification with groups of individuals who share a common outlook and also through recognizable performative repertoires that are expressive and embodied. Some of the sociological aspects of identity formation identified in this chapter include: family set up, peer grouping and other social factors such as drug abuse.

Secondly the paper observes that the society plays a vital role in moulding of an adolescent. Adolescence stage is very critical during growth among the youth. It is a phase where an adolescent struggles with changes in his/her body, both physically and emotionally. At this stage they seem to adopt different identities at different times which sometimes give them a 'chameleon-like appearance'. They also engage in complex processes of identity work to locate themselves in social worlds that are predominantly defined by school, family and peers. It is clear, however, that this process is not just about the experience in the sphere of everyday life, but also involves the interaction with the mass media. Social identity is therefore realized through the attributes we associate the youth with. How they view themselves and their role in the larger social environment have impacts on their social identity formation. It is therefore observed that characters in young adult fiction do not solve their own problems nor do they make their own decisions, instead they are helped by people from the mainstream society. This makes us draw a conclusion that social identity is enacted through social interactions with others and their relationships with them.

I have argued that processes of social identity formation and sociocultural practices of identity performance mutually reinforce and shape each other. This helps to explain how identities can be experienced as real, unitary, and stable but when they are constructed or reconstructed by especially the youth, they are experienced as multiple, unstable and fluid. The paper concludes that the processes by which the youths regulate their personal identities are inextricably linked to practices by which societies and their in-groups regulate their members. Correspondingly, collective action and societal change are inextricably linked to personal change. In this way understanding social identity reveals the crucial role of identity dynamics in mediating the relation between the individual and society.

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