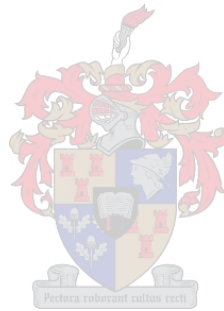# Psychosocial experiences related to student community engagement:

A multilevel analysis

by

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Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts
and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Prof Anthony V. Naidoo

March 2017

DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

March 2017

ABSTRACT

Against the background of a growing emphasis on community engagement (CE) globally and in South Africa (SA), this study foregrounds the psychosocial aspects that inform the CE experiences of university students. In SA, CE is mandated as an integrated core function of higher education institutions towards societal transformation and it involves activities that universities undertake in collaboration with external organizations and communities. In SA's diverse society with its apartheid history and pervasive socio-economic inequalities in particular, engaging with people from diverse backgrounds poses various challenges for students involved in CE. This study, based at Stellenbosch University (SU), follows a qualitative approach and applied strategies used in grounded theory. Focus groups were conducted with 35 purposefully selected student volunteer project leaders and students in service-learning programmes. Additionally, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with eight university staff members involved in CE in various roles. Furthermore, seven community project representatives of schools and community-based organizations were interviewed. ATLAS.ti (version 7) qualitative data analysis software was used. Various coding strategies were applied to develop themes that are grounded in the data. Drawing on transformative learning theories and approached from a community psychological perspective, the experiences of students involved in CE are discussed in relation to the individual and interpersonal levels and in the university, community and societal contexts. Findings on the individual level comprise cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. Themes discussed on the individual level include: enhanced self-awareness; the notion of personal engagement; experiencing internal conflict; personal growth and a strong focus on psychological preparedness. Positive emotional aspects included a sense of enjoyment; feeling appreciated, satisfied, purposeful and a sense of achievement. Negative emotional aspects included feeling anxious; a sense of failure; stress and emotional exhaustion. Students also reflected on managing sadness due to exposure to secondary trauma. On the interpersonal level, students navigate multiple differences concerning language, culture, age and socio-economic backgrounds as they learn and develop different skills in the

context of relationships. Various themes are discussed on the university, community, and societal levels. These themes describe a nuanced background within which CE takes place. This study contributes to the conceptualization, implementation and management of CE as it provides a rich description from multiple perspectives. The research found that CE exposure evokes broad ranging and extreme emotions in students, from depression to elation. There was clear evidence that more attention should be devoted to improving students' preparation and psychological support before and throughout the CE process. This is particularly important in light of the psychological storm presented in this study, which refers to a set of contextual elements that, if lacking, may leave students feeling vulnerable and exposed to deal with the complexities on their own. The findings indicate that in order to achieve the greater good, as a core outcome of CE, it is imperative to practise awareness of contextual influences on the engagement experience and to foreground student well-being as they stand in this critical position between the university and its engagement with external organizations and communities.

OPSOMMING

Teen die agtergrond van die groeiende klem op gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid (GB) wêreldwyd en in Suid-Afrika (SA), stel hierdie studie die psigososiale aspekte wat deel vorm van universiteitstudente se ervaring met GB in die voorgrond. In SA is GB gemandateer as 'n geïntegreerde kernfunksie van hoëronderwysinstellings met die oog op samelewingstransformasie. Dit behels aktiwiteite wat universiteite onderneem in samewerking met eksterne organisasies en gemeenskappe. In SA se diverse gemeenskap met sy apartheidsgeskiedenis en diepgaande sosio-ekonomiese ongelykhede veral, is daar verskeie struikelblokke wat inspeel wanneer mense van verskillende agtergronde by GB betrek word. Hierdie studie by Stellenbosch Universiteit volg 'n kwalitatiewe benadering en behels die toepassing van strategieë wat gebruik word in gegronde teorie (grounded theory). Fokusgroepe is gehou met 35 doelmatig geselekteerde vrywillige projekleiers en studente in diensleerprogramme. Daarmee saam is semigestruktureerde in-diepte onderhoude gevoer met agt universiteitspersoneel wat betrokke is by GB in verskillende rolle. Onderhoude is ook gehou met sewe gemeenskapsprojek- verteenwoordigers van skole en gemeenskapsgebaseerde organisasies. ATLAS.ti (weergawe 7) kwalitatiewe data-analise sagteware is in hierdie studie gebruik. Verskeie kodifiseringstrategieë is toegepas en die temas is ontwikkel gebaseer op die data. Met die gebruik van transformatiewe leerteorieë en benader vanuit 'n gemeenskapsielkunde perspektief, word die ervaringe van studente wat betrokke is in GB bespreek met betrekking tot die individuele en interpersoonlike vlakke, en die universiteits-, gemeenskaps- en sosiale kontekste. Bevindinge op die individuele vlak het kognitiewe, emosionele en gedragsdimensies ingesluit. Die temas wat op hierdie vlak na vore gekom het, was versterkte self-bewustheid; die idee van persoonlike betrokkenheid; die ervaring van interne konflik; persoonlike groei en 'n sterk fokus op psigologiese voorbereidheid. Positiewe emosionele aspekte het 'n sin van genot; 'n gevoel dat hulle betrokkenheid waardeer word, asook tevredenheid, doelgerigtheid en 'n sin van prestasie ingesluit. Op die interpersoonlike vlak moet die studente veelvoudige verskille betreffende taal, kultuur, ouderdom en sosio-ekonomiese agtergrond bestuur soos hulle verskillende

vaardighede leer en ontwikkel in die konteks van verhoudings. Verskeie temas word verder bespreek binne die universiteits-, gemeenskaps- en sosiale kontekste. Die temas skets 'n genuanseerde agtergrond waarteen GB plaasvind. Die studie dra by tot die konseptualisering, implementering en bestuur van GB aangesien dit 'n ryke beskrywing van GB vanuit verskillende perspektiewe verskaf. Die bevindinge toon dat GB blootstelling 'n wye verskeidenheid emosies by studente ontlok, van depressiwiteit tot gelukkigheid. Daar was duidelike aanduidings dat meer aandag gegee moet word aan voorbereiding van studente en aan sielkundige ondersteuning voor die aanvang en deur die loop van GB. Dit is besonder belangrik in die lig van die psigologiese storm wat in die studie geïdentifiseer is, wat verwys na 'n stel kontekstuele elemente wat tekort skiet en wat studente weerloos laat voel en hulle uitlewer om alleen met die kompleksiteite te werk. Die bevindinge voer aan dat ten einde die groter oorhoofse doelwitte van GB te bereik, is dit van kardinale belang om bewustheid te handhaaf van kontekstuele invloede op die betrokkenheidservaring en om studente se welstand te beklemtoon, aangesien studente dikwels in die kritiese posisie tussen die universiteit en betrokkenheid met eksterne organisasies en gemeenskappe staan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many things in life that one simply cannot do without the support of the key people in your life – completing a PhD is one of those.

Firstly, I would like to thank God for gracing me with the vision, abilities and strength to go on this journey and to complete it.

I would like to thank my husband, D'mitri, for his consistent love, support and encouragement throughout this PhD journey. Thank you for all the sacrifices that you have made with me to get this done. I am grateful to God for giving me the best partner.

I express my sincerest gratitude to Prof Tony Naidoo for his guidance (and even more importantly, the psychological support) throughout this research project and in completing this dissertation. Thank you for walking this road with me.

My family, especially my mother, has made incredible sacrifices to get me through university and supported me long after my initial degree was completed. In the context of 'black tax' (in my case, 'coloured tax'), I am one of the lucky ones that could continue my studies to the highest level, without having to sacrifice my dreams to work for my family. Thank you Mammie, Pa-John, Clyde and Mischké. I also offer this word of thanks to my extended family that helped to raise me. In the same breath I thank my in-laws for their love and support.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr Susanne Friese from Germany for her guidance and support with regard to several aspects of data management and analysis with ATLAS.ti in this research project.

I also thank my managers and colleagues at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for allowing me more time towards the completion of this dissertation. I am grateful to each one that took on a bit of extra work to make this possible for me.

I acknowledge and thank the Andrew Mellon Foundation for financial assistance during 2012 and 2013.

I would also like to thank my friends and others who have supported and encouraged me through various stages of this journey. I especially would like to mention Bianca, Geraldine, Laeticia, Hanri, Alexa, Caitlin, Simoné, Grace, Shalane, Cilnette, Mart-Marie (and the list continues); the staff and members at Every Nation Church in Stellenbosch; and my fellow PhD conquerors: Wylene, Christine, Rizwana, Bronwynè and Anouk.

I acknowledge and thank the following key people at SU who influenced my passion for CE and social change, and who have contributed to my personal and professional development: Prof Ronelle Carolissen, Dr Jerome Slamat, Dr Antoinette Smith-Tolken, and the staff of the Psychology Department; as well as Chantel Swartz and staff members at the Postgraduate and International office.

I would also like to thank Prof Sandy Lazarus (affiliated with the Medical Research Council and University of the Western Cape) for her academic influence, especially in the formative stage of my PhD journey. In the same breath, I thank Mr Basil May, Thomas and Thom van der Ven, Grant Demas and the Railton Community Assessment Project research team for their inspiration during that stage of my journey.

Lastly, I acknowledge and thank all the students, staff members and community project representatives that willingly and passionately shared their CE experiences that are presented in this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

STUDY ORIENTATION AND RATIONALE

'I think community engagement is from the word go psychological because it

involves people from different walks of life engaging with each other to learn.'

(George, SU staff member)

Introduction

This dissertation aims to foreground the psychosocial aspects that inform the community

engagement (CE)[1] experiences of university students. The study involves a multilevel approach, as

the perceptions of students cannot be viewed in isolation from other role players such as university

staff members and community project representatives. The current chapter first sketches the

background and rationale for this research, stipulates the research aims and questions, and outlines

the method of enquiry. I then position the study in the area of Community Psychology (CP) to

provide a psychological perspective on the transformative processes of CE. Thereafter, the chapter

includes a contextualization and definition of key terms. The chapter concludes with a discussion on

the importance of the study and lastly, an outline of the rest of the dissertation.

Background and Rationale

CE comprises various forms of activities that universities undertake in collaboration with

external organizations and communities (Higher Education Quality Committee [HEQC], 2006).

Due to age-old perceptions that universities are ivory towers that are disconnected from the general

public and exploitative of communities, mutually beneficial relationships between these entities

have become indispensable in present times as universities work towards the greater good of society

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[1] In this research CE is used to include service-learning, student volunteering and research-based community
interaction (Higher Education Quality Committee, 2006).

and social change (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Klein et al., 2011; Leibowitz, 2012; Ndabeni & Maharajh, 2009; Weinberg, 2002).

When conducting research in any area of university-community engagement, the broader movement known as the 'third mission' of universities should be taken into consideration. Traditionally, universities focused on teaching as their first mission. They later included original research as their second mission (Boyer, 1990; Trencher, Yarime, McCormick, Doll, & Kraines, 2014). Boyer (1990) describes the role of the professoriate in terms of four dimensions, namely *scholarship of discovery* (which relates to the researcher role); *scholarship of integration* (in which he refers to going beyond disciplinary boundaries to interpret new findings); *scholarship of application* (which broadly refers to the usefulness of the knowledge created to solve real-life problems, and application therefore as service which in turn enriches knowledge); and the *scholarship of teaching* (which refers to the traditional teacher role of professors). It is in Boyer's (1990) notion of scholarship of application that he refers to universities' role in greater society, which in turn informs the service mission of the universities.

The concept of the third mission of universities is also used to refer to the entrepreneurial university, where the partnership between governments, universities and industry has been expressed as the "Triple Helix" in a knowledge-based society (Etzkowitz, 2003). In other words, the university's third mission involves greater collaboration with civil society to break away from its criticized image as 'ivory towers' (Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2011; Weinberg, 2002). Activities in the third mission include, but are not limited to, entrepreneurial advancement; contributions to local and national economic development; innovation and technology transfer; social engagement; continuing education and developments toward environmental sustainability (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Klein et al., 2011; Montesinos, Carot, Martinez, & Mora, 2008; Ndabeni & Maharajh, 2009; Trencher et al., 2014 Weinberg, 2002). The present research is located within the

strand of social engagement as a sub-component of the broader movement of the university's third mission.

In South Africa, the post-apartheid government mandates CE to assist with the transformation of South African society. Government has inscribed CE as a core function of universities and other higher education institutions. Therefore, it should form an integral part of teaching, learning and research (Department of Education, 1997; HEQC, 2006; Lazarus, 2007).

At Stellenbosch University (SU), too, where the present study is located, policies and practices have been aligned to respond to the national call towards greater social collaboration through CE programmes (SU Community Interaction Policy, 2009)[2]. Even though the university has a long history of interaction with communities, the form of engagement has been changing over time, with continual shifts away from philanthropic activities towards collaboration, reciprocity and mutual benefit through curriculum-based, co-curricular (structured volunteer) involvements and engaged scholarship (Stellenbosch University (SU), 2016). The new Social Impact Strategic Plan, which was informed by the 2014 external evaluation of the university's CE activities, reconfirmed the university's commitment to the mandate of furthering its impact within South African society in different areas. These include the 'political, economic, ecological, as well as the sphere of civil society, including family life, culture, art, education, sport, health, public discourses, public opinion-formation, public policy-making, etc.' (SU, 2016, p. 2). Furthermore, the university's plan for social impact is aligned with other internal policies like the Institutional Intent and Strategy for 2013-2018, and Institutional Plan 2016 - 2021, as well as global objectives such as the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SU, 2016). SU is considered as one of the leading

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[2] At Stellenbosch University the term community *interaction* is commonly used as it 'presupposes a two-way communication or influence and equality between the interacting parties' (Thomson et al., 2011, p. 222-223). With the recent shift, the term *social impact* has been adopted (SU, 2016). Not disregarding these terms, I prefer to use the term community engagement (CE) as it is more aligned with global scholarship concerning this topic.

universities in CE in South Africa and globally. The university is affiliated with various networks in the Western Cape where it is located; the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF); and globally through the Talloires network (SU, 2016). At SU 'Social Impact is ingrained in the culture of the university where societal well-being is a core goal and social justice is a commitment' (SU, 2016, p. 2).According to Smith-Tolken (as cited in Williams, 2016), the university continues to act purposefully to help make the national developmental goals a reality.

As a result of the growing global emphasis on engagement, university-community collaborative relationships have been studied widely, including the factors that support or hinder the formation and maintenance of the collaborative relationships and the benefits for the different role players involved (Carlton, Whiting, Bradford, Hyjer Dyk, & Vail, 2009; Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Ebersöhn, Loots, Eloff, & Ferreira, 2015; Pinto, 2009; Schensul, 1999; Strier, 2011; Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis, 2005). There have been efforts to conceptualize the collaborative relationships and to develop models that can guide practices (HEQC, 2006; Kruss, 2012; Smith-Tolken, 2010; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

Students are typically the critical link between the university as institution and the communities it collaborates with through various projects. In that regard, various studies have gauged students' experiences of CE involvement (Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Kiely, 2005; Knapp, Fisher, & Levesque-Bristol, 2010). In CE, service-learning, in particular, has been widely recognized for its potential to be transformative to those involved in this dynamic enterprise (Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2012, 2015). Correspondingly, with increasing university-community interaction, researchers have developed models of engagement and service-learning with a strong emphasis on the importance of reflection (thinking about an experience with the aim of learning from it and adapting future action) as a means to connect the service with the learning (Eyler, 2002; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Petersen & Osman, 2013). The emphasis has in the meantime shifted to more critical forms of pedagogy and reflection to include issues of power and positionality (Chupp & Joseph,

2010; Constandius, Rosochacki, & Le Roux, 2014; Petersen & Osman, 2013; Thomson et al., 2011); and beyond pedagogy as a 'counter-normative' alternative to traditional classroom-based teaching (Swords & Kiely, 2010, p. 150). In the same vein, CE, and in particular service-learning, based on the premise of 'connected knowing' (Saltmarsh, 1997, p. 81), is fundamentally a holistic affair that involves and may transform cognition and emotions, affects participants' sense of morality (Eyler & Giles as cited in Strain, 2005), and enhances their cultural competence (Amerson, 2010).

Structured student volunteering, often based on philanthropic motivations, has a long history at institutions of higher learning internationally (Fajardo, Lott II, & Contreras, 2014; Snyder & Omoto, 2008; Taylor & Pancer, 2007; Vecina & Fernando, 2013; Vernon & Foster, 2002). Student-led initiatives that have long histories are for example USKOR (which later became Matie Community Service) at SU, and Students' Health and Welfare Centre Organisation (SHAWCO) at the University of Cape Town (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Thomson et al., 2011). The benefits of volunteering have been studied extensively and include enhanced personal development, improved self-esteem and sense of well-being, enhanced interpersonal skills and developing graduate attributes, amongst others (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Snyder & Omoto, 2008; Taylor & Pancer, 2007). Furthermore, Putnam (as cited in Taylor & Pancer, 2007) describes volunteering as building social capital.

Holdsworth and Quinn (2012) argue that since student volunteering is often described as a 'win-win' situation for the different parties involved, the student volunteer may 'appear a bland and uncontroversial figure' (p. 387). Moreover, they maintain that it is unrealistic to assume that the advantages of volunteering are spontaneous and self-evident. Holdsworth and Quinn (2012) further argue that because of the strong belief in the advantages of volunteering for the university, student and community, the students are often placed in a difficult position of having to help rectify the image of the university with the particular communities. However, in reality these unnoticed

representatives of the university may embody the exact tensions that they are expected to address or challenge. These tensions may include class differences, power imbalances between the university and community (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012), and in a racialized society like South Africa, also the issue of race. This conflicting situation or 'paradoxical space' as described by Rose (as cited in Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012, p. 386), may indeed present challenges for the students.

The background provided above informs the rationale for including student volunteer leaders in this study. In other words, when keeping in mind that student volunteer programmes are often lead and managed by students (with some financial support and limited training from the university), the guided reflection and theoretical underpinning as with service-learning modules, are starkly absent. Even without these elements, the students involved in volunteer activities may still experience the same (potentially) transformative effects as those in service-learning programmes, based on the premise that they are engaging with other people. This context as described, therefore, places student volunteers, especially the project leaders, in a very vulnerable position. Furthermore, this particular section of the student population may provide rich insight into their nuanced experiences and even challenge the normalized notion of volunteering as 'a good thing' (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012, p. 387).

The engagement *context* is also recognized as an important influence in the learning and transformative processes that take place through CE (Kiely, 2005; Strain, 2005; Thomson et al., 2011). In light thereof, and especially in a diverse society like South Africa with its apartheid history and the pervasive poverty and socio-economic inequality (Akanbi, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016), the CE context may pose various challenges for university students, staff members and community partners involved.

The SU historical context in particular provides a unique background for the practice of CE, considering that 'this university served as the bedrock for the formulation of the policy of apartheid' (Fransman, 2015). Even though the university has made progress towards inclusion and

transformation, some students and the public still perceive the university to be slow in transformation and exclusionary through its language policy that foregrounds the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner culture (Fransman, 2015). The university still has a predominantly White student and staff demographic (SU, 2017). Perspectives of exclusion and discrimination have also been highlighted by the 2015 documentary *Luister* (an Afrikaans word that means *Listen*) through the student activist group Open Stellenbosch, on some students' experiences at SU (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF3rTBQTQk4). With CE taking place in mostly Coloured[3] and Black communities that surround the campus, it is imperative to take into account the university's racialized historical relationship as exclusionary towards these surrounding communities. Even though contemporary students at SU are introduced to a university with reformed current policies and social transformation intentions, the troubled history may nevertheless underlie their engagement with surrounding communities in direct or indirect ways.

Essentially, CE in South Africa broadly, and in Stellenbosch particularly, constitutes a double-diverse context. Students from various racial groups in the first instance attend class and live with other university students on campus who are often culturally and socio-economically different from themselves. In many instances they speak a different language as well (Constandius et al., 2014). Second, students engage with project participants in communities who are in many instances also diverse in different ways (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2011, 2012, 2015). In the aftermath of the Group Areas Act (Act 41 of 1950) and the canon of acts on separate development that sanctioned people from different races to live and work in separate geographic communities, even after 22 years of democracy, very little racial integration and meaningful contact takes place between people of different racial groups in South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, 2010; Tredoux

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[3] Racial terms such as 'Coloured', 'Black', and 'White' as used in this dissertation refer to the provisions set under the apartheid government. Although I am opposed to racial classification of people and the division it creates, yet in order to contextualize the inequalities that exist in society it is important to refer to historical labels of racial classification (Williams, 2007).

& Finchilescu, 2010). Furthermore, members of various racial groups hold preconceived ideas about one another, which add a dynamic of fear of the unknown to the students' engagement experience (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, 2010; Naudé, 2012).

Nonetheless, CE, for the most part, takes place between the universities' staff and students, and Coloured and Black communities (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014; Isaacs, Rose, & Davids, 2016; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2011, 2012, 2015). Therefore, focusing on multiple levels such as the individual, interpersonal, university, community and society is especially necessary since the South African social context entails diversity of people, groups, cultures, language and socio-economic conditions. These social differences are particularly complex within the South African context given the pernicious, oppressive manner in which society used to be divided along racial lines to ensure White supremacy under the guise of separate development. This influenced many spheres of life, including education (Naidoo, Pretorius, & Nicholas, 2017). Therefore, any study that concerns itself with CE should be cognizant of the intersection of race and socio-economic differences.

In addition to how they may personally benefit from the experience, students also have the potential to effect change in communities through CE (Constandius et al., 2014; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012), which highlights their critical role in CE's overall mission of working towards social change (Swords & Kiely, 2010). Related is the notion that involvement in CE, based on the contact theory, may challenge students' views and may transform their views of other people – which may include stereotypes and prejudice (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000, 2008; Naudé, 2012, 2015).

The South African higher education landscape has recently experienced a moment of awakening when students nationwide protested against several issues. These included exorbitant fee increases (under the social media hashtag #FeesMustFall), calls for decolonization of curricula and speaking out against institutionalized racism (under the social media hashtag #RhodesMustfall and in Stellenbosch through the activist group Open Stellenbosch), issues with regard to non-

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permanently employed support staff at universities (Molefe, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2016), and protests against a rape culture at universities. Through these protests, student demonstrated how connected universities are to other organs of state and the public. Moreover, they also demonstrated that they are a powerful cohort of society that can effect transformative change (Molefe, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2016). It should be noted that data collection for this study took place before the different waves of student protests, yet it is noted here as important contextual information. Nevertheless, this study not only aims to highlight the importance of ensuring students' well-being through their involvement in CE activities, but it also draws attention to awareness of other social dynamics that may inform their experiences and their efforts through the engagement projects.

To clarify, the implication is not that engagement programmes and research generally neglect the broader societal issues, but literature does understate how differences such as race, language, and socio-economic circumstances, which are considered societal issues, may influence participants' experiences cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally and interpersonally. These differences may create underlying nuances that go unnoticed, under-examined and understated, despite its possible effect on the process and outcomes of engagement for various role players.

Considering that the effects of CE on the individual are often of a psychological nature (e.g. enhanced self-esteem, personal growth, an emotional endeavour, empathy with others, enhanced interpersonal skills), points to positioning this research in the psychology domain. When considering the multiple levels of interaction involved (the students, communities, universities), a CP perspective offers a systemic approach that studies the individual, interpersonal and the societal (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Furthermore, CP comprises various modes of intervention, from direct individual intervention to indirect intervention. Examples include preventative activities and advocacy (Naidoo & Van Wyk, 2003; Naidoo, Van Wyk, & Carolissen, 2008); interventions that are situated on a continuum ranging from ameliorative to transformative (Nelson & Prilleltensky,

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2010); or engagement as transactional, transitional or transformational (Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans, 2010).

Research Questions and Aims

In light of this dynamic South African and SU background as described above, this research endeavoured to explore the psychosocial aspects that inform the CE context. Furthermore, this study aimed to explore how students construct these psychological and psychosocial aspects through their engagement experiences. CE is not an isolated activity for students, so the perceptions of university staff members and community programme representatives also received attention. Based on the literature that suggests that student volunteers' experiences need further exploration, the present study included students that are involved in CE as part of their service-learning modules (academic credit-bearing) and student project leaders that are involved as volunteers (non-academic-credit-bearing) to provide a more nuanced explication of the engagement experiences from different perspectives.

The research questions that were developed to achieve these aims included:

1   How do participants describe the role or relevance of psychology within the CE process?

2   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the individual level of analysis?

3   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the interpersonal level of analysis?

4   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the university context that may inform engagement?

5   What are the aspects related to the community organizations and communities that may inform CE?

6   What are the aspects related to the broader societal context that may inform CE?

Method of Enquiry

The explorative aims of the study informed the primary motivation for embarking on a qualitative journey. This reasoning was in accordance with what Flick (2014) suggests in that a quantitative or qualitative approach should be selected based on how it corresponds with the research questions that the study aims to answer. Given the explorative research aims and its location within a constructivist worldview, the study is geared towards asking questions that aim to understand the engagement context, participants' construction of their experiences of engagement, and how people made sense of that interaction, rather than determining the number of people that held certain views or shared particular experiences (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004).

The study design can be defined as a generic qualitative enquiry. More specifically, it is based on what Hood (2007) describes as the Generic Inductive Qualitative Model (GIQM). It refers to research that is based on qualitative research strategies used in grounded theory, yet differs from grounded theory on certain criteria. This particular distinction is outlined in the methodology chapter of this dissertation. I selected strategies deemed appropriate to answer the research questions in a manner that would be methodologically and epistemologically sound. Silverman (2013) proposes that research models or designs are not necessarily right or wrong, just more or less suitable. The right design therefore depends on the research questions and overall aims of the study. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for qualitative researchers to follow a more generic approach and draw from different research strategies in a single study to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2014; Jensen, 2010). The discussion on methodology provides detailed motivation of the research strategies used in the different stages of the present study.

In keeping with grounded theory strategies, the research process was cyclical, inductive and became more focused as the study progressed (Charmaz, 2014). The chosen methodology also supports the use of various data collection methods, in this case individual semi-structured, in-depth

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interviews and focus groups (Flick, 2014). These methods, in turn, are geared towards gaining a better understanding of the topics under exploration. Interview and focus group data were collected among students, university staff members involved in CE and community programme representatives. The resulting verbatim transcriptions of interviews and focus groups were managed and analysed with the assistance of computer software programme ATLAS.ti version 7 (Friese, 2014). Various coding strategies were applied and themes were constructed grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2009).

In an effort to provide a psychological perspective of the transformative process of CE, I applied a CP lens with its multilevel focus (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). I also drew on various other psychological approaches and the social sciences in general to form a basis for the interpretation of the findings. These include basic principles of group processes in psychological counselling (Corey, 2004; Yalom, 1985); interpersonal and intergroup theories and concepts from social psychology and critical CP (Dixon & Levine, 2012; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Montero, 2011; Pickering, 2001; Suffla, Seedat, & Bawa, 2015). Moreover, since the transformative potential of CE has been widely recognized, transformative theories were also used in explicating the engagement process (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000, 2008; Naudé, 2012, 2015; Swords & Kiely, 2010).

Positioning of the Present Research in CP

The present dissertation proposes that CE includes a significant psychological dimension and therefore positions the present study in the domain of psychology. The discipline of psychology is broad and a number of sub-disciplines may have been appropriate for framing the current research. However, the chosen field of interest and the field that best harmonizes with the principles and rationale of CE is that of CP (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Some of the principles that coincide with both CP and CE include, but are not limited to, an ecological perspective; community

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development towards social change; prevention; empowerment; holistic perspective; and respect for diversity (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Furthermore, CP supports a multi-level perspective of the issues under exploration, and is a growing sub-discipline of psychology that has been applied in various contexts (Amer, El-Sayed, Fayad, & Khoury, 2015; Kalafat, 2000; Lazarus, Bulbulia, Taliep, & Naidoo, 2015; Makkawi, 2015). CP is considered both a sub-discipline and an approach to psychology (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). It fundamentally considers people in relation to their immediate environment and broader social environments. It considers individuals, groups and communities as clients and emphasizes prevention of disease and health promotion. CP is concerned with the empowerment of people to cope with their life circumstances; and embraces cultural relativity and diversity (Naidoo, Duncan, Roos, Pillay, & Bowman, 2008; Naidoo, Shabalala, & Bawa, 2003; Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001). CP is also concerned with research and action through what has been termed 'praxis'; and is committed to the pursuit of social justice (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Prilleltensky, 2001).

Various aspects related to the orientation and work of CP has been captured in the following broad definition of the field:

> *Community psychology offers a framework for working with those marginalised by the social system that leads to self-aware social change with an emphasis on value-based, participatory work and the forging of alliances. It is a way of working that is pragmatic and reflexive, whilst not wedded to any particular orthodoxy of method. As such, community psychology is one alternative to the dominant individualistic psychology typically taught and practiced in the high income countries. It is community psychology because it emphasises a level of analysis and intervention other than the individual and their immediate interpersonal context. It is community psychology because it is nevertheless concerned with how people feel,*

think, experience, and act as they work together, resisting oppression and struggling to create a better world. (Burton, Boyle, Harris, & Kagan, 2007, p. 219)

CP with its multifaceted nature is therefore an appropriate lens through which to study the psychosocial aspects related to CE. CP at its core links with CE through its foundational principles of social justice; empowerment; advocacy; prevention; psychological sense of community; and the ecological or holistic perspective of people in relation to their environments (Lazarus et al., 2015; Montero, 1998; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Scileppi, Teed, & Torres, 2000). In other words, these principles that are inherent to the theory and practice of CP resonate with the aims of what community interaction sets out to do, which is to be socially responsive to the broader society (links with social justice, ecological perspective, and psychological sense of community); to share knowledge (links with empowerment); and to lay the foundations for a critical civil society (links with advocacy) (Department of Education, 1997; HEQC, 2006; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; SU Community Interaction Policy, 2009).

From Burton et al.'s (2007) definition, one can draw several links to CE. First, the authors referred to working with groups that are 'marginalized by the social system'. The term community is discussed in the section on contextualizing key terms in the current chapter. For the purpose of this study and given the apartheid background of South Africa, it refers primarily to poor and Black communities that were historically (and in some communities are still in present times) neglected and under-resourced (Thornton & Rampele, as cited in Carolissen, 2006). CE projects particularly in South Africa often collaborate with and are located in marginalized communities that are characterized by high levels of poverty and unemployment, crime, violence, and substance abuse (Constandius et al., 2014; Isaacs et al., 2016; Naudé, 2011, 2015). With CP's perception of being a psychology for the poor, Black population (Carolissen, Rohleder, Bozalek, Swartz, & Leibowitz, 2010) and CE's popular location within marginalized communities, there is a noticeable link to

draw between CP and CE. However, it must be noted that neither CP nor CE is limited to side-lined communities for its practice and applicability.

Secondly, CP aims to work towards social change, especially with the more recent critical CP approaches (Montero, 2011; Suffla et al., 2015). This aim of enabling social change links with the vision of CE as well (Lazarus et al., 2015; Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna, & Slamat, 2008).

The third link between CP and CE that can be drawn from Burton et al.'s (2007) definition above is that of 'participatory work and forging alliances', which are core activities and orientations in both CP and CE (Fynn, Terre Blanche, Fourie, & Kruger, 2012; Graham & Langa, 2015; Lazarus et al., 2015). The fourth link to be drawn is that a pragmatic approach and reflexivity is emphasized in both CP, through reflexive practice in research and application (Suffla et al., 2015), and in CE through the practice of reflection (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).

Furthermore, the amplification of the two words *community* and *psychology* captured in the latter part of the definition is important in this study since it further highlights the connection between CP and CE, which the present research aims to foreground. In other words, the study includes the personal, interpersonal and broader contexts (*community*) and explores the experiences, cognition and emotions (*psychology*) of stakeholders in the CE process.

Finally, the notion of 'resisting oppression and struggling to create a better world', as mentioned in Burton et al.'s (2007) definition, is another relevant component of both CP and CE. In CP, the notion of resistance is mostly directed at a dominant mode of psychology and mainstream psychology's silence about apartheid, particularly in CP's inception years and early democratic phase in South African society (Berger & Lazarus, 1987; Foster, 2008; Lazarus, 1988; Seedat & Lazarus, 2014; Naidoo, 2000). In the same breath, the focus on 'resisting oppression and struggling to create a better world' is present in CE too in the post-apartheid South African higher education context. In other words, by calling for CE to be embedded in the higher education curriculum in South Africa, the government called for higher education institutions to be involved in developing

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students so that they can become socially responsive and aware citizens and to actively participate in solving problems in society (Department of Education, 1997; Lazarus et al., 2008).

Contextualizing and defining key terms

The following key terms are contextualized and defined as used within the parameters of this study: Psychosocial aspects; community; community engagement (CE); service-learning; volunteering; research-based CE; CE projects; and reflection.

Psychosocial aspects. The term psychosocial *aspects* and sometimes used psychosocial *influences* refer to both the psychological and social components that may inform engagement. The psychological components operate primarily on the individual and interpersonal levels, such as the effects or impact of the engagement experience on the students. These may include enhanced self-awareness, personal growth, enjoyment, etc. On the other hand, the social components refer to aspects such as the poverty context, racial and cultural differences and the like. These operate on the university, community and societal levels, but may nevertheless impact the person on individual level.

Community. The term community is understood differently in various contexts globally. SU's community interaction policy states that,

> *The term community signifies a social grouping of society involved in an interaction at any given moment. Community refers to groups of people united by a common location, or to groups of people that are linked intellectually, professionally, and/or politically; that is, geographic communities, communities of interest and communities of practice. This broad definition allows the university to focus on marginalised groupings in society whilst at the same time including other community formations.* (SU Community Interaction Policy, 2009, p.3)

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In the South African context particularly, the term community is typically used to refer to Black or Coloured communities (Ngonyama Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004). Although not exclusively, these usually Black and Coloured communities often host CE projects such as those included in the present research.

The communities classified as marginalized were largely created by the Group Areas Act (Act 41 of 1950), which sought to ensure that the different sections of the population do not live together. In that sense, the use of the term community is also politically infused (Ngonyama Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004; Thornton & Ramphele cited in Carolissen, 2006). The communities classified as Coloured, Black or Indian received differential resources and public services and the least investment by the state. Consequently, marginalized communities were often characterized by material poverty, poor public service delivery and amenities. Unfortunately, even 22 years into a democratic South Africa, the Coloured and Black communities, in particular, still experience the same or remnants of these social conditions. Community, therefore, refers to much more than living in common geographical space.

Additionally, this common association of the term community in the South African context with predominantly Black and marginalized communities, has added to the perception of CP as a psychology for poor, marginalized and mostly Black people (Carolissen et al., 2010; Ngonyama Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004). The term community and its varied meanings have been criticized widely, including the forewarning that the term community may in some instances be used to refer to race. On the other hand, the use of the inclusive term *communities* as including different kinds of communities – or different races – may also be problematic, as it may refrain from engaging with issues of race, structural inequalities and privilege (Ngonyama Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004). The use of the term community in South Africa is therefore complex and generally not neutral.

Community engagement (CE). CE refers to various initiatives of higher education institutions together with external organizations and communities, with the aim of knowledge

exchange and benefit for both the university and the engagement partners (HEQC, 2006; Petersen & Osman, 2013). In South African universities and specifically at Stellenbosch University where this study is located, CE includes service-learning, volunteering and research-based activities (SU Community Interaction Policy, 2009). The newly adopted Social Impact Strategic Plan 2017-2022 prefers the use of the term social impact to refer to activities involving curricular and co-curricular engagements with social groupings within and outside the university, based on reciprocal involvement and for mutual benefit of both, and towards social justice and social change (SU, 2016).

Various universities in South Africa conceptualize CE differently, but all include concepts such as reciprocity and mutual benefit (Thomson et al., 2011). As mentioned previously, the term *community engagement* in this study refers to the comprehensive view that includes service-learning, student volunteerism and research-based interaction between universities and communities. However, when referring to the findings of this study, CE includes only service-learning and volunteerism, since no students in predominantly research-based interactions were included in the study.

Service-learning. Service-learning is concerned with CE as part of or as an entire academic module. It usually includes some form of interaction with members, organizations or communities outside of the university and involves opportunities for reflection as part of the module structure (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Thomson et al., 2011). In service-learning, both the students and community participants and organization are said to benefit from the service. As such, the students learn through their engagement and in particular from the action of reflecting on the service. The community organization or specific participants (either learners or service-users of the organization) benefit from the service rendered by the students (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; HEQC, 2006).

Volunteering. Volunteering or student volunteerism is concerned with students' non-academic credit-bearing involvement in CE programmes, essentially as acts of humanity. Through

these activities 'the primary beneficiary is the recipient *community* and the primary goal is to provide a *service*… Although students may learn from these programmes, they are generally not related to, or integrated into, the students' field of study' (HEQC, 2006, p. 14, emphasis in original). These programmes take on various forms, of which the most common are after-school academic assistance; sport participation and sport skills development; life skills and leadership development; and career guidance. Students take part in the project activities based on their personal motivation and according to their available time outside the normal tuition hours (HEQC, 2006).

Research-based CE. This sphere of engagement puts research activities at the forefront of the engagement activities. Usually these research projects follow action research and community-based participatory research approaches (HEQC, 2006). This study specifically includes service-learning and volunteering spheres of CE, as these areas have a longer history at the university and offer more interaction time between students and members of participating communities than the research-based engagement. This is not to say that the research stream is not very active at SU, it was merely excluded to keep the research more focused.

CE projects. Participants in the present research were involved in projects that were located in the service-learning and volunteer sub-sections. CE projects take on various forms globally and there should therefore be some clarification of what types of projects were included in this study.

Projects in service-learning included school-time and after-school academic assistance by engineering students; individual counselling, family assistance, group work and community interventions in the social work programme; and a project on career guidance for high school learners by psychology students.

In the volunteering sub-section, the projects included after-school academic assistance; leadership and life skills programmes for primary and high school learners. Life skills in these programmes included topics such as substance use, sex, HIV, and teenage pregnancy, and self-esteem. Another project by a female students' residence was focused on care for and spending time

with people with disabilities one evening per week during the semester. It is also important to mention here that the emphasis in this research was not on evaluating the projects, but on understanding the students' experiences of their involvement on different levels.

Reflection. Reflection as a core practice of service-learning has been widely acknowledged and emphasized as the critical link that brings together theory and the experience gained from the engagement (Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson, 2005; Collier & Williams, 2005; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). The most effective reflection is said to be 'continuous' (before, during and after engagement); 'challenging' (going beyond the personal comfort zones and creating new links); 'connected' (link between classroom knowledge and practical experience); and 'contextualized' (related to the context in which the engagement takes place) (Collier & Williams, 2005, p. 83). The term critical reflection is also used in the literature to refer to dealing with issues of power, inequality, positionality (Constandius et al., 2014). In that sense, critical reflection moves the core focus of reflection as a traditionally self-directed exercise towards broader social issues (Swords & Kiely, 2010).

Significance of the study

Since the study is located within a culturally complex and diverse institution, namely SU, and within the multi-cultural South African context, an exploration of the individual and interpersonal dimensions of CE will offer invaluable knowledge to theory and practice alike. The research findings will be useful in the conceptualization, facilitation and management of CE programmes, as they will highlight the important, yet often understated psychosocial dynamics undergirding the process of CE. However, the study also includes the broader university, community and societal dimensions in accordance with its multi-level approach through CP. The inclusion of students, staff and community programme representatives as role players in CE further broadens the scope of the study as it illuminates a variety of perspectives of the process. For this reason, the findings can be useful for the conceptualization, management and implementation of CE programmes, as they

firstly highlight the importance of student well-being and preparation for engaging with diverse communities, and secondly offer an understanding with regard to the contextual factors that inform CE in the South African higher education context.

Chapter Summary

The current chapter provided the background and rationale for this research. It discussed the growing emphasis of CE at higher education institutions worldwide and in South Africa. I then presented literature on the notion that students are affected by the engagement, whether they are in service-learning programmes or involved as volunteers. The importance of including both groups was stated. The discussion then outlined the research aims and questions based on the developed argument, indicating a need for the further exploration of contextual influences on the process of CE, especially in the diverse South African context. An overview of the method of enquiry in this research followed. I then positioned this research in the field of CP as I drew several links between CE and CP. I subsequently contextualized and defined the terms community, community engagement, service-learning, volunteerism and presented examples of CE projects. The discussion continued to define the terms reflection and critical reflection. The significance of this research was then briefly outlined.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is presented in seven chapters. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to CE as part of a broader global movement and a discussion of the most prominent themes related to the process of CE, including the effects of CE on the individual in relation to the environment. It also provides theoretical perspectives that will help to understand and interpret the findings. These include an overview of transformative learning theories; Kolb's experiential learning theory; theories on social contact and interpersonal relationships; group processes within psychological group counselling; and an outline of selected CP values and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as an overall organizing framework.

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Chapter 3 gives an account of the research methodology that was followed in the present study. I situate this research in a constructivist framework and provide a rationale for following a generic approach to grounded theory. The chapter also describes the research context, the procedures to recruit participants, the data collection process, and the data analysis process using ATLAS.ti version 7.

The research findings are presented in three chapters. Chapter 4 presents the findings related to the individual level of analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the findings related to the interpersonal level of analysis.

Chapter 6 presents the findings related to the university context, community organization and community context in a broader sense, and findings related to the societal level of analysis.

Chapter 7 provides a discussion and integration of the findings to offer a synthesized overview on the psychosocial aspects that influence the CE context at various levels of analysis and the influence of these aspects on the experiences of university students.

Lastly, Chapter 8 provides a summary of the main findings in relation to the research aims, and concludes the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

'I think whether it is service-learning, community-based research or volunteering

as structured learning, there is the opportunity to not just interact with other

people, to be reconciled to them, but also to gain self-knowledge'

(Abraham, SU Staff member)

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of current literature on various aspects of CE that relates to the research focus. I also provide the theoretical perspectives used for interpreting the findings. These include theories on transformational learning and perspectives from psychology.

CE in the South African higher education landscape

The sections below offer a discussion of the following relevant themes from the literature on the South African higher education context:

- CE as a national mandate;

- CE as a nascent vehicle towards societal transformation; and

- Awareness of power imbalance and inequality.

CE as a national mandate. Chapter 1 offered an outline of the background to this research. The current section examines the CE context of universities in SA in more detail as it forms an important part of the broader engagement context. In his preamble to the White Paper (Department of Education, 1997), the then Minister of Higher Education, Professor Bengu, highlighted the need for a single countrywide coordinated system of higher education. According to the ministry, this move would complement efforts to address the 'fragmentation, inequality, and inefficiency which is the legacy of the past, and create a learning society which releases the creative and intellectual

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energies of all our people towards meeting the goals of reconstruction and development'
(Department of Education, 1997, p. 3). CE activities, predominantly in the form of community
service and outreach, have a long history at South African universities and other higher education
institutions. Nonetheless, the White Paper on the transformation of higher education of 1997 has
helped to formalize and emphasize CE activities and mandated it as part of the core responsibilities
of higher education institutions. As such, CE had to be integrated with teaching and learning, and
research as a means to enrich the learning experience with 'a deeper sense of context, locality and
application'. Students should be developed as socially responsible and aware citizens (HEQC/ JET,
2006, p. 11).

Furthermore, CE in its various forms (including service-learning, volunteerism and research),
provides a vehicle through which universities can become involved in shaping the social landscape
and is a means to 'disrupt social isolation' (Lazarus et al., 2008; Tatum, cited in Naudé, 2012).
Moreover, CE has been positioned as a 'scholarly activity' (HEQC/ JET, 2006, p. 12), which draws
on Boyer's (1990) notion of various forms of scholarship. This conceptualization of CE as scholarly
activity is central to developing students as active citizens post-university, and to generating
relevant and applicable knowledge for South African society (HEQC/ JET, 2006; Smith-Tolken,
2010; Thomson et al., 2011). The focus, therefore, shifted from mere student learning through
practical experience, to engendering broader social impact. In this regard, Bhattacharyya (cited in
Constandius et al., 2014) emphasizes that if the development of agency is the goal of CE, then there
should be a move away from providing services *to* communities towards working *with* communities
to address pressing social issues. Similarly, Douglas (2012) proposes a shift from *what* activities we
use to engage, towards *how* we engage. Moreover, Thomson et al. (2011) argue that the term
service in itself may hold remnants of the 'master-servant relationship and the paternalistic,
charitable activities that were typical manifestations of this grossly unequal relationship dynamic'
(p. 224).

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Following the White Paper (Department of Education, 1997), national efforts were initiated to assist universities to conceptualize, plan, systemically organize and integrate CE at the various campuses. This was done by means of the Joint Education Trust's Community–Higher Education–Service Partnership (CHESP) initiative, funded by the Ford Foundation (HEQC, 2006; Lazarus et al., 2008; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012). A good practice guide was developed to assist with auditing and monitoring the quality of universities' CE efforts (HEQC, 2006). Other CHESP initiatives included capacity building programmes as a core priority for university staff members, which included national workshops, graduate programmes and a 'train the service learning trainer programme' (Lazarus et al., 2008, pp. 71-72). Lazarus et al. (2008) identify five key supporting or enabling mechanisms that can facilitate the development and cementing of CE at university level:

> *The most critical enabling mechanisms include: (1) the appointment of an executive person responsible for community engagement; (2) establishing a campus presence through an office for community engagement; (3) appointing a senior academic and support staff responsible for operationalizing community engagement; (4) establishing institution-wide and faculty-based committees for community engagement; and (5) including community engagement in staff promotion and reward systems* (Lazarus et al., 2008, p. 68).

CE has, however, been criticized for the lack of an overarching conceptual framework to guide its practice at South African higher education institutions (Le Grange, 2007). Furthermore, although the mandate of CE has been made clear in the national policy, activities at universities were mostly uncoordinated and predominantly based on individual motivation of university staff and students, rather than deliberate strategic efforts (Lazarus et al., 2008). Furthermore, Thomson et al. (2011) note that the funding support by the government to help implement the mandate at university level was inadequate. This in turn implies that pressure is put on universities to balance all other roles. Olowu (2012) further notes a lacuna in the literature with regard to bench-marking of

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CE in South Africa. However, the varied contexts of universities across the country may complicate this endeavour.

The literature therefore points out that even though CE is nationally mandated and at a policy level integrated into the core functions of universities, the implementation of CE and consequently the success of endeavours at universities are varied.

CE as a nascent vehicle towards societal transformation. There is ambiguous evidence regarding the goal of societal transformation through CE at higher education institutions (Dempsey, 2010; Leibowitz, 2012). CE stops short of wide-ranging social impact and its potential to transform society remains largely unfulfilled (Constandius et al., 2014; Leibowitz, 2012). Moreover, for the most part, CE activities are more in favour of the university than the collaborating communities (Constandius et al., 2014), and in that sense universities may remain powerful institutions that perpetuate the idea that they are exclusionary (Badat, as cited in Leibowitz, 2012).

On the other hand, CE can be potentially transformative because it stimulates engagement on current issues by the CE participants and the broader community, providing students with tools and motivation to address social issues and fostering a multifaceted understanding of intricacies within South African society (Ebersöhn, Bender, & Carvalho-Malekane, 2010; Thomson et al., 2011). CE is potentially transformative since it exposes students to various social backgrounds through the engagement process (Berman & Allen, 2012; Brown, 2011; Constandius et al., 2014; Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2011).

However, Durrheim and Dixon (2005) caution that exposure to various cultures may on the one hand lead to transformed thinking about other people, and on the other hand it may perpetuate stereotypical thinking based on race, culture and socio-economic circumstances. The chances for the latter to happen are more probable if the traditional power imbalance is upheld (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). In a similar vein, Dempsey (2010) argues that even though the engagement may be

presented in the guise of empowerment, the unequal relationship still has the potential to amplify the inequality within the relationship.

Maistry and Thakrar (2012) foreground the importance of preparing students for engagement in an effort to counter the risk of perpetuating stereotypical thinking or causing harm to the collaborating communities. This focus emerged from their belief that students are both mediators or representatives and recipients through the process of CE (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012).

Programmes that are geared towards societal transformation should be grounded in critical thinking that grows from critical reflection (Constandius et al., 2014). The role of critical reflection is to help unpack and deconstruct current ways of thinking and doing to ultimately introduce different approaches. When considering that students from the same programmes or studies can make comments that point to stereotypical thinking while others make comments that point to transformed thinking (Constandius et al., 2014), reveals that students' own motivations and the extent to which they engage, may play a role in the transformative potential of CE.

Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature on the critical reflection by the lecturers involved in CE. Constandius et al. (2014) mention that if critical reflective practice assists students in deconstructing old ways of thinking, it may potentially do the same for lecturers. In a similar vein, Carolissen et al. (2010) assert the need for CE, service-learning in particular to be scrutinized as it is often uncritical concerning the diverse contexts it is taught in. As such, they foreground a human capabilities approach to pedagogy allowing for the inclusion of the diverse social realities and consider power in the teaching relationship. At the same time, the approach emphasizes lecturers' own reflexivity, which may be favourable for the CE process (Carolissen et al., 2010). The potential of CE to be transformative may be widened, as the lecturers' role in designing programmes and modules and facilitating the process of CE is invaluable.

Awareness of power imbalance and inequality. When considering the transformative potential of CE, one should also consider power imbalances that may influence the engagement

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space. This is especially important in the South African context, where society is considered one of the most unequal in the world, with a Gini coefficient of an estimated 0.7 based on the Living Condition Survey 2008-2009 (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

Dempsey (2010) argues that CE for the most part 'downplays the complexity of community, abstracting and absolving important divisions and power structures in the process. As a result they misleadingly assume a unity and homogeneity [within communities] that rarely exists' (p. 360). This watered-down view of community and the question of power within university-community relationship should be considered as this may influence not only the engagement process, but also the outcome (Dempsey, 2010).

Structural inequalities too may place university members and community members in different positions in relation to each other. This can accentuate power differentials, as issues of agenda setting, funding and decision-making play a role (Constandius et al., 2014; Dempsey, 2010). Some researchers suggest that collaborative processes, critical reflexivity, open dialogue, power sharing and acknowledging the strength that both partners bring to the relationship help to equalize power imbalances (Lazarus, Naidoo, May, Williams, Demas, & Filander , 2014; Lazarus, Seedat, & Naidoo, 2017; Marais, Naidoo, Donson, & Nortje, 2007; Osman & Attwood, 2007; Strier, 2011; Suffla et al., 2015).

Berman and Allen (2012, p. 83) highlight that being exposed to situations of inequality brings to the fore issues of 'identity, positionality and the responsibility that comes with privilege in an unequal society'. As mentioned previously, this space could potentially be a catalyst for change or the reinforcement of stereotypes. The importance of guided reflection is once again emphasized as one cannot assume transformed thinking and willingness to engage with these issues. Naudé (2012) warns that discomfort around issues of inequality without facilitated boundary crossing, or guided reflection, may conjure resistance from some students as they would prefer to remain in their

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comfort zones, and in turn may elevate the perpetuation of stereotypical thinking towards people from different cultures.

In his book, *Knowledge in the Blood*, Jansen (cited in Naudé, 2012, p. 230) refers to the spaces in which White students grew up as 'insular'. Their way of life and thinking were cemented, as they had limited exposure to the life world of other cultural groups than their own. Naudé (2012) further notes that this shortage of exposure to other cultural groups may have led to elevated perceptions of difference. However, for many students these perceptions were disproven when they entered engagement settings in new and different environments than their familiar spaces (Berman & Allen, 2012; Naudé, 2012; 2015). Individual students respond differently to this exposure to new environments, and these differences depend on their motivations for the engagement (for example, wanting to make a difference or for learning purposes) and whether they engaged by choice or as compulsory part of an academic course (Constandius et al., 2014; Prinsloo, 2015).

Benefits, influences and effects of CE on students

The next section presents the literature that relates to students' experiences of CE in various contexts.

Academic enhancement. Several authors identify academic enhancement as a benefit of student involvement in CE (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Isaacs et al., 2016; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012). Students indicated in one study that they had grown in their critical thinking abilities (Van Rensburg, 2007) as they were often forced to interrogate concepts previously taken for granted. They saw CE as a means of learning that some felt cannot be achieved through class-based lectures alone. In a similar vein, CE provided an ideal space for students to gain relevant field experience during which they could observe the interaction between theory and practice and in some instances, the mismatch between theory and practice (Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Prinsloo, 2015). Correspondingly, students also interrogated different approaches and models relevant to their field of study through the engagement process (Ebersöhn et

al. 2010; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012). Furthermore, students gained insight into their career choices and possible career paths (Kiely, 2005; Taylor & Pancer, 2007)

Personal growth. Studies consistently report that personal growth occurs through CE (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014; Gross & Maloney, 2012). Students became more self-reflexive and self-aware as they discovered various aspects of themselves and skills that they did not know they had (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2012; 2015; Van Rensburg, 2007). Students also benefitted from the opportunities to grow their leadership, management skills and self-confidence in speaking a second language (Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Isaacs et al., 2016). Problem-solving skills were also honed as part of the process, as students' plans seldom unfolded according to their schedule. Linked with this was the caution to remain flexible and to adapt to changing circumstances (Isaacs et al., 2016; Prinsloo, 2015).

Additionally, students develop moral reasoning through CE as they are exposed to knowledge that may be upsetting to 'cognitive and moral frameworks, [that] broadens the heart's constrained habits, and enlivens our moral imagination and sense of agency' (Strain, 2005, p. 71). As such, it is challenging to an individual's deepest core (Strain, 2005). Brown (2011) furthermore reports enhanced empathy for other people through engagement.

Engaging with diverse cultures. Students in several studies mentioned that involvement in CE was meaningful to them because of the opportunity to work with different cultures. This was true of South African students working among other South Africans (Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Naudé, 2015; Prinsloo, 2015; Van Rensburg, 2007) and internationally (Amerson, 2010; Brown, 2011; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Kiely, 2005). Due to South Africa's fragmented past, it is unfortunate, yet not uncommon for some students to have never visited communities that are culturally different from their own; particularly White students that have never been to Black and Coloured communities. Although not without its challenges, CE provides students from various backgrounds the opportunity to engage and cross boundaries – entering unfamiliar environments (Constandius et

al., 2014; Thomson et al., 2011). For some it is a culture shock, an eye-opening experience that raises discomfort and fears because of popular beliefs about rampant crime and violence in Black and Coloured communities (Durrheim, Mtose, & Brown, 2011; Naudé, 2012; Roberts, 2010). On the other hand, CE was not without its nuances for Black and Coloured university students either. For some it was challenging to deal with personal preferences, tradition and culture, and for others it was a pleasant experience like going home and giving back to the communities that they came from (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2012).

Engaging with broader social issues. The engagement environment set the stage for engaging with and reflecting critically on issues of identity (in particular racialized identities), gender, poverty and social inequality (Carolissen et al., 2010; Van Rensburg, 2007). These aspects are important in South African society, which is characterized by vast inequality (Akanbi, 2016) and socially embedded racism (Punt, 2009). The exposure to and engagement with issues of difference therefore provide a space for students to make sense of their own beliefs, positionality and responsibility towards the greater society (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014). Reflecting on these issues also helped students to develop empathy for other people's perspectives and life circumstances and to fuel an enhanced appreciation for students' own lives (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014). For many students, the feeling of contributing to change and making a difference was very motivating (Berman & Allen, 2012; Prinsloo, 2015; Taylor & Pancer, 2007).

On the other hand, Constandius et al. (2014) note that engaging with people from different cultures does not necessarily challenge deep-seated stereotypes in all students. Moreover, some employ the strategy of 'othering' as they distance themselves from their community participants and demonstrate attitudes of superiority (Constandius et al., 2014; Naudé, 2012). Students in the Naudé (2012) study commented that they felt 'elevated' as the White person coming into the community and that the community participants sometimes 'put them on a little throne' (p.231).

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However, the fact that the students were the ones making the comment indicated that it was their beliefs rather than the community members' beliefs. Related to this was the idea of engagement as a means of soothing guilty feelings for past wrongs done to disadvantaged people and for occupying privileged positions in the face of current pervasive inequalities (Constandius et al., 2014). In that regard, Carolissen et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of having students engage with their own notions of identity and their feelings towards the communities they are engaging with through a human capabilities pedagogical strategy.

To conclude, the benefits, influences and effects of CE on students are essentially multi-layered. It involves growth on the personal and academic front and enhanced awareness of social issues (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014) coupled with awareness of their social responsibility as active citizens (Naudé, 2012, 2015). Moreover, students' engagement experience destabilizes their prior conceptions and motivates them to become more active citizens (Berman & Allen, 2012). The vast range of possible influences that CE may have on students illuminates the need for a stronger focus on the psychosocial dimension in the conceptualization and implementation of CE programmes and modules. The current research aims to inform this area in literature by providing detailed descriptions of the students' constructions of how they were influenced psychosocially through the process of engagement.

Important Questions Raised in Current CE Literature

Literature has raised several critical questions with regard to CE. To begin with, the potential of CE at universities is often 'stunted on account of political issues' (Constandius et al., 2014, p. 119). In other words, besides implementing the mandate of CE, universities face other demands that may counter their work on CE. Furthermore, Constandius et al. (2014) alert us to the idea that if not carefully considered, CE may possibly present a risk for a 'double standard' concerning the social responsibility of the university. They explained that as universities focus on CE, these activities

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shift the focus from the university's intra-institutional transformation imperatives, including staff and students' attitudes and actions (Constandius et al., 2014).

In addition, there is concern about possible conflict over the core aims and responsibilities of universities. Universities are expected to educate students for the labour market to contribute towards the local and global economic goals. These goals in some instances may become more emphasized than holistic development, especially the soft skills of the students as socially responsible citizens (Constandius et al., 2014; Douglas, 2012). Correspondingly, Maistry and Thakrar (2012) emphasize their concern about how students are prepared before they enter into CE activities, which according to them is an aspect sorely neglected in the literature. The preparation (and I would add, psychosocial support) is important to address, since the potential to cause harm to collaborating communities through CE or the possibility that stereotypes can become reinforced through engagement, are real concerns. Taylor and Pancer (2007) also emphasize that students who felt supported during their engagement experience are more likely to continue to volunteer after the initial engagement. Furthermore, Maistry and Thakrar (2012) note that even though some students in their study realized the ambitions of CE towards societal transformation, they did not see themselves as agents of change in that process. This finding illuminates the need for direct awareness raising efforts about the self in relation to others within a broader system to reach the goal of developing students towards active citizenship (Constandius et al., 2014; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012).

With regard to research, Kiely (2005) mentions that the field of service-learning has focused greatly on the impact of the engagement experience on students' learning. He aptly notes that these foci may be motivated by 'institutional pressure to prove that service-learning is more than fluff' (p. 5). As a result, research that generates theory has been sorely lacking. In response, Kiely (2005) developed the transformational service-learning process model, which is discussed later in the section on theoretical perspectives. There remains a call for more research on the contextual

influences that lead to the impact or effects that fill the research papers on service-learning (Kiely, 2005). On the other hand, Nduna (2007) outlines the varied expectations that community organizations had of the students and university. There is also a call for more research that provides the perspectives of community members in the engagement relationship.

To conclude, given this multi-layered context and demands on universities (and particularly the students), a study of how students' development is influenced by the process of CE, is essential. It is precisely this human dimension of CE and a holistic approach to students' development that the present study aims to foreground if the ideal of societal transformation through CE is to be kept alive.

Theoretical Perspectives on CE in Current Literature

CE can be understood from various theoretical perspectives. It does not have an overarching theoretical framework, which is a valid criticism one can level at the available scholarly material on the subject (Le Grange, 2007; Smith-Tolken, 2010). Indeed, it allows for confusion about what could be considered CE and how to explain the processes related to the field. Contrary to this view, the lack of an overarching framework may also be positioned as an advantage, since it allows scholars in the field to look at this multi-faceted enterprise through different theoretical lenses. In the current section I present some of the prominent theories that were used to interpret the findings in this research (as illustrated in Table 1 on the following page).

Table 1

Theoretical Framework of this Study

Orientation	Theories
Transformative learning perspectives	Fundamentals of transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 2000)
	Transformational service-learning process model (Kiely, 2005)
	Fundamentals of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984)
Psychological perspectives	Fundamentals of social identity theory
	Fundamentals of the social contact hypothesis
	Stages of group processes (Corey et al, 2014; Yalom, 1985)
	Community psychological perspective
	Critical CP
	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of child development (1977, 1979)

Transformative Learning Theories

Transformative learning theories (Table 1) are relevant in the multicultural South African context where students have to engage with people, groups or cultures that are different from their own. Although the transformative learning theories were developed in the field of adult education (Mezirow, 2008) and applied in service-learning in particular (Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2015), I refer to them in this study in relation to both service-learning and volunteerism as processes during which university students learn and grow experientially.

Fundamentals of Mezirow's transformation theory. Mezirow introduces the notion of transformational learning in the field of adult education and emphasizes the importance of context in our experiences. Context includes the 'biographical', 'historical' and 'cultural' (Mezirow, 2000, p. 3). According to Mezirow, each individual has a set of *meaning perspectives* or ways of viewing the world that develop from childhood. These perspectives determine how we think the world is supposed to be and form the building blocks to our *frames of reference*. Consequently, we use these frames of reference to filter the new knowledge we obtain (Mezirow, 2000). Furthermore, he

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proposes that our frames of reference are in turn made up of *points of views* and *habits of mind*. However, when individuals encounter new information that is contrary to how they normally view the world, they experience what he called a *disorienting dilemma* (Mezirow, 2000). A disorienting dilemma challenges current beliefs and prompt people to rethink, reconsider and adapt their views. According to Mezirow (2000, p. 22), transformational learning involves some variant of the following processes of meaning-making or clarification:

1   A disorienting dilemma (an acute and significant occurrence that prompts people to rethink their personal assumptions, values, beliefs, and lifestyle habits (Mezirow, 2000, 2008))

2   Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame

3   A critical assessment of (own and other people's) assumptions

4   Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared

5   Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions

6   Planning a course of action

7   Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8   Provisionally trying new roles

9   Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10   A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

An important aspect of Mezirow's transformation theory for the current study is the notion of 'habits of mind', which is defined as 'broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes or canon may be cultural, social, linguistic, educational, economic, political, psychological, religious, and aesthetic and others' (p. 26). In turn, habits of mind find expression through forming particular 'points of view' on the issues concerned (Mezirow, 2008). More importantly for this study too, Mezirow

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(2008) emphasizes that positive engagement with people from different groups may trigger a re-evaluation of one's points of view about them, but may not necessarily transform habits of mind. The implication of this for CE is that involvement in activities may on a superficial level assist with assessing and challenging stereotypical thinking amongst those involved in the process, but may not necessarily produce long-lasting transformation within the individual.

Furthermore, since students enter diverse communities that may challenge them on different levels so that they experience a disorienting dilemma, the importance of guided critical reflection and psychological support becomes imperative.

Kiely's (2005) transformational service-learning process model. This model was developed based on a longitudinal study of a cross-border service-learning programme of American students in Nicaragua and drew on the work of Mezirow on transformative learning. Kiely (2005) propose five interconnected processes in the transformative learning framework, namely contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing and connecting. These processes are discussed below.

Contextual border crossing delineates how various elements in the service-learning context inform the transformational experience of the students (Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2015). These elements include firstly the *personal* dimension, which refers to the student's individual characteristics such as 'social roles, professional background, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, interests, needs, learning styles, expectations, motivations, desires, fears, and sense of efficacy', which Kiely calls 'biographical baggage' (Kiely, 2005, p. 9). The second element is the *structural* dimension, which refers to the student participants' 'race, class, gender, religion and nationality' (Kiely, 2005, p. 9). These elements alert the students to their positions of power in relation to the community participants they engage with and the power to ignite change. Thirdly, the *historical* element in Kiely's (2005) study relates to the political history between the USA and Nicaragua and the inequalities this has produced. The historical component is useful in a study in South Africa as we

also have political boundaries between people groups with power and inequality associated with it. Kiely (2005, p. 9) adds that the historical dimension 'leads students to examine the significance of nationality, unequal relations of power, and relative value of certain citizenship rights and obligations'; which in a South African study is equally relevant. The fourth dimension that informs the context is the *programmatic* element, which includes the approach and design of the service-learning programme (Kiely, 2005). Contextual border crossing therefore is a process through which the students realize that their identity and personality traits are also informed by other contextual factors as they enter different territory. This process links with Mezirow's (2008) 'disorienting dilemma' in which students become aware of and examine their deep-seated beliefs and assumptions; and with Dewey's notion of 'forked road experiences' (cited in Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2015).

Dissonance refers to the discord or incongruence between the students' personal contexts and current beliefs and the new environment in which they engage (Kiely, 2005). Yalom (1985) asserts that 'dissonance creates a state of psychological discomfort and propels the individual to attempt to achieve a more consonant state' (p. 271). Since the American students' lives (in the study of Kiely, 2005) were dramatically different from the new environment that they entered, they were forced to think and act in ways that they were not familiar with or that were outside of their usual framework. In reference to Mezirow's theory, this implied a challenge in the students' frames of reference that inform their perceptions of others and beliefs about them (Mezirow, 2000, 2008). Kiely (2005) points out that the type and duration of the dissonance affect the transformational experience of the students. The types of dissonance that emerged from Kiely's (2005) study included 'historical, environmental, physical, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, social, communicative and technological' (p. 11). Kiely (2005) explains that 'low-intensity dissonance' (p. 11) is related to issues like the language barrier, dealing with different forms of transport, housing and the like. Low-intensity dissonance led to short-term adjustments that helped the students to get by in the new environment, but it did not produce lasting changes in perceptions. 'High-intensity dissonance'

includes issues related to the 'political, economic, historical and social' dimensions (p. 12). High-intensity dissonance informed shifts in students' viewpoints on issues related to these dimensions and this stayed with students long after they returned to the USA. These shifts that were initiated during the engagement experience affected their life choices even after the experience. Some students reported changes in their career decisions and some returned to Nicaragua with the intension of working towards social change (Kiely, 2005).

Personalizing refers to the students' emotional and visceral response to dissonance (Kiely, 2005). Through the process of personalizing, students experienced real emotions about the situations and challenges in the engagement environment. Kiely (2005) reports that 'students expressed "moral outrage" and "feel compassion for poor people's struggle." They experienced a variety of emotions, including 'shame, guilt, anger, confusion, compassion, denial, and sadness' (p. 12). Additionally, the students' responses were informed by their individual characteristics and contexts and the nature of the issue they were confronted with. Personal strengths and weaknesses were also scrutinized during the personalization process (Kiely, 2005).

Processing and connecting is perceived as two intertwined processes, where processing deals with the more cognitive and rational sense-making of the experience; and connecting refers to the more affective side and connections formed with the people with whom the students engaged. Processing helped the students to gain a deeper understanding of the 'causes of and solutions to current issues and problems in Nicaragua' and included critical forms of reflection, together with other opportunities for sense-making with fellow students and community members (Kiely, 2005, p. 13). Through the process of connecting, students formed profound bonds with the local people as they started to understand their circumstances and began to develop empathy for them.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. Kolb's (1984) theory is based on the notion that people tend to think about real life situations and experiences to learn from them and adapt with the aim of improving the next time. Service-learning, and especially the notion of reflection, is rooted

in the experiential learning paradigm (Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Eyler, 2002; Lazarus et al., 2008). Kolb's (1984) theory consists of four interrelated processes, namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (as illustrated by Figure 1 below). These phases of learning have been applied to studies on service-learning previously (Ebersöhn et al., 2010).
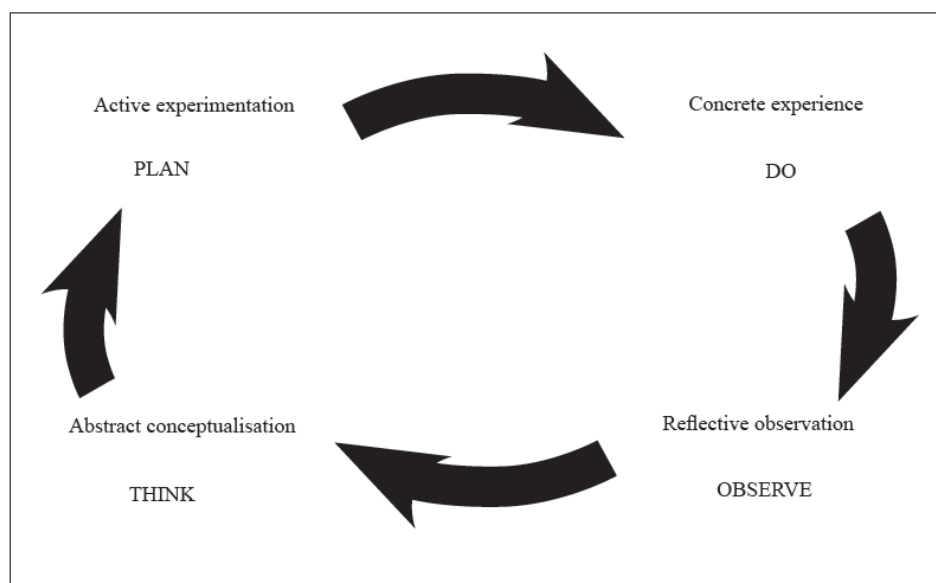
Figure 1. Schematic representation of Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (Source: Ebersöhn et al., 2010, p.91)

Concrete experience (as per Figure 1) refers to the actual doing, for example providing a service and in the case of many students in the current research, facilitating after-school academic assistance programmes with learners in the partnering communities (Ebersöhn et al., 2010). Reflective observation refers to thinking about the experience and making sense of it. It can also be described as taking a step back and reconsidering. Abstract conceptualization refers to reaching conclusions or making connections and to plan for consecutive actions. Finally, active experimentation refers to putting into practice new ideas with the aim of improving in the consecutive concrete experience or action (Kolb, 1984).

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Social identity theory. Social identity theory, a prominent theory in social psychology, refers to the notion that individuals have a social as well as an individual identity (Tajfel, as cited in Bornman, 2010). Social identity is that part of a person's self-concept that causes the individual to feel part of a social group. As identification with the group, the individual may connect cognitively, emotionally or behaviourally. Furthermore, social identity theory suggests that as part of a group, one strives to achieve or maintain positive group identity and long to receive positive feedback based on one's belonging to a group (Tajfel, as cited in Bornman, 2010). Moreover, people tend to favour their own group (in-group) over others that are different from them, or to which they do not belong (out-group).

Social contact hypothesis. The contact hypothesis proposes that regular contact between people from different groups may decrease intergroup anxiety, improve intergroup attitudes and reduce intergroup prejudice (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Tredoux & Finchilescu, 2010). However, Gordon Allport (cited in Tredoux & Finchilescu, 2010), a social theorist, suggests that the contact should take place under certain conditions, namely 'institutional support for contact, common goals, cooperation, and equality of group status in the contact situation' (p. 290). Pettigrew (as cited in Tredoux & Finchilescu, 2010) also added a condition that there should be a potential for friendship between the groups. In CE, three of Allport's conditions are relatively easy to facilitate (institutional support, common goals, and cooperation), whereas the groups that engage are usually not equal, as the university members often assume the more powerful positions. However, the power between groups in engagement can be mediated and managed so that it does not become a barrier to the engagement process (Lazarus et al., 2014; Lazarus et al., in press).

The contact hypothesis is in a sense paradoxical as it reduces prejudice amongst members of different groups in some instances, whereas in other instances it reinforces the very prejudice that contact was supposed to reduce or diminish (Durrheim & Dixon, 2010). The social contact hypothesis shows similarity to Mezirow's (2000; 2008) notion that engaging with people from a

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different group or that exhibit different values than the individual, does not necessarily transform habits of mind, which can be comparable to prejudiced presuppositions towards others.

The notion of prejudice refers to a predominantly bad, usually negative orientation or attitude towards other groups, which is irrational or based on flawed generalizations (Dixon & Levine, 2012; Duckitt, 1994). The notion of prejudice is a fundamental, yet contested concept in social psychology as various scholars define it in different ways. Therefore, a basic understanding of this concept is adopted when using the term in this research.

Group Processes

CE often involves group interventions at schools and community-based organizations. In order to explicate the processes observed in the findings, and to strengthen the link between psychology and CE, the research draws on group processes and dynamics. This is not to say that facilitators in CE act as therapists, but pertinent processes that often occur during various group stages may play out and influence CE, and this research aims to point these out.

Corey, Corey and Corey (2014) propose that group processes comprise five stages. The teachings of Yalom (1985), a well-known professor of psychiatry, are also integrated:

Stage one involves the pre-group considerations and the formation of the group. Corey et al. (2014) highlight the importance of detailed planning of the group as this step informs the progression of the group process. What is important about this stage in CE is the notion of open and closed groups, and voluntary participation and mandated participation. These factors influence the dynamics within the group. Whether groups are open (participants come and go throughout the process), or closed (one set of participants throughout the process) depends on the purpose and the setting.

Stage two, or the initial stage, involves orientation and exploration (Corey et al., 2014; Yalom, 1985). During this stage, the members learn about the function of the group, get to know

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other members and explore their expectations of the group. Yalom (1985) states that this stage is characterized by members' search for structure and exploration of the boundaries. Corey et al. (2014) and Yalom (1985) both point out the importance of building trust during this stage and that the members may have a sense of uncertainty about the leader and other members. In CE, this stage may involve discussing the purpose of the engagement, laying ground rules for interaction and the expectations that the students and community participants have of one another.

Stage three is referred to as a transition stage and is characterized by resistance (Corey et al., 2014). This stage is comparable to what Yalom (1985) describes as a stage characterized by conflict as members challenge both each other and the leader for leadership, dominance and control. There is rebellion or resistance to sharing personal information. In CE, this transition stage may indeed be a challenging experience for inexperienced and poorly trained students who have to occupy leadership positions. They have to deal with the group participants' behaviour and their own feelings about the members and the process in general (Corey et al., 2014). This emphasizes the importance of training and continuous support.

Stage four is termed the working stage and is characterized by group cohesion and productivity towards the group goals (Corey et al., 2014). Yalom (1985) also describes this stage as characterized by an enhanced sense of mutual trust, more interaction amongst members, sharing of long kept secrets, past offenses and the like. In CE, this may be the stage where students express feelings of joy, achievement and satisfaction with their engagement experiences (Naudé, 2012, 2015). However, this may also be the stage where the community participants share sensitive information that students may not know how to respond to. This accentuates the importance of continuous support and guidance to help the students to manage the process.

Stage five is the termination stage and involves consolidation of learning and the process of terminating the intervention (Corey et al., 2014). Yalom (1985) states that termination is not just the end of the process, how it is facilitated may influence further actions beyond the group. During this

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stage, members are encouraged to apply the lessons learned in their environments outside the group. The termination stage may also involve sadness over the loss of the group and uncertainty among members about how their life would be without the group (Corey et al., 2014). Furthermore, Yalom (1985) notes that members may also subtly look for reasons not to leave the group (and in the case of CE, reasons for why the project should continue). In CE termination is important in the sense that the participants or collaborating organizations may start to rely on the presence of the students at their organization. The termination process should therefore be treated with care, and the process should not be rushed. Also, in instances where the same community learners will remain in a project, termination is important as it lays the foundation for the next student group. The termination process can be a very emotional affair for the group leader and the members (Corey et al., 2014; Yalom, 1985). This once again underlines the importance of student support and guidance during this phase.

A limitation of the group process perspective as it relates to the current study is that the participants in the study represented projects of various durations; and that the group processes were not necessarily explored in detail. References to group stages are therefore based on my interpretations of the data and are used to delineate the links between CE and psychology.

CP as a Perspective on CE

CP, and in particular the values inherent to the research and practice of CP, forms a seminal lens through which to view the dynamic process of CE. A psychological perspective was adopted because of the notion that CE is fundamentally a psychological endeavour for all involved in the process. Even though CP is not a unitary theory, its inherent values and principles that guide the research and practice in the field (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) offer strong connections to CE. These links are examined in the following sections.

CP has several core values that inform research and practice within the field. For the purpose of this study, I refer to selected values (see Figure 2) that resonate with the focus and research

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questions of this particular study. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) propose values for personal-,

relational- and collective well-being, on which this chapter draws. The named values, although

considered as core values of CP, are not unique to CP, but are used in various disciplines within the

social sciences.
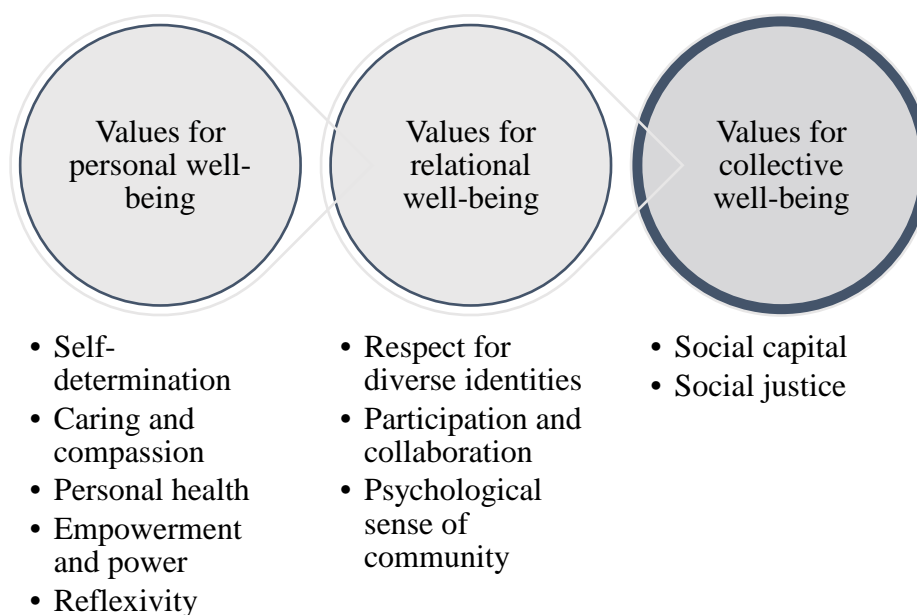
Figure 2. Selected values of CP that are relevant to this study

Values for personal well-being attend to the needs of the individual. These values (as per

Figure 2) include self-determination, caring and compassion, personal health, empowerment and

power (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). From critical community psychologies, reflexivity is

included here as a value on the individual level (Suffla et al., 2015).

According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), self-determination, also called autonomy,

relates to people's ability to work at reaching their own goals and dreams without extreme

restrictions or limitations in their pursuit. Caring and compassion has to do with looking out for the

'physical and emotional well-being of self and others', whereas personal health concerns the

'protection of physical and emotional health of others' (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010, p. 61).

The value of self-determination is linked with empowerment (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010), an important value to consider pertaining to personal well-being and very relevant for the present research. Empowerment, however, as with several of the other values in CP, does not operate only on the individual level, but interlinks with the interpersonal and collective as well.

Empowerment and power. The term empowerment has been in use for some decades (Rappaport, cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). It is used in various contexts such as patient empowerment in healthcare (Bravo et al., 2015). In education, for example, the work of Paulo Freire, who sought to facilitate critical consciousness with the concept of conscientization (Freire, 1996). Different perspectives on women's empowerment towards gender equality are increasing (Bustamante-Gavino, Rattani, & Khan, 2011). Employee empowerment is considered in an organizational context (Lincoln, Travers, Ackers, & Wilkinson, 2002). Furthermore, empowerment also features in participatory research processes and community building (Lazarus et al., 2017). In South Africa, for example, another form of empowerment has been introduced, namely Black Economic Empowerment, which is a retributive strategy by the government to remedy past inequities (Naidoo et al., 2017).

In the context of CP, the term empowerment was introduced by Julian Rappaport, as he highlights that people have the potential to influence policy (cited in Cattaneo, Calton & Brodsky, 2014). Rappaport refers to empowerment as 'a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives' (cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, p. 106). Additionally, Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) also draw attention to the idea that empowerment has to do with 'obtaining, producing or enabling power' and that it 'operates on the individual, group or community and social levels' (p. 106). Zimmerman (1995), on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between empowerment processes and empowered outcomes.

Furthermore, *relevance* and *power* are interconnected core characteristics of empowerment and should be used as a unit (Cattaneo et al., 2014). Even though the acknowledgement of power and efforts of empowerment is fundamentally part of CP, power itself is rarely the focus of investigation. Furthermore, underlying dynamics and processes of empowerment have not received adequate attention (Fisher & Sonn, 2007; Fisher, Sonn, & Evans, 2007). García-Ramírez, Balcázar and de Freitas (2014) refer to power as 'having access to material and psychosocial resources, as well as to a system of social regulation, that allows for the opportunity and ability to attain well-being' (p. 80). Access to power is connected to socio-historical factors, in addition to personal and relational factors (García-Ramírez et al., 2014).

In the context of CE, especially, it is important to be cognisant of power in the conceptualization and implementation of projects. University staff and students often have more material resources than the communities with which they engage. However, the community partners' contributions to engagement and knowledge creation should also be reckoned as important. As such it plays a role in the power dynamics (Marais et al., 2007; Lazarus et al., in press).

Reflexivity refers to the process through which researchers critically consider their own position and perspectives regarding the topic of concern. Practitioners that engage in reflexivity do so with the aim of challenging the status quo rather than just engaging in ameliorative efforts (Montero, 2011; Suffla at al., 2015). In the context of this study, there is a connection between reflexivity and reflection, a practice that is readily employed in CE, especially in service-learning (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Reflection is the process through which students think back on engagement, make sense of their engagement experiences, and critically consider further steps of action (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).

Values for relational well-being are considered on the premise that individual well-being is intertwined with or stands in relation to other people. Put differently, well-being is relational. In that

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regard, people have to consider the individual needs of others, as much as their own (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Respect for diverse identities is considered an important value with regard to relational well-being. Taylor (cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) asserts that: 'When we affirm people's identities, we help them affirm themselves. When we respect their defining human qualities, we help them respect themselves' (p. 62). On the other hand, if we do not respect people's identities or reflect demeaning or oppressive views of people, it may affect their well-being negatively (Taylor, cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Participation and collaboration are also important values to consider on the interpersonal level. It ties in with the previous points of respect for diverse identities, respect for others' needs and power relations. When there is a difference in needs or priorities, or unequal power distribution, collaborative processes may help to resolve the differences (Lazarus et al., 2014; Lazaruset al., 2015; Marais et al., 2007).

Psychological sense of community is likewise an important value to consider on the interpersonal level. The term sense of community can be defined as:

The sense that one belongs in and is meaningfully a part of a larger collectivity; the sense that although there may be conflict between the needs of the individual and the collectivity, or among different groups in the collectivity, these conflicts must be resolved in a way that does not destroy the psychological sense of community; the sense that there is a network of and structure of relationships that strengthens rather than dilutes feelings of loneliness. (Sarason, cited in Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2010)

In their effort to operationalize the term sense of community, McMillan and Chavis (cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) identify four domains, namely membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs and shared emotional connection.

Values for collective well-being pertain to values that operate on a broader societal scale, yet intersect with the individual and relational levels (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Social capital as a concept is related to psychological sense of community and can be considered an important value on the relational level of well-being. Social capital is referred to more readily in other disciplines like sociology, political science and community development (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). It refers to people's relationships and networks and is differentiated from other forms of capital. Putnam (cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) asserts that:

> *Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.* (p. 104)

For Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), social capital means 'collective resources consisting of civic participation, networks, norms of reciprocity and organizations that foster (a) trust among citizens, and (b) actions to improve the common good' (p. 104). The difference between social capital and psychological sense of community lies in the level of analysis (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). While psychological sense of community is analysed on the individual and community level, social capital includes societal factors at the government level. In that way, sense of community is described as only one part of social capital – with other parts being 'neighbouring', 'collective efficacy', and 'citizen participation' (Perkins & Long, cited in Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Social justice, also called distributive justice, is considered one of the most important pursuits of CP and refers to the fair and equitable distribution of power, resources and obligations in society (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Also on the level of collective well-being is the support for societal structures that has been put in place by government to provide in various needs of the public, including health, education, employment, transportation and recreation (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

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Social justice has become a growing concern globally in recent times, especially due to the growing inequalities visible from unemployment, poverty, migration and the like (García-Ramírez et al., 2014). Social justice has been foregrounded in the practice of CP due to the widespread recognition of the role of resources as imperative for individual and relational well-being (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010); and the recognition of the tools of CP that enables the sub-discipline to respond to the challenging situations (García-Ramírez et al., 2014).

Critical CP. Critical CP further informs the theoretical framework of this dissertation. Even though critical CP is not a theory per se, it does influence the way that I approached the research and interpreted the findings.

Critical CP weighs issues of power, reflexivity, positionality and the foregrounding of transformative interventions rather than ameliorative endeavours, contextually-based knowledge and the like (Montero, 2011; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Suffla et al. (2015) assert that:

> *This approach [critical community psychology] is grounded on the premise that the promotion of individual and community well-being is necessarily realised through the transformation of pernicious social conditions, and it is an emancipatory enterprise that is overtly political, value-laden, and intersubjective in nature. From this perspective, critical community psychologies subvert the notion of scientific neutrality, acknowledge the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and view power as constituted in the context of social relations.* (p. 10)

Furthermore, in efforts to enhance and maintain social justice, some community psychologists have adopted a more forceful approach in what has been termed liberatory psychology, which seeks to enhance CP's mission towards social justice. It involves a critical view of Northern theories, values local knowledges, and resists normalized structural power imbalances (Ngonyama Ka Sigogo et al., 2004).

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Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

CP is rooted in an ecological framework that perceives the individual in relation to other people and broader social influences, whereas traditional psychology is more concerned with the individual and his or her immediate environment (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) popular theory of an ecological perspective on child development is the overarching organizing framework for this study. Bronfenbrenner (1979) outlines five systems, namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem, and later on, the chronosystem (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The microsystem refers to the individual's relationships with family, classmates and close friends, whereas the mesosystem refers to the interaction of two or more microsystems. The exosystem refers to the linkage between the microsystem and situations or settings that the individual seldom interacts with directly, but that still affect him or her (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Scileppi et al., 2000). The macrosystem implies the broader societal systems and culture that informs social life, education and politics (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The chronosystem denotes the changes or developments over time and their effects on people (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory is relevant to the current research as it relates to the psychosocial aspects that are explored on the individual level (micro system); interpersonal level (meso and exo systems); and the university, community and societal levels (macrosystem). The chronosystem relates to the historical context of the university, the university's relationship with the Stellenbosch community, and the South African history.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the available literature on the aspects relevant to the focus of this dissertation. The chapter set out to discuss CE in the South African higher education context. Important themes included the challenges that universities face in implementing CE as a state mandate. Secondly, the chapter gauges CE as a vehicle of societal transformation. The

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literature suggests that although CE holds the potential to inform social change, it may not, in many cases, produce lasting or transformative social change. CE was then discussed as an environment that includes power balances and inequality, given the diverse socio-economic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual South African context of which role players in the process should take cognisance. Thereafter, various benefits, influences and effects of CE on students were delineated as a background for this study. The pertinent themes in the literature included academic enhancement, personal growth, engaging with diverse cultures and engaging with broader social issues. Subsequently, an overview of some of the important questions raised in the literature was presented.

The second focus of this chapter was on presenting various theories that could elucidate the processes of CE with regard to students' experiences. First, the transformative learning theories of Mezirow (2000, 2008) and Kiely (2005) were presented as these involved the explanation of various transformative processes that take place within CE. Next, I described the experiential learning theory of Kolb as a popular theory used in service-learning, and gave an overview of interpersonal and intergroup theories that may also inform the interpretation of data in the current research. I also discussed group processes as a framework for pointing out the group dynamics that may be at play during the engagement process. Thereafter, pertinent CP values were presented as a further means of conceptualizing CE. In this regard, an overview was given of selected values of CE, including values for personal, relational and collective well-being. Lastly, the critical CP approach was briefly mentioned together with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, as these informed the approach to the research and an organizing framework respectively.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

'Grounded theory methods enhance possibilities for you to transform

knowledge… Enter the studied phenomenon with enthusiasm and open yourself to

the research experience and follow where it takes you.'

(Kathy Charmaz, 2014)

Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to explore the psychosocial aspects related to CE as described by students, university staff members and community project representatives. The chapter starts with a rationale for adopting a constructivist philosophical position, followed by the reasoning behind the chosen method, namely a generic inductive qualitative inquiry, a generic model of grounded theory. Subsequently, the discussion offers an overview of how participants were recruited, followed by a description of the study participants. Although the research followed a cyclical process, the different research activities are discussed separately to provide a detailed account of the different strategies employed.

The data collection methods are discussed with reference to the rationale for conducting interviews and focus groups, as well as the procedure that was followed during data collection. Subsequently, data management and analytical steps are discussed with reference to the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis programme (Friese, 2014). The chapter concludes with some reflections and the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

Philosophical Worldview Underlying the Study: Ontology and Epistemology

The study is a qualitative inquiry, located within the social constructivist theoretical model that places emphasis on the meanings that participants ascribe to experiences or interactions and to the context in which interaction occurred (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2014). Within the

constructivist tradition, 'the realities we study are social products of the actors, of interactions and institutions' (Flick, 2014). The social constructivist worldview was adopted for this study as the central tenets of this particular worldview or paradigm offers the most suitable fit with the overall aim and orientation. That is, the present study is of an explorative nature with an inductive approach to data analysis, which emphasizes the participants' own meaning that they made of psychosocial aspects in the context of their CE experiences.

Rationale for adopting a social constructivist worldview. The basic assumptions of the constructivist paradigm are outlined below with reference to how they informed the present research.

People search for meaning and meanings may vary. Social constructivists assume that people search for meaning in their daily lives. Furthermore, people form subjective meanings of experiences and these meanings may vary between persons and may fluctuate over time (Creswell, 2009). Research within the constructivist orientation therefore emphasizes the meanings that participants to the study hold about the questions under study (Creswell, 2009). The underlying worldview therefore provides that participants could express different views on the same topic due to their diverse settings and backgrounds. The aim was not to reach consensus among participants, but to capture the different views and to gain a better understanding of psychosocial aspects in the contexts of CE. The open-ended type of questioning during data gathering further supported the expression of different meanings by participants.

Meaning is constructed during interaction with people. The constructivist approach is suitable for the present study as the focus of inquiry was on the interaction process, primarily between university students and the different project participants with whom they engaged. However, these two entities are not isolated, but are situated in the broader engagement setting, where university staff and community project representatives also play an important role in facilitating or providing the structure within which the engagement took place. According to the

social constructivist worldview, the different contexts of and role players in the interaction may have influenced the meanings that students made of their interaction experiences as well (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, the data gathering method of focus group discussions provided another space for interaction and meaning-making for the student participants, which added to the appropriateness of the constructivist worldview.

Meaning is shaped in context. Researchers in the constructivist tradition often study social interaction processes in the places where people live or work to explore how social, cultural or historical aspects may have influenced the participants' meanings (Creswell, 2009). Data collection took place in different settings such as the university campus, staff members' offices and schools and at community-based organizations. There was no direct participant observation of CE as part of the data gathering. However, I could draw from my own interaction experiences in different roles over 10 years in similar contexts. Yet, as a reflective researcher I remained cognizant of how my own experiences may have influenced how I conducted interviews and focus groups. In the same breath, the constructivist framework assumes that the researcher and participants co-construct meaning during the research process (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As such, the research orientation allowed me as researcher to draw on previous experiences to make meaning of the participants' perceptions of and dialogues about their CE experiences.

Epistemology. Epistemology refers to how meaning is made. This research belongs to the interpretivist tradition since the participants' viewpoints were interpreted while considering the contexts in which they operated and to which they referred (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, participants' perceptions and expressions of their experiences were considered in relation to their contextual differences based on race, language and culture within the broader South African context and the immediate context of which they spoke. Furthermore, participants' inputs were also interpreted based on current theories and literature on the topics concerned.

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Rationale for Adopting a Qualitative Approach

When using the qualitative paradigm, research is conducted in the natural setting where participants work or live and where the issues under study occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Especially in methodologies such as ethnography and grounded theory (GT), the researcher is immersed in the research context and moves back and forth between the field and emerging analysis (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2014). This study involved conducting interviews in the settings where the CE activities took place to better understand the broader context.

Furthermore, an inductive approach to research is adopted within the qualitative orientation as theory is constructed from the data. This approach is therefore suitable for exploratory work, as shown in the present research. Qualitative research also supports the use of multiple methods of data collection with the aim of reaching a better understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2014). It is further suggested that the use of multiple methods and triangulation of findings add 'rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry' (Flick, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). Therefore, to better understand the context and to represent the complexity of university-community engagement, I made use of multiple sources of data and methods.

The pull towards grounded theory. GT shares several characteristics with the qualitative tradition in general, including an inductive approach; conducting research in the natural setting of participants; cyclical or back and forth movement between different aspects of the research process; purposeful selection of participants; generally asking open-ended questions; as well as applying coding strategies in data analysis. Some qualitative research methodologies also acknowledge the role of the researcher in the research process, as in the case of constructivist GT (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hood, 2007; Saldaña, 2009). Even though the abovementioned strategies are shared with other qualitative methodologies, specific strategies have to be applied to claim the status of a grounded theory, such as constant comparative practice,

theoretical sampling procedures and theoretical saturation of categories (Charmaz, 2006; Hood, 2007). It is also the latter differentiating strategies that Hood (2007) calls the "troublesome trinity" that many researchers struggle to apply correctly in a GT study (p. 163).

Fundamentally, GT constitutes a systematic and inductive approach to research; follows a distinct iterative process; adopts constant comparative practice with the goal of building theory that is grounded in the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a, 2007b; Charmaz, 2006, 2011; Hood, 2007). GT is designed in such a way that it encourages the researcher to remain close to the data due to continuous involvement in data gathering and analysis throughout the process (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Charmaz, 2006). This inductive approach, close and continuous engagement with data and evolving analysis was the key features that pointed towards a qualitative research methodology and GT specifically.

The second attribute that made GT a viable option was that it essentially provided a set of tools and guidelines to conduct qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006 & 2011). Applying these tools adds rigour to the process as the researcher is able to make the process visible by describing the research strategies followed throughout the study's progression. The notion of making the qualitative research process visible was already one of the key motivations for and advantages of the earliest GT development of Glaser and Strauss (cited in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007b; Kelle, 2007).

Another strength that pulled me towards GT in particular was the possibility of developing a new theory or a conceptual framework for understanding CE from a psychosocial perspective (Charmaz, 2011). Furthermore, the exploratory nature of the research questions pointed to the use of methods that would be suitable for the process of uncovering and discovering participants' construction of the psychosocial aspects of CE. GT type of research is well-known for its suitability to explorative work and was therefore an appropriate choice for the present study (Charmaz, 2006 & 2011).

Ambiguity around grounded theory. Although the strategies used in the present study are based on GT methodology, the outcome is not professed to be a grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Hood, 2007). Charmaz (2006) warns that 'when we think of identifying properties of GT, we enter ambiguous terrain' (p. 180). On the one hand, GT is 'simultaneously a method that invokes specific strategies, a general method with guidelines that has informed qualitative inquiry, and a method whose strategies have become generalized, reconstructed, and contested' (Charmaz, 2011, p. 362-363). Since GT has become a general method of qualitative inquiry, researchers may therefore use only specific GT strategies (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, & Nievar, 2005; Mitakidou, Tressou, & Karagianni, cited in Charmaz, 2005). Additionally, GT offers a set of 'flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). On the other hand, these statements are in several instances contradicted by the criticism in the literature that numerous studies claim the status of being GT studies, but are in fact not (Charmaz 2005 & 2006; Hood, 2007; Hutchison, Johnston, & Breckon, 2011). Additionally, there is an inconsistent view on the issue of *a priori* sampling in GT as it is never *a priori* in one instance (Hood, 2007). However, it is elsewhere proposed that *a priori* sampling can be used as it may provide a starting point for data collection and further theoretical sampling would occur after the initial categories of participants were established (Charmaz, 2006; Morse, 2007).

I therefore conducted an inquiry to explore what GT strategies were essential in a true or classic GT study to position the present study correctly (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Charmaz, 2006; Hood, 2007). The following section clarifies which GT strategies were applied in the current design and which were not.

Grounded theory strategies that were applied in the present study. Hood (2007) proposes the differentiation between GT and what she calls the Generic Inductive Qualitative Model (GIQM) and highlights the differences between the two. First, the research questions in GT focus primarily

on process, whereas in the generic model the research questions can be directed at description or processes. Both GT and the generic model adopt an interpretive approach (Charmaz, 2006; Hood, 2007). This study used a combination of process and descriptive aspects, along with an interpretive approach to data analysis.

An important difference between sampling in GT and the generic model is the distinction between theoretical sampling and conventional qualitative purposeful sampling. Although both models employ purposeful sampling, further recruitment of participants in the generic model, which was followed in the present research, is contingent upon the emerging questions that arise in data analysis or to include certain categories of people. Further sampling in GT, however, relates to the strategy of theoretical saturation of categories.

The research process in GT and the generic model are both inductive in nature so that the focus is on working from the data in an upward cyclical motion. Data collection, analysis and memoing therefore take place concurrently (Charmaz, 2006, 2011; Greener, 2011; Hood, 2007). Charmaz (2014) describes memo-writing as an important step between data collection and draft writing. In this regard, the present study applied the inductive and cyclical approach. Therefore, both models provide for testing out new ideas in further data collection and the research therefore became more focused as it progressed (Charmaz, 2006).

In terms of data analysis, both models apply constant comparative practice, but up to a certain point. By applying the constant comparative strategy, researchers compare segments of data to other segments of data when creating codes; compare data with codes; then compare codes and elevate important codes to tentative categories (Charmaz, 2006; 2011). Once there are categories (or themes), comparison stops in the generic model. However, GT continues the analysis process further to handle core categories as concepts, which is then used to further compare concepts to each other and to compare developed concepts with disciplinary concepts (Glaser & Strauss, cited in Hood, 2007).

Furthermore, what distinguishes the generic model from GT is that the relationships between the categories in GT have to be thoroughly explicated; whereas in the generic model, themes basically have to be described and the linkages identified. This study includes analysis to the point of insightful descriptions of the main themes and highlighted relationships between the themes concerning the psychosocial aspects in CE. The current model still allows for the development of a conceptual framework rather than a theory.

Memo-writing, also referred to as memoing, is essential in both GT and the generic model. The types of memos written are discussed later in the chapter in the data analysis strategies.

Data collection discontinues in the generic model when new data yield little or no new insight regarding the themes (Hood, 2007). In GT, data collection ceases when the theoretical categories are developed or saturated, and therefore do not add to further develop key theoretical categories (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2014; Hood, 2007). In both instances, saturation is judged and decided by the researcher.

Recruitment of Participants

The angle from which the researcher enters the field is crucial in qualitative research since the researcher and participants interact more closely than in quantitative studies (Flick, 2014). In this study the methods used relied heavily on disclosure by participants regarding their views and experiences and the approach to recruiting participants therefore had to be considered carefully (Flick, 2014).

Purposive sampling methods. This study employed purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Purposive sampling, also referred to as purposeful sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling and is frequently used in qualitative studies (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Hood, 2007). The aim of purposive sampling is to select participants that can provide insight into particular topics to help the researcher to understand what is being studied and to provide the best

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answers to the research questions (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Bryman (2012) suggests that since purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling, this method does not allow the researcher to make generalizations to a broader population. Bryman (2012) further distinguishes purposive sampling from convenience sampling, which refers to participants that are 'available by chance to the researcher'. Purposive sampling is more strategic as the researcher 'samples with his or her research goals in mind' (p.418). Currently the university has 193 registered projects on its database (Stellenbosch University, 2017). Therefore, within this qualitative design, sampling had to be approached strategically.

Description of participants and recruitment procedure. The following sections give a description of the study participants, namely students, university staff members and community project representatives. The recruitment procedure is also discussed in this section.

Student participants. A total of 35 students (all between the ages of 20 – 29 years) participated in seven once-off focus group sessions. Three of the focus groups consisted of student project leaders; two focus groups of social work students; one focus group of engineering students and another focus group of psychology students. The aim was to include a variety of study fields and a variety of project operation contexts, as some students participated in CE as part of academic courses and some voluntarily.

Student project leaders were recruited on recommendation of a university staff member that was involved with training and management of student-run programmes. Project leaders were targeted as they usually had been involved in the projects for more than one year and manage projects in addition to volunteering. The student leaders represented their residences, societies or campus-wide leadership structures. Two of the participants had transitioned from residence representative to campus-wide leadership structures in CE and could therefore speak based on a broader perspective.

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The students were e-mailed with a brief overview of the study and were requested to participate in focus groups. The e-mail emphasized that they would be participating in small groups, placing less emphasis on individual contributions. The request to participate was also accompanied by an offer of refreshments during the session to encourage participation. Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) support the use of food as incentive when focus groups take place around a mealtime.

Out of a list of six initial student leaders that were contacted, four agreed to participate. Subsequent focus groups only took place a year later due to personal and work-related factors. As a result, the staff member that recommended the first group was contacted again to get an updated list of student project leaders. During the second round of recruitment, all the student project leaders were e-mailed with an outline of the study and were requested to participate. Out of a group of about 40 students, 10 indicated an interest in participating. The students indicated their preferred time and date out of several suggested dates over a period of three weeks. Again, I offered refreshments as incentive.

Engineering students were purposefully selected as they were in a faculty other than the social sciences. It was also a group of students that I had access to as part of my teaching assistantship in their service-learning module. Engineering students were recruited by e-mail and by means of a class announcement on recommendation of the project administrator. Out of a group of about 200 that were registered for the module, only four students indicated interest in participating in the focus group discussion.

Another group of purposefully selected participants were social work students because of the department's long-standing history of structured service-learning involvement with a variety of community partners in the Stellenbosch district, including schools, non-profit-, government- and community-based organizations. On recommendation of the programme leaders, students in the third and fourth year were recruited since they were more senior and had more engagement

experience that the first and second year cohorts. I personally recruited the students by means of announcements during their lecture time.

Students involved in CE with the main focus on research were not approached for participation in focus groups specifically. However, several participants that took part in student focus groups also referred to their research experience in the group discussions. There were also staff members that referred to their teaching and involvement in research-based CE. It is noted, however, that the narrow representation of research-based CE may have been a limitation in the present study. Table 2 on the next page provides a brief overview of the student participants.

Table 2

Overview of Student Participants

Focus group number	Group Description	Number of Participants	Service-learning or Volunteer	Gender	Ethnicity	Home Language
1	Student project leaders	4	Volunteer	1 M; 3 F	2 White; 2 Coloured	1 English; 3 Afrikaans
2	Student project leaders	4	Volunteer	1 M; 3 F	1 Black; 3 White	1 Xhosa; 1 English; 2 Afrikaans
3	Student project leaders	6	Volunteer	2 M; 4 F	2 Black; 3 Coloured; 1 White	2 Xhosa; 4 Afrikaans
4	Engineering students	4	Service-learning	1 M; 3 F	4 White	2 English; 2 Afrikaans
5	Social work students (3rd year)	6	Service-learning	0 M; 6 F	4 Coloured; 2 White	2 English; 4 Afrikaans
6	Social work students (4th year)	5	Service-learning	0 M; 5 F	5 White	1 English; 4 Afrikaans
7	Psychology students	6	Service-learning and volunteer	1 M; 5 F	2 White; 2 Black; 1 Coloured; 1 International	2 Xhosa; 2 Afrikaans; 2 German
Total		35		6 Male 29 Female	19 White 10 Coloured 5 Black 1 International	21 Afrikaans 7 English 5 Xhosa 2 German

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In order to maintain anonymity and yet add a human touch to the research, I decided to give participants aliases, rather than to use a participant number, as listed below:

Focus group 1 (Student project leaders):

Bart	Male, Coloured, Afrikaans, Postgraduate, Volunteer
Penelope	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Evelyn	Female, White, Afrikaans, Postgraduate, Volunteer
Starr	Female, Coloured, English, Undergraduate, Volunteer

Focus group 2 (Student project leaders):

Lisa	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Daniella	Female, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Phineas	Male, Black, Xhosa, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Zoë	Female, White, English, Postgraduate, Volunteer

Focus group 3 (Student project leaders):

Sam	Male, Black, Xhosa, Postgraduate, Volunteer
Coco	Female, Coloured, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Primrose	Female, Black, Xhosa, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Iris	Female, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Jameson	Male, Coloured, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Volunteer
Scarlet	Female, Coloured, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Volunteer

Focus group 4 (Engineering students in third year):

Alex	Male, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Minki	Female, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Daisy	Female, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Selena	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning

Focus group 5 (Social work students in third year):

Alegra	Female, Coloured, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Odille	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Audrey	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Maya	Female, Coloured, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Sabrina	Female, Coloured, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Riley	Female, Coloured, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning

Focus group 6 (Social work students in fourth year):

Ivy	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Heidi	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Ruby	Female, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Amelia	Female, White, English, Undergraduate, Service-learning
Jasmin	Female, White, Afrikaans, Undergraduate, Service-learning

Focus group 7 (Psychology students):

Miryam	Female, International student, German, Postgraduate, Volunteer
Blossom	Female, White, German, Postgraduate, Volunteer
Rose	Female, Black, Xhosa, Postgraduate, Service-learning turned volunteer
Velvet	Female, Black, Xhosa, Postgraduate, Service-learning turned volunteer
Skye	Female, Coloured, Afrikaans, Postgraduate, Service-learning turned volunteer
Ryan	Male, White, Afrikaans, Postgraduate, Volunteer

University staff members. A total of eight university staff members participated in the current study. As a starting point, I personally visited the university's community interaction division to ask for guidance with regard to which projects and staff members to include in the study (Seidman, 2006). Since I have already obtained ethical permission to conduct research that related to the division, the head of the division was informed about the present study and could direct me to relevant persons. This included members in strategic leadership positions regarding CE at the university and those that had a long-standing history of incorporating CE components in their work. The intention was not to survey all the staff members that met these criteria, but to conduct interviews with those to whom I was referred. In addition to the members involved in CE, I also approached an expert in history of the university and its relationship with the town of Stellenbosch. The rationale was to obtain insight into the university context and development concerning engagement with surrounding communities over time.

Prospective participants were e-mailed to request meetings to explain the study and to ask whether they would be interested in participating. All staff members that were approached agreed to participate. Due to my involvement in CE-related activities over a period of 10 years, I was familiar with the members of the division and several staff members that were recruited for the study. Since in-depth interviews relied on an investment of time by participants, I have found this familiarity helpful in gaining access to them and to establish rapport during the interview process. Table 3 provides an overview of the university staff member participants. Male and female names were selected as aliases to correspond with an alphabetical order. Staff members were between the ages of 40 and 55 years.

Table 3

Overview of University Staff Member Participants

Participant Alias	Description of participant's duties	Home language	Gender	Race
Abraham	Strategic development of CE	Afrikaans	Male	Coloured
Beatrix	Strategic development of CE and lecturing in service-learning modules	Afrikaans	Female	White
Catarina	Coordinates student projects; trains student volunteers	Afrikaans	Female	Coloured
Donna	Management in CE	English	Female	Coloured
Elsa	Strategic development of CE	English	Female	Coloured
Fabio	Lecturer and researcher in service-learning	Afrikaans	Male	White
George	Lecturer, volunteer programmes and service-learning	English	Male	Coloured
Humbert	Historian	Afrikaans	Male	White

Community project representatives. The community participants were recruited on the basis of being community partners of university-based CE programmes or hosting university students at their community organization. I was referred to specific community partners by the student participants and university staff members. As with the staff member interviews, the idea of this study was not to survey all the community partners that met the criteria, but to conduct in-depth interviews with the participants I was referred to. The community participants were contacted by telephone or e-mail, depending on the contact information received from the persons that made the recommendations.

The criteria for participation in the study were that these members should have been working in collaboration with the university for three years and should be in a supervisory position over the students that conduct CE programmes at their schools or organizations. A total of seven community partners participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews. These participants included two primary school principals, two teachers from schools in the immediate Stellenbosch district and three community organization managers. In the case of principals, these members were not only the gatekeepers to the schools, but were informed members since they were also personally involved with either supervising interactions or meeting with students regularly. It should also be mentioned that one of the community project managers who was referred by a university staff member, had no students in her project at the time of the interview, but was still planning to include them. She was therefore not in a supervisory position with students where she could comment on the students' interaction with community project participants. However, the interview data were still included in the study as she provided very useful information regarding the particular community context, an area that hosted a variety of CE programmes. Table 4 provides an overview of the community partners that participated in this study. Community project participants were between the ages of 23 and 57 years.

Table 4

Overview of Community Participants

Participant Alias	Description	Home language	Gender	Race
Mrs Rivers	Community project manager: After-school programme; programme for the elderly; crafts, etc.	Afrikaans	Female	Coloured
Mr Forest	Principal at primary school: Hosts various projects at school	Afrikaans	Male	Coloured
Mr Snow	Principal at primary school: Hosts various projects at school	Afrikaans	Male	Coloured
Mrs Winterbourne	Teacher at high school: Partners with engineering students' project	Afrikaans	Female	White
Mrs Summers	Teacher at primary school: Partners with various projects at school	Afrikaans	Female	Coloured
Ms Rainbow	Community project manager: After-school facility	Xhosa	Female	Black
Ms Sunshine	Community project manager: Programme for single mothers	Xhosa	Female	Black

Table 5 on the following two pages provides an overview of the settings in which the CE activities took place, together with the types of projects and modes of engagement represented by the students.

Table 5

Description of the CE Settings and Programmes where Students were Involved

CE settings and programmes	
Types of organizations where engagement took place	Primary and high schools in the Stellenbosch district
	Multi-purpose centres (e.g. after-school facilities)
	Governmental and non-governmental social service institutions, including hospitals, homes for people with disabilities, old age homes, and a correctional facility
	A multi-disciplinary centre for comprehensive healthcare services
Project participants	Primary school learners from as young five years old in Grade R up to high school children.
	Adult and child clients that were identified by field work supervisors at the designated placement sites (social work students)
	[Schools' designated staff members or principals communicated with students or staff members about target groups, depending on the identified need of the school, the students' interest and learning outcomes, and the number of students and learners that will participate]
Project focus at high schools	Academic assistance in mathematics
	Career and life planning
	Leadership skills development
	Life skills (project focuses included assisting learners to critically think about their community; to engage with social issues and assisting youth to develop and conduct their own community initiatives)
Project focus at primary schools	Structured and free play activities
	Arts and crafts
	Homework assistance
	Sport activities
	Life skills (including topics like leadership development, diversity, religion, teamwork, friendship, communication, adolescence, resilience in relation to social issues such as crime and violence in the community)
Project focus at community-based centre	Assistance with homework and research for assignments
	Computer literacy
	Life skills programmes (including topics like HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse)
	Community-related projects (e.g. challenging the youth to look at their community and see what they can do, what difference they can make as youth like in their community)

	CE settings and programmes
	Source bursaries for high school seniors and assistance with applying to university (one organization also pays for the registration fees)
	Career guidance and providing information about options after high school
Project focus at home for people with disabilities	Talking about topics that they identify
Project times	During school time
	After school
	Saturdays (Penelope's project)
	[Project time was agreed upon by the community project representatives, students and university staff members]
Project duration	Volunteers usually signed up for an academic year or one semester
	Service-learning modules were for one quarter or semester
	Once-off engagement activities (e.g. Mandela Day activities, celebrated annually on 18 July; and MAD² Community Day activities, annual campus-wide community interaction orientation for first year students at SU). E.g. making sandwiches for various groups of people, tree planting, painting and renovation at schools or community organizations.
Mode of engagement	Individual work: working one-on-one with children or adult clients (social work students)
	Group work: facilitating programmes with groups at schools or organizations (social work students and other service-learning students and volunteers)
	Community work: facilitating programmes aimed at the broader community. Facilitated through schools or other organizations (social work students)

Data Collection Methods

The rationale and procedures with regard to data collection methods are discussed in the following sections.

Focus groups: With university students. The use of focus groups are discussed below with reference to the rationale for choosing this method, the group sizes and the procedures followed.

Rationale for conducting focus groups with students. The fundamental characteristics of focus groups attracted me to this method in the present study. These basic characteristics include discussions that are focused on a particularly defined topic; the group setting of data collection which provides space for participants to add to and check each other's contributions; the eliciting of in-depth data through usually open-ended questioning and discussions; and the emphasis on meaning-making over measurement (Barbour, 2007; Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Silverman, 2013; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Furthermore, focus groups are also mentioned as suitable tools in GT studies (Barbour, 2007).

The first motivation for conducting focus groups was to make it easier, less intimidating and more appealing for students to participate. Barbour (2007) supports the notion of the focus group as suitable tool for studies where possible reluctance was anticipated, as the group setting may dissolve some of the initial fears of or hesitance from the potential participants. Most participants were not psychology students and may therefore have been reluctant to participate in an individual interview setting where the focus was on the psychosocial aspects of CE. Furthermore, in the group setting participants could choose to answer questions or participate in the discussion when they felt comfortable to do so, in contrast with the individual interview setting where all questions would have been directed to the individual. The idea was that when students participate in groups, the attention would be more on the group and less on the individual (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

The second reason was that focus groups offered a space for data collection with multiple participants at the same time (Barbour, 2007; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). The group setting offered a space for interaction between students where they could engage with each other on their different or similar experiences, they could learn from each other, and agree or disagree with one another (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Additionally, students could also build on each other's responses, creating chains of responses. Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) describe this as a "synergistic effect" that may lead to the eliciting of data or ideas that may have remained uncovered in individual interviews (p. 45). Flick (2014) suggests that group discussions "correspond to the way in which opinions are produced, expressed, and exchanged in everyday life" (p. 244). Since ideas and opinions were exchanged in the group setting, there was space for the group members to check the validity of the statements at the point of collecting the data (Flick, 2014). This simulation of the natural setting and interaction between participants also fitted with the overall constructivist framework of the study.

There was an added unexpected advantage of the group setting. Barbour (2007) mentions the cathartic effect that some focus groups may have for participants. For several students it was the first time that they had ever engaged with the topic from a psychological point of view with their peers or shared how the CE experience affected them personally. Many students highlighted that the particular engagement during the focus groups helped them to reflect on and formulate their own thoughts about their experiences with community participants in their projects. The focus group session therefore provided a type of communal reflection space for the students. Students mentioned that most of their reflection occurred individually, informally with friends or sometimes even with parents, who often did not fully comprehend the settings and challenges that they were faced with. The focus group sessions were therefore found very valuable to discuss and make sense of their experiences.

Third, the study was explorative in nature and therefore a good fit with the focus group methodology as it is often used for eliciting rich data where little is known about the particular topic under investigation (Barbour, 2007; Flick, 2014; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Little is known about the psychological and psychosocial underpinnings of CE and therefore the focus group provided ample space for explorative work with the students. Furthermore, the adaptability of the focus group method made it flexible enough for the GT strategies used in the study. After each focus group, I reassessed the focus group guide, adding or removing questions for further exploration of key issues during subsequent focus groups.

Fourth, possible broad generalizations from focus group findings are limited, and this is often mentioned as a drawback of this method (Barbour, 2007; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). However, in this study the aim was not to make broad generalizations to the population. The focus was on exploring and understanding the psychosocial aspects at play in the CE contexts to which the participants had been exposed, which resonated with the general use of the method in qualitative research (Barbour, 2007).

Additional advantages of focus groups that were also observed in this study include the fact that I facilitated the focus groups personally and could therefore ask for clarification at the point of data collection. Moreover, I could explore subtle nuances in what and how students conveyed their views and experiences during the sessions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

Group size. The size of the focus group depends on the aims of the research, such as a focus on depth or measurement, the participants involved and the topics under study (Barbour, 2007; Bloor et al., 2001). Authors concur that generally the group size tend to be bigger in marketing research than in social science research, where the focus is more on eliciting depth of understanding. Different texts propose different ideal group sizes, such as between six and eight people (Bloor et al., 2001); or between eight and 12 people (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). However, focus groups with as few as three participants and up to 14 participants are reported

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(Barbour, 2007). The sizes of the focus groups in the present study varied between four and six participants. Three groups consisted of four members each, another three groups consisted of six members and one group consisted of five members. The smaller group sizes facilitated the aims of exploration better as all participants had ample time to take part in the discussions; ideas could be explored in more depth; and leads could be prompted and followed up. This is in accordance with guidelines in several texts on focus group research (Barbour, 2007; Bloor et al., 2001; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Since there were only a few questions in the focus group guide, participants had time to engage with the topic and the issues raised by the other members in the group (Bloor et al., 2001). Furthermore, as a single moderator, I also found the smaller groups easier to manage.

Procedure. I decided to conduct the focus group discussions myself as I wanted to be directly involved in the data collection. My training in psychology was advantageous in conducting the focus groups, especially with regard to managing group processes and the skills of listening and probing for more explanations or examples to better understand the participants' viewpoints. Moreover, it helped me to maintain awareness of 'moderator bias' (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, pp. 94-95), like maintaining a balance between being objective and showing empathy and recognizing similarities from my own previous experiences in CE, which could have influenced the discussions if I did not remain aware of it. I also found the familiarity with the topic useful in building rapport and creating a comfortable space for the students to talk about their experiences.

The focus groups meetings took place on-campus, in a familiar building to provide easy access for students. Furthermore, the rooms were reserved for the purpose of the focus groups to ensure no disruption from other students. Before each focus group session, I made sure that my two recorders were fully charged and had enough recording space. I also ensured that there were enough consent forms, focus group guides were printed out and refreshments laid out neatly for when the students arrived. I usually made sure that each one helped themselves to some snacks and drinks before we commenced with the session. Consent forms were read through and signed first, we then

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laid down ground rules for focus group discussions, and thereafter started with the introductory question.

As a general introductory question, I asked students to state their names, which project or student society they represented, where their project was located and what the project entailed. With this introductory question, which Barbour (2007) called 'unthreatening general questions' the students could break the ice by starting with speaking about themselves, getting an idea of the involvements of others in the room, and I could get an overview of the types of projects and communities that were represented in the session (p. 83). In some of the sessions the students knew each other from previous institution-based CE training; were fellow members of a particular project, as was the case of the psychology students; or were fellow class mates in service-learning modules. The reasonable familiarity helped with establishing a favourable atmosphere for engagement with the topic and talking about their individual experiences. No extra stimulus material was used in any of the focus groups (Barbour, 2007).

The second question was usually on their experiences as a volunteer, project leader or service-learning student and what they thought the most important aspects were regarding relationships and management of the CE programme. It was only later in the discussion that questions were asked concerning the deeper psychosocial aspects. Throughout the session I observed group dynamics and made sure that everyone was included in the discussions. The students shared easily and engaged each other on their experiences and it was therefore effortless to have a continuous flow in the discussion (Barbour, 2007). However, the challenge was to try and maintain a balance between keeping the discussion focused on the topic, still leaving enough room for exploration and managing the time well.

Audio recording of the sessions was convenient as I did not have to worry about detailed note-taking, but only jotted down points for further exploration. In the first session there was a scribe present for the purpose of taking detailed notes in addition to the recordings. However, I

found this unnecessary as the recordings were sufficient. Additionally, I wanted to minimize the possible effect that the presence of another person in the group may have on the group processes. Debriefing was done at the end of each session (Barbour, 2007) as I wanted to find out how everyone was feeling to make sure that no one was left exposed and vulnerable because of sharing personal experiences, thoughts and emotions. Even though the topic was mostly positive, the students shared deep emotional experiences and I ensured that a sense of closure was reached before sending them away. My own debriefing was done through personal reflection and with my research supervisor during our supervision meetings.

Individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The rationale for and procedures involved in conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with university staff members and community partners are discussed in the following sections.

Motivation for conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Since interviews are fundamentally aimed at understanding a topic from the participants' point of view, it was not a difficult task to consider the use of interviews as it was an appropriate fit with the overall aims of the research (Seidman, 2006). In-depth interviews were also in line with the constructivist framework of the overall research project as the approach emphasizes that participants may hold different views of the topics that were studied (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I decided to conduct semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, as it provided some structure to the conversation, space for introducing selected topics to the conversation, with ample room for participants' own accounts and further probes (Seidman, 2006; Williams, Harries, & Williams, 2014). Depth and detail was sought in the interviews as follow-up questions and probes were used to get to 'thick descriptions' of the context and situations that participants mentioned (Geertz, cited in Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13).

The interviews with university staff members and community partners of CE programmes can also be described as expert interviews (Flick, 2014). Participants were selected based on their

position in the management and facilitation of CE at the university or community-based organizations. The foci of the interviews were on eliciting description of the interaction contexts and to a lesser degree on the personal experiences of these members. However, due to the 'non-confrontational style' of interviewing and the semi-structured nature of the tool, participants referred to their personal views on the topics and how it changed over the years for which they have been involved in that particular project or particular position in the organization (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 31).

Procedure. Selecting the 'right' experts for a study may be a problem (Flick, 2014, p. 231). For this study I started with the head of the institutional community interaction office and followed their recommendations on who to speak to that were experts in their particular role related to CE. The purpose of making personal contact was to explain and elicit support for the research (as confirmed by Seidman, 2006). With regard to the community partner interviews, I did not select participants based on their position in the whole community, which is also perceived as a challenge – that is, who may speak on behalf of the community (Chung, Grogan, & Mosley, 2012; Jewkes & Murcott, 1998). Participants were chosen as the head of their project, the principal of a school or the designated teacher that usually liaised with the university, and on recommendation of university staff and students.

Securing experts to participate in research may be problematic as they are often very busy (Flick, 2014). However, in this case, the acquaintance that was formed over several years with some of the staff members due to my own involvement in CE, assisted with securing their participation in the study. I observed that the familiarity with some of the interviewed members also benefitted the interview process as it assisted with building rapport and with creating a non-threatening environment. To show respect for these experts' time, I kept within the 60-minute interview time limit with the exception of one interview that went overtime. Due to the nature of the information shared in expert interviews, the interviewees may be reluctant to share certain information (Flick,

2014). However, in this study a set of elements like reasonable familiarity with some of the participants; a non-threatening and non-confrontational style of interviewing; and a semi-structured interview guide stimulated depth in the interviews that in turn brought about understanding of different contexts related to CE.

Data Management and Analysis

In the following sections I consider various aspects of data management and analysis. I first present aspects related to transcribing and the initial engagement with the interview and focus group data. This is followed by a discussion of the various analytical skills applied in the different phases of the research process.

Transcription of and engagement with the data. The semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded. This was done to capture the exact words of participants to draw out direct quotations from the data. I immersed myself in the data by listening to the recordings repeatedly during data analysis. All the recordings were transcribed verbatim and this process yielded vast amounts of textual data. The transcriptions of seven focus groups and 15 interviews (50 participants overall) consisted of about 750 typed A4 pages. Due to the vast amount of data, I made use of professional transcription services to save time. Furthermore, due to the large amount of textual data, I made use of the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti, following the guidelines by Friese (2014).

My supervisor and I jointly listened to some interview and focus group recordings. We deliberated and made notes about what we thought the key themes of the specific discussions were. This exercise assisted in fine-tuning my listening abilities, which benefitted me throughout the coding process, which is discussed in the sections below.

Qualitative analytical strategies. Data analysis in the current study consisted of four main phases. However, the phases did not neatly follow on each other, but there was a cyclical movement

in accordance with several authors who refer to qualitative data analysis as a cyclical process (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Saldaña, 2009). ATLAS.ti was very helpful in this regard as the software allows the renaming of codes; shortening or lengthening of quotations; merging similar codes; and even deleting codes that are no longer useful (Friese, 2014).

Saldaña (2009) defines a code in qualitative research as 'most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (p. 3). Charmaz (2006) suggests that coding generates the 'bones' of one's analysis, whereas 'theoretical integration will reassemble these bones again into a working skeleton' (p.45). In ATLAS.ti and other software programmes, coding is the technical step of highlighting and assigning meaningful labels to segments of data (Friese, 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014).

Constant comparative practice (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) was applied as it helped with identifying suitable code labels. It also assisted with the categorizing strategy of creating focused codes and themes. The software was also particularly helpful in coding focus group data as the hyperlinking function in ATLAS.ti could be utilized to point out a flow in discussion where different participants followed on the statements of the previous speaker (Friese, 2014).

Although the analysis was cyclical, the research process is illustrated in Figure 3 as separate phases to delineate the main strategies within each phase for the sake of thoroughness.
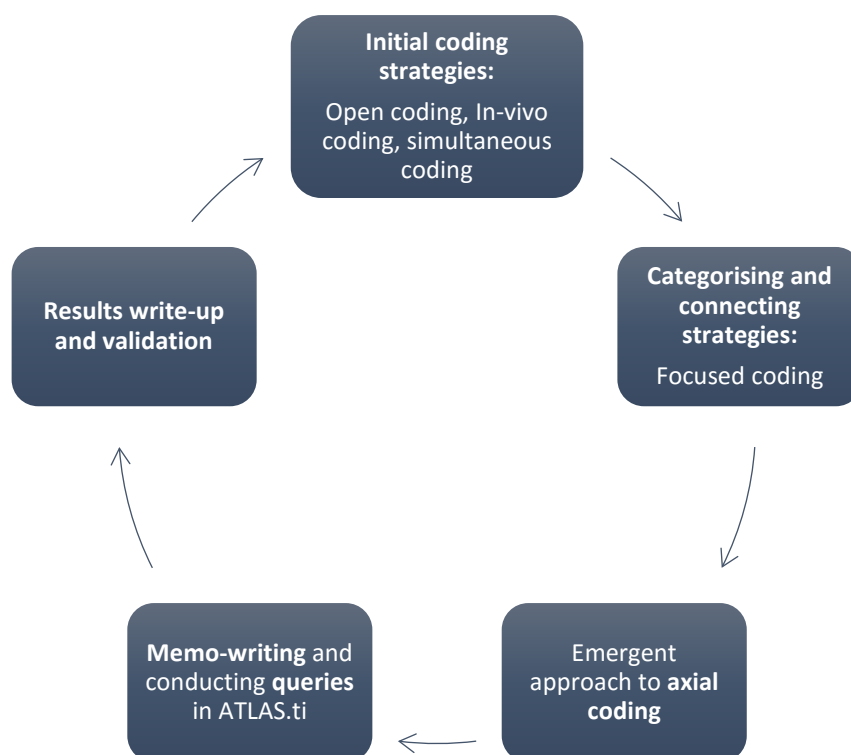
Figure 3. The data analysis process followed in this study.

Phase 1: Initial coding strategies. During the first phase, which Saldaña (2009) describes as

the first cycle of coding, and Charmaz (2006, 2014) calls initial coding, I applied various strategies

from GT and the general qualitative approach. During this phase of coding the researcher should

remain open-minded and create codes as they emerge from the data rather than forcing the data to

fit the codes (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). During this initial coding phase, I followed Charmaz's (2006,

p. 49) guidelines: 'Stay close to the data; keep your codes simple and precise; construct short codes;

preserve actions; compare data with data; and move quickly through the data'.

In-vivo coding, which refers to using the exact words of the participant as a code label

(Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009), was applied where participants' descriptions captured particular

processes or situations in profound ways. For example, one participant referred to university and

community collaboration on the construction of programmes as *'co-crafting engagement*

programmes' (Interview with George, SU staff member). This statement was striking as it referred

to the intricate hands-on nature of creating interaction programmes to fit the needs of the community members, students and the university.

Simultaneous coding (Saldaña, 2009), also called multiple coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994), was employed early in the coding process in instances where a single segment of data was captured under different codes or the one was imbedded in the other or overlapped by another. In the field of psychology, it is common for single segments of data to take on different meanings and to therefore relate to different codes. Simultaneous coding was, however, used sparingly with the purpose of keeping the analysis simple.

With initial coding being close to the data (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009), I created over 500 codes for only three transcriptions. In this sense I followed what is called a 'splitter' rather than a 'lumping' approach (Saldaña, 2009, p. 19). Splitting is when coding is very close to the data and the analyst looks closer for more 'codable moments', whereas lumping is used to capture bigger segments of data, or to collapse several codes under the same label (Saldaña, 2009, p. 19). Since there was such a vast number of codes, a second phase of analysis ensued, which focused on categorizing and connecting strategies.

Phase 2: Categorizing and connecting strategies. During the second phase I employed focused coding to categorize and connect the initial codes. The process of focused coding can be described as 'using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Charmaz (2006) states that in this step the analyst makes judgements about which codes 'made more analytic sense to categorize data more incisively and completely' (p. 57). She further points out that often students mistakenly believe that focused codes need to 'reappear time and again to be used as a focused code and subsequently as a category' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 145). Therefore, a focused code could for example appear less frequently, but could be important in the data. I looked for themes in the data during this phase, as several codes shared similarities, yet contained different aspects of the particular code. I started to group the codes

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under more abstract code labels, yet ensured that it still corresponded with the data (Friese, 2014). The use of software was useful in renaming or raising initial codes to focused codes. Codes were also renamed to indicate different sub-sections of particular codes, for example different types of awareness. When it came to coding instances that referred to awareness, I would ask myself: 'Awareness of what?' or 'What is meant by awareness in this instance?' I subsequently distinguished between awareness of own and others' identities; awareness of one's attitude towards others; awareness of own abilities; awareness of the situation; and awareness of limitations.

Phase 3: An emergent approach to axial coding. Axial coding can be described as a process of reintegrating data after initial coding procedures. The process is aimed at building categories by answering questions such as 'when, where, why, who, how and with what consequences' (Strauss & Corbin, cited in Charmaz, 2014, p. 147). The process of axial coding therefore provides an analytic frame for reintegrating the data and is suitable in studies where multiple data sources are available (Saldaña, 2009). However, the procedure of axial coding has received much criticism from scholars who suggest that the process may become too rigid as there is the risk that the research would force data into preconceived categories. On the other hand, the analytic frame provides structure for people who prefer to work with a frame (Charmaz, 2014). In response, Charmaz (2014) proposes an emergent approach to the process of reintegrating data and identifying properties of a category. She develops the properties of a category based on questions related to the specific category. She further encourages researchers to 'follow the leads that they define in their empirical materials' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 148).

I followed the emergent approach as proposed by Charmaz (2014). For example, one of the categories developed in this way was the notion of psychological support. I did not realize the importance of the codes related to students' expressed need for psychological support until late in the analysis process, when I recognized that during or after all the focus group sessions the students would say how much they appreciated the space to share experiences with peers. Subsequently, I

went back to the data to code for various aspects related to psychological support that I may have missed during initial coding strategies. I developed an analytic frame based on the data according to the following aspects or questions: 'Expressed support'; 'expressed need for support'; 'what does support look like?'; 'in which phase of the engagement process is support provided or needed?', 'what are some suggestions that students made with regard to support?', and 'to which other codes are psychological support linked?' By applying an analytic frame based on the data, some of the questions raised by Strauss and Corbin (cited in Charmaz, 2014), namely 'what?, who?, why?, when?, how?, under which conditions?' were also answered. Therefore, developing and applying analytic frames or guiding questions based on the data allowed me to remain true to the data while explicating different properties of the main themes.

Phase 4: Memo-writing and conducting queries in ATLAS.ti. Memo-writing formed an integral part of the analysis process. Memo-writing is a space where one can stop, reflect and write about the emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2014). It was through writing memos about significant quotations and codes that I identified and described the links between codes, built up categories and fleshed out my ideas on the emerging analysis.

During the course of the study I wrote process and analytical memos. In process memos, which are comparable to field diaries or journal entries (Saldaña, 2009), I wrote about how certain steps in the research process developed. For example, after focus groups and interviews, I wrote down some notes on how I thought the day went; what the key themes were that stood out from the particular focus groups or interviews; and what I thought about how the participants responded to the research questions. I also wrote about how I conducted the interviews and focus groups and made notes about what I should do differently in the following interviews or focus group sessions.

I wrote analytical memos more intensively in the preliminary write-up phase. An advantage that I have found to writing deeper analytic memos more towards the end of the process, was that I could draw links across the data (Charmaz, 2014; Flick, 2014). I could integrate data from the first

focus group with issues that students, staff members or community partners raised later on in the research process. Analytical memos therefore created a space where the constant comparative practice could be applied (Glaser & Strauss, cited in Charmaz, 2014), as I compared data with data, data with codes, codes with themes, and themes with other themes.

The ATLAS.ti programme was very helpful during this stage as I wrote analytical memos on data level in what is called the quotation comment field (Friese, 2014). Friese (2014) suggests that the quotation comment field is useful for writing ideas related to the specific data segment. This strategy means that the memo was kept alongside and focused on the data. It keeps the interpretations close to the data, adding to the trustworthiness of the findings. Furthermore, using the memo manager in ATLAS.ti, I could keep the memos systematic and easily retrievable, rather than in different folders on my computer or in note books.

Figure 4 presents an example of an analytic memo on data level in ATLAS.ti:

Figure 4. An Example of analytical memo on data level using the quotation manager in ATLAS.ti (version 7)

I used ATLAS.ti for conducting queries such as code co-occurrences and codes primary document tables (Friese, 2014) when I wanted to get an idea of where the data were situated in the data pool. In other words, who spoke about what and how often? These types of queries were mostly done right after coding in ATLAS.ti, so that I could get a bird's eye view on the data.

Phase 5: Results write-up and validation. During the process of writing up the findings, I discussed the most important codes and explicated the links between the codes to build up themes. Since I discovered links between data during the writing of the first draft, I treated the write-up as another phase of the analysis. I asked participants to comment on my understanding of the data during validation sessions (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). One focus group was held with student participants, and three individual discussion sessions with two staff members and another student. During these sessions the preliminary results were presented in the form of central themes with links that students and staff members could discuss, add to or amend. After the validation session, the final results were written up. I had the opportunity to conduct a training session for new incoming residence-based community project leaders, which gave me an opportunity to share the findings and at the same time get a sense of its applicability.

Trustworthiness and Transferability of the Research

I applied various procedures to ensure that the findings are trustworthy and that procedures were consistent. As a means to ensure that I used coding terms consistently, I applied the constant comparative strategy of GT to compare data with data, data with codes, and codes with codes (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2009). Since the study was exploratory, I did not set up a code list from the start, but developed a list during the coding process. In the beginning of the data management and analysis process, I employed an external researcher to code some of the interviews, and in the middle of the process I worked with Susanne Friese, an expert in ATLAS.ti, to cross-check and comment on my coding (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, the use of computer

software helped to make an otherwise potentially vague qualitative research process distinct and visible, and in that sense, also accountable to persons other than myself.

Bryman (2012) suggests that:

The establishment of the credibility of findings entails both ensuring that research is carried out according to the canons of good practice and submitting research findings to the members of the social world who were studied for confirmation that the investigator has correctly understood that social world.(p. 390)

The latter process is called respondent validation or member validation (Bryman, 2012), and elsewhere, member checking (Creswell, 2009). It is done with the objective of seeking confirmation or correction. In line with this practice, I undertook a process of presenting the preliminary findings to several participants to the study and requested them to comment on it. This procedure included face-to-face discussions with two university staff members and one student, and a group discussion with four student participants. These members shared valuable insights that allowed me to refine the analysis, as they agreed with and elsewhere provided different perspectives on my analysis.

Triangulation of multiple sources of data adds to the validation of the research (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Therefore, including university students, staff members and community partners in the present research allowed for the research questions to be approached from different perspectives and to facilitate depth of understanding. This in turn allowed for rich accounts or 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973, cited in Bryman, 2012, p.392). Thick descriptions of the main themes provide readers with a more comprehensive view of the context under study and assists them in considering the transferability of the research findings to similar settings (Creswell, 2009).

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Researcher's Reflections

This section presents some reflections on how my training and key experiences influenced my decision to embark on this study. I also present some reflections on the benefits of using ATLAS.ti in this study.

Personal interest in CE and academia. My interest in CE work can be traced back to my involvement in an after-school project that two colleagues and I initiated in 2006, called Watergarden. The programme was situated in Klapmuts, a community in the broader Stellenbosch district, and was focused on academic assistance, sport and movement for primary and high school learners. The project was initiated shortly after the three of us graduated with our Bachelor's degrees in Psychology (BPsych), which focused on training students to respond to psychosocial challenges by focusing on preventative measures such as life skills.

An important component of Watergarden that is of relevance here is its emphasis on building relationally with regard to our project partners and especially the student volunteers. My role for most of my time at Watergarden was the volunteers' coordinator. Through my volunteers' coordinator role and later project manager role, I experienced first-hand and observed some of the changes, challenges and enjoyment that the Watergarden volunteers went through. The Watergarden experience was therefore a significant influence on my interest in exploring the psychological dimension of CE, especially for the students, in this collaborative endeavour.

Another key experience was my involvement as part of the research team in a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project in Swellendam, a rural town in the Western Cape in 2010. This was a collaborative project between SU and the Railton Foundation, Swellendam and Netherlands (Lazarus et al., 2014). It was through this project that I understood that I can combine my academic interest with my passion for community development. I worked with researchers in that particular project who led me to this newfound realization, which ultimately led to the decision to embark on a PhD study on the intersection between psychology and CE.

Reflections on the benefits of using ATLAS.ti. I categorized the benefits of using ATLAS.ti into two main groupings, namely the benefits for data management purposes and benefits for analytical purposes.

Benefits for data management purposes. These benefits refer to functions that the programme offers that assisted me in managing the data. One of the most prominent advantages of using software in qualitative research is for its project management function and the researcher to set the research project up in such a way that data are easily retrievable (Friese, 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014). It was no different in the present study where the advantage of having all the data in one 'container' was valuable, as I could organize, code and retrieve data to do analysis from one place (Friese, 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014).

Another well-known benefit of data analysis software is its ability to help the researcher in making the research process visible since different versions of the project can be saved, which in turn supports the reflection on the development of the process (Charmaz, 2006; Silver & Lewins, 2014). An additional aspect of the research-made-visible benefit was creating awareness during the different stages of coding. The initial round of open coding resulted in over 500 codes for only three transcriptions, which prompted me to continue onto the next step of connecting strategies through focused coding. Likewise, when I noticed that there were too many quotations under particular codes, it warned me that my coding may have become 'lumped' and that de-lumping of codes into sub-codes may be required. The visibility provided by the computer programme through displaying the code 'groundedness' (amount of quotations within a code) was useful in this regard (Friese, 2014). Furthermore, the software provided that I could easily change the code labels and adjust the length of quotations.

Benefits for analytical purposes. These benefits refer to the advantages that ATLAS.ti made possible through the data analysis process. Computer programmes do not analyse qualitative data (Friese, 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014); yet the advantage of the programme's functionality during

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the analysis process is evident. During the analysis I could take a bird's eye view of my data through the network view where data and links between data are presented visually (Friese, 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014). This function is comparable to a spider-gram or mind-map. The bird's eye view is also made possible through the codes primary document table (Friese, 2014). This is a type of output where selected codes in the different primary documents can be viewed in one table, which may be comparable to a spread sheet. However, the quotations that are indicated by numbers are linked directly to the respective text within the ATLAS.ti project. This meant that I could check the data directly in relation to codes. I could also get an overall perspective of the topics or issues addressed and by whom, which further prompted engagement with the data and reassessment of my coding.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were taken into account over the course of this research. First, permission for this study was obtained from SU's Research Ethics Committee (REC) for Human Research (Humaniora) during 2012 and renewed for data collection during 2013 and 2014 (see appendix A and B). I also obtained permission from the Institutional Research and Planning Division at SU (see Appendix C), which governs research focused on the university or directly involving university staff members and students. In addition, I obtained permission from the Community Interaction Division (see Appendix D), since the study included staff members and community partners of the division. Furthermore, permission was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) because the schools generally constituted important community interaction placement sites for CE programmes and two teachers and two principals also participated in the study (see Appendix E).

All participants were informed about the overarching aim of the study, which was to explore the psychosocial aspects involved in the context of CE. Changes with regard to the specific focus due to the progression of the study were also explained to participants (see Appendix F for the

consent form). Students were informed about the specific procedure with regard to focus groups, including the guidelines of how focus groups operate and the duration of the sessions. The university staff members and community partners were informed about the procedure with regard to the individual interviews and their duration. Both the focus groups and individual interviews were once-off commitments by participants.

All participants were informed that there were no immediate risks and discomfort related to the discussion of the topics under study. However, if a need for counselling were to arise from any discomfort caused by the discussions, participants were informed that arrangements could be made with the university's psychological counselling services. No instances of discomfort or distress stemmed from participation in the present study. On the contrary, student participants appreciated the opportunity to participate in focus groups and found the sessions valuable in terms of their own reflection on their CE experiences.

After explaining the aims, procedures and duration to participants, they were asked to give written consent. Participants were informed that their participation in this present research was voluntary and that they could terminate the interview or leave the focus group at any point if they wanted to do so. Participants were ensured of anonymity throughout the research and in subsequent publications. Permission was asked for the recording of interviews and focus groups. No participant in this study objected to the audio recordings. Furthermore, participants were informed about safe-keeping of data, and that the findings would be used in the writing of a dissertation and subsequent scholarly publications.

Chapter Summary

The chapter started out by presenting a rationale for adopting a constructivist worldview that underpinned this study. I then presented an overview of some of the key characteristics of qualitative research to demonstrate the suitability of the methodology for the purpose of this study.

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Thereafter I moved on to provide reasons for my interest in GT, and contrasted the strategies of the generic model employed with constructivist grounded theory.

A detailed discussion of the specific steps in the research process was then presented, including the procedures that were followed for recruiting participants and an overview of the students, staff and community project representatives that participated in this study. Later, I discussed the data collection methods. I subsequently discussed the data management and analysis with ATLAS.ti, with specific focus on the different phases of the analysis process.

The last few sections of this chapter focused on the procedures that I undertook to promote the trustworthiness of this research and presented some reflections on my personal interest in CE and the benefits of using ATLAS.ti. Lastly, a discussion of the ethical considerations involved in this study brought the chapter to a close.

The next three chapters present the findings related to the psychosocial aspects of CE on the individual (Chapter 4); the interpersonal domain (Chapter 5); and university, community and societal levels of analysis (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS - I: THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

"A volunteer can leave on top of the world or exhausted and drained!"

(Penelope – Student project leader)

Introduction

The overarching focus of this research was to explore the psychosocial aspects that inform the different contexts of CE, as constructed by students, university staff members and community project representatives. As discussed in the previous chapter on research methodology, I used a generic model of grounded theory to develop the themes that are presented here as support in answering the research questions.

Psychological aspects on the individual level in the context of this study refer to internal processes of the participants, including the development of multiple forms of awareness, thought processes and emotional and visceral effects on the individual. These intrapersonal or individual processes take place on cognitive and emotional levels. It should be noted, however, that this study was interested in the participants' description of their experiences and the psychosocial aspects involved rather than measuring and explaining the psychological processes.

Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2010) notion of well-being, which involves personal, interpersonal and societal levels, is used as an organizing framework for the findings. Therefore, three separate chapters present the findings namely, Chapter 4: Individual level; Chapter 5: Interpersonal level; and Chapter 6: Community, University and Societal levels of analysis. This organizing structure allows for more in-depth discussion of the different themes and makes the process less demanding for the reader. The findings presented in the current chapter relate to the following research questions: How do participants describe the role of psychology in the context of

CE? And, how do participants describe the psychosocial aspects that are perceived to inform experiences on the individual level.

The themes and sub-themes are first introduced and then supported by direct quotations from the data. In keeping with the constructivist paradigm that emphasizes participants' construction of their experiences (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2014), and the grounded theory approach of substantiating my findings and interpretations in the data; the participants' voices are foregrounded throughout the findings chapters. The integration of the findings with current literature and theory occurs in Chapter 7, where I also present a conceptual framework of the psychosocial aspects in the context of university-community engagement. Since many themes are interconnected with others, they are not discussed in depth every time, but are merely referred to in order to acknowledge the linkages. Furthermore, the aspects on the individual, interpersonal, and university, community and societal levels are interrelated and inform one another. The separate chapters for the findings on the different levels were essentially created for the purpose of organizing the findings, and not to suggest that the processes operated independently.

The themes that relate to the intrapersonal aspects of CE on the cognitive and emotional levels, as captured in Table 6 on the following page are discussed in turn.

Table 6

Themes Discussed on the Individual Level of Analysis: Cognitive and Emotional

Psychological aspects on the cognitive level	Enhanced self-awareness
	The notion of personal engagement
	Awareness of attitudes and mind-shifts
	Experiencing internal conflict or ambiguity
	Psychological preparedness
	Personal growth
Psychological aspects on the emotional level	Sense of enjoyment
	Feeling appreciated
	Sense of achievement
	Feeling satisfied
	Feeling purposeful
	Feeling anxious
	Managing sadness: Becoming desensitized
	Sense of failure
	Stress and emotional exhaustion
	The psychological storm

Self-awareness

The term self-awareness in this study refers to participants becoming more aware of their own emotions, moods, values, discovering likes or dislikes and their place in the bigger picture. Particularly, the issue of self-discovery through the process of CE emerged as a very salient sub-topic of self-awareness. Jameson, a student volunteer, put it as *'you find yourself through this process'*. Riley also highlights the personal nature of CE and the idea of self-reflection throughout the process:

And it's also a very personal issue... I am very soft-hearted and like... it's very personal, you have to do a lot of self-reflection, really, otherwise you are going to

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hurt yourself. And that is not nice, then you will feel like you're failing and it's a very personal (issue). (Riley, third year social work student)

Many other students concurred with the idea that CE is of a very personal nature and requires self-awareness. Bart put it another way as he referred to the student as '*the individual finding out where they belong in a bigger scheme of things*'. He referred to fitting in with the specific programme or organization where students were involved and the CE landscape overall. When speaking of his role in CE specifically, he said that *'you cannot be involved in the betterment of anyone's situation if you do not know where you fit in'* (Bart, campus-wide student leader).

CE made participants realize that they have to view things in their life differently than before the engagement. Riley explained that she started to shift her focus inward and told how she re-evaluated her life because of the engagement experience:

And like, it makes me think of my own life… also in my home like the more I'm telling you this now, like how often I do the wrong things, it makes me question my profession and where I am as an individual, the change needs to start with me. It is here, where you realize that change needs to start with you. (Riley, third-year social work student)

Alegra, a social work student, also referred to questioning herself within the bigger scheme of things. She thought about CE and ultimately the social work profession, especially when her personal efforts did not elicit the response she hoped and disappointment crept in:

And then at times when you go there and only two of your groups [group members] show up or like things just go left [not as expected], and then you feel like, why? And you go to your supervisor, tell him you know what, this is what we're facing and it would be like, I don't know whether I'm up for this. And disappointments, and you putting more than your everything into something and then people don't

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> *show up. Or people just do what they want… then you'll be like, I don't know*
>
> *whether this is for me or not.* (Alegra, social work student)

Alegra's disappointment led her to question whether her chosen profession was in fact what she wanted to do. As young adults, the students were often confronted with their own life choices and had to decide which values they wanted to adhere to and which not. Student participants mentioned that the particular developmental stage, students generally lived their lives in bubbles or little boxes, but that CE offered them a space to find themselves beyond the box. Put differently, CE exposes students to different contexts and gives them opportunities to broaden their perspectives and to re-evaluate their values and life choices. This finding concurs with literature in the South African (Naudé, 2012, 2015) and international contexts (Kiely, 2005).

Personal engagement

The theme of personal engagement interlinks with self-awareness, since students involved in CE invest much of themselves in the process in terms of time and energy. This theme also refers to students' own choice, passion and investment in the projects that they are involved with:

> *We put our time in because we care about you guys [referring to the learners] and*
>
> *we've been here all these hours and, because we want the best for you. And I think*
>
> *there are a lot of projects that do that where we really care about the kids and really*
>
> *put them first…* (Penelope, student project leader)

Audrey mentioned that she always wanted to work with people and that that was why she decided to become a social worker. However, she mentioned that she did not *'realize it would take so much of you'*. The students mentioned that it required self-awareness of their own skills and well-being when they invested in others. This personal engagement in their respective programmes brought about various outcomes in their lives, especially related to personal growth.

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Personally, it made me realize so many other things, like it really takes a lot, you have to be really sensitive to take something like this on in the first place and to work with people... And I think as a leader, they [the volunteers] look at you the whole time – how does she respond, what does she do... It's really a learning process and takes of your humanity [investment of yourself]. (Coco, student project leader)

Students suggested that they realized that they could not provide the best volunteer service when their own well-being was not taken care of. The link between personal engagement and self-awareness was illuminated here as the volunteers were aware of their own moods and emotions when volunteering. Since volunteering required personal investment, the students felt that when they did not feel well, they did not provide a good volunteer service to the project participants. A comment from Penelope illustrated this point:

So their [the volunteers] psychological space is very, very important because you're obviously giving so much of yourself that you need to make sure that whatever it is that they're giving, is healthy... you cannot volunteer if your psychological mind frame is not good. (Penelope, student project leader)

On the other hand, some respondents suggested that some students, particularly in the university residence set-up, join the community interaction projects for their own benefit of gaining 'room points'. These points allow them to choose the rooms they wish to stay in the following year. The participants felt that when students come in with the wrong motives, those students do not make much effort to engage and to invest in the interaction. Consider the statements from Penelope and Phineas (from two different focus groups) below that illustrate this point:

So to be involved in a community project, but to actually be a part of it and to actually function with the project, are two completely separate things, because you do get different kinds of volunteers. You get people who kind of like to go and sort

of watch what's happening and you're like, you get people who like to go and make the connections and really get involved. And even in a university basis, in res[residence], we get 'kamerpunte' [room points], for being part of the community interaction committee, so every time you go, you get a 'kamerpunt', so there could be very, very selfish reasons for volunteers doing something like community interaction when it's perceived as something very selfless. (Penelope, student project leader)

So that 'kamerpunte' thing is actually the main magnet that just attracts the people to come and sign up because they know that at the end of the year they will get the room points which will then help them to choose what rooms they want to get into. (Phineas, student project leader)

Penelope's concern points out the difference between students that go along with the project volunteers, but who do not connect with the project participants. In those cases, students limit their own growth and development that could potentially take place through their involvement in CE activities. Penelope also describes volunteering as a selfless act, which links volunteering to the idea of personal engagement, an act of giving of oneself.

Personal engagement was also related to passionate service in the context of CE, as the students shared stories of doing more than what was expected of them:

And then now we also started going on Saturdays as well, and Saturday is a one-on-one tutor session. So instead of working in a group, every child gets a volunteer, and you sit down and it's up to the child to say ok, I'm struggling with this, can we have a look at that... (Penelope, student project leader)

Students demonstrated passion when they stepped into leadership positions when they did not yet feel ready to lead the project, but did it anyway because that was required to keep the project

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going. Similarly, others continued their leadership period because they could not overlook the leadership gap if they too were to leave the project. Zoë, a student project leader, described the intense personal investment in the project in a very powerful way through her statement below:

> *…You've kind of embody the community interaction project by the time you're this kind of leader and then it comes out with more emotion and is received with more emotion in this context.* (Zoë, student project leader)

Zoë referred to the deep personal investment she had made over three years of volunteering and serving in leadership positions in the particular CE project, to a point where she felt that the project was a part of who she has become. The other focus group participants agreed with this idea, and it came up in other focus groups in the study, as they all shared stories of personal investment. The effect of that personal investment was that the students experienced the progress, success and failures of the project in very personal ways too. These experiences are covered in the section on emotional effects of CE later on in the chapter.

Awareness of attitude and mind shifts

The participants viewed awareness of one's attitude during engagement as an essential aspect. They mentioned that attitude is important before and during the engagement. Attitude was also highlighted as important for the first day of interaction between students and community partners, as the foundation for the relationship is built then. Participants mentioned that they had noticed that the learners that they engaged with could pick up which students wanted to engage and who did not want to. In other words, the young children were able to pick up barriers or resistance to engagement, whatever the reasons for the barriers may be. One of the community organization interviewees in the study, Mrs Rivers, mentioned that she noticed how children would avoid certain students during engagement. This may not directly speak to the students' attitudes or willingness to engage, but it certainly pointed out that the children were intuitive in their engagement with the students too. In this regard, it is important to point out to students that they should be cognisant of

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their attitude towards engagement and should have an open or welcoming approach to facilitate the relationship building process. The following comment from Evelyn illustrates these ideas:

> *Like if a volunteer shows up at the school with an attitude of 'it's just another residence committee', the kids will notice it if you do not really want to be there... it will influence them negatively, I think... because if you go there, you should really want to be there, they would obviously feel more special and it would help a lot... like if you are doing an academic programme, they will actually listen to you, and they will actually be more 'opit' [engaging], more willing to learn from you. And you can also learn from the kids if you actually want to be there and not go for other random reasons.* (Evelyn, student project leader and on campus leadership structure)

When university students engage with people who are materially poor, people who live with disabilities, or younger learners at schools, there are often perceived power differences present in the engagement relationship. However, students either allow for the difference in power or resources to be a challenge to the relationship or not in the attitudes that they assume. A humble and authentic attitude was perceived to be helpful to the relationship, and involved listening more to participants to understand and learn from their situations; focusing on the participants' strengths and abilities rather than the perceived lack; and giving participants a voice with regard to choice of activities and participating in developing solutions to problems.

Even though some students were genuine in their attitude to assist in improving people's life circumstances, they had what Catarina, a staff member involved with student training and management, called a *'charity mentality'*. This mentality essentially kept the students in the more powerful situation with the community partner in a less powerful position as the students kept seeing the community partner as in need of help. Catarina mentioned that sometimes students would arrive at CE training for the first time with a mentality that *'a tea party for the elderly is enough'* in

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terms of engagement. However, as a facilitator, Catarina wants to help students to view the relationship differently, that is, a change from a perspective of the powerful university student that helps the poor community members, to the university student that wants to serve and learn from the communities with which they engage. Catarina mentioned that she is proud of the students as they realize and practise the different approach.

On the other side of the engagement spectrum, participants pointed out that the attitude or mind-set of some of the community partners may either facilitate or be a barrier to overcome, even before engagement with the members have taken place. Here Catarina commented on some community partners who expected material donations from the university, rather than the service by the students. This mind-set was therefore challenging for the students, since they were taught differently during their training.

In the example below, Sam explains what he believes is an important 'mind-shift' that should happen for students to move towards facilitating social change:

> *Just that total mind shift where it's about relationship and not status, where it's about not position but about community, and when it's about love and not self-righteousness or pride, you know. Now, when we understand that shift we are then moving towards social change because then you realize that leadership, any leadership is not just bound to political position or a residential position, it's actually what you live out as a human being. The moment that shift occurs that is when we truly can understand and become social agents of change and whatever project we decide to do.* (Sam, student project leader)

Sam's comment captures the importance of the awareness of attitude pointed out above, as well as the necessity of making the necessary adjustments when students become aware of attitudes or mind-sets that do not align with the broader mandate of social change.

Experiencing internal conflict or ambiguity

Ambiguity or internal conflict in the context of this study refers to instances where participants experience incongruence between two important aspects and where they struggle to reconcile the two. This ambiguity manifests in different ways for the participants and this discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, due to the relatively short-term nature of student engagement, there is a high rate of turnover of leadership in student-run CE projects. Student leadership positions terms usually last for one academic year. However, some leaders of projects remain in leadership position despite the changeover. Others only remain for the required term and then move on. Students felt ambiguity or internal conflict when they had to leave the project for different reasons, such as changing academic course or workload. They would desire for their situation to be different so that they could remain at the project. An example from Zoë, a student project leader, illustrates this point.

Zoë experienced ambiguity when her academic schedule changed from the one year to the next. She could no longer attend the project activities as much as she used to before. The ambiguity was about wanting to stay and having to let go. Zoë continued to administrate the project activities from campus, but could not facilitate any of the academic assistance programmes herself because of her own academic commitments. She mentioned that *"it is incredibly difficult to run a community organization if you can't go"*. She also mentioned that there was no one else who could lead the project, so she felt that she could not abandon it. Therefore, as the leader she had to make special arrangements to meet with the staff members at the school that her organization partnered with. Zoë mentioned the difficulty of not being able to do what she used to do the year before. Her biggest battle was to not be fully informed of the everyday happenings at the school. She felt out of touch with what was happening on the ground. Zoë's feeling of missing out on what was happening during the everyday activities of the programme was tough for her. This led her to leave the organization, but because of her heart for CE, she decided to get involved in a different way by

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volunteering in an administrative capacity at the campus office for CE. This office caters for more projects than only the one where volunteered. In a follow-up focus group, Zoë described how she eventually left the programme, but continued to volunteer at the campus-wide engagement office. Furthermore, she chose a career in teaching, a decision that was strongly influenced by her CE experiences. Zoë's example illustrates the difficulty that many people have with terminating relationships (or in the context of this study, to terminate involvement in projects), as described by Corey et al. (2014) and Yalom (1985). It also demonstrates her passion for CE and the high-intensity dissonance that Kiely (2005) explains in that the experiences during CE can influence students' life choices for long after they have left the projects.

The feeling of uncertainty emerged as a very important theme for the service-learning students, in particular the social work students. In both the third and fourth year focus groups, participants highlighted ambiguity in terms of ethical dilemmas. These included: conflict between achieving learning outcomes versus being authentic towards the client and conflict between doing what was good for the university (in terms of their grades in the module) versus what is good for the client.

In the first instance, Alegra, a third-year social work student, explained that sometimes she would focus more on the learning outcomes so that she can write in her reports, rather than being fully responsive to the client's story. The other students concurred enthusiastically with Alegra's honesty as she explained the following:

> *You'll see this child with a problem but you'll sit there and he'll tell you, you know what… my mom gave me a slap. And you'll be like, yes, something to write in my report. You know like, it's like, oh something. Oh, I know where I can reach my, like my outcomes. That stuff goes through your mind and it shouldn't be like that. You should be like sympathize and empathize with that child and be like, you know what, I'm going to go with you through this…* (Alegra, social work student)

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Alegra and the other students continued by saying that the portfolio that they needed to compile throughout the engagement process was a source of conflict for them. They constantly had to negotiate being authentic and supportive to the clients, and getting excited when they noticed essential learning outcomes that they could refer to in their reports. The students mentioned that they felt guilty for getting excited about reaching their learning outcomes sometimes at the expense of their clients' challenging situations. Consequently, some of the students went to the opposite side of the spectrum where they did not care about their marks anymore and rather focused on what was best for the client, despite their own need for achieving good academic results. Alegra later became more focused on the needs of her clients: *'As long as I know like I feel good about what I did and about what I told my client or …I feel or I see appreciation and gratitude from their side.'*

On a different note, they also mentioned the conflict between wanting to share their experiences with people and the pledge of confidentiality that restricts them from talking about their experiences outside of the engagement setting. Although the students understood confidentiality, they still felt the need to talk about their experiences as the space for this type of sharing of emotional experiences was limited during supervision time.

Another type of ambiguity, or even frustration, was that students to had communicate with project participants in a language that the participants are familiar with, but that the students themselves could not speak. Daniella mentioned an example where she explained that project participants in a multi-language group were excluded from the conversation because they did not understand the language:

> *…they don't feel part of what's going on around them. They actually, you can see them being excluded from the group and it's because they exclude themselves because they can't participate. I can't speak Xhosa even though I really would love to but I can't do it, so how do you connect with that child?* (Daniella, residence-based project leader)

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Daniella felt powerless in that particular situation. She desperately wanted to include the learners that she could see were excluded, but she did not know how to connect with them to draw them in. The example is mentioned here under the section of experiencing inner conflict since in the conversation the emphasis from the participant's side was on the feeling of desperation she had of *'How do you connect with that child?'* It therefore reached further than just the issue of language. Situations of exclusion based on language were a source of tension for her and for other students.

A different form of conflict was mentioned by Alex as he recalled going into a culturally different community for their engagement activities. He was part of a group of students that had to cross the railway line to reach the community where their project was located. Even though it was not the first time that he drove across a railway line, it was the first time going into a culturally different community where he was expected to interact with the people there. It is not uncommon in many South African towns for White, Black and Coloured communities to be separated by railway lines, high way roads or even rivers. Today still, this situation is part of the apartheid legacy of separate living and development that used to be the order of the day. In that specific focus group, the students spoke about the particular occurrence openly and even jokingly. Alex explained the tension that he experienced, the uncertainty about what his parents told him as a young, White boy when he was little, about where he should or should not go:

> *Alex: It's only when you get into the bus, that's when you become scared, because now we drive across the railway line, and my mom told me that you shouldn't drive over the railway line.*
>
> *(Participants' crosstalk)*
>
> *Interviewer: And now you even go to the "wrong side of the tracks" …*
>
> *(Participants laughed)*
>
> *Alex: Yes, exactly. Here, we drive across the railway line. I started to stress.*

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The students usually experienced nervous anticipation before their engagement endeavours. Alex highlighted a particular feeling of uncertainty about what he would find in this new community that was so different from the one he grew up in. The students had a lively discussion about the role that the media played in negatively portraying certain communities. This instilled fear into people regarding predominantly Black and Coloured communities as being violent. Minki's comment illustrated this idea:

> *You should go in there with an open mind, like you shouldn't think like I am going to a poorer community, there they do drugs and stab each other with knives…When I sat in that bus for the first time, it was scary. I come from the farm so that's weird. But when I came there, it was totally, like the vibe in the community was very different and the vibe in the school was different to what I am used to. And I think like, you should just tell yourself okay just chill, just take in the experience.* (Minki, engineering student)

The tension between the students' own values and the values of the clients was highlighted as an important source of uncertainty, even though a student pointed out that they were informed in class that *'you have to be able to separate the two'* – referring to their own values and the values of the people they worked with. Odille explained the tension in a very vivid way when she shared an incident where she went into a clients' home once and seeing a rash on a young girl's face covered in a black paste. According to Odille, if it were her child she would have taken the girl to the doctor and would have gotten antibiotics. However, she needed to respect the client's values and beliefs as a Rastafarian person, and the types of remedies that the mother believed would help her child:

> *But actually also with the Rastafarian thing, when I asked her what are you doing for this, what is this? It was like a value thing with me, like if my child had these things all over her I would take her to the doctor, get her antibiotics… When I went back she actually did take her child to the doctor and it cleared up but it was just*

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> *still that internal what do you do? People don't share the same opinion and just very, you battle.* (Odille, third-year social work student)

Odille mentioned an internal battle that others also referred to in the focus groups. There were many instances when the participants realized that their values were different from the values of the people that they worked with. Other instances where this ambiguity around values played out was on the issue of domestic violence and teenage pregnancy. Several students mentioned how difficult it was for them not to judge their clients for their decisions and to remain professional and not force their values onto their clients:

> *Like with me, I'm like okay fine if they're that young and having sex. I have a bit of an issue with it but rather let them be safe. And you've got other people who are like no, we can't give them that [contraceptives] because it is statutory rape, you're condoning it. And I'm like – But you've got to pick a path.* (Heidi, social work student)

Heidi spoke of her own values as a Christian woman who does not condone sex before marriage, but as a social work student she realized that she could not force her values onto clients. This internal battle was real for her and the other students in the group as they discussed the issue. In the end each felt compelled to pick a path – a path that may even go against their own personal values.

The conflict between differences in values also played out when students were confronted with how they behaved and what they taught their participants. Several of the students mentioned issues of coming home late at night, smoking and drinking. They experienced inner conflict and a sense of being hypocritical when they told their teenage clients not to smoke, all the while knowing that after the session they would like to take a smoke break themselves.

Role confusion was another source of internal conflict for students as they spoke of constantly having to switch between a student role and a professional role. This dance between the roles is evident in their practice settings where they carry the student label, but at the same time are expected to fulfil different roles in the social work organization. They are required to help with all sorts of tasks in the organization, besides statutory work. One important battle was deciding whether to close a case or not after it has been investigated and implementations have been completed. Heidi, a final year social work student, spoke about her internal conflict:

> *Like if I have to close a case, because you literally write closed on top of them, it gets filed with all the stats and I sit then I'm like should I close it, should I not close it... I had a case with this kid and like I did the assessment and I did the whole talking with the supervisor, telling her everything and then at night I lay awake and I was like, flip what if I missed something really bad, like what if I didn't do something? Like what if I did the wrong thing and now something happens to this child and then it like plays on your mind.* (Heidi, fourth year social work student)

I have to point out that the students made it clear that they managed well in their dance between the roles even though they mentioned the related challenges in their particular position as a final year social work student. This dancing between roles instilled in them a sense of responsibility and necessary preparation for their profession, especially at times when they had examinations and practice overlapping at the same time. They felt they *'have to be both people'* – a student and a semi-professional.

Psychological preparedness

Students' self-awareness and confidence during engagement settings depended a lot on their preparedness for the engagement. Preparation for CE is also foregrounded by Maistry and Thakrar (2012). Psychological preparedness in this context refers to the actions taken to prepare the students for the engagement activities by discussing aspects such as their attitude, cognisance of the

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interaction setting, caring for the self, and psychosocial aspects of their CE settings. The latter may include awareness of their own and their engagement partners' developmental stages, gender differences, and language and cultural differences. Even though in some projects students engaged in discussions on differences between themselves and community participants, most students felt that they were not psychologically prepared for the interaction. Moreover, preparation for engagement was treated differently in various types of programmes and depended on whether it was for volunteer projects or service-learning. Similarly, university staff members facilitated preparation sessions differently, and most of the preparation focused on facilitating programmes and managing the project, with little emphasis on the potential personal experiences. I did not conduct a specific enquiry into how students were prepared for the engagement activities by asking them to explain the processes or point out the strengths and weaknesses thereof. Therefore, the theme of psychological preparedness discussed in this section naturally emerged from the conversations with the participants.

Miryam pointed out that she felt 'lost' at the start of her engagement process. The fact that she did not feel prepared for the engagement had her feeling vulnerable and unsure: *'I've felt very lost at the beginning, and I would have loved to have a role model to come with this person and see how they do it, because that always teaches you the most'*.

Alex, an engineering student, highlighted the idea of not being prepared psychologically for what he encountered. In the following quotation he mentions an instance when he did not know how to respond to a learner that recently lost a family member:

> *It's just so awkward, one doesn't know how to handle these things, you literally threw us in blind, and that is where the psychology issue comes in again. We don't know how to handle these people; we don't have a clue. We all had a good attitude from the beginning, very nice, but what do we do when a child tells you, my mother died last night. We had a child whose uncle died two days ago. She was fine, and*

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said he lived with us in the house. How do you speak to [a child in that situation?]

(Alex, engineering student)

Alex emphasized that his good attitude towards the engagement was not enough, since he did not know what actions to take to respond to the situation. I was part of the staff team involved with the specific project that Alex referred to here, and in this instance various constraints related to the module did not allow for in-depth focus on psychological preparation of students, which may be the case in other projects as well. Alex's mention of *'we don't know how to handle these people'* indicated his distance from the participants in his project. His expression of distance was not unique among the students, but it also did not deter students from engaging and trying to bridge the gap. This issue of crossing contextual boundaries (Kiely, 2005) is discussed further in the discussion and integration chapter.

Students' sense of psychological preparedness and its link to self-awareness is highlighted when they are expected to engage with much younger learners, or male university students that engage with young, female learners in primary school especially. The age gap together with the gender gap presents a big challenge for some students. The engineering student participants pointed out that what is normal or logical for some people, may not be so for everyone, and poor psychological preparation consequently had a negative effect on their confidence levels during interaction. Minki, an engineering student, mentioned that *'engineering students are sometimes awkward socially… there are a lot of weird people at the engineering faculty and they also have to do this* [CE] *… it is good for them, but you have to tell them do this or do that'*. This particular example above was raised by students in the engineering faculty, but it could possibly have occurred with students from any other discipline, especially those outside of the social sciences.

Catarina, a university staff member, pointed out that she prepared the students by giving them information and not *'shock therapy'*. The preparation included discussions with the aim of

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informing the students about the living circumstances that their community partners may possibly be faced with.

Contrary to Catarina's information sharing approach, Ms Sunshine, a community organization manager, said that her approach was to introduce the students to the learners and allow them to get to know each other:

> *For us, how we do things here at [project's name] is never about you Black, you White, and you're an international student... when the students come we'll say we are working with Black students (school learners) who are Xhosa speaking, that's it... we don't say these are the kind of people you should expect and they are coming from these backgrounds, and therefore you should treat them this way, no. So that's why when the students come the first day, we introduce them, they work, they play with the kids so they get to know them so then it's their choice how to treat them.*
> (Ms Sunshine, community project representative)

Despite these differences, Ms Sunshine believed that with their approach the students and learners would find the middle ground where they can engage:

> *Even for our learners, we won't say... we are expecting White students from the university, we'll just say we are expecting students from the university... or international students from the university and that's that. We won't say that they're White or Black, that doesn't matter. What matters is the person you will be working with at that time... whatever way you learn from them then is between the students...*
> (Ms Sunshine, community project representative)

Ms Sunshine did not subscribe to *'shock treatment'* as Catarina mentioned, but her introduction to the context and to the learners was limited with good reason – she wanted to

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minimize the possible stereotypes or barriers that may have emerged from her focus on differences or otherness.

Students commented on their idea of the advantages of being psychologically prepared for engagement and the possible effect on self-awareness. They anticipated that they would know how to enter the community better, understand their purpose in the spectrum of engagement, and know how to assess the situation better. This would in turn help them to more easily build relationships with the project participants as everyone would be more comfortable in the engagement and get the most out of the engagement, even though the time for engagement was usually short.

Although it was perceived as an advantage to be psychologically prepared for engagement, students noted the possible disadvantage of being too prepared for the engagement. Students may become too rigid with regard to *'following another manual'*, or *'build up preconceived ideas of the people'* they would be engaging with. One student mentioned that *'maybe it is the true you that that child really needs, instead of another person that follows a textbook, but someone that lives according to feelings'* (Alex, engineering student). In this instance *'the true you'* refers to the idea of being present in the situation, which should overshadow the rigidity of following rules in a textbook.

Sense of Support

Associated with students' sense of preparedness and self-efficacy in the engagement, was their sense of support before and during the engagement process. Situations where students felt supported included: organization staff that assumed some responsibility in setting up the engagement with clients or community participants; when other students and residence leaders that were *'involved in vision-casting also participated in the activities'* or provided emotional support to project leaders as Coco, a student project leader commented: *'I have a committee that is rock-solid behind me'*.

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Students' perceptions of a lack of support were described as not feeling heard or listened to. Riley and Alegra shared their experiences with supervisors and lecturers: *'They don't listen to you'* (Riley, third-year social work student) and *'you start saying or explaining something and they already have the answer… you'll be like, it's not what I'm asking'* (Alegra, third-year social work student). Residence-based project leaders also expressed a lack of support from the rest of the residence members and other portfolio leaders on the house committee and it felt like they had to '*run the show'* on their own.

Starr explained a perplexing situation as CE portfolio leader of a project based in an off-campus residence cluster: *'How is it that community interaction is not considered a top priority in this organization?'* Her comment was also related to the perception of students that CE was a *'side-line project of an organization'* and not necessarily a top priority.

The theme of support was linked to other preconceived ideas held about CE by students not involved in CE. These included a misperception of what CE entails and its connation to 'charity work': *'Students think that community interaction is just charity work, you know, you give money to...But they don't know what really goes into it, they don't understand how important it really is'* (Starr); the idea that people that are involved in CE is *'too nice' (Penelope) or 'soft-hearted'* and *'someone that will do anything for anyone' (Evelyn).* These preconceived ideas made it difficult to get students involved in projects and to sustain them in projects. This comment from Phineas below illustrates these ideas as well:

> *But I must say that at residence, especially men's residence, I mean, things like [name of CE organization], I won't say they take it for granted or lightly, they just really misunderstand it, I would say, because it is all about this thing of just helping, just doing something for someone poor. It's not really shaped up to say that you are actually influencing someone's life, you are making a change, and you are contributing so you know this service thing… Some guy actually told me this,*

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Phineas I would love to but I am not a nice person, really. He said that is not my thing. I will maybe type something for you but I am not like that you know. (Phineas, student project leader)

Several students mentioned the need for more supportive spaces for reflection on their emotional experiences after the focus groups, which was a finding in itself. The idea of group reflection is discussed further in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Personal Growth

The theme of personal growth was one of the most important themes in all of the student focus groups, staff and community partner interviews. This theme contained a variety of sub-components that highlighted the dynamic nature of CE. One of the aspects highlighted by several participants is the idea of realizing and practising new skills, abilities or creativity when engaging with participants in one-on-one settings or leading group sessions. Students linked these aspects with a sense of being empowered through the experience that they have gained in addition to the theoretical education obtained in university classrooms. A comment from Audrey below illustrates her appreciation for being exposed to what she can expect in the social work profession:

They expose us to so many different things, like for example I don't think I would get along with old people but if they had to put me in an old age home at least I've experienced it and like knew that I'm not good at this. So you experience all these things so that one day you choose how you end up being, you choose where you want to work and who you want to work for. (Audrey, third year social work student)

Another aspect that was raised by students a number of times is the idea of being amazed at their ability to handle unfamiliar situations; the personal strength they had developed due to the often strenuous nature of the work; and in turn also the sense of confidence to face other unknown

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situations in the future. Skye and Rose's accounts captured the idea of being amazed at their own abilities:

> *I think it is that...it's sort of empowering, like, I manage that and that was my first time. So I can do it again and also your creative side because... like Blossom [project leader] gives us a lot of space to come up with our own things and lead the session... And you trust yourself I guess.* (Skye, psychology student volunteer)

> *I think we believe more in ourselves, like, I didn't know I could be like that, and because I was, not forced, but I mean... I look back and I think wow.* (Rose, psychology student volunteer)

Participating in CE activities on a voluntary basis or as part of academic courses often expose students to communities and settings different to the ones where they grew up in or was familiar with in their day to day lives. These settings included differences on the basis of their own culture or language or unfamiliar settings such as working in correctional facilities, hospitals and in multi-disciplinary teams. This exposure was repeatedly described by the students as '*out of comfort zone experiences*' (Ryan). There were also opportunities that motivated students to look at and think differently about other and their own communities. These *'out of comfort zone experiences'* were furthermore seen as building blocks for personal growth as Ryan, a postgraduate psychology student, described his experience: *'[it] becomes part of who you are as a person'*.

In several instances students in leadership positions mentioned that they did not choose to be in project leadership or to become the head of the CE portfolio at their residence. Nevertheless, they found the personal growth that resulted from being in a leadership position very beneficial as can be seen from Bart's account:

> *I didn't even want to stand for community interaction portfolio initially and I fell upon it. I don't know why they gave it to me specifically... I don't know if there was*

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any prejudice involved or whatever, whatever might have been, it's fine, because it's a portfolio that changed my life actually, my view on a lot of different things and my growth because they talk about graduate attributes… It's, those types of things that add to your life and all of us (co-leaders) sort of share that now, because we have that experience. (Bart, campus-wide student leader)

Furthermore, Penelope pointed out that being involved in CE has helped her to develop empathy for other people's situations and a more holistic perspective as a student in Stellenbosch:

It comes down to what you said about, holistically for a student, it improves your holistic view of sort of what's around me, what's important in life, because it's so easy to, like, oh my degree and my friends and my boyfriend… But it's actually not about that, because there are people in your community that have, I don't know how to, how to word it, but… Have a lot more serious issues that sort of need to be dealt with. To take the time to be in a project like that, creates a much more holistic view of what is the Stellenbosch community, because you so often think that Stellenbosch is about the students, and it's about the university, but it's not, because there's schools and there's residence and there's so many other, ja, other involved parties within this one place, so. (Penelope, student project leader)

Emotional Impact during the CE Process

A key aspect that added a psychological component to CE according to the participants in this study was that they had to engage with their emotions during the course of the process. Several participants spoke about a range of emotions that they experienced during their CE efforts. Some of the positive emotions that participants highlighted include a sense of enjoyment; sense of appreciation; sense of achievement; feeling satisfied; and feeling purposeful. Some of the emotions on the negative spectrum include anxiety; experiencing and managing sadness; sense of failure; feeling stressed and emotionally exhausted. These emotions are discussed below.

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Sense of enjoyment. Several participants mentioned a sense of enjoyment. Even in the focus group sessions, a sense of enjoyment of CE was evident among the study participants as our focus groups were marked with laughter and excitement to talk about these engagement experiences. Participants expressed that the exposure to people that lived in different areas and to learn about different cultures was gratifying:

> *For me [name of community] is a place where I find peace. I don't know, I go there and it's just, you just connect and talk to people that you wouldn't normally have a chance to talk to, and you just see these amazing examples of people doing these things* (Blossom, psychology student project leader)

> *It's nice, it is overwhelming, but it's nice* (Evelyn, student project leader)

It was also very enjoyable for students when previous participants in a programme remembered them and went up to them in spaces outside of the engagement context, like the shopping mall. Furthermore, participants felt particularly happy when the participants opened up to them during the engagement sessions. The comment by Riley below is one example:

> *I think the positive thing for me is that not everyone opens up, but those clients when you go to them, some of them, really like welcomes you with an open heart and like they are so happy to see you and they like, they really express themselves, they really open up to you… "This is how I feel about the situation". Like my grade seven girls… and that makes me feel good.* (Riley, social work third year student)

The sense of enjoyment in that space is connected to being trusted by the community participant and being allowed to help in improving their situations. The social work students specifically highlighted the sense of enjoyment in this regard. One student contrasted this acceptance to sometimes experiencing resistance when they tried to connect with participants. Therefore, CE was more enjoyable for students when they felt welcomed and trusted by their

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community partners at the organizations and participants in the programmes. Likewise, it was enjoyable for students when they saw that the participants enjoyed the programmes that they offered:

> *I enjoyed my group work so much. I could see that the children were actually benefiting from it and that they enjoyed it… that motivated me so much…* (Amelia, social work student)

For some, the enjoyment was seeing the children light up when they finally understood something that the student volunteers tried to explain to them; playing with the children and forgetting about their academic work until they got back to campus. For others, like some of the engineering students, the enjoyment lay in being able to actually have the opportunity to be involved in CE as structured part of their academic schedule:

> *If I had a choice, I would be doing community interaction if I had time, but this degree is so hectic… you can't just be like, cool today I'm going to, you can't, it's impossible… So, I feel like it was really cool because you actually must get it out of your system, the fact that you've been wanting to do something like this for so long… you know, enjoy it while you can, because you have the opportunity. So, I think that was very, very cool, for me.* (Selena, engineering student)

The sense of enjoyment that students felt was compelling and even infectious like Catarina, a university staff member, explained. She mentioned that some student leaders enjoyed CE so much it was like they became *'infected as with an illness'*, or it was like they *'became converted to a new religion'* and they continue with the project until they complete their studies. One of the leaders, Phineas, described himself as a *'community interaction fanatic… I am crazy about just being there'*. In addition to his programme at the university residence, he also got involved in programmes outside of the university. Several other students explained that the experience of CE invoked in them such passion for the work and that they wanted to continue with it beyond their studies.

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Feeling appreciated. The students felt appreciated for their efforts and additionally developed a sense of appreciation for their own lives and opportunities. Some of the students mentioned that they noticed this from their interactions with community partners. Penelope illustrated this point:

> *With regards to the teachers and principal, they have received us very, very well. They really appreciate what we're doing and are very, very open to any sort of suggestions that we come to them with, whereby their teacher is the one who comes in on Saturday and opens the school for us, we use the school facilities, so, they really have been very supportive of the project. And I must admit, I agree with Bart when he said, they really do appreciate the human element. They appreciate that we care, that we're taking the time to sort of get involved and help out and that sort of thing.* (Penelope, project leader)

Penelope highlighted here the appreciation expressed by the community partners, especially their appreciation for the service that the students offered to the school, rather than physical objects from the university.

Students also developed a deep sense of appreciation for their own lives and circumstances through their work in CE programmes. Sabrina reflected on her appreciation of her own life:

> *It makes you appreciate everything you have because like the community in [name of community] like there's a Rasta camp. So it's like the shacks are so small and there are so many people in that house and there's also like a garbage thing for the children (where children play). It's bad for them as well. So you see that it's really bad and it makes you feel bad because sometimes you feel like you don't have everything, you don't appreciate everything...* (Sabrina, third-year social work student)

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Sense of achievement. Another prominent positive feeling related to CE was a sense of achievement. This sense was invoked by sometimes small victories like learners that remembered the programmes that were taught to them; someone that correctly answered mathematics questions; and even youth that were in a better position to make informed decisions about their lives and careers. The following quotation supports the idea of achievement because learners were better equipped for possible difficult situations in the future:

> *So that was very special for me because I felt like, you know, I did leave them with something, and I did make a difference in their lives. And also, because they did -- they remembered, like, most of the stuff that we had gone over for the past ten weeks… So, it shows that, like, one day when they have problems or when they feel anxious about something then they'll actually be able to use those skills that we've taught them over the past ten weeks. So that was very positive for me.* (Velvet, psychology student volunteer)

Beyond the sense of achievement with the work that they have accomplished, the students also felt personal achievement, as can be seen by Audrey's testimony below:

> *So it is true what they say… you really grow a lot. I was, especially in high school, I was a very, very soft person when I got here I just said to myself -- and I always like helping people so I was like I'm going to become a social worker. But when I started off I didn't know it had to take so much of you and so it really has developed my strength… I cry really easily as well but I haven't cried once during a session so I'm very proud of myself, so that's my achievement.* (Audrey, third year social work student)

Feeling satisfied. Students shared a variety of experiences they had during the engagement. Not surprisingly, they encountered days where they felt extremely satisfied with their achievements

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for the day, and on other days not so much. A sense of satisfaction was described as something that made them feel good and which in turn energized them for other things in their lives.

> *And like you said it's reciprocal, so as much as the volunteers are giving, they need to be getting something back so that by the end of it, when they leave that project, they are like, ok, I did something good, I feel good about what I've done and I can carry on doing other things that I have going on in my life, I'm in a good place.*
> (Penelope, student project leader)

This can be considered relevant for day-to-day experiences of engagement and at the end of a project as a whole.

Feeling purposeful. Many students felt that they were part of something greater than themselves in a positive way and that they have added something good to the lives of their participants. The students especially appreciated being part of shaping a new generation of young people through their CE initiatives. The examples below illustrate this sense of feeling a sense of purpose:

> *It's like you're giving life to someone because you know some of the kids like the boys especially you go: 'Oh look at your muscles!' -- You boost their self-esteem also but like at the same time it's like you're someone's hero… I think not even for yourself and like for the child that means much more because you don't really fully understand, you can't fully comprehend their situations, you know but you see something that like oh my word it's giving life.* (Sam, student project leader)

> *But then you get that one case, you get that one case that like is successful or like group work when the kids really, really love it. I mean like okay cool; I can do this… And like a few months down the line, I'm struggling and you can't do it… and then like just that one case, that one little kid who comes and gives a hug or that one*

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group member who comes and goes (says): "You really, really helped me", like you literally do it for that. (Heidi, fourth-year social work student)

Feeling anxious. Students described feeling anxious, especially at the beginning of the CE experience, and this feeling was strongly linked to not knowing what to expect of the situations they would face and their abilities to handle it. Once students became familiar with the tasks at hand and the situations they would be operating in, the anxious feeling usually subsided. Consider the example of Alex, an engineering student who commented on his initial anxious feeling by saying, *'Even with the information session, I thought that I would never get my degree, I am going to die, and that is what I thought'* (Alex, engineering student). Blossom, a psychology project leader, also observed initial anxiety amongst her group of volunteers:

> *I also think it's an anxiety thing. I think when you first go in – because I remember the first week… Everybody was just there with their pamphlets (guidelines), and then after debriefing, I was like, you know you don't need to use the pamphlet entirely. And then I think, the second session, because you had done it once before, you felt okay to like, I know what's on the paper.* (Blossom, psychology student project leader) [P4: 106]

For Riley, however, the feeling of anxiety did not subside, as she was afraid of her client's temperamental nature and outbursts of rage: *'I'm so scared. Like every time I go there, I'm so scared. And you so afraid, because that woman* (her client) *gets mad and she says they* (the people in the client's house) *make me furious… Then she'll sit there, and she gets mad, and I get scared.'* (Riley, third-year social work student)

Managing sadness: Becoming desensitized. The experience of sadness emerged as a strong theme among the social work students and especially in relation to cases where young children were involved. This is evident from one participant's comment: *'I think it's the saddest with the kids. I think we get the saddest with the kids.'* The students shared several stories of experiencing sadness

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and loss about and with their clients. As a response one of the fourth-year students commented that *'I do feel like we've all become very desensitized to it'*. She continued to explain why she (they) have become desensitized or try to distance herself from the work that they do, as a means of coping. The others in the group agreed in unison as Heidi explained. Consider the following extract from the group discussion for some context and clarity on the issue of sadness and how the students attempt to cope with it:

> Heidi: *I've spent the last couple of months – I've read over, I think over 70 cases with (about) young children and women, like being abused, being sexually assaulted. If I wasn't desensitized to it, I wouldn't make it through the day, genuinely. If I had to take in every single thing that I read I wouldn't make it through the day, because those cases are hectic especially like working with rapes and that kind of thing. I mean young children whose mother brings them because the child went to the father for the weekend and came home complaining because she was sore and now you have to deal with it. You know like if I wasn't desensitized I wouldn't be able to cope. So I feel like I'm still – I'm not saying that I'm okay, no everything is fine now, but that impact...*

> Amelia: *You still have emotions towards...*

> Heidi: *I still have...*

> *[Cross talk] (The participants concurred with what Heidi shared)*

> Heidi: *But somewhere I have had to learn to distance myself... I have to almost see them as a number. I have to look at the cases, look at the age once when I type into referral and then I just leave it, I just don't look at it again, because if I did... if I have to sit and like discuss the amount of children under the age of 10 or whatever, I would literally break down and cry, because it's insane. It's hectic and*

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that's just one area. And then I said like oh, but there's so many of these and there's

so much stuff happening. So you almost have to compartmentalize and be like, this

is what I'm doing, this is what I'm doing and then put it away. So you almost have

to be desensitized otherwise you're not going to make it through the day.

The participants continued their discussion on the nature of their work and even commented that they have noticed that *'you can see the social workers all do desensitize'*, and *'It's the norm... like it's just another day, another case'*. The stories such as the ones shared here, highlight the need for psychological support for the students, which currently is either lacking completely or not prioritized in most CE programmes. Even in programmes like social work where supervision is structured, deep reflection on emotional experiences is not prioritized. Stories like these also point to considering the area of secondary traumatization or vicarious trauma (Canfield, 2005) and the ethics of care, which is not normally discussed in the literature on CE. This point will be taken forward in the discussion chapter.

Sense of failure. A sense of failure played out in different ways for the participants in this study. For some it was connected to *'a day gone wrong'* at an after-school programme, and for others it was their reflection on weeks or even months' worth of work. Comments like, *'I'm not really doing anything'* (Ivy), *'Nobody needs me'* (Amelia) and *'What am I doing here'* (Ivy), all indicated students' expression of failing to meet their goals, or that they have not seen the levels of change that they would have liked to see. For example, as Riley stated: *'And I feel just like we using this people, because in some cases I feel like I've done nothing with them'* (Riley, third-year social work student). Consider the following extract for another example of a participant's sense of failure as she connected her experience with not being adequately informed from the start regarding the type of authority she would have:

…I think it was just the whole fact of going out and not like being conscious of all

these 'grense' [boundaries], you can't do this, you can't do that because you're

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still a student. And then you feel you're a failure, because what's the point of you being there. (Alegra, third year social work student)

For Alegra, this sense of failure, coupled with other demands of studies and personal commitments, influenced her well-being in such a way that she sought professional counselling, as is mentioned in the next section.

Experiencing stress and emotional exhaustion. Students in the study, in both service-learning and the volunteer component, experienced CE as stressful and emotionally strenuous. Stress was evident in their day-to-day involvement in the projects with regard to project management and programme facilitation. It was also evident in managing the rest of their responsibilities as students, partners in relationships, families and the like, as is evident from Zoë and Heidi's comments: *'It put me under a lot of strain and my academics did suffer a bit and things like that, and relationships was a big, part of it'* (Zoë, student project leader). *'It's exhausting and then the next day you still have classes and you have to write a test because you can't write tests in the evening. You have to write them during the day'* (Heidi, fourth year social work student).

In Alegra's case, as mentioned under sense of failure, her experience of stress and exhaustion led her to seek professional help:

I was in depression, last year major depression, really major depression… there were times I like get super like suicidal thoughts and stuff but I've seen the psychologist and talked to her… And yeah, I was down, down, lower than low. Lower, lower and lower, that's how bad it was… I still sort of get like that at times on Thursday afternoons or at night like just lying in bed and thinking, wow, people are facing tough stuff out there and I'm privileged to be here and sometimes I'll just be – I'll cry just to think about everything… (Alegra, third-year social work student)

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The "Psychological Storm"

In his effort to explain how demanding especially leadership roles in CE can be, one of the participants described his experience as a 'psychological storm'. In this regard, a psychological storm refers to a sense of feeling buffeted, overwhelmed. Bart referred to managing relationships with community partners, student volunteers, his studies and personal life. Consider the extract from Bart for context and original explanation:

> *So, like sometimes psychologically like they said now with the community partner…*
> *I think trust obviously, needs to be gained, and things like that, so, obviously in that*
> *way, your relationship grows. When it comes to your student volunteers, then*
> *handling them with care is definitely something, like inspiring, keeping them*
> *motivated all those type of things, reverse psychology on them, whatever, to get*
> *them into a believe system or that sort of thing. So that also puts you sort of as a*
> *community leader or like we now, this, our situation, puts us in the middle of that.*
> *Sometimes there will be a lot of – there would be psychological storm actually, to*
> *be honest, because you need to make sure that – you need to be in a good space as*
> *well. And if you're not motivated or be able to inspire them, then this thing will not*
> *work, and sometimes it's difficult to keep yourself accountable. I've experienced*
> *that myself personally where I struggle as well, because you need to balance so*
> *many other factors and not just the programme – the programme is not our life,*
> *unfortunately. It's great, it's a great purpose and all that, and that's our*
> *psychological battle.* (Bart, student project leader)

The psychological storm as explained by Bart is experienced on the individual level, but similar to many of the aspects presented in this chapter, is influenced by interaction between people involved in the engagement, or factors outside of the students' control. The characteristics of the psychological storm as described in this study, point to a link with the concept of burnout. This

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syndrome is characterized by feeling overwhelmed, a lack of interest in tasks or responsibilities, and emotional exhaustion usually due to prolonged stress and overload (Maslach, 1982). Burnout is widely researched in the workplace, amongst health care service providers and teachers (Akintola, Hlengwa & Dageid, 2013; Johnson & Naidoo, 2017). However, burnout is not necessarily associated with CE in the literature. This may be due to foregrounding the positive effects and benefits of CE, and consequently leaving the negative experiences understated.

Chapter Summary

The current chapter presents the themes related to the individual level of CE as discussed by the study participants. The findings presented here support the notion that CE is a profoundly personal experience for the students in that they give a lot of themselves and in turn are affected in various ways throughout the process of engagement. It is also clear that even though the students experienced CE cognitively and emotionally or viscerally, these experiences are informed by their interaction with other people, whether it is the project participants, community project representatives or their lecturers and supervisors at the university. The next chapter focuses on the themes related to the interpersonal level of interaction in the context of CE.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS - II: THE INTERPERSONAL LEVEL

'I think a lot of it has to do with being able to perceive the situation, so being able to take a step back and see ok, how is everyone responding to the situation that we're in now, and how can I improve it...'

(Penelope, student project leader)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how participants perceive psychology to operate on the interpersonal level in the context of Community Engagement (CE). This refers to the participants' construction of how the interactions between various role-players affect the students' emotions, thoughts and actions. This part of the findings relate to Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2010) notion of the 'relational' in their understanding of well-being as comprising personal, relational and societal components. This section of the findings also relates to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) micro- and meso-levels in the systems theory. The themes related to the interpersonal level, as captured in Table 7 on the following page, are discussed in turn.

Table 7

Themes Discussed on the Interpersonal Level of Analysis

Language and engagement	Differences in language ability limits communication
	Language and forming connections
	Language ability as a privileged position
	Creating an enabling language space
Age differences and developmental stages in engagement	Reimagining childhood
	Addressing age appropriate topics
	Being judged based on age
	Same age as their clients
	Awareness of own developmental stage
Building relationships and managing connections	Relationships create a space for learning and growing
	Special bonds with few
	Finding common ground
	Relationship building requires honesty and trust in the process
Practising facilitative skills in interpersonal settings	Interpersonal awareness
	Managing the nature of conversations
	Acknowledging possible biases
	Affirming and acknowledging
Terminating engagement relationships	Terminating the relationship provokes emotions
	Preparing for termination
	The psychological block
Finding closure	Succession plans in place
	Perceptions of influence
	Ambivalent closure

Language and Engagement

In a multilingual country like South Africa, CE between students and community partners from different language backgrounds and abilities is not uncommon. In this study, participants referred to their experiences of being caught in what one participant described as *'this language mess'* or *'language divide'*, a reality that cannot be ignored. Indeed, language differences have presented various challenges in engagement situations for students and their project participants, such as the ones that are discussed below.

Difference in language ability limits communication: The biggest factor concerning language differences in CE was that it limited communication, which in turn posed various challenges for students who had to facilitate sessions and manage groups. Giving instructions or facilitating discussions became an almost impossible task. Consider the following comments to illustrate this point:

> *I think in terms of the question, sometimes they don't understand the question – the English questions. But then if you explain it in Xhosa or if you give them an example, then they sort of understand.* (Velvet, psychology student volunteer)

> *My problem with, well any type of social work, is my language barrier. So most of my clients are Afrikaans, they can understand English, but they can't speak English at all. So, I can speak to them, but I need [name of fellow student] to translate for me. So, it's very difficult to interact with them or to give them valuable services or for it to be even of value to me, because sometimes I can't learn anything.* (Odille, third-year social work student)

The students, however, had to think on their feet and come up with creative solutions to the conundrums that they were faced with. Consider the example presented by Selena below:

> *And then I think the communication issue that came in was literally the language,*
> *because they spoke Xhosa and we didn't. So, it was like, it was extremely difficult,*
> *we had to teach them like technical terms about aviation and like the only way I, I*
> *was like, okay, this is not working and the only way I could get, felt like I could get*
> *through to them, was I literally used the kids as props. Like I literally made the kid*
> *lie across the chair and I was like, you're a plane, wiggle your wings. And by doing*
> *that, it was cool...* (Selena, engineering student)

Besides Selena's creative example of using the child as a prop, another example was to adopt a more laid back or 'hang-out' approach where the students moved away from their scripted programmes to more informal discussions of the topics concerned. As Skye explained, in that way the learners were not *'bombarded with all those English words, but once you break it down, or you give them examples, then they usually open up and then they speak.'* (Skye, psychology student volunteer)

Language and forming connections: Participants referred to situations where differences in language limited bonding between themselves and project participants or where the difference in language facilitated bonding between them.

In the first instance, one can consider again the example of Daniella that was mentioned in the previous chapter in the section dealing with ambiguity. Daniella found it very difficult to draw the Xhosa-speaking participants into the conversations, since she was not able to speak their language.

On the other hand, the lack of ability to speak the participants' language has facilitated building connections with them through other means. In Selena's example of using the child as a prop, she continued that:

> *...And like I made them translate some terms for me. Like 'lift' was one of the things*
> *we had to teach them, like the plane has a lift underneath. So I'm like, what is that*

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in Xhosa? So they told me no, it's 'ileri' so I was like cool, now I'm going home and learn those words. So when I come back, they feel like I have made an effort to be part of their world versus me or them trying to just be part of my like English world. (Selena, engineering student)

In Odille, the social work student's case, she had a fellow student translate for her during the sessions. That meant, however, that the participants in her group could more fully participate through speaking their mother tongue, which in turn meant that the engagement was more meaningful for both the community participants and the students. She ended up attracting more participants to her group sessions and even people way above the initially targeted age group.

Language ability as a privileged position: In most instances where language was mentioned in the study, it was concerning a lack of ability to speak the participants' language. The idea of Xhosa-speaking ability as a privileged position came about where non-Xhosa-speaking students envied that ability, as they felt constrained, whereas students that could speak and understand isiXhosa, found the ability advantageous. The same can be said for Afrikaans-speaking students engaging with Afrikaans-speaking learners. Consider the following quotations as illustrations of this point:

They were also Afrikaans, so we actually had it easy in that regard. Some of us bonded with them immediately, and we could relate to them easily. (Minki, engineering student)

I think I would just try to use it to my advantage. So, because they do forget, they speak and they speak. Then they have this thing where they speak between each other, and it's getting confusing. They say too many things at the same time, then I turn and I'll answer them or speak in isiXhosa, then they're like, oh wow, and they focus again. (Rose, psychology student volunteer)

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On the other hand, there were also situations where Xhosa-speaking students were put in the middle of a non-Xhosa speaking fellow student and other Xhosa-speaking learners. Velvet felt that it was a somewhat difficult position and not necessarily a privileged position. Consider some of her reflections on this matter below:

> *It actually becomes a bit difficult for me because, you know when the students act up or when they say things, or when they're rude, and then I can obviously understand that... I'm not sure whether to continue with the session and ignore what they just said or... to actually confront them. You know, it becomes kind of difficult to address that at that instant, you know... So, but then in other instances is when they speak Xhosa too much, like, it becomes a bit of a problem because then, I have to sort of translate everything they're saying.* (Velvet, Psychology student volunteer)

Creating an enabling language space: In instances where student volunteers were able to speak the learners' mother tongue, they usually provided the opportunity for learners to communicate in it. Students' ability to speak isiXhosa or Afrikaans, for example, has added to a more enabling engagement environment as learners could more freely express themselves, rather than struggling with English, their second or third language. However, sometimes learners preferred to speak in English rather than their mother tongue. Consider the following examples on the project participants' choice of language use:

> *I'll start with English and then isiXhosa, and then try to, to just say it's fine, you can just use either or, I don't mind. But then I feel sometimes I don't know if they want to show off or show me that they can also speak in English. And because they are not as articulate, they can't express fully what it is they want to say.* (Rose, psychology student volunteer)

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But also, what Rose said, if they do answer in English, then it's sort of like one sentence or two sentences in English, whereas if they speak in Xhosa then they will give more detail of their opinion on the thing. (Velvet, psychology student volunteer)

Participants in this study also mentioned that they encouraged the learners to communicate in English, since it is a language that they have to become familiar and comfortable with for their school and post-school careers. The extract from Ms Sunshine illustrated this point:

It's a language that they need to use… If our students can be taught in Xhosa it's not going to help them, because if they go to varsity the books are written in English; if they go work for companies, which company uses Xhosa? …So we encourage them from Grade 8 to Grade 12 even our sessions are not in Xhosa as much as we are Xhosa. … We're trying to help them in any way possible, in every way possible. (Ms Sunshine, community project representative)

It is important to note that the latter example was in reference to an after-school facility for high school learners in a predominantly Black community, and did not refer to mother tongue education as a contested topic on its own.

Age Differences and Developmental Stages in Engagement

Since most CE projects were in collaboration with after-school facilities and schools, many students engaged with learners that were much younger than themselves. Although not challenging for some, others indeed found the age difference difficult to manage. The students were between 20 and 29 years old.

Reimagining childhood. Various students mentioned that they had to reimagine what it was like to be in school, to be that age where their learners are. Students wondered about age appropriate behaviour and learners' preference around toys and playing. For some it was

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overwhelming to engage the learners in conversation especially if they did not have young children in their own families and therefore little background on how to engage them and keep them interested. Consider the statement by Ryan as he reflected on his experience below:

> *I have to say that one of my biggest challenges when I started working was... you as a student now having to place yourself again in that role of being a learner, you know, being at school. You know what were my thoughts then? Girls, peer pressure, social -- you know how to fit in, and that helped me a lot, and that's also something I use...* (Ryan, psychology student volunteer)

Addressing age appropriate topics. Various students spoke about the developmental stages of their clients as an important aspect to consider during engagement, as it informed the topics to be addressed and how these topics should be addressed. The following example can be considered in relation to this point:

> *Like I don't know their behaviour change completely like their school uniform and everything... and they have really bad attitudes with the classroom teachers and with each other... They're constantly fighting... Yes, they are in that phase, so now we just try to teach them about emotions and conflict management and that whole phase of early adolescence... It's like they don't understand what they're going through.* (Riley, third-year social work student)

In the example above, Riley refers to adolescent girls in primary school. In terms of their school uniform, they still wear their normal school uniform, but the older girls tend to wear shorter or tighter skirts.

Being judged based on age. Working with clients or project participants that were older than them also posed different challenges to the students. Some of these included feeling judged or undermined and feeling conflicted about having to address older people on their decisions. Consider

Ruby's example below as she reflected on having to conduct a home visit and being denied entry by the resident:

> *Or working with like older people and they're like but you're a child what do you know… and they just like dismissed me. They said you can't come in, you're a child and you don't have any like skills or anything, like no… What am I supposed to tell them no, no okay well I don't have a child, I don't know what it's like to be a parent and they literally judged me on my age… I'm use to you have to have respect for older people, you can't like have attitude with them and stuff, and I'm standing there and I literally didn't know what to tell them I was like okay cool then, okay then see you next month.* (Ruby, fourth-year social work student)

Same age as their clients. Some of the students mentioned that there have been instances where they were the same age as their clients. In those instances, it was a source of self-awareness for the student. See the examples by Ruby and Amelia below:

> *He's still on high school but he was in my group but he was like 21, and I'm like okay so we're the same age, this is not awkward at all. [She said it in a sarcastic way as to mean the opposite]* (Ruby, fourth-year social work student)

> *Or the worst part is… you mustn't have like a judgemental attitude; but the other day I was sitting across from this girl that was my age and she has four kids and I was thinking to myself, I'm like I don't even have like a potential husband and here you are…* (Amelia, fourth-year social work student)

The others in the group agreed that was indeed difficult, and that they struggled with a judgemental attitude about certain issues as well.

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Awareness of their own developmental stage. Students also became aware of their own growth and needs in their particular developmental stage during the process of CE. Sam's example illustrates this point:

> *I always believe that 19 to 24 is probably the most important ages in life because what principles and things you decide, behaviour characteristics you decide to adhere to now it's going to take longer for you to overcome them... and I think that you understand yourself more at 19 to 24... I think psychology is a big thing, it plays a big role I mean not just for the child but for ourselves... I think that's the one biggest contributor psychology can do in terms of people at our age, I don't think they [the university students] realize half the things they're going through.*
> (Sam, student project leader)

Building Relationships and Managing Connections

Across the focus groups, the students in this study referred to building relationships and forming connections with learners as an important and almost natural outcome of CE. The students described the connections as *'special bonds'* or *'very personal relationships'* and there is *'always that one kid'* that attracts their affection. Even though the effects of forming connections are usually visible on an individual, emotional level for the students, it took place in the interpersonal space and is therefore discussed here in the chapter on interpersonal aspects. The learners also experienced strong connections with students as expressed by the participants in this study. However, that side of the relationship, that is the learners' experiences, are outside of the scope of this study.

Relationships create a space for learning and growing. Participants throughout the study mentioned the context of relationships as a space where students can learn and grow. A comment from Starr illustrates this:

I definitely agree, like your project, it's never just about one thing, because you go there, you build a relationship with people and through those relationships, the students grow and the volunteers grow as well, you learn certain values, it's definitely, holistically the students grow throughout the year. (Starr, student project leader)

Another participant also mentioned the importance of building relationship through showing interest in the students, and not just focusing on the tasks at hand:

And sometimes it's also nice to just let space at the beginning to be interested in them. Don't talk about career at all at the beginning. Just talk about how was your day and do you have to get the train afterwards… when they feel you are interested in them, they are much more open and then and after you have just a little bit of personal talk, then you can go into this career counselling. Then, I think that helps, personally for me. (Skye, psychology student volunteer)

Special bonds with few. Although the students engaged with many learners in their projects, the bonds that they highlighted as special connections were with a few, sometimes only one learner in the particular group (as was also noted by Naudé, 2012, 2015). The students usually spent most of their time with the particular learner and shared stories about their lives, which added to forming strong connections. The extent of the bond that formed between students and learners was also facilitated by a small ratio of learners to students. Consider the following comments as illustration to these topics:

With me being involved for three years, I have a very special bond with all of them, where they want to take photos with you and they want to show you what's going on in their lives. And it really is a very, very personal relationship. (Penelope, student project leader)

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The kids, for me, they are a set group of kids so you get to know their faces, you get to know the character of the kid, you get to know, for example, this one kid he absolutely loves maths. (Daniella, student project leader)

So, some of them I noticed last year, they got very attached to the volunteers, because I decided to keep volunteers at a minimum, just five volunteers [with 15 learners] so that they, really they can build relationship with them throughout the year... (Starr, student project leader)

Finding common ground. As mentioned previously, in the multicultural and multilingual South African context, university students often engage with community members that come from a different cultural and/or language background than themselves. Those differences have the potential to create chasms between students and learners or other clients. Relationship building and a willingness to engage have been mentioned as ways to bridge these gaps:

Definitely I think there's too much, like there is still a big gap between us and our clients. Like if I go see an individual like say a teenager, teenage Coloured girl at a school like from low socio economic circumstances, like we have so much -- like there's so little in common. It's a little in common and you can't build a relationship... (Jasmin, fourth-year social work student)

Ivy responded with the words that *'you need to find common ground'*. The social work students further agreed that building relationships with clients that are different from them in many ways have also been a bit easier with group work as compared to one-to-one engagement. Their reasoning was that the learners could also then talk to one another, which aids in creating a more comfortable space for the engagement to take place.

Mrs Rivers, on the other hand, stated that differences should not be a concern or challenge, but that the students' attitudes can help to bridge the divides:

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One of the aspects that I think is very important is mutual respect. And then I think if we respect one another, then irrespective of your background, your colour, your whatever. Just respect one another then I think things will develop smoothly. (Mrs Rivers, community project representative)

Relationship building requires honesty and trust in the process. Several participants throughout the study have highlighted that building relationships with engagement partners, whether it was with individuals, groups or organizations, required time to develop. Further aspects were honesty and trust as key building blocks of the relationship and helping process. Consider Ruby's example below as she explained her thoughts on this issue:

The one-on-one clients they always, I experienced they always lie to me, they're always telling stories. And then like I don't even want to help you anymore because I'm trying to like help you and now you're just lying to me... we're wasting time we are not going to solve the problem because you're in denial about it and I'm trying to help you, to ask you to trust me and to trust me to help you and stuff but you're just lying, so then... I don't feel like helping this person anymore. (Ruby, fourth-year social work student)

The dishonesty in the relationship has caused frustration and demotivation as Ruby then felt that the help she offered was not wanted or needed.

Practising Facilitative Skills in Interpersonal Settings

Conducting group sessions and individual engagement with project participants required a variety of skills from the students. These included awareness of group dynamics; patience; adaptability; treating people with respect; maintaining an approachable attitude; and time management. These skills were also reported by studies on CE in South Africa as discussed in the literature review and elaborated on in the discussion section (for example Isaacs et al., 2016; Naudé,

2012, 2015). However, the present section illuminates some nuanced examples of the skills that students used that are not generally mentioned when talking about interpersonal skills in CE in current literature. These include interpersonal awareness, managing the nature of conversations, acknowledging possible biases, and affirming and acknowledging.

Interpersonal awareness. Students described the skill of interpersonal awareness as taking a step back and considering what action to take or how to respond to a situation. This skill also refers to 'being present' in a situation, and awareness and management of group dynamics. Penelope provided a very rich example of awareness in situations that may not appear to be straightforward to manage, whereas Zoë's example is one of wit when it comes to handling testing situations involving learners:

> *We have a couple of top students and we have a couple of… struggling students. And there are a couple of them where you sort of sit and wonder, I mean, none of us study psychology, so we sit and wonder: "Is this child maybe ADD [ADHD]?" Is this going on? They have a very short attention span, so you need to take that into consideration. So why are they behaving the way they are behaving? And how am I going to approach this… So, in that sense when you're working so closely especially one-on-one, you need to be able to perceive that child very, very well in order to actually obtain the results that you were looking for. Because otherwise, you could keep going there, and keep being there, but academically you won't achieve any of the results that you were seeking for when you initially started the project.* (Penelope, student project leader)

> *A student put me through a test... You know those moments when you just know you have won over the students? This boy, he flirts with me now, he wants my number, he wants to meet up with me right. And I know okay, if I am too serious they are going to think I am a boring teacher. But if I am not serious it's inappropriate and*

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that's also unethical and I somehow managed to balance it with 'oh, no, thanks but not happening' and the whole class laughed and he was my best student. (Zoë, campus-wide project leader)

Besides awareness of the group process, student leaders also had to practise awareness concerning their volunteers. According to Bart:

When it comes to your student volunteers, then handling them with care is definitely something, like inspiring, keeping them motivated all those type of things, reverse psychology on them, whatever, to get them into believe system or that sort of thing. (Bart, campus-wide student project leader)

Penelope elaborated:

And I think even as a leader to be able to perceive how your volunteers are feeling. So psychology plays a huge role in making sure that all the individual parties are actually comfortable in a situation. So, it's reading different personality types, reading different situations, just how it is working I think, that plays such a huge role, especially as a facilitator. (Penelope, student project leader)

Managing the nature of conversations. This skill was mentioned in context of discussing sensitive topics with young people. These may include teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, violence, and sessions about grieving and the loss of loved ones. The participants in the focus groups mentioned that conversations like these in particular can easily spiral out of control or further traumatize the learners if the facilitator does not contain the process. Starr expressed herself on the matter:

Definitely and especially you need to control the nature of the conversations as well, so I think that was one of the challenges that I experienced with life skills projects and leadership skills development. So I think... there has to be more

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training-based. There should be more training for, especially for the facilitators, that's something that I did for myself, but I'm not sure about other leaders... (Starr, student project leader)

Controlling the nature of conversations can also be linked to the working phase as discussed by Corey et al. (2014), where real work and productivity is the aim of this phase in the group process.

Acknowledging possible biases. Especially in the diverse South African context, this skill of *'putting your biases upfront'* may be facilitative to engagement spaces where students engage with others from a different cultural, language or socio-economic background than themselves. This technique was mentioned by one of the staff members in the study in our conversation about identities and the *'colour-coded'* nature of people in South Africa. George expressed himself as follows:

And my own notion is that in order to participate meaningfully in transformative community engagement it's very, very important that one emancipates yourself, that one frees yourself from other people's constructed projections onto you. Otherwise if you internalize them, if you introject them they potentially have very negative spinoffs on how you conceptualize the work and how you would facilitate it... It's very important to be aware of one's own history and to acknowledge that one also has your own opinions and bias and to be aware of that always within this enterprise. And how I do that is to acknowledge it upfront... It's to put it out there so that others also can listen to what I say of how my understanding is... it's through that filter, so that they can also filter out what they think my bias may be because of my history. (George, university staff member)

Although George mentioned this skill from a lecturer's perspective, it is equally applicable to students when they engage with the project participants. The students' confidence in putting their

biases upfront with the learners, however, has to be stimulated and developed in the reflection spaces on campus.

Affirming and acknowledging. The skill of affirming and acknowledging refers to a shift in perspective from following your own agenda as the project facilitator and expert, to listening and creating a participant-led agenda. Affirming and acknowledging also involves recognizing the circumstances and obstacles that many of the project participants live with and honouring them for their strength and perseverance. Consider the following extract from Rose's explanation of what she has termed affirming and acknowledging in a career development programme:

> *What really helped me was affirming and acknowledging, because my first session, I just came here and I was like, it's easy, what do you want to do? [In terms of future careers] Okay, it's fine, okay you can do A, B, C. Yes, and then it just didn't really work, I mean, their next session I acknowledged and affirmed. I was, like, okay so, just tell me what are the things that are blocking you from thinking that you can do this, and immediately when you step into their world you understand. I mean, yes, I understand but, you know, it's just like a case so what, but you acknowledge and you take it and okay, I understand. I see it, okay, and then they take whatever it is you are trying to give or how you are trying to show them, and then it works. Both of you come out feeling, yes I did something, and they come out feeling, yes I learned something. So, affirm and acknowledge.* (Rose, psychology student volunteer)

Skye added to the conversation and confirmed the idea of following participant-led sessions:

> *I think it's exactly that what you find, like, a successful session is usually when they lead the session… So I think as psychology students, we're trained to pay attention to, to their meanings, the meanings they make of certain things and then we explore that, because we're like, oh you like that, let's see why. And then that helps because*

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then they also feel like, oh I had a nice session, like, I wasn't just doing homework and answering tasks, whatever. So then, I think that's helpful. (Skye, psychology student volunteer)

In a different focus group, Daisy also alluded to the idea of affirming and acknowledging:

I think one should actually appreciate them for their circumstances… He deals with the same issues that we do, plus those things, understand. So, I think one should actually appreciate them for it. (Daisy, engineering student)

Terminating Engagement Relationships

In most instances, students worked with the same learners over a period of time and became very attached to them, which made it difficult to terminate the relationship when the engagement period came to an end. Termination is an essential part of any group process (Corey, 2004; Yalom, 1985). Termination is therefore further explicated in the discussion chapter as it is an important, but overlooked component of CE in current literature. The students pointed out several components of termination of the engagement relationship that are presented below.

Terminating the relationship provokes emotions. Several of the students in this study reflected on their feelings about having to leave a project or community. Sadness was a prominent emotion and some also indicated frustration as they found it difficult to explain to participants, like Odille said they *'can't be there forever'*. It was difficult to terminate, even though they tried to simplify the process and conducted some steps in the build-up to termination. In a similar vein, students also mentioned a sense of helplessness in that they were not allowed to contact the learners again outside of the service-learning programme. Two poignant examples are presented below:

Sometimes it's hard to terminate your service because you got attached to that person. Like in my first year, we were working with a client the whole year and I felt so sad because now we have to leave everything and we're done now, we just

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go and they will never see us again. And they like invited us to a show they had on the farm as well, and we couldn't go because we are not allowed to be in contact with them after we terminate. (Sabrina, third-year social work student)

And then the one guy told me when I was doing this drug support group he came and he said one thing – please don't just come and leave because we get so despondent and then we don't want to trust anyone – and it's so difficult to actually explain we can't be here forever. (Odille, third-year social work student)

Preparing for termination. Several students referred to some of the techniques that they used in preparation for terminating the engagement. Creating a calendar for counting down the remaining sessions was a technique mentioned by various students and staff members. Doing evaluations with the participants was also mentioned as this exercise served the purpose of reflecting on the process, which helped both the project participants and the students to prepare for termination. Some students suggested preparing something special for the last session, which aided in closing off the engagement experience. This can be something small like having cake or ice cream at their usual gathering place, or an outing. A further suggestion was that students should, in addition to the big group, greet the participants that they have formed particular strong bonds with in a separate or private way, as that particular learner would notice that the student has thought about them and values the connection as much as they do. Scarlet and Odille's examples on these issues are presented below:

Like for you guys that have been involved in a project that is maybe only for a year or so, you will have to prepare that child systematically that, I will leave in a month's time, I will be leaving in three weeks, and I will be leaving in two weeks. So that learner can start to accept that I will not be here anymore – or that person will not be here anymore. (Scarlet, volunteer project leader)

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Or with like children I'll usually take a calendar so it's like visual. We'll cross it off or we'll make like a little worm just that they know that we leaving... Evaluation and termination for me are quite close because then you evaluate what you've done, what you've been through and then the next week terminate with them. (Odille, third-year social work student)

For Audrey, a social work student, it was important to find out about and refer clients to follow-up services after her time has expired as part of her termination process:

I think it's also very important to refer them to someone else. Not necessarily saying okay well you will have a student next year because you can't promise something like that; but you can tell them now that you've gotten to trust someone why don't you rather just keep on going to your social worker, they know about your background just keep on going on. You don't need to start from the beginning again. So it's important to make sure they have someone to keep on going back to. (Audrey, third-year social work student)

The psychological block. One of the students in this study touched on an interesting theme, namely the 'psychological block'. This refers to some of the dynamics involved when students and learners form connections and then have to deal with termination. This is particularly important as project leadership changes often in the university context:

I think it would be like, like the word I use now, of the susceptibility of people wanting to open their door or hearts to you. Because, I mean... some volunteers, I'm sure some kids love to see them all the time, you get attached to someone. I'm sure the volunteers also get attached to the learners, whoever they are busy with, if it's maths or whatever. So, you having to let go, you know, it's not a nice thing, no one likes to let go. And these faces need to change... meaning if that person is still in that programme, you need to sort of foster that same sort of level of relationship

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with someone else, they can maybe be a bit reluctant, because I think it feels like cheating on the previous one. (Bart, campus-wide student project leader)

Penelope alluded to the same idea in her observation:

It's very difficult when, there are some [students] that have been there for longer, that they [learners] do know that they trust. And when the new first year that may come in this year, they don't really put in an effort to get to know, because they feel like they sort of know a couple of you and that's ok. So, it's very difficult to, to get them [learners] to realize that, you know, the new people that they need to get to know as well, and need to be as responsive. (Penelope, student project leader)

Bart explained that for some students and learners, it may be very difficult to let go of a very special bond that has formed between them. He mentioned that the learner in particular may experience unease or reluctance about connecting to the new student volunteers as he/she may still remain in the project after the particular student had left the project. In that sense, learners may feel that they are cheating on the previous volunteer with which they had formed a special bond. Penelope, on the other hand, suggested that the learners should be encouraged to start afresh by welcoming the new volunteers and to form new bonds with them.

Finding Closure

Closure in this context refers to reflection on the process, how it was ended and the students' reflections on the impact that they may have had on their project participants. The study participants outlined certain conditions that influenced their experience of closure.

Succession plans in place. Finding closure was easier when there were succession plans as the students felt that their clients will be taken care of even though they will not be involved with the project anymore:

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I can feel at ease that there is someone capable to take care of them the way I would have, or maybe even better. But yes, it is sad because they become part of you. (Scarlet, student project leader)

Perceptions of influence. Finding closure was influenced by students' perceptions of the success or failure of their engagement. The examples of Ryan, Ivy and Amelia illustrate this point:

You don't know if you have had any impact and if you did what the impact was. That concerns me also… there is always, even if it's the smallest just ripple effect or whatever. But ja, I'm very interested to always know exactly… (Ryan, psychology student volunteer)

I always think a lot of our success stories we don't hear about because they happen after we've left. So I think we do better than we think, most of the time. I just don't think we know about it. (Ivy, fourth-year social work student)

We get the case when it's at its ultimate low and then we leave before anything actually comes of it. (Amelia, fourth-year social work student)

Ambivalent closure. Finding closure was complex for Rose, as she was not sure if she had done the right thing or had responded to the learners in the right way. Consider the extract of the conversation between Rose, Velvet and Blossom (the project leader):

Rose: *Like as far as closure is concerned, I don't feel I had that, you know, I had to stop working with (name of community) because I wanted to work with (name of another community). And I remember my second to last session I had a group of, it was two boys and two girls coming to me and they just wanted to say, I think I had seen them on my second session and then again just second to last. And they were just telling me how they had done A, B, C and gone to speak to one, two, three and how they were just so grateful, and they wanted my numbers and then I*

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was stuck. I didn't know, should I? Shouldn't I? The boundaries, I just felt it would

be a bit too much and it would be an emotional decision if I had said yes. I remember

saying no I can't but I, you know, I was so sad, I wanted to cry then, you know. It's

always so hard because even now I can see their faces, I can and it's...

Velvet: Do you feel like you let them down or --?

Rose: I think to a degree, ja. I think maybe I should have given them the

numbers and maybe I could have helped more in some way, you know, but I didn't

and I wonder how they are but ja, I suppose it's -- it's just, it's fine.

Blossom: Because generally we don't give numbers, at all.

Rose: That's the thing, ja.

Blossom: At all.

Rose: I remember you emphasizing that.

(Rose, Velvet and Blossom, psychology student volunteers)

In the above example, Rose highlights an issue on which the participants in this study have been divided. Some supported further contact with learners or clients, whereas others maintained that there should be no further contact between the students and learners after the project or the students' engagement period has been terminated. There are no clear and consistent conditions in which it was advocated to terminate without further contact, or to maintain contact after the project has ended.

Chapter Summary

This chapter documented the findings with regard to participants' construction of psychosocial aspects on the interpersonal level that influenced the engagement experiences for students. Language and engagement was presented first, particularly how language affects

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communication and relationship building; language ability can be considered as a privileged position in instances where participants speak indigenous languages different from the students; and that CE can be an enabling space for practising English as a mainstream language. Secondly, age differences were discussed as an influence on engagement, including students' techniques of having to reimagine what it was like to be a child and addressing age appropriate topics. Students also reflected on being judged based on their age, their reflections on their own needs in the particular developmental stage as young adults and how it is sometimes awkward to engage with participants the same age as themselves. Thirdly, the discussion turns to building relationships and managing connections between students and learners or clients. This included references to relationships as a space for learning and growing, developing special bonds with few project participants, having to find common ground in relation to participants that are different on various levels, and the idea that relationship building requires honesty and trust in the process. The fourth theme was about skills that students use in interpersonal settings and their reflections on this. These skills included interpersonal awareness, managing the nature of conversations, acknowledging possible biases and affirming and acknowledging. The last two themes were about students' reflections on terminating the engagement relationship and finding closure. This chapter on interpersonal aspects is followed by the participants' constructions of how the school, community, university and broader societal aspects may influence the CE experience.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS - III: THE UNIVERSITY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIETAL LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

'The bottom line is transformation, and in South Africa it's societal transformation. And so it's creating the spaces where people can work out how to live differently, because we had a past that separated us.'

(George, SU staff member)

Introduction

The findings that are presented in this chapter are constructed from participant responses to the research question: What are the psychosocial aspects on the university, community and broader societal levels that inform the CE experience for students? These factors may have a direct or indirect influence on the engagement setting or experience. CE at the university, community and broader societal levels may appear to be isolated from or distal to what happens in the immediate engagement space between students and project participants. However, the approaches, mind-sets, history, and agreements between the entities on a broader scale indirectly set the context from which university students move and in which they engage in the communities. In that sense, it is important to have an idea of the psychosocial dynamics that operate on these levels in addition to the immediate proximal factors.

The findings presented in this chapter relate to Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2010) notions of the 'relational' and the 'societal' in their view of well-being as inseparably personal, relational and societal. It also relates to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) exo-, macro- and chronosystems and his explanation that factors within these levels of the eco-system, although removed from the individual, may have an influence on the individual's development.

In terms of organizing the findings in this chapter, I present key themes related to each of the mentioned levels in separate sections. However, these levels are in reality largely intertwined. The

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purpose of this study and this chapter was not to provide an evaluation of the state of CE or social impact at the university, or to provide a full picture of the communities in which these projects operated. However, the themes presented here emerged from the discussions as the most prominent in relation to the different levels of interaction and provide some background and context to the broader engagement setting. Table 8 on the following page provides an overview.

Table 8

Outline of Themes Related to the University, Community and Societal levels

Level of engagement	Themes
University level	A glimpse of the history
	Institutional commitment
	Shifts in focus
	Improving the university's image through CE
	Capacity building and staff perspectives of CE
	Staff members' self-awareness
	CE as an integral part of the university
	Growing emphasis on reflection
	Programmatic challenges
	Limited time for engagement
	Mismatch between set programme and participant progress
	Consistency and continuity
Community level	Valuing the human element
	Practising awareness of challenging situations:
	Challenges related to community context:
	Living conditions
	Resistance from community participants
	Getting to services
	Safety in communities
	Challenges related to the community organization:
	Lack of communication
	How participants are selected
	Lack of structure in community organizations
	Fault lines within communities
	Responding to different expectations
	Noticing a theory-practice divide
Societal level	South Africa as a divided society
	Facing racial prejudice
	Scrutinizing 'knowledge in the blood'
	Becoming unstuck through awareness

Psychosocial aspects at the university level

As per Table 8 on the previous page, this section refers to participants' experience of aspects that were considered as important influences on the engagement context on the university level. The themes discussed here correlate with Kiely's (2005) structural, historical and programmatic elements of the engagement context.

A glimpse of the history. The development of CE or community interaction (which is the preferred term) at SU has been described by several staff members (Abraham and George) as *'a dynamic journey'* from where it started to the present. The history of SU giving towards civil society goes as far back as the 1930s according to Humbert, a university staff member and historian. He referred to the university during its formative early era as a type of '*volksuniversiteit*' (loosely translated as university for the people, or directly, people's university) that already operated under the belief of *'being of service to communities'*. For instance, theologians were trained at the university and sent to the countryside to preach the Gospel to people. Humbert highlighted, however, that '*die sogenaamde volk*' ('the proverbial nation') under the apartheid government, were the White, Afrikaans-speaking people. Other racial or cultural groups, even those in close proximity to the university, were for the most part overlooked by this Afrikaans-medium university. Instead, the Coloured and Black communities in the Stellenbosch district were the targets or recipients of 'barmhartigheidsdienste' or charity aid.

Since the fall of apartheid, society has undergone many changes, and the focus shifted to viewing all South Africans in the new democratic dispensation as 'the nation'. SU, as a public university, accordingly, has committed and aligned itself in terms of its vision and mission statement and its policies, to work towards rebuilding, restoring and transforming the South African society as a whole (SU, 2016). Notwithstanding, the decades of unequal power relations and oppressive actions and its dire consequences (pain and neglect) for the Coloured and Black communities around the university, have resulted in tense relationships with local communities.

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According to Abraham, an SU staff member, this legacy, in turn, has left the contemporary post-apartheid management of the university with the mammoth task of rebuilding trust between the university and the surrounding communities.

With this in mind, it is clear that the concept of the university engaging with communities is not entirely novel, but has developed and evolved over the years into current practice – a vibrant CE unit, connected to and aligned with national and global networks (such as the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum and the Talloires Network affiliated with universities in the USA).

Institutional commitment. According to Abraham, by formally establishing an institutional division for CE in the mid-2000s, SU communicated an unambiguous '*commitment to CE as a third core function of the university with human resources and financial resources made available for this purpose*'. Furthermore, academic staff members were also required in terms of annual performance appraisal to provide evidence of their CE activities, on par with evidence of their teaching and research activities. This requirement was for all academic staff, across the university's 10 faculties spread over five campuses. This institutional commitment followed governmental policy directives for South African higher education institutions (White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education Institutions, 1997). Abraham emphasized that during the time of establishing the division, he realized that much thought went into strategic planning by the university's top structures. He stressed that '*community interaction was designed to be integrated as a core function of the university and not as an after-thought in relation to the other core functions of teaching and learning, and research*'.

The institutional division for community interaction has been steadily morphing over the years and recently (in 2015) underwent a name change to the Division for Social Impact. According to Catarina, an SU staff member, this change was made '*to include a broader definition of communities and activities embraced at the division*'. While the registered CE projects on the

university database span across disciplines, the dominant focus areas include health, education and social development. There are also multiple residence-based and campus-wide student society projects engaged with CE activities that operate under the auspices of Matie Community Service, a registered non-governmental organization associated with the university.

Similarly, incentives have been made available to staff members and students involved in CE. According to Abraham and Catarina, *'The Rector's Award for community interaction'*, *'Flagship Status'* for community interaction projects, and the *'75-hour'* and *'100-hour challenges for student volunteers'* are some examples of how staff and students are encouraged and honoured for their work in CE.

Shifts in focus. Several university staff participants in the current study referred to the noticeable shift from a community service orientation to more collaborative approaches. For example, Fabio, an SU staff member, asserted that: *'There was a type of shift from we don't only give material stuff or do a little bit of lessons here and there… but we really look at people more holistically'*.

The shift of providing a service to a needy community or doing charitable deeds for the poor, or engaging with the social justice concerns of communities, are currently contested in training sessions and lectures alike. Key notions such as reciprocity; mutual benefit; the importance of communities identifying the needs; respectful interactions; growing emphasis on reflection; and building relationships are prevalent in current CE discourse. These discourses were noticeable among the staff interviewees and the student participants throughout the present study.

Catarina mentions that she sometimes still finds that 'some students enter CE with a philanthropic mind-set and with good intentions they want to do things like host tea parties for the elderly'. She views it as her task to help students to think differently and broader about CE. She challenges the students to adopt a more strength-based approach and to 'match the communities' identified needs with the resources and strengths of the student groups'. On the other hand, she has

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also noticed the conflicting situation in which some people in the collaborating communities still maintain a philanthropic view of CE, whereas students are trained to think differently about their endeavours. According to the philanthropic view, the community members expect material things from the students or the university instead of the value of the knowledge and skills – the more personal intangible investment into their organizations.

However, the majority of community partners value the personal investment in their organization from the university's side (according to Penelope, Bart, Evelyn and Starr in the first focus group), and in turn they also realize their role as learning partners for the students. Catarina and some of the student project leaders particularly mention the growing awareness of community partners that the communities are *'training grounds for the students'* in that the students gain exposure to different contexts and develop different personal and professional skills.

Shifting the university's image through CE. In a different view of shifting focus, Abraham mentions the struggle of trying to rebuild trust with some community members as some may still remember the pain that this university has caused and its role in the bigger scheme of apartheid. Consider Abraham's comments on this issue below:

> *Our university has a historical mark of shame on it, and we have to work hard so that it can eventually be erased. The history will always be with us, but you know, we still have to work much longer and harder in order to get to a place where our community partners say, this is surely an asset for all people in the country. So I cannot see how some of my academic colleagues can think that community interaction does not belong here, and that they should only continue with teaching and learning – as if the university exists in a vacuum. I think step by step we are building people's trust. So there is still a lot of work to be done, for me and the generations that come after me. I have no illusions; we still need to give this*

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university a different image through community interaction. (Abraham, SU staff member)

It is clear from Abraham's comments that CE continues to have a contested objective and controversial activity within the academic discourse of the university.

Capacity building and staff perspectives of CE. There is increasing commitment to capacity building of students and staff through service-learning modules that are academically credit bearing. Volunteer programmes and activities have also taken on more structure over the years, with various training and support programmes in operation throughout the academic year. Abraham mentioned that he has observed academics shift in their beliefs as they were *'at first sceptical'* about CE, but have now adopted the enterprise. They take part in facilitating service-learning modules and undertake community-based research projects. He mentioned especially research projects as challenging for academics since power relations are being contested and decisions regarding research processes have to be shared within more collaborative approaches. He also pointed out that although most are not involved in very progressive programmes, there are some that are committed to help set different standards and ways of going about CE endeavours.

Abraham also reflected on some of the challenges that academics may experience with regard to becoming involved in community-based research approaches:

It is observable globally that the academy is to a great extent still uncomfortable with something called community interaction, because there are many traditional models of scholarship, and the current incentives for academics play a big role. And people are actually more comfortable playing traditional roles, because if you get involved in engaged teaching, and community-based and engaged research, then you as lecturer give up some control… and you have to formulate with people that is not in the academy, and questions shift the whole time then it becomes uncomfortable… you give up some of your control that you traditionally had over

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the process, but what you gain is so much more. People that can fulfil academic roles and can work in a team with other social actors, create so much more respect for the academy. (Abraham, SU staff member)

On a different note, Beatrix, an SU staff member, looked at the university-community relationship very critically as she pointed out that *'academics may be involved in community-based research or service-learning for how they can benefit from it'*. She mentioned that staff members may speak highly of mutual benefit, reciprocity and of partnerships, but that in reality it may look different. She considers partnership as a much *'more serious commitment in comparison to collaborative agreements that are usually enacted in projects'*.

Beatrix also mentioned that more effort should be put into building a holistic picture of communities and of people's needs, since she has noticed that the academic person and the people with whom they work in the communities have very different perspectives:

I think we still struggle with this holistic perspective. I think that there are often big cultural differences between the people that have to function in the reality of the communities, and the perspective of the university person (students and staff). I think we are a bunch of spoilt brats that do not always realize what we have and where we are. And I think we need to do more in order to get a realistic picture of what goes on in the communities. (Beatrix, SU staff member)

Furthermore, Beatrix shed light on how demanding the university environment is for staff members in terms of the outputs expected of them with teaching and research. She felt that emphasis was more often on *'functioning and productivity, rather than on the personal or relational'*. According to her, *'there is just no space for errors'*, and there is a need for a more *'person-centred approach'* to encourage staff to be involved in CE work.

Another component related to capacity building is a lack of cross-discipline collaboration between staff members, as pointed out by Beatrix:

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…and concerning collaboration between disciplines, I have seen now at [a university in South America] that we fall short. They are not as developed as we are concerning community interaction, but there is a lot more collaboration between the disciplines. (Beatrix, SU staff member)

Beatrix added that more collaboration between disciplines would aid in the work done through CE as it would be more aligned to how things operate in communities: *'the functioning within communities is multi-disciplinary, it is not in disciplinary boxes, and I think we need to overcome that.'*

Staff members' self-awareness. Another key issue pointed out by George, SU staff member, was that self-awareness extended to the staff members as well. It is not just something that the students in CE programmes had to master. Being aware of how one's race as one aspect of identity may play a role in how staff conceptualize and engage with the work related to CE. George explained that he has learned the value of self-awareness in conceptualizing the work and facilitating CE courses. He mentioned that: *'In South Africa, people's identities have been colour coded'*. These colour-coded identities often imply *'stigmas of derogatory kinds'*. He explained that: *'In order to participate meaningfully in transformative community engagement it is important that one free yourself from other people's constructed projections onto you'*. George continued to explain that there could be negative spinoffs in terms of facilitating CE if the staff member is not aware of how others may view them or what his or her *'colour-coded identity'* may represent for others. He felt that it is important to discuss this openly in lectures and reflection sessions during the CE process. This aspect of staff member awareness cuts across the university and societal levels of analysis in the present conceptualization of this study.

CE as an integral part of the university. Abraham mentioned in reference to the university's mandate to integrate CE *'as a core function of the university, alongside teaching and*

learning and research, and not as an afterthought'. Penelope's comment below illustrates that the ideas captured in policies are indeed filtering through to the students involved in CE activities:

> *But it's so interesting… something like the way the university runs the community interaction system, it's very, very intriguing and it is actually an integral part… You'll see, almost every single res [residence]… every single one has a community interaction portion, all the societies as well. So it has become an integral part of the university, but there's a very small percentage of students that realize how big it really is, and how important it is. I've had so much to do with companies and every single one of them has community projects running, and we're getting exposure to that now. And there's so few people that realize how much it continues throughout your life time.* (Penelope, student project leader)

In the last part of Penelope's comment, she also points out an issue noted in the literature that few students on university campuses become involved in CE and realize the potential effects it could have on their personal development (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012). The students reflected on some of the myths that they have come across in their interaction with other students. These included: *'CE as a side-line project of the organization'* (Starr); students involved in CE are *'soft-hearted'* (Evelyn); and students who believe that they need to have a certain personality to be involved in projects and work with children (Phineas). These are also discussed in the section on sense of support, where student leaders often come up against these barriers when trying to recruit or retain volunteers in the projects.

Growing emphasis on reflection. Beatrix, SU staff member, mentioned that she realized the importance of reflection in the process of helping students to make sense of their experience. She further emphasized that reflection should receive more attention than what it is currently receiving in programmes. The comment below illustrates this point:

I think we need to work on this more. I think it's really important that awareness is created amongst the students. I realize more and more that this thing of reflection helps to cultivate the students' awareness… now the students are confronted with things that they have to think about, and they have to analyse their reactions… I think a lot of those things are being done, but I think it is something that we need to drive much stronger. (Beatrix, SU staff member)

Programmatic challenges. Several aspects with regard to how the CE modules or programmes were set up influenced the engagement process. The most pertinent themes are presented below:

Limited time for engagement. One of the challenges that were raised by several students was that the time for the CE activities were generally very short. They referred to the scheduled contact times per term or semester. Often, the already short time was even more condensed due to public holidays or university and school holidays that sometimes did not align. The examples of Minki, Maya and Heidi below illustrate this:

It's really a short time… I think okay, we have made a bit of a difference, but I really felt when I had to say goodbye to them, that I just started to engage. It's just a short time in the sense of our contact time, we only have five visits. (Minki, engineering student)

And we only go there one day a week and we have to fit case work, group work, community work, plus I must drive around people (fellow students), so it's like – it's difficult. (Maya, third-year social work student)

Little kids they don't remember you after like three weeks never mind like two months when you go on holiday for two, three months we don't see them through exams and stuff… (Heidi, fourth-year social work)

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In Heidi's example, she pointed out that especially when working with younger participants, the time lost due to holidays became very disruptive to the engagement process.

Mismatch between the set schedule and participant progress. The social work students mentioned that they often encountered situations where their set programmes were not in line with the realistic progress made with clients. The students also mentioned that they sometimes found it difficult to explain this to their supervisors without being penalized for deviating from the plan. The example by Odille below illustrates this:

> *It's like this whole process and you must have like two sessions for this but what if your client is slow or what if your client is fast...you will get 40%... but your client is leading you... like you have to carry on with assessment, and they actually get bored and there's a lack of motivation and they don't come.* (Odille, third-year social work student)

Consistency and continuity. Another important university-related challenge that influences the engagement process is perceptions about inconsistency with regard to student projects. Staff members, students and community project representatives all spoke about this. Inconsistency and a lack of continuity are influenced by student leadership turnover, graduating students and in volunteer programmes, sometimes problems related to transport. The examples below illustrate these ideas:

> *I think some of the teachers feel that the student projects are sometimes very flaky... because with students and transport problems and things like that, they can't necessarily come each week, so it's not so regular.* (Evelyn, campus-wide student leader)

> *When it comes to students I feel like you need to continue for years and years. I don't mean that it should be the same students... students can leave and new ones*

can join, but the project should be kept. And also the projects should not operate

separately but under one name. (Mrs Summer, primary school teacher)

The example by Mrs Summer pointed out the idea that student projects sometimes operate in silos or in a fragmented way. For example, three university projects at a school or organization with seemingly no coordination between them, whereas the organization representative (in this case a teacher) feels that there should be more synchronization of projects from the university at the school.

On the other hand, Donna, an SU staff member, noted this perception, but she believed that this lack of consistency and continuity is receiving attention. She also made a suggestion for faculty-based monitoring and evaluation teams to help build consistency in the relationship with collaborating communities:

> *So I think the challenges are really around that (consistency and continuity) and then making sure the relationship management happens and I think that's where the monitoring and evaluation is also very critical… maybe a situation where we have faculty-based community project boards where they are based in each faculty but you have representatives from communities who sit on this board, and they can, then it's a collaborative thing of deciding what is it that we need to focus on and how is this process actually going, you know, so that the board can then monitor and evaluate and decide and help with the implementation.* (Donna, SU staff member)

It is clear from the brief picture above that the university has made considerable progress in its journey of CE. However, the dynamic nature of the enterprise demands cognisance of how the engagement landscape changes. In that regard, it is necessary to keep adjusting current practices to remain relevant to communities, staff members and students. A quotation from George can be used to conclude this section on the emerging story of CE at SU:

We still have a way to go and as long as we continue being honest with ourselves and honest about the challenges… and we create the space where we can co-interrogate the challenges we can navigate our way through. (George, SU staff member)

Psychosocial aspects on the community level

The themes presented in this section relate to participants' expressions of factors at the school, at the community organization level or, communities in general.

Valuing the 'human element'. The 'human element' was what Bart referred to when he spoke about community partners who have responded more to and showed appreciation for the service, skills and time spent with the project participants, rather than placing more emphasis on material things that they can receive from the university. I used this as an overarching theme descriptor for these human responses from community partners and project participants. Mrs Rivers' appreciation for the services from students illustrates this idea:

I don't know how I can express it, but Matie Community Service is really an organization that cares about what happens in our communities… I am involved with them, or they are involved with us, and I think we have a good relationship. They present things here, they send students, and they do things according to my rules. So when the students are here, I will be forever grateful for them, they make so much effort with our children… they do everything, they read, mathematics, English, you name it… (Mrs Rivers, community project representative)

The students quite enjoyed and appreciated the assistance and guidance of the collaborating teachers whom they worked with at schools. Some mentioned that the teachers even guided them through the curriculum that the students had to help the learners with during after-school academic assistance programmes. See the examples from Penelope and Heidi below:

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With regards to the teachers and the principal, they've received us very, very well, they really appreciate what we're doing… their teacher is the one who comes in on Saturday and opens the school for us. We use the school facilities, so, they really have been very supportive of the project and I must admit, I agree with Bart when they say, they really do appreciate the human element. They appreciate that we care, that we're taking the time to sort of get involved and help out and that sort of thing. (Penelope, student project leader)

Most of the time if you can get into a school, most of the time the teachers are very – they are absolutely enthralled that you're going to be working with the kids, they really appreciate the extra help, they really do and they appreciate you as a professional coming in, they're really, really appreciative. (Heidi, fourth-year social work student)

Practising awareness of challenging situations. This theme was prominent across the focus groups and interviews. I grouped this variety of situations and factors to be aware of into community context-related and community organization-related challenges.

Community context-related challenges

Living conditions: It has been suggested that students should be aware of the conditions that many of the children or clients grow up and live in. These conditions include experiencing or witnessing abuse, neglect, violence and crime. Awareness of challenging conditions points to the importance of building connections with the learners to get to know and understand them within their context. Conditions of crime, violence and abuse has to be kept in mind as these may affect learners' behaviour during sessions – whether outbursts of rage or someone that breaks out crying for seemingly no reason, as noted by Mrs Summers, a primary school teacher. As discussed in the chapter on interpersonal aspects, the relationship between the students and learners can be a space

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for affirming the learners' worth, inspiring them towards different decision-making and for helping them towards changed perspectives on situations.

Crime, violence and other social ills are not common in every household within the communities and should not be seen as affecting every learner in the same way. Also, the listed conditions do not invalidate the strengths and assets that do exist within the communities. In that regard, I point to relationship building again, since it is in that engagement space where strengths and assets can be discovered, uncovered, affirmed and celebrated.

An observation highlighted by the students that cuts across community and broader society level was class discrepancies between the different areas in the same community. The students mentioned that they noticed *'discrepancies in the types of houses and housing projects, schools that are respected and well-funded and some not too far away that were dilapidated'* (Heidi). Although the students mentioned that they have driven through some of the materially poor areas before, working or engaging in those areas had been a different experience, *'eye opening'* and *'quite intense'* (Heidi).

Resistance by community participants: A challenging situation, according to several participants in the study, was working with people who seem to be stuck in their own way of doing things or who have a sense of hopelessness. This often hampered progress and efforts to work towards change:

> *They don't want change because that is what they are used to, and now we are coming in and we must make, like make a mind shift but it's not going to happen now, it's not going to happen, it's going to happen somewhere maybe ten years from now, it's not going to happen now.* (Riley, third-year social work student)

Students highlighted their observations of alcohol abuse, neglect and cycles of intimate partner violence when working with individual cases and in groups in communities. These instances had students feeling disturbed, sad and sometimes angry. Ivy, for example, commented that she had

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to *'constantly do crisis management'* instead of developing and guiding clients through a programme that may possibly help them. There are many factors that cause clients to drop out of programmes, yet it remains a factor that hinders learning for students and problem solving, healing, and well-being for the clients. See Ivy's comments below:

> *It's like they don't understand that whole process, I don't know like with my case work clients they first of all run away and then if I can find them they're like crisis management kind of – they come in when there's a crisis at home or whatever happens, and then they'll come into the organization they'll make a complaint and we'll open a file for them whatever. And then we want to follow up and do the assessment and check the family and all that kind of stuff, now they are nowhere to be found. You must manage the crisis right there as it is and then they're gone.* (Ivy, fourth-year social work student)

Getting to the services: Students mentioned the distance between clients' homes and the organization as a barrier to the engagement process in some cases. It often meant that the community members had to cover great distances to receive a service or attend a programme; or they simply did not show up for scheduled meetings. Heidi mentioned her dilemma:

> *Everyone lives so far away so we do a lot of referrals. So transport is a huge problem because it's quite a poor community and to get – the hospital is in the middle of freaking nowhere compared to the rest of the community – and so to get there is a mission.* (Heidi, fourth-year social work student)

Only the social work students mentioned access to the services as a challenge, as they sometimes rely on the clients to come to the organizations. In the case of volunteer programmes, the students conducted the programmes at the schools or in close vicinity to where the target groups live.

Safety in communities: Keeping the distance problem in mind, social work students mostly went to their clients' homes, which in some cases placed them in danger, as pointed out in the case of Odille below. However, students nonetheless went to clients because they valued and needed the contact time to reach their learning outcomes. The safety theme was particularly strong among the social work students as they worked on their own or in pairs, whereas the students in volunteer programmes usually operated in big groups. The sense of vulnerability or feeling unsafe is related to the idea that the areas where community programmes operate or where social work clients live, are often plagued by crime. In this instance outside factors that are not under the students' or the university's control influenced their sense of safety. In Odille's case, the feeling of being unsafe was coupled with a language barrier between her as English-speaking student and the Afrikaans-speaking community members, which left her feeling vulnerable in crisis situations:

> *For me safety is a major issue. For me especially going into houses – okay for me with the language barrier often people are shouting at me in Afrikaans and I don't know what they saying and then I'm feeling very unsafe and very vulnerable. I was in the community last week and a very drunk man who was screaming and trying to get into my car and running around and so – like the supervisors and that they don't actually discuss safety with us a lot of the time. Like the field instructor will say maybe go in two's or phone me if there's a problem. But what if you actually stuck in a situation where it's not so easy to just to phone someone. Like the community members have told me, well the addicts that I'm having a group with; please don't bring your phone or money because we're very manipulative just come as you are. So then how do I contact someone?* (Odille, third-year social work student)

Odille also described how she sought out help and went about her own strategy of building up a safety net in case of emergency:

Things that do make you feel safe, is there are community leaders in all the communities, so you have experience with that, and then so you get to know like the different role players in the communities and how to build your relationship with them. So when that very intoxicated person came running and causing havoc one of the community leaders put their hand in front of me and they were like Odille, I think it's time for you to leave as you can see this isn't a great time for you to be here, so in that way you are kind of creating safety. And I've gone to other people's houses and said can I run in here if need be or I've asked for the car so I can drive up so I can get in. But they (supervisors) don't tell you – they don't give you these pointers or advice they just like go do what you need to do. (Odille, third-year social work student)*

In the last part of the extract above, Odille touched on the subject of preparation, which is discussed in the chapter on the individual level. In this case, Odille did not feel that her supervisors had adequately prepared her for different crisis situations that may arise while working in communities. Keeping in mind though, not everything can be foreseen, which once again speaks to the complexity and unpredictability of CE. Odille, on the other hand, must be commended for taking responsibility for her safety and being proactive.

Community organization level challenges. The ideas presented under this theme were varied and emerged in the student focus groups and the interviews with staff members.

Lack of communication: A lack of communication between community and university representatives (staff or students) have been a source of much frustration for the various collaborators. Several students have referred to instances where times or venues were changed and they were only informed last minute or not until they arrived at the programme. The participants learned to maintain flexibility and quickly adapt to the new plans, instead of having a fit of temper about it. However, these feelings of frustration were very real in these situations. Blossom, a

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psychology project leader, has also brought into the conversation the idea that sometimes the agreements or realities around the agreements may have shifted, which then adds pressure for those involved to keep the project going. According to Blossom:

It is super frustrating if you are trying to organize something and you keep having to notify people about changes. It's very difficult, because sometimes what happens in a community is that they have a need and you come with a service, right? And they matched. But according to their time schedule, the service that you're offering is low priority so then your service becomes not, not – sort of, is something to look forward to but an extra burden for the school system, and I think that that is frustrating. And then it becomes an extra burden as well for the students, who then have to, they don't know what's going on, in my opinion, and then this is changing and that's changing. So I think that sometimes that is a struggle because our schedules are so rigid and in the community, things change all the time, and the priorities are fluid and flexible, and I think that that can be frustrating for all involved, including the teachers. (Blossom, psychology student project leader)

How participants are selected: Miryam made an observation that the focus group participants at first found funny, but which raises an important issue that has direct implications for group processes and group dynamics:

Ja, also that the learners sometimes are not very motivated because the teachers, maybe, sometimes if they did something wrong, they just sent them – instead of sweeping the floor, they send them to career counselling. (Miryam, psychology student volunteer)

In Miryam's example, the CE project is used as punishment for bad behaviour in class. The teacher may have had the idea that attending these sessions would help the particular learners to think about their decisions and their futures, but from personal experience and from the students'

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discussions it was clear that it was usually the ones that did not attend sessions by choice who would frustrate the process for everyone else. Learners' choice to attend programmes is therefore an important topic.

Lack of structure in community organizations: On a different note, one of the staff members pointed out the difficulty when they receive invitations for engagement from community organizations, but where the structures at some the inviting organizations are not in place. It is a potentially challenging learning space for the students as the organization cannot provide the much needed guidance for a systematic learning process, even though the organization would benefit from the skills and services of the students. Catarina mentioned that projects work best when *'there are structures in place, and where there is a paper trail, where you can follow up'*.

Awareness of fault lines within the community: In the same vein, participants shared that university staff and students consider thoughtfully who to engage as community representatives – in other words who should talk on behalf of the community – when taking on community-wide interventions, erecting structures or doing something in public spaces. One of the staff members warned that local politics may try to find its way into well-meaning collaborations or interventions. Similarly, what Humbert described as 'fault lines' within the community may start to show or play out in the project where community members discredit one another:

> *Something that one usually do not take account of is that there are division lines or fault lines in the community, and especially with regards to who has the right to speak on behalf of the community. Now, you know, sort of like anchor people or point men that help you manage the project. Then one will say no, no, no that man doesn't know anything, he wasn't there, I was there. He is lying, you know. I will tell you what the real story is.* (Humbert, SU staff member)

Responding to different expectations. Besides the challenges listed above, students often have to face different expectations held by community partners and project participants. One

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expectation is in a sense a self-created problem: sometimes when children in Coloured or Black communities see White people in their communities, they expect things from them because of many years' philanthropic activities. Coco, a student project leader, explained that it was difficult to convince the children that they were not there to give handouts and to introduce them to a different approach.

On a different note, she added that some students are ignorant about the activities that they want to do with the children. She mentioned the example of teaching them how to play soccer, when the children probably already know how to play soccer and practise this sport in school or in the streets. According to her, this ignorance was not so much about the activity, but rather the mind-set that the children in these communities *'are not used to anything'*. This attitude actually thinks of the students in a more powerful position in relation to the children, which is not beneficial for the engagement. With regard to expectations, in some instances the expectations of the community partners or learners were in contrast with the expectations from the university side, which was about collaboration, mutual benefit and reciprocity. These two conflicting expectations placed students in a challenging position that they had to manage.

Other expectations of the students from the community partners' side included behaving in a respectful manner, being on time, maintaining a professional attitude when they are at the schools or organizations, and applying their skills and expertise to the relevant areas.

Along with various expectations, students were challenged to consider a variety of needs that communities may have. The same goes for considering which communities are in need. Some students did not think that engaging with predominantly White schools were necessary. I observed this in the study and from personal experience. Mrs. Golding, from a school with predominantly White learners, mentioned that even the learners that may need help with their mathematics are not eager to attend university programmes because of their perceptions that it was 'outreach' and they did not consider themselves in need. These perceptions link with the questions centring on what

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community is community and who community is and how CE is perceived. These questions were addressed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation.

Noticing a theory-practice divide. Participants from the fourth-year social work group observed and highlighted a theory-practice divide. Heidi explained it like this:

> *A lot of our theory is based on American and European (context) and they have the resources and we don't. And they're like, ja but you can find a resource somewhere. I'm like I'm working in the community where people are scared to walk out of their doors and you want me to find them resources, they're too scared to come to the hospital why would they go to… You can like abstractly like come up with like the strength in this client's life but sometimes the client is literally so desolate that you need to start from the bottom up and that is the South African perspective.* (Heidi, fourth-year social work student)

It is important to point out here that the full range of theories that the students learned about in their courses was not examined in this study. Therefore, it may not be accurate that American and European theories were the only ones used. In fact, students also mentioned that they work according to an ecological or systemic perspective, which adopts a broader view of clients' lives. The point that does become clear from the quote though, is that Heidi experienced a discrepancy between the theory she learned and the reality she had to work in.

Psychosocial aspects on the societal level

As mentioned previously, the themes presented in this section relate to the South African context in a more general sense. These include issues of race and racial prejudice, South Africa's past and so forth.

South Africa as a divided society. Throughout the study, participants did not turn a blind eye to the idea that South Africa is a divided society due to its stormy past and current inequalities.

Abraham referred to Robert Putnam's notion of 'bridging capital' as he believed South Africa is a 'polarized society' and that we need to develop the glue between people groups and towards a stronger South African identity, rather than just strong 'within-group' identities. CE is described as a vehicle that can help to bring people together, a vehicle towards healing, and specifically by acknowledging the underlying dynamics in these processes. Consider Abraham's poignant ideas on this issue:

> *The author Cabrera in the Nicaraguan context speaks about 'multiple woundedness'. Our people have been wounded on different levels. People have been wounded physically; people have been wounded in their psyches over generations; and so to see the relevance of community interaction in that regard. And especially at this institution, this institution was – and it's sad to think about it – this institution took part in wounding people, hurting people, because it founded and supported apartheid. So I think that psychology is extremely relevant also in how people think, the thought structures of people, the thinking along racial lines that are there. So our work cannot be on a very superficial level, we have to realize that there are feelings involved – people are angry in this country, people are scared and they don't trust each other… We are a post-conflict society and that conflict was based on race, so that conflict – the damages of that conflict – should be analysed and we need to work towards a solution.* (Abraham, SU staff member)

George expressed similar ideas on this topic:

> *The bottom line is transformation and in South Africa it's a societal transformation. And so it's creating the spaces where people can work out how to live differently because we had a past that separated us. That put us into silos that disconnected people from other people by essentializing the identity of race, by overplaying that dynamic within our identities. And so through engagement one needs to work,*

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create a space where people can work out how to engage meaningfully, how to be a co-participant in facilitating transformation without a criterion like race getting in the way and acknowledging one's race doesn't mean – or not essentializing one's race doesn't mean disregarding it, it just means not essentializing it. It's there, but it's not the main thing about you, it's just a feature. (George, SU staff member)

Participants in this study referred to social cohesion as one of the aims of CE. In that sense the space provided by the process of CE allows for or should ideally allow for building cross-cultural relations and deconstructing negative beliefs about people that are different from the individual. Participants supported the idea of building social capital towards a more cohesive and changed society through CE. According to Donna:

If we create structures where social capital can be built and developed, then that becomes a powerful mechanism to effect change at, you know, political level. I think this whole idea of building social capital is quite powerful. (Donna, SU staff member)

Facing racial prejudice. Racial prejudice in South Africa plays out on different levels. Students in this study shared their accounts of dealing with their parents' prejudice towards certain people groups and communities. In Zoë's example, her parents forbid her to be involved with CE. She described her experience as follows:

Okay, I was forbidden from doing community work because a White girl can't go into a township, she is going to be raped and murdered; straight and simple like that… I was so excited in first year, but I had spent the whole year not doing it because I was a good girl, so completely crushed that I couldn't but then second year I did it – and I was just, by the way I have been going to (name of predominantly Black community), deal with it… If you tell them afterwards and that

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you're fine, they'll get used to it so yes, forbidden was the actual word used. (Zoë, student project leader)

Along the same lines, Alex spoke about his experience of having to enter a predominantly Coloured community for the first time and he remembered some of the things he used to hear growing up and from media reports:

It was the first time that I went into a Coloured community to see what type of culture they have. It was very strange for me, but it was very, very nice… Only when you get into that vehicle you start to get scared, because now you have to drive across the railway line and my mother told me not to drive across the railway line… (Crosstalk: And here you still go to 'the wrong side of the tracks') … Yes, exactly, now we drove across the railway line and I started to stress… It was a big culture shock for me, because they weren't like you hear about in the newspapers, the newspapers only portray the negative aspects. (Alex, engineering student)

George mentioned that he has noticed prejudice among South African students toward other South African students. Even though students were generally willing to engage with people from communities that are different from their own, George noticed that they may be ignorant of engagement opportunities or needs within the institution and within institutional spaces, which according to him, hampered institutional transformation. Put differently, the way students viewed CE and the way they decide who to engage with, influence the engagement culture. Consider his comments below. One also notices through this illustration how the institutional level intertwines with the societal level:

I think one of the biggest institutional missed opportunities is that we have our students thinking that they need to engage with civil society beyond the institution in order to facilitate transformation when there's painfully – too little is being done about intra-institutional transformation, too little is being done to create spaces

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where fellow South Africans engage meaningfully enough to co-create South Africa and I think it's because of the way we were socialized to think. And it's because of the privileges that go with being part of a certain group that certain people are resistant. I think theoretically people understand, but doing so also requires of you to stop essentializing your man-ness or your Whiteness or your Christian-ness… or your wealth. It doesn't mean – and what is so bizarre is it doesn't mean you forgo it. Engaging meaningfully so that transformation can happen doesn't mean that now you stop being White or you stop being wealthy… It just means that you don't put that thing first… And it means that you acknowledge the privileges that go hand in hand. (George, SU staff member)

Scrutinizing 'knowledge in the blood'. Abraham referred to Professor Jonathan Jansen's book *Knowledge in the Blood* as he explained that even though the younger generation of students did not participate in apartheid, they have what he calls 'knowledge in the blood' because of the things transferred to them by their forefathers. Abraham suggested that it is essential for CE to provide a space where students can examine and scrutinize what they believe about other people, groups and themselves:

And one thing we need to do here is to allow our students on a psychological level to scrutinize their knowledge in their blood and their thinking patterns. And I think whether it is service-learning or community-based research or volunteering as structured learning, there is the opportunity to not just be in interaction with other people to be reconciled to them, but also to gain self-knowledge. (Abraham, SU staff member)

George, in a different interview (and not prompted by the researcher) also referred to 'knowledge in the Blood' as *'an unawareness of how (particularly White people) were taught to be*

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in relation to others'. He also referred to examining thinking patterns along the same lines as Abraham above:

> *The approach sometimes need to be different, one needs to create a different kind of space, different kind of unthreatening space for South African students to become aware of how they were socialized... But then with individuation you also now become proactive in how you choose to live going forward with awareness, so it is awareness of the past, so that students can work out what needs to be changed, so that they can proceed in such a way that the kinds of change one wants to see will happen, because if you were socialized in a particular way and it was damaging and you continue that way, you'll get the same results.* (George, SU staff member)

Becoming unstuck through awareness. Participants suggested that becoming aware of thinking and beliefs about the self and other people is a key component of moving towards meaningful engagement and societal transformation. In a sense, it is a continuation or next step after scrutinizing 'knowledge in the blood', but it essentially counts for all people groups. South Africans have been socialized into different roles and this necessitates the need for awareness across the racial groups. This notion links with the social identity theory as proposed by Tajfel (cited in Tredoux & Finchilescu, 2010). The following poignant quotation from George's interview below unpacks the idea of how, through facilitating the process of CE, students and project participants alike can start to become unstuck:

> *The South African students are often stuck. They're stuck in that mind set and so one, I as a teacher I don't see – my role is not to bully them out of that, it's to create awareness as to say who are you engaging with? Are you a South African engaging with South Africans in need? Or are you a White engaging with a Black? And I want to use those words because people talk about Swartes (Blacks) and Wittes (Whites) – what is a White, what is a Black? We somehow essentialize that identity,*

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*their humanness and the skin colour arbitrary. So to create awareness around
that... So it's that kind of shift but if students are not aware of, if we don't create
the spaces where students become aware of it then they remain stuck...* (George,
SU staff member)

He then spoke about the other side of the coin of *'driving the message home'* that people who
used to be victims of a particular political system can either remain a victim, or move forward by
taking responsibility and being proactive about their future:

*You've lost the battle already if you're waiting for a White person to turn the key
on the other side and let you out. Because that again is seeing them as more
powerful; you've got to open, you've got to unlock the door on your side and walk
out. You are 100% responsible for your own emancipation, your own liberation and
freedom.* (George, SU staff member)

In a similar vein, Ms Sunshine, a community project leader who is Black, warned that one
should think carefully about the lessons that you want to teach the young Black generation about the
history of the country. She also highlighted George's point about taking personal responsibility:

*And you have to be careful what – sometimes we watch videos of these things. Yes,
it's part of what they are being taught at school but you have to be careful of what
you're creating, if you say okay I'm going to watch the video of 1976 of what
happened, like really now it's 2014, 1976 what are you trying to teach these kids?
Move on. That's why we blame, we always blame Whites when things don't go good,
it's like okay White people they go to varsity, us as Black we don't go to varsity, us
as Black we don't have money, Whites they have money so what are you doing about
that, what have you tried to do to make yourself have money, to add some money,
what have you? I've worked with some White students that were students who went
to varsity, in the afternoon they went to a restaurant to work. How many Black*

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students are doing that? So what I'm trying to say but it is life. So you have to be careful what you teach them, teach them as okay everybody is a human being. (Ms Sunshine, community project leader)

These ideas raised by Ms Sunshine also link with Starr's ideas on facilitative skills, about managing to what extent one discusses sensitive topics with the learners, and the importance of thoughtfully containing the session.

The process of becoming unstuck may be very challenging for students. Especially White students may experience sadness and guilt because of the past or even resistance because of the fact that they were either too young to participant in apartheid or not yet born. They will have to think about, scrutinize and practise awareness of their emotions as they figure out where those feelings come from and what it means to them to move forward and address current social injustices. On the other side of the coin, those that have been victimized may enter into internal conflict around taking personal responsibility for their future; or may be confronted with the reality of the social injustices in present-day South African society that should be challenged.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented themes on the psychosocial aspects that operate on the university, community and societal levels of interaction in the context of CE. I commenced this chapter by presenting some historical background about the development of CE at SU. Thereafter I referred to the institutional commitment and the shifts in focus and efforts to improve the university's image through CE. I also discussed capacity building and the importance of staff members' self-awareness when facilitating CE modules or activities.

On the community level, I started out by referring to valuing the human element that involves community partners' response of appreciation for the students' services at their organization. Thereafter, I presented a variety of challenges that students may face or practise awareness of during their engagement process. These challenges are grouped according to community context-

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related and community organization-related challenges. Subsequently, I discussed different expectations of students by the community, which is sometimes contradicted by the university's expectations. The last theme noted a theory-practice divide in the local context where students operated.

The next section concerned the psychosocial aspects on a societal level where various themes relating to the South African context were presented. These included South Africa as a divided society; facing racial prejudice; scrutinizing knowledge in the blood, which relates to how people were socialized towards others; and lastly, becoming unstuck through awareness. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, although these themes are presented on different levels, they are essentially interwoven in reality.

In the next chapter, I discuss and integrate the findings of the research with current literature and the relevant theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND INTEGRATION

'Awareness will help us work out what the better way is to do it...'

(George, university staff member)

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the psychosocial aspects that informed CE on the individual, interpersonal, university, community and societal levels. This chapter endeavours to discuss and integrate the core findings and to provide a holistic view on the psychosocial contexts and influences involved in CE as illuminated by students, university staff members and community project representatives. The core themes will be discussed in turn.

Discussion of findings related to the individual level (cognitive processes and effects)

The findings on the individual level indicated that CE is fundamentally of a very personal nature and included cognitive and emotional elements or influences. In accordance with current literature, participants throughout the study reflected on how the process was personally demanding and affected them in various ways. These findings were in line with the other South African studies (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2015); as well as international studies (Kiely, 2005; Taylor & Pancer, 2007). In other words, the students experienced their involvement in the CE activities as an integral part, and not isolated facets of their lives. This connects to Naudé's (2015) notion of 'a broadened sense of self: an integrated and interdependent individuality and a relational self' (p. 88). The psychosocial aspects that informed engagement on the individual level are illustrated by Figure 5 below, and will be discussed first.
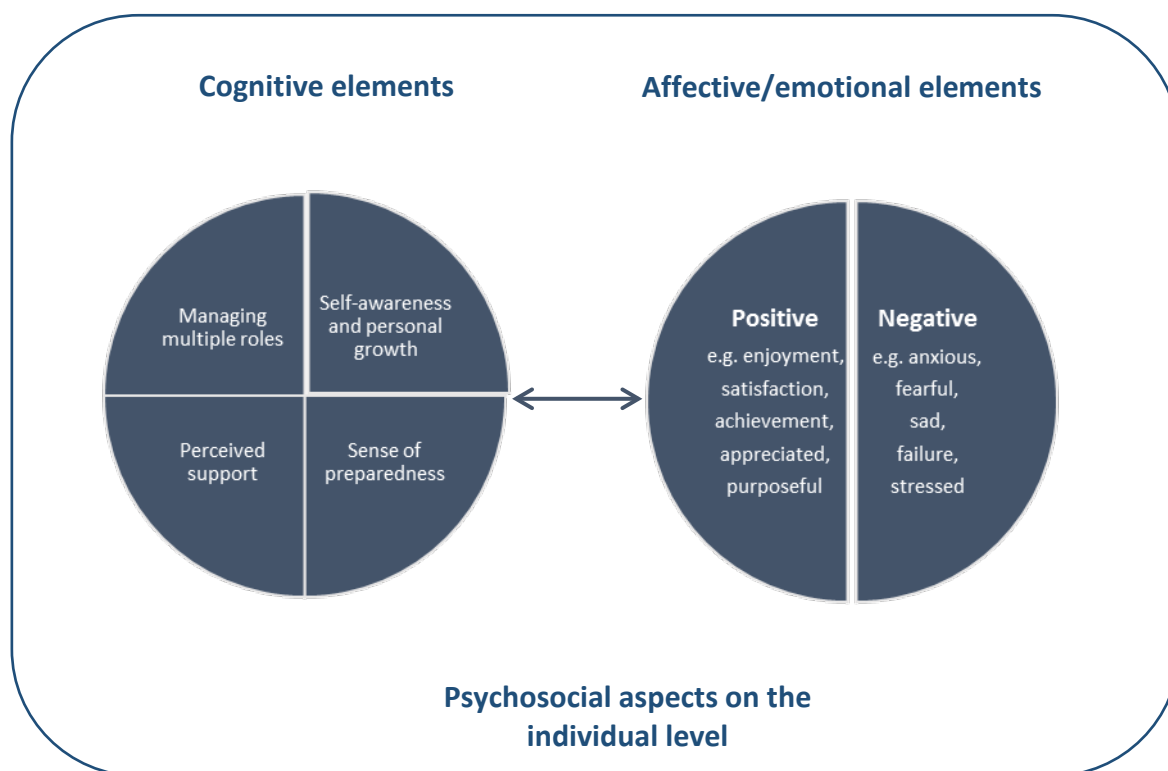
Figure 5. Psychosocial aspects that inform engagement on the individual level.

Self-awareness and personal growth. Students related experiences of an enhanced self-awareness and associated personal growth in the form of self-discovery; becoming aware of new or latent skills; becoming aware of their own personality traits and how it operates in CE; and becoming aware of where they fit into broader society. These effects were also noted by previous studies in the South African context (Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2011, 2012, 2015); and in an international context (Kiely, 2005; Taylor & Pancer, 2007). Enhanced self-awareness and personal growth is seen as part of the core outcomes of transformative processes that take place during CE especially as a result of being exposed to diverse settings (Kiely, 2005; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 2000, 2008; Naudé, 2015). Self-awareness was sparked by what Mezirow (2000) called disorienting dilemmas and Dewey and Kolb (cited in Constandius et al., 2014) called forked road experiences. Thus, being involved with CE allowed for awareness on multiple dimensions, including personality

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traits, skills, abilities and the like, which Kiely (2005) referred to as 'biographical baggage' that students take with them into the engagement space.

Through their exposure to multiple contexts the students entered unfamiliar spaces (Constandius et al., 2014; Prinsloo, 2015). Consequently, they were often faced with information contrasting their current frames of reference and habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000); which Jansen (2009) called 'disruptive knowledge' (p.265); and which Strain (2005) described as upsetting to a person's cognitive and moral frameworks. These situations, therefore, forced them to think and adapt, similar to Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning. Exposure also represented opportunities that motivated students to look at, and think about their own identity and positionality, about their own and other communities (Carolissen et al., 2010).

Furthermore, these *'out of comfort zone experiences'* (Ryan, psychology student) were seen as building blocks for personal growth. Additionally, exposure to different contexts may have enhanced the students' moral development (Strain, 2005) and cultural competence (Amerson, 2010). Since CE was of a very personal nature for students as they invested a lot of time and energy into the projects, they consequently experienced both the successes and failure of the project in very personal ways too.

Sense of preparedness and entering diverse spaces. The students' sense of competency and self-confidence were perceived to be influenced by their sense of preparedness for the engagement process. Even though they engaged in orientation sessions, most student participants felt that they were not psychologically prepared for the engagement. Comments like *'I felt lost in the beginning'* (Miryam); *'it was such a culture shock',* and *'I didn't know what to expect'* (Alex) illustrated this. Constandius et al. (2014), Isaacs et al. (2016) and Naudé (2012) reported similar findings in their research relating to the preparedness, nervous anticipation and first responses by students.

Related to these findings, Maistry and Thakrar (2012) underscored the importance of preparation for engagement since students were seen as both 'agents and beneficiaries of

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community engagement' (p. 59), which is particularly important in South African society with its multiple challenges. In the same vein Carolissen et al. (2010) stressed the importance of teaching about and engaging with issues of difference in the curriculum as a means to help develop global citizens that are responsive to contemporary societal issues. Furthermore, with regard to group processes (Corey et al., 2014; Yalom, 1985), the pre-group or preparation stage and initial stage (which may include the first contact) are important in setting up the foundation for the rest of the process. It is in these stages that the purpose, aims and expectations for engagement can be explored and outlined.

Alex, an engineering student, pointed to a need for psychological preparation for engagement. For a reminder of the context and because this instance involves many aspects, his extract is reiterated: *'It's just so awkward, one doesn't know how to handle these things; you literally threw us in blind… We don't know how to handle these people, we don't have a clue. We all had a good attitude from the beginning, very nice, but what do we do when a child tells you, my mother died last night.'*

Alex highlighted several interrelated issues concerning preparation that may potentially hinder transformative processes if attention is not paid to it. His comment cuts across the personal, structural, programmatic and historical contextual dimensions (Kiely, 2005). In this case the contextual boundaries were in the form of race, culture, age, educational background, and socio-economic circumstances. He is a White, Afrikaans speaking, male, from a middle income background, and an engineering student (meaning that he was undergoing higher education and performed well academically to even be registered in an engineering programme). In turn, he engaged with primary school learners, in a predominantly Coloured school, who live in a predominantly Coloured, farming (low income) community; which naturally represented borders along all of the mentioned dimensions. Moreover, he was expected to be engaged socially in a domain that may have appeared foreign to his area of study.

Constandius et al. (2014) and Naudé (2012, 2015) reported similar incidences of awareness of contextual borders between the students and participating community members, and the distancing that some students employ as can be seen in Alex's comment of *'we don't know how to handle these people'*. This statement of Alex relates to Mezirow's (2000) notion of a disorienting dilemma as he did not know what to do with the new information that he was confronted with, when filtered through his existing frames of reference. This statement may also reflect the divided nature of South African society. In that regard Alex's statement to some degree indicates the little meaningful contact that he personally experienced in relation to other groups (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005; Tredoux & Finchilescu, 2010).

Secondly, Alex's comment pointed out that students that are not based in the social sciences may find the adjustment to the interaction more challenging than those in the social sciences who may be more socially inclined and trained for engagement. It should be noted too that Alex's positive attitude towards engagement in the beginning was not enough to help him with the felt boundaries between himself and the project participants. It therefore emphasized the need for structured preparation sessions which is informed by the students' expressed needs. This also relates to Carolissen et al., (2010) of creating reflective spaces in the classroom where students can engage with various aspects related to their identities as it in turn influence their view of themselves in relation to others.

Mezirow's (2000) 'habits of mind' need to be considered here as well, and especially the emphasis that exposure to difference may challenge individuals' points of view, but does not necessarily lead to the transformation of their habits of mind – the deep-seated views towards people from different groups which informs their actions. In the case of Alex it is not clear whether he engaged deeply with the dissonance experienced due to crossing contextual boundaries. This is a limitation of the design in that the students were only seen once for the focus group session, and

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some for a follow up session depending on their availability; and not like Kiely (2005) who followed a longitudinal approach.

The following statement by Penelope, a student project leader, explained that the extent to which students crosses boundaries depends on their attitudes and motivations for involvement: *'You get people who kind of like to go and sort of watch what's happening, and… you get people who like to go and make the connections and really get involved.'* In that sense, engaging with differences based on the various contextual boundaries, should not be taken as a given, but depends on how students engaged with the awareness of boundaries and with information that is in contrast to their frames of reference (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000).

Perceived support. Associated with students' preparedness for the engagement process was their sense of support from academic staff, community organization personnel, family, friends and other significant people in their lives. This aspect relates to the *programmatic* element of the engagement context (Kiely, 2005). Students felt supported when the organization staff and fellow leaders and residence members were actively involved in the project, and when supervisors were available to talk to them. Taylor and Pancer (2007) found that students that felt supported through their service-learning experience were more likely to become involved in volunteering after the experience. In that sense, if CE is intended to elicit long-lasting changes and preparing students to become agents of change, the issue of support needs stronger emphasis.

Many of the participants however, mentioned a lack of psychosocial support from supervisors in service-learning programmes. Moral support is generally implied through providing guided reflection sessions, but it may not necessarily be the focus, since most research has emphasized the meaning-making dimension of reflection. Even by definition, reflection is described as thinking about the interaction with the aim of learning from it and to adapt for future interaction (Eyler, 2002; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Petersen & Osman, 2013); which is undergirded by the principles of the experiential learning theory of Kolb (1984). Dewey (cited in Constandius et al., 2014)

asserted that deep reflection is an enabling mechanism for transforming perceptions and attitude, which is often sparked by uneasiness. Furthermore, reflection is seen as planned opportunities for students to think about and talk about perplexing issues of difference (Weah, cited in Constandius et al., 2014). Similarly, Berman and Allen (2012) emphasized reflection for the purpose of improving the engagement. None of these examples emphasized the psychological support needed by the students through the process of engagement, which highlights a shortcoming in the promotion of reflection as important tool for transformative learning. This lack of emphasis on psychological support consequently results in spaces where the focus is on managing programmes, reaching structured learning outcomes (as noted by the social work students in this study), and less emphasis on student well-being and the emotional and visceral components.

This lack of support experienced by students links with CP's values for personal well-being, including care and compassion, and personal health (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). It also points to a need for emphasizing the ethics of care, where humanness is foregrounded above learning outcomes. In a political ethics of care, 'care is portrayed as holistic and as a broad, public and political activity' as opposed to a narrow view often criticized as being overprotective (Tronto, cited in Bozalek et al., 2014, p. 449). Elements in political ethics of care include: '*attentiveness'* (recognizing that care is necessary); '*responsibility'* (taking responsibility for and acting on an identified need); '*competence'* (ensuring that care work is completed and done well); '*responsiveness'* (being receptive to the way care is received); and '*trust'* (which can be considered a consolidating element for the rest) (Tronto, cited in Bozalek et al., 2014, p. 405 – 454). Considering the ethic of care in CE would do well to support students and enrich their experiences. In turn, it may also affect the engagement experiences of the project participants in a positive manner.

The students commented after the focus groups that they wished that there were more communal spaces to share experiences, since they often had to cope on their own (an unexpected

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finding for service-learning students considering that reflection sessions are structured into their modules). The idea of group reflection mentioned by the students related to Kiely's (2005) *processing* dimension, and also resonated with Eyler et al. (cited in Naudé, 2015). These sources suggested that a balanced approach between discussing uncomfortable and challenging issues; and creating a supportive space for developing solidarity in group sessions, may enhance learning and growing together.

This lack of communal spaces for critical reflection raised a concern as it implied unrealized or a limitation on the potential for developing the students toward broader societal impact as one of the core aims of CE. Furthermore, in view of the contact hypothesis, and classrooms with diverse student compositions at the university, supportive conditions can be created for regular contact between students from diverse backgrounds in these communal reflective spaces. In turn, this guided group reflection may reduce prejudice and stereotyping as students are encouraged to engage with differences based on race, positionality, and power, as well as reflect on their role in society (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

Managing multiple roles. In the current research the students reflected on having to manage multiple roles, similar to findings noted by Isaacs et al. (2016). Having to manage multiple roles may become a perplexing situation or disorienting dilemma for students (Mezirow, 2000) as they experience dissonance between their own contextual boundaries (different roles). As such, it also links with the *dissonance* and *processing* dimensions of Kiely (2005). Managing multiple roles was applicable to both service-learning and volunteer students. The student project leaders (volunteers) had little to no theoretical background compared to service-learning students. In addition to managing the programme, facilitating sessions themselves, recruiting volunteers from their residence and taking care of their academics amongst other personal responsibilities; being a volunteer project leader became a demanding task. This taxing situation was elevated around test and examination times. Similarly, the social work students referred to their experience of having to

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fulfil both student and professional roles at the organizations that they were placed. Some of them also needed to travel far to their placement sites which added to an already overwhelming situation.

Bart, one of the volunteer project leaders described it as a 'psychological storm' as he reflected on coping with multiple demands. Upon analysing Bart's idea in relation to the rest of this research it became clear that there are multiple elements that may build up to experiencing a psychological storm. This storm is comparable to a sense of being buffeted, overwhelmed. The elements leading up to a psychological storm include: crossing contextual boundaries; managing multiple roles; experiencing cognitive and emotional effects and dissonance; responding to multiple demands; coupled with a lack of preparation and an unsupportive environment. This notion of the psychological storm is illustrated by the diagram in Figure 6 below.
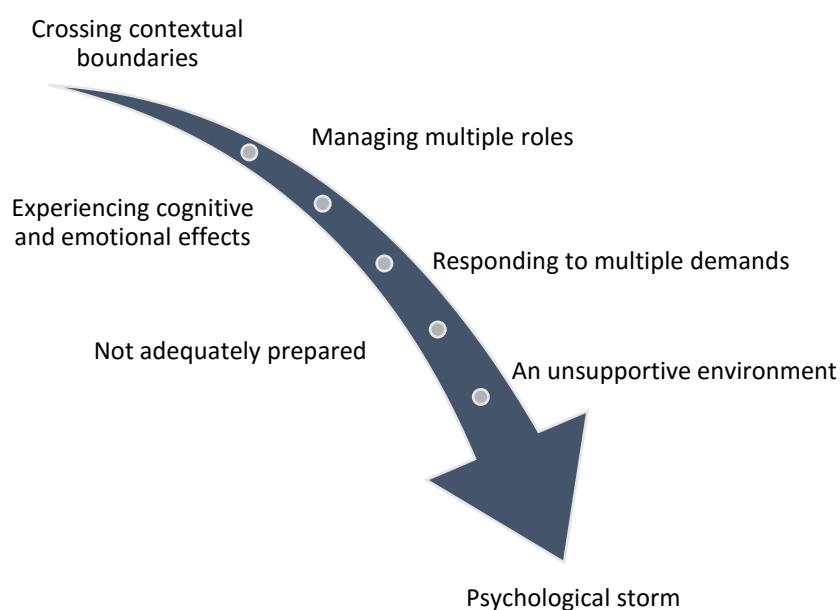
Figure 6. Illustration of the progression towards a psychological storm in CE.

Related to the psychological storm (Figure 6), Penelope noted that *'students can leave on top of the world or exhausted and drained'* – referring to the notion that CE could have potentially very positive outcomes leaving the students elated and motivated to remain involved and even commit to

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future involvement, or very negative outcomes that leave them *'exhausted and drained'*. Penelope's comment is in accordance with the ideas of Holdsworth and Quinn (2012) that the student volunteer is not necessarily the bland character that volunteer because it is a good thing, as has become a normative view. On the contrary, the engagement experience presents the student volunteer with various challenges and therefore points attention to well-being and structured support.

If Penelope's idea can be seen on a continuum from elation on one side with exhaustion on the other, both sides may relate to the notion of high-intensity dissonance – experiences which may have long-lasting effects (Kiely, 2005). In this instance however, it can be favourable or unfavourable for future engagement in similar contexts or with similar people where the student had the bad or good experience.

While feeling *'on top of the world'* may encourage the students to continue volunteering, on the other end of the spectrum, if students are emotionally exhausted by the experience they may abandon their involvement. This exhaustion could potentially also involve challenges and misunderstandings related to the community organization context or the particular individuals that they have engaged with. In turn, this bad experience could lead to perpetuating stereotypical views and generalisations with regard to the communities that they engaged with.

Furthermore, when considering the features of the psychological storm and in particular the feeling of emotional exhaustion and disinterest in further volunteering involvement, the link with burnout is illuminated (Johnson & Naidoo, 2017; Maslach, 1982). As a result of the potential risks to students, the ethics of care as described earlier become imperative considerations in the planning and management of CE to help students circumvent a potential psychological storm.

These findings on managing multiple roles therefore emphasized the need for more attention to student well-being, in addition to central aims of CE concerning enhanced learning, enhanced personal growth, cultural competence and an enhanced sense of citizenship (Gross & Maloney, 2012; Knapp et al., 2010).

Discussion of findings related to the individual level (affective and emotional experiences)

The students in the present study mentioned a range of emotions experienced through the process of CE. Naudé (2012) agreed that 'border crossings are deeply emotional, affective experiences' (p. 239). The emotions referred to in the present study included: sense of enjoyment; feeling appreciated; sense of achievement; feeling satisfied; feeling purposeful; feeling anxious and fearful; experiencing and managing sadness; sense of failure; stressed and emotional exhaustion. Comparable findings have been reported in the literature, even though not all these emotions were represented (Berman & Allen, 2012; Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Constandius et al., 2014; Isaacs et al., 2016; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2012, 2015). However, all the mentioned studies have reported fear, anxiety or nervous anticipation at the beginning of the engagement process. This feeling was linked to crossing contextual boundaries and not knowing what to expect. The 'disorienting dilemma' of stepping into unknown environments provoked anxiety and nervousness (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000, 2008). Furthermore, fear was also caused by students' perceptions of the pervasiveness of crime in the communities they had to enter into, as also noted by Naudé (2012). The fear related to crime and violence is embedded in the South African society (Roberts, 2010), which therefore reflects in the engagement space too.

Enjoyment, feeling satisfied and sense of achievement can be related to successfully engaging with the dissonance experienced when crossing contextual boundaries, or realising of own skills and abilities (Mezirow, 2000). Several of the students explained that the experience of CE invoked in them such passion for the work and that they wanted to continue it beyond their studies, which can be related to Kiely's (2005) notion of high-intensity dissonance, and Naudé's (2012) commitments to the future or 'paying it forward' (p. 239). This also relate to findings by Berman and Allen (2012), Prinsloo (2015), and Taylor and Pancer (2007) on students' sense of feeling that they have contributed to change or making a difference.

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Feeling purposeful, on the other hand, related to students' enhanced awareness of their connectedness and responsibility towards broader society (Naudé, 2012), but also in the smaller moments of realisation that they are doing something positive towards someone else. This aspect relates to the dimensions of personalising the other (as real people can be connected to previously abstract concepts); as well as processing and connecting (Kiely, 2005). Feeling purposeful, may in turn inform students' commitment to future engagements, as denoted by Naudé (2015) and commitments to social justice (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

On the negative spectrum, students mentioned dealing with sadness, feeling like they have failed their clients or participants, and felt stressed and emotionally drained because of the different challenges. Comparable findings were reported by Naudé (2012, 2015) where students felt that they abandoned their participants. A sense of failure was for some related to a particular day, but for others there was a deep sense of not having made a difference even though they have invested a lot of time and energy in the project. Some of their comments included: *'I'm not really doing anything'* (Ivy), and *'Nobody needs me'* (Amelia); and *'I feel just like we using these people, because in some cases I feel like I've done nothing with them'* (Riley). This feeling related to the idea of Constandius et al. (2014) that CE often benefits the university (students) more than the community, seeing as the students completed the engagement period and passed their module, but did not feel that they have made a significant change in the clients' lives. This feeling of failure was very demotivating for the students.

Similarly, being exposed to very tough situations in communities had depressing and emotionally draining effects on service-learning and the volunteer project leaders. They reflected on the demands of day-to-day activities and having managed different roles. Heidi's story of experiencing secondary traumatization due to working with cases of abuse and sexual violence needs to be mentioned in particular. Her example emphasized the vicarious trauma that students can be exposed to, and the consequent need for a stronger focus on the ethics of care.

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An extreme example of burnout, the feeling of being overwhelmed with challenges was Alegra's reflection on having to seek professional help because she felt *'down, down, lower than low'* due to thinking about the challenging situations people live in (*'wow, people are facing tough stuff out there'*), and reflecting on her current privileged position (being a university student). It should be noted that Alegra was a Black woman, who shared similar life circumstances to most participants she engaged with. Her situation further reiterated the idea that deep emotions were not only related to 'crossing boundaries' of contextual difference, but even for Coloured and Black students that come from similar circumstances, being involved in CE was not a neutral affair, but also deeply emotional and affective, similar to some students in the study of Berman and Allen (2012) and Naudé (2012).

It should be emphasized, however, that most of the students in the current research were positively inclined to the engagement and had positive experiences of the engagement. Several sources from the literature also noted the positive experiences by the students and the consequent feeling of satisfaction (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014; Ebersöhn et al., 2010; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012; Naudé, 2012, 2015). Bart described it as: *'the portfolio that changed my life actually, my view on a lot of different things and my growth – because they talk about graduate attributes… It's, those types of things that add to your life'.*

Another example was Zoë, a White, English speaking female student. She was a project leader of an afterschool academic assistance programme for several years and then later became involved with CE at administrative level at the university. Subsequently, she also pursued a career in teaching because of her engagement experience. The examples of Bart and Zoë, and many other students in the present study relate to Kiely's (2005) notion of high-intensity dissonance where participants re-evaluated their life and career choices because of the engagement.

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Discussion of findings related to the interpersonal level

The main themes with regard to the interpersonal level of analysis (as depicted in Figure 7) included: issues with regard to language and age differences; various skills that students used or needed; building relationships and forming connections; as well as issues concerning terminating the engagement relationship and finding closure. These will be referred to briefly in turn.
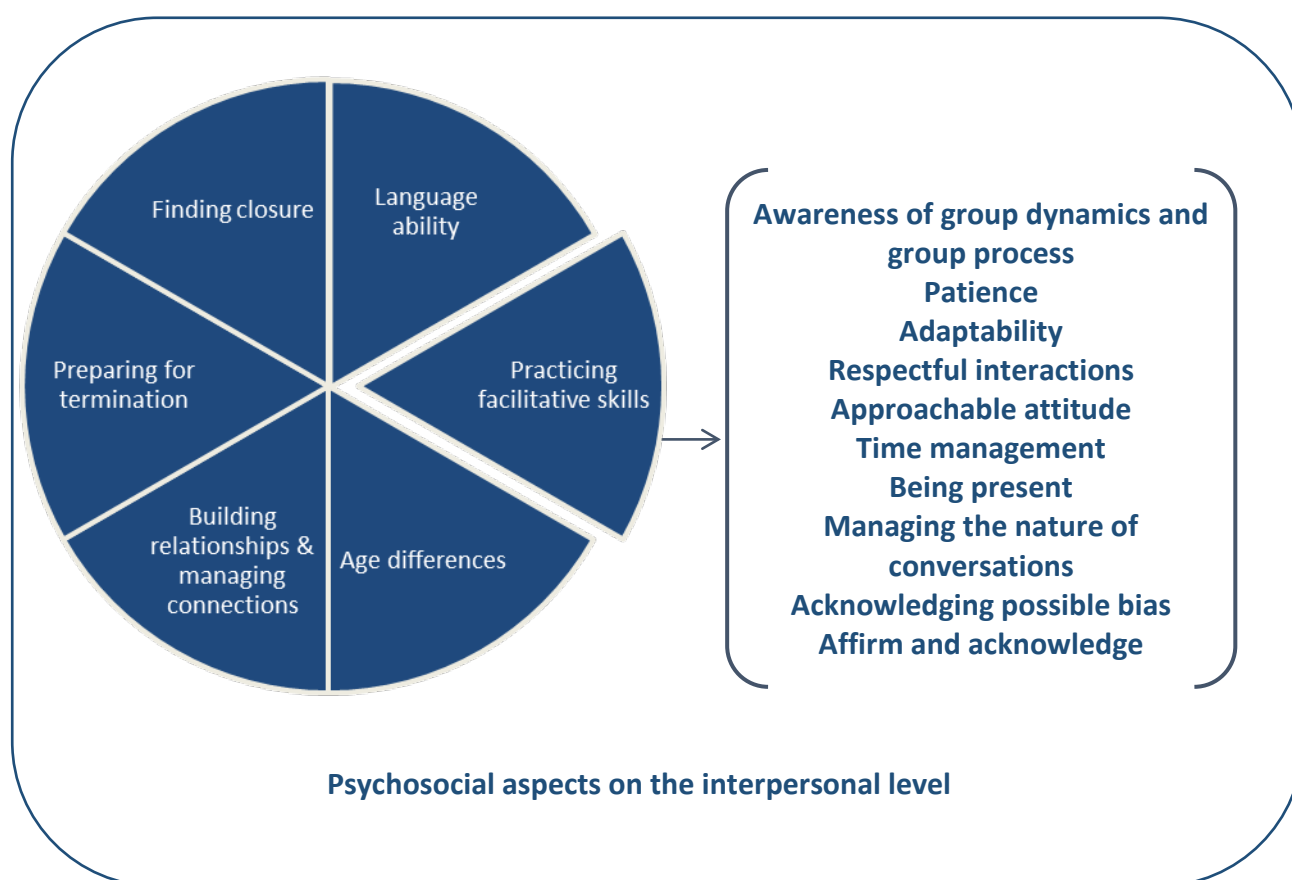
Figure 7. Psychosocial aspects on the interpersonal level.

Language and engagement. In South Africa's multi-lingual context the engagement often involved students and learners who had different language backgrounds and abilities. In that regard, language was part of, or lack in, an individual's skillset that he/she brought to the engagement

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context (Kiely, 2005). Language ability was seen as limiting communication with regard to facilitating programmes, as noted by Naudé (2012). Consequently, a language gap between the students and learners or clients influenced the forming of connections – which were sometimes positive and in other instances negative. Adapting to and finding creative ways to bridge the language divide relates to what Kiely (2005) described as low-intensity dissonance. This kind of dissonance led to 'instrumental and communicative forms of learning' which enabled the students to adapt to their environment (Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2015).

Language ability was also seen as a *'privileged position'* by one of the students in the current study, and was related to several other instances within the research. Students commented that it was easier for IsiXhosa-speaking students to engage with learners in their IsiXhosa mother tongue. Similarly, students in Naudé (2012) noted that the learners in their programme preferred to engage with the students who spoke their own language, and associated with it, shared their culture – which in the South African context is usually interconnected.

Conversely, it was also noted by Velvet, an IsiXhosa-speaking student that this privilege to speak the participants' language can also become challenging at times, since the one with the language ability has to fulfil the duty of translating for everyone else. A similar finding was mentioned by Naudé (2015) that students were dependent on each other for translation. Along the same lines, Isaacs et al. (2016) mentioned that students who spoke Afrikaans fluently took on most of the workshop facilitation responsibilities in an Afrikaans-speaking community, thus taking the burden off the English-speaking students who did not feel so comfortable with the Afrikaans abilities.

Linked with the above, there were confusion amongst the students with regard to allowing students to speak their mother tongue versus 'forcing them' to communicate in English. Students debated that speaking in a common language (English) would facilitate the process, and it would also help students to practise their English in a safe space, which is considered a necessary skill for

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higher education and work environments post-school. Naudé (2015) foregrounded the learners' preference to speak in their mother tongue, and instead the students were the ones to adapt to the context. In their case they depended on each other for translation. Within the South African historical context however, language and being forced to speak a particular language is not neutral but touches on issues of power and discrimination (Swartz, 1998). It is therefore an important issue to consider when deciding on which language to use in CE programmes.

Age difference and engagement. Since many projects at university involved collaborations with schools in the surrounding area, it implied that age differences between the students (young adults) and learners (adolescents) were common. Age difference can be considered a contextual boundary on the personal dimension (Kiely, 2005). Similar to the language divide, finding ways to bridge the gap can be considered low-intensity dissonance that leads to instrumental and communicative forms of learning (Kiely, 2005). For some of the students it was easier to relate to the young learners and for others more challenging. Some of these challenges related to age included having to imagine what it was like being the age of the participants, and linked to that, figuring out which topics were age appropriate for the learners. Social work students in particular shared about their experience of being judged based on their age, as some clients mentioned that they were too young and therefore not in a position to advise them on their lives. This situation caused ambiguity for the students as they were limited, but also stuck between the role of student and professional. It was also clear from this interaction that values and culture played a role, as the student mentioned her value system of respecting older people. This too was conflicting as the students could not act on what they wanted to, but was held back by their belief system. This was an example of dissonance (Kiely, 2005) where the students were stuck between two different sets of expectations – doing what is required in their role as social work student; or stepping back in line with their value system.

Another way in which age played out was when the students were almost the same age as the participants, which they described as '*awkward*'. They also described a tendency to evaluate themselves with the participants, and in turn noticed a judgmental or sometimes hypocritical attitude towards them (for example issues on sex before marriage and having children at a young age). Related to this, was the students' awareness of their own values, needs and tendencies as young adults. The extent to which students engaged deeply with their experiences during CE helped them to rethink frames of reference and potentially change their habits of mind in the diverse South African context (Mezirow, 2008). More importantly it has the potential to influence long term decisions. This is comparable to the high-intensity dissonance by Kiely (2005) and Naudé's (2012, 2015) processes of commitments to the future and paying it forward.

Practising facilitative skills. The students' knowledge and skillset made up an important part of their personal engagement context (Kiely, 2005). The students reported similar skills to those commonly mentioned in the literature with regard to group facilitation and awareness of group dynamics (Ebersöhn et al., 2010); patience and adaptability (Isaacs et al., 2016); treating people with respect; maintaining an approachable attitude; and time management (Berman & Allen, 2012; Maistry & Thakrar, 2012). In addition, the students in the current study reported skills like interpersonal awareness or 'being present' in order to decide how to respond to a situation; managing the nature of conversations, especially when discussing sensitive topics; and standing your ground, in a sense of sharing good guidance or knowledge even though participants did not cooperate (for example, preparing for recurring domestic violence, even if the client chose to remain in an abusive relationship, or did not cooperate with regard to follow up processes); acknowledging possible biases or prejudice; and affirming and acknowledging students for persisting through difficult circumstances.

Affirming and acknowledging is an important skill to discuss in depth as it is imperative for the engagement process in terms of personal growth of project participants and sense of

achievement of the students. An example of this was presented by Rose, a female, Black student who engaged with other Black learners in a career development project for high school learners. Even though Rose was aware of the learners' context since she came from similar circumstances, her educational context still presented a boundary (Kiely, 2005) that she somehow overlooked. Rose became aware of her oversight, in that she could not get through to the learners, and decided to change her approach.

By changing her approach to acknowledging the learners' strength in dealing with their circumstances, she moved from the expert, educated university student, to a co-participant in the learning and growing process, similar to the approach by students in Maistry and Thakrar's (2012) study. As with the Black students in the Maistry and Thakrar (2012) and Naudé (2012, 2015) studies, the engagement added to their sense of giving back to their own communities. Additionally, the act of affirming the participants for how they cope with their life circumstances links with the value of respect for and embracing diversity and affirming their self-efficacy (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Furthermore, the act of affirming and acknowledging links with Yalom (1985), who emphasized the need that every person has for positive feedback and recognition from their fellow man. Thus, the act of affirmation enhances the participants' sense of worth, which may be an instigator for further change and growth.

Building relationships and managing connections. At its core, students learned and grew in the context of relationships in the CE process. In other words, it was in the interactions with other people (fellow students and the community participants) that students became aware of contextual boundaries and the resulting dissonance when crossing those boundaries (Kiely, 2005). In the present study the students highlighted the importance of showing interest in the learners or project participants' lives as the bonding facilitated the process of building rapport or *'getting through to them'*. These bonds developed over time and students noted the importance of honesty and trust as key building blocks for building strong connections. Similar to Naudé (2015), the students in the

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current study also reported that they usually bonded with few learners rather than big groups and started to form friendships. Furthermore, it was usually through the 'special bonds' that the processes of *personalising* and *connecting* took place where students connected with the learners as they shared experiences about their lives, about resilience and optimism for the future (Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2015).

Additionally, relationships were also the context for finding common ground and seeing similarities between themselves and people of diverse backgrounds, which can be considered an important outcome of group process (Corey et al., 2014; Yalom, 1985). In view of the contact theory, the engagement with people from different groups could potentially help with stereotype reduction on the one hand (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005); but on the other hand, engagement with people from different backgrounds could potentially reinforce stereotypical thinking (Eyler & Giles as cited in Strain, 2005). Also, Mezirow's (2008) asserted that contact with people who held different views and beliefs may challenge the students' frames of reference, but not necessarily lead to long-lasting changes with regard to their habits of mind. Nevertheless, the context of relationships was a space where the students were confronted information that challenged their own perceptions of the world around them, towards becoming socially aware citizens (Constandius et al., 2014; Naudé, 2012, 2015).

On a more practical level students also experienced ambivalence in managing personal boundaries as to how much they should share of themselves, and how much the project participants should share with them. This issue also related to the students' sense of preparedness for the engagement, and similarly their training in how to deal with potentially sensitive information. This issue pointed out that there is a need to include basic interpersonal skills, such as listening and counselling skills, are required in training of students for involvement in CE.

Preparing for termination. As with the rest of the CE process, terminating the engagement was also infused with emotions. Some of the emotions shared by the students in the current research

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included sadness, frustration, and was also linked to the previously discussed sense of achievement and sense of failure. Preparing for termination was understated in the literature that I have reviewed related to CE, yet on the other hand termination is seen as an important part of any group process (Corey, 2004; Yalom, 1985). Naudé (2012, 2015), however, referred to preparation for termination, and noted sadness in addition to a sense of abandoning the learners as well as pride (because of their involvement in the project and consequent responses from the learners). In accordance with Naudé (2015), students in the current research also mentioned ways of easing the termination through a small celebration with cake, a picnic and the like.

Additionally the students in the current research also mentioned things to do during the build-up to termination, not just on the last day. Most popular was creating countdown calendars with the learners; as well as conducting evaluations as this exercise helped with reflecting on the process and aided both the project participants and the students to prepare for termination.

An interesting finding pointed out by one of the project leaders in the current study was what he called the *'psychological block'* (Bart). This psychological block refers to learners' openness or resistance towards new volunteers in a project, following the termination of a very strong bond with a previous student. It is important to take note of this occurrence since project leadership and students' involvements in CE programmes generally do not last very long. Thus, students need to communicate the extent and timelines of their commitment to the programmes very early in the process, which will in turn help with the termination process and for the learners to bond with other students in future without feeling abandoned by them. This notion can be linked to Corey et al. (2014) and Yalom's (1985) explication of the difficulties that group members have with regard to the termination of the group process and associated resistance to abandonment. When considering that termination is an important part of group processes and that it not only ends off the one process, but also lays the foundation for the next engagement experience for the students and the project participants, more attention to termination is imperative.

Finding closure. A further important aspect related to ending the engagement relationship was finding closure. In that sense the students either left the engagement with a positive or negative sense. In that regard the students tried to make sense of, and consolidated their experiences. Finding closure links with processing in Kiely's (2005) model. Furthermore, it is also an important process in group counselling (Yalom, 1985).

The students mentioned that reaching a sense of closure was easier, and they felt more at ease when there were succession plans in place for the learners that they were leaving behind, in that the students knew about other volunteers taking over or other activities that the learners can get involved with. A further element that influenced closure was students' reflections on the impact that they have made – whether it was lasting and whether it actually made a difference in the participants' lives. In Rose' example, her sense of ambivalence with regard to ending off the engagement was still noticeable in the focus group. She questioned herself whether she has done the right thing by not giving the project participants her phone number, which to her, translated into questioning whether she has done enough. This uncertainty about their impact can also be related to the assertion by Constandius et al. (2014) on the engagement that generally benefits the university more than the community participants. In turn this can become a very perplexing situation for students on a very personal level. Penelope noted that when students have positive experiences in CE, they *feel good and can continue with other things in their lives*. This notion points to Naudé's (2012, 2015) idea of 'paying it forward'. Closure also relates to the students' sense of satisfaction because of their involvement in something bigger than themselves, thus, an enhanced sense of morality and empathy towards others (Brown, 2011), and realising their responsibility to the benefit of the public (Berman & Allen, 2012; HEQC, 2006; Lazarus et al., 2008).

Discussion of findings related to the university, community and societal contexts

Since CE is not an isolated activity but takes place within the broader university, community and societal contexts, elements on these levels also affect the engagement process and

consequently, the engagement experiences of students. This notion links with the ecological systems theory referring to factors that operate on various levels of analysis may affect an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The university, community and societal levels therefore relate to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) meso-, macro- and chronosystems. These broader levels also correspond with Kiely's (2005) structural (related to power and positionality); historical; and programmatic dimensions of the engagement context, which present possible boundaries between those who are in interaction.

Psychosocial aspects related to the university context

SU's institutional commitment to CE and alignment with national policies and imperatives (Department of Higher Education, 1997; HEQC, 2006; Lazarus et al., 2008; SU Policy on Community Interaction, 2009; SU, 2016) constitute important contextual elements of CE. These commitments and imperatives, such as a designated person to oversee CE on the university's highest level of management; a dedicated office with human and financial resources dedicated to CE; staff and students' rewards for involvement; training programmes for staff and students; connectedness with national and international networks on CE (as described by Abraham in the current research, and the Social Impact Strategic Plan), relate to the programmatic elements in Kiely's (2005) model.

CE has become integrated into the core of the university as was noted in conversations with students and staff. However, it has been mentioned by the participants that few students become involved in CE (in relation to the entire student body) and that the majority of the students may not be aware of the potential benefits to themselves, as current students and future employees, and the people they interact with (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012). An example was Penelope's statement that *'students don't realize how important it [volunteering] really is and how much it continues throughout one's life'*. Maistry and Thakrar (2012) reported comparable findings that few students were aware of CE opportunities on the university campus, and that most

involvement was linked to requirements for obtaining their higher education qualifications. The lack of student involvement in CE may translate back to awareness raising about the possible benefits in developing competence and graduate attributes that may help with student employability post-university (Goodman & Tredway, 2016; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012).

The students in the current research also mentioned myths and false impressions of CE by other students who are not involved in CE (such as *'you are too nice'*, *'easy to walk over'*, *'will do anything for anyone'*, *'soft-hearted',* as mentioned by the students in the first focus group). These perceptions and lack of interest by the majority of students present an important area for further research, which may in turn help the university in recruiting more students in CE endeavours.

Considering the potential effects and outcomes of CE, it can be a means of rebuilding trust with the community members in view of the tainted history with the broader Stellenbosch community. Abraham, SU staff member, reflected on his engagement with parents of prospective students and their concerns urging him to *'tell us (them) what it is really like here'*. This comment is an indication that there is still some distrust towards the university from people outside of the university, especially the Coloured and Black communities because of past hurts. The distrust may indicate the frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000), which surrounding community members have built up over the years towards the university. In that sense, the particular community members experienced a disorienting dilemma, in that the information shared with them through Abraham's presentation about the community, was contrary to what they believed. The comment also indicated (which Abraham, Beatrix and George noted in the current research) that the university still has some work to do in order to restore trust with the broader Stellenbosch community.

Even though several of the staff participants have reflected positively on the university's implementation of CE, there were negative aspects which posed challenges to the overall mission of CE. For example some staff members do not believe that CE is a necessary component of the overall mission of the university; some academics remain sceptical about CE. Furthermore, CE is

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perceived as demanding to incorporate into course work especially in view of their already taxing schedule. Constandius et al. (2014) emphasized that because of academics' position of power which they occupied, their perceptions towards CE is critically important, especially since they are the ones who conceptualize and implement service-learning and other CE activities.

When asked about to what extent the university is approaching and facilitating projects that maintain the status quo (keeping things the way they are) versus challenging the status quo, the students referred to changed ways of engaging with people. This included a shift to doing things with people instead of for people. At one level this shift is a way to empower people to do things for themselves as they develop their self-determination and exercise their agency (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). However, the question of whether this approach is shifting the status quo is not clear.

Abraham, one of the staff members, admitted that projects at the university predominantly still maintain the status quo. He mentioned that staff members generally operated within the system and '*don't rock the boat*'. However, he also maintains that a measure of undermining the status quo is required since the status quo has become too comfortable. In other words if people do not decide to take on a different approach, they would continue with the norm and the status quo would remain intact. Abraham's comment on the status quo is reiterated:

> *I think, you know, there are many injustices in the status quo, and if we do maintenance work then not much would change. We need to bring about big changes, we need to go to the heart of poverty and give opportunities to people; and we have to remain a good university. Now I believe that these are not alternatives for one another.* (Abraham, SU staff member)

In the last part in Abraham's comment is imperative to emphasize, in that the university's engagement and investment in CE, does not come and should not come at the expense of giving up quality teaching and learning, and research. In other words, focusing on advancing CE may enhance

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the overall strength of the university as active institution in society, and support its mandate towards social justice as set out in the White Paper on the transformation of the higher education system (HEQC, 2006; Department of Education, 1997)

Staff members' reflexivity. Especially in the diverse South African context the skill of *'putting your biases upfront'* (George) may benefit the facilitation of CE. Constandius et al. (2014) mentioned that there is a shortage on the research with regard to staff members' reflections on their involvement in CE. George, a staff member in the present study, reflected on race as one aspect of his identity and how it may be perceived when facilitating CE: *'In South Africa, people's identities have been colour coded…in order to participate meaningfully in transformative community engagement it's very, very important that one emancipates yourself, that one frees yourself from other people's constructed projections onto you'*. In that sense, he noted the importance of reflexivity and the need for staff and academics to engage with their own frames of reference and habits of mind which have been developed over many years (Mezirow, 2000, 2008), while contending with contextual boundaries and resulting dissonance (Kiely, 2005).

George further noted that there are consequences or *'negative spinoffs'* for the conceptualization and facilitation of CE if academics and other staff members involved in CE do not practise awareness of their possible biases and opinions; and contend with their own positionality, power, and privilege when developing and implementing programmes. This reflexivity is central to critical psychology (Montero, 2011; Suffla et al., 2015). In line with this, Beatrix, another academic commented that: *'I think we are a bunch of spoilt brats that do not always realize what we have and where we are. And I think we need to do more in order to get a realistic picture of what goes on in the communities'*. Thus, similar to the students in CE, staff members are also being exposed to situations of inequality that highlight their own characteristics, relative privileged position in society, as well as responsibility towards the greater good (Berman & Allen, 2012; Montero, 2011; Suffla et al., 2015).

George mentioned that his teaching technique for creating more open spaces for honest engagement with the students was to acknowledge his bias upfront. This was so that the students in turn could *'filter out what they think my (his) bias may be because of my (his) history'* as an adult, Coloured man. This action relates to group reflection, which can be a space for contending with challenging questions, as well as to provide support (Kiely, 2005; Naudé, 2015). This skill, however, implies boldness and vulnerability on the part of the staff member, since there is no guarantee how the students would respond. Naudé (2012, 2015) have mentioned that some students may prefer to remain in their comfort zones, and further noted that students' reflections tend to be filtered to what they think the lecturer wants to hear. Additionally, putting complex issues such as apartheid, race, discrimination, poverty and inequality, positionality and the like on the lecturing agenda, may be seen as 'disruptive knowledge' (Jansen, as cited in Naudé, 2012, p. 234) – disruptive for both facilitator and students. Therefore, contending with the dissonance experienced through crossing boundaries and taking on a more vulnerable position than in the traditional teacher-student roles can be a challenging task for staff members too. Consequently, the group reflection spaces may therefore benefit both the students and the staff members.

With regard to research, university staff members may find that their academic freedom is being challenged as community-based research approaches require community involvement in various phases of the research and to varying degrees (Lazarus et al., 2015). Abraham noted in the study that the staff members *'do not really want to give up control of their research'*. This resistance is problematic on the one hand, considering the potential benefits to the university and collaborating communities. On the other hand, the resistance is also understandable, considering the many possible challenges with regard to the conceptualisation, cost involved, and time commitments related to community-based research (Lazarus et al., 2014; Lazarus et al., 2015). In a similar vein the literature alerts staff members to practise awareness of power dynamics and mutual contributions concerning resources when conceptualizing and implementing research and programmes (Lazarus et al., 2017 Marais et al., 2007; Smith-Tolken, 2010).

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The students mentioned programmatic challenges that influenced the engagement experience for them. These included limited time for engagement as most of the groups only visited the organization once per week and had a lot of tasks to complete with the community participants in order to meet their learning outcomes. The unsynchronized holidays between the university and schools often caused disruptions in processes. In the same vein, the social work students also mentioned a mismatch between their set programmes and the progress of the clients. These aspects relate to the programmatic elements in Kiely's (2005) model. As such, it forms part of the context in which engagement takes place.

Another important contextual element related to the university level was the high turn-over of students and projects, which resulted in perceptions of inconsistency. Similar findings were noted by Vernon and Foster (2002). The turn-over was not just seen as disruptive for the engagement process on the interpersonal level between students and their engagement partners, but also in terms of relationship building. In that regard, new relations had to be initiated when established contact people left the university. A recommendation for practice therefore include longer periods of time in CE projects, as well as taking time to make succession plans.

Psychosocial aspects related to the community context

The societal level of analysis relates to the macrosystem and chronosystem in the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). In that regard the macrosystem informs the values and norms in society which set the culture. This in turn, influences the engagement space for students and the project participants with which they engage even on the interpersonal and individual level. This link is noticeable in how students and their engagement partners navigate the differences that are considered contextual boundaries (Kiely, 2005) that can potentially divide them, such as language, race and culture and unequal socio-economic circumstances.

South Africa as divided society. Throughout this research the participants referred to the complex nature of past and current South African society. As mentioned before, South African society is considered one of the most unequal in the world with a Gini coefficient estimated at 0.7, which indicates an extreme level of socio-economic inequality among the population (Akanbi, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016). This inequality reflects the aftermath or 'long shadow of apartheid history' (Molefe, 2016, p. 32), that currently still informs many spheres of life in South Africa (Durrheim et al., 2011).

As such, it is imperative to practise awareness of how the underlying dynamics, which may include racial dynamics, can potentially inform the engagement relationship. To reiterate Abraham's statement: *'Our work cannot be on a very superficial level, we have to realize that there are feelings involved – people are angry in this country, people are scared and they don't trust each other...'* George's statement further emphasized a need to practise awareness with regard to racial dynamics in the engagement space: *'And so, through engagement, one needs to work, to create a space where people can work out how to engage meaningfully, how to be a co-participant in facilitating transformation without a criteria like race getting in the way...'*

These statements underscore the need for deep, critical reflection, which was also pointed out by Constandius et al. (2014). Furthermore, the anger, mistrust and fear that Abraham refers to, has important implications for building collaborative relations between the university and communities, especially in light of SU's history. In other words, the underlying dynamics that are embedded in the broader societal culture may inform the relationship building and managing of relationships (on the university level); even more so, the engagement space between students and project participants (on the individual and interpersonal levels), even when conducted with the best of intentions.

Contending with racial prejudice. Prejudice is a complex concept. It involves a negative orientation or attitude towards people from different groups, which are generalised and often based on assumptions (Duckitt, 1994; Durrheim et al., 2011). The participants referred to racial prejudice

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in several ways in this study. Two examples are presented by Zoë, a White female student, and Alex, a White male student.

Firstly, Zoë reflected on how her parents have forbidden her to become involved in CE in a predominantly Black community. However, she has defied their warning and became involved, even a year after she initially wanted to start. This attitude by Zoë's parents speaks of deep-seated beliefs about Black people and Black communities as violent. Whereas Zoë's persistence reflects the attitude of current White students as willing to engage and learn, which was noticeable amongst the study participants. Secondly, Alex referred to his mother's warning that he should not cross the railway line into Coloured and Black communities, which reflected the segregation and fear towards other races that were induced by apartheid. These two examples are linked in that they are both based on prejudiced ideas about Coloured and Black people and communities. Constandius et al. (2014) and Naudé (2011, 2012, 2015) amongst other South African studies reported students' initial anxiety when entering communities that are different to their own. As such, the initial fear may on the one hand be normalised as the students are essentially entering a new environment and are therefore not sure about what to expect of the CE experience. Yet, on the other hand, their initial fear may be related to deep-seated stereotypes or racial prejudice. It has been discussed before, but to reiterate again, the CE space exposed students to situations of difference where they had to contend with the dissonance of crossing contextual boundaries (Kiely, 2005), and contend with the dissonance caused by new information that are contrary to their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000).

On the other hand, George highlighted that within the university itself, more should be done to help students to engage with each other, and to cross contextual boundaries and to deal with the dissonance. His statement is reiterated:

> *…Too little is being done to create spaces where fellow South Africans engage meaningfully enough to co-create South Africa, and I think it's because of the way*

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we were socialized to think... Engaging meaningfully so that transformation can happen doesn't mean that now you stop being White or you stop being wealthy – it just means that you don't put that thing first, and it means that you acknowledge the privileges that go hand-in-hand. (George, SU staff member)

The human capabilities approach as discussed by Carolissen et al. (2010) may be a facilitative tool to help students engage with their own identity and beliefs about others in society.

Scrutinizing 'knowledge in the blood'. The current theme is linked to the previous one regarding racial prejudice. In this regard, both Abraham and George in two separate interviews referred to Jansen's (2009) book 'Knowledge in the Blood'. Essentially this title refers to the notion that the younger generations of White students that may not have lived during apartheid or were very young during that time, are still influenced by their forefathers to enact the apartheid created ways of thinking about other races. Abraham and George emphasized that for CE to be transformational, the students need to be guided in scrutinizing their 'knowledge in the blood'. This notion in turn, links with contending with dissonance caused by boundary crossing and information that are contrary to students' set frames of reference (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000). Scrutinizing their 'knowledge in the blood' may in essence not just help students to learn about other people, but also about themselves, their position in society and their role towards the greater good of society (Berman & Allen, 2012; Constandius et al., 2014).

Becoming unstuck through awareness. The idea of becoming unstuck was raised by George when he referred to South African students that are often stuck in particular ways of thinking along racial lines. This idea of 'stuckness' can be related to the social identity theory where individuals view themselves as part of a group, in addition to their individual identity (Bornman, 2010). The notion of becoming unstuck therefore relates to broadening of perspectives to recognize, affirm and acknowledge other ways of thinking, being and doing. In that regard, becoming unstuck

can also be linked with embracing diversity (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) and critical thinking or reflexivity (Montero, 2011).

Becoming unstuck may be a very challenging process for students. Especially white students may experience sadness and guilt because of the past or even resistance because of the fact that they were either too young or not yet born to have participated in apartheid (Constandius et al., 2014; Durrheim et al., 2011). Even so, it will require thinking about, scrutinizing and practising awareness of it as they figure out where those feelings come from and what it means to them, in order to move forward and address current social injustices (Jansen, 2009). On the other side of the coin, those that have been victimized may enter into internal conflict around taking personal responsibility for their future on one hand; and on the other hand contending with the reality of the social injustices in present-day South African society that need to be challenged.

Table 9 on the following page provides a summary of the psychosocial aspects that are related to student CE. This framework can be used when conceptualizing and managing projects, and preparing students and making provisions for supporting them through the process.

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Table 9   *Psychosocial Aspects Related to Student CE Experiences: A Multilevel Perspective*

Level of analysis	Psychosocial aspects that relate to student CE		Community psychology values
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	Cognitive aspects	Self-awareness; CE as personal engagement (investing of oneself); Awareness of attitudes and making mind-shifts; Experiencing internal conflict/ ambiguity; Psychological preparedness; Personal growth	*Values for personal well-being:* Self-determination; Caring and compassion; Personal health; Empowerment and power; Reflexivity
	Emotional aspects	Sense of enjoyment; Feeling appreciated; Sense of achievement; Feeling satisfied; Feeling purposeful; Feeling anxious; Experiencing and managing sadness; Sense of failure; Stress and emotional exhaustion; The psychological storm	
INTERPERSONAL LEVEL	Language and engagement	Differences in language ability limit communication; Language and forming connections; Language ability as a privileged position; Creating an enabling communication space	*Values for relational well-being:* Respect for diverse identities; Participation and collaboration; Psychological sense of community
	Age differences and developmental stages	Reimagining childhood; Addressing age appropriate topics; Being judged based on age; Same age as clients; Awareness of own developmental stage	
	Building relationships and managing connections	Relationships create a space for learning and growing; Students form special bonds with some project participants; Finding common ground; Relationship building requires authenticity and trust in the process	
	Practising facilitative skills in interpersonal settings	Interpersonal awareness; Managing the nature of conversations; Acknowledging possible biases; Affirming and acknowledging	
	Terminating engagement relationships	Terminating the relationship is laden with emotions; Preparing for termination; The psychological block	
	Finding closure	Succession plans in place; Perceptions of influence; Ambivalent closure	
UNIVERSITY LEVEL	The university's history with the community; Institutional commitment; Shifts in focus; Improving the university's image through CE; Capacity building and staff perspectives of CE; Staff members' self-awareness; CE as an integral part of the university; Growing emphasis on reflection. Programmatic challenges: Limited time for engagement; Mismatch between set programme and participant progress; Consistency and continuity		*Values for relational well-being* *Values for collective well-being:* Social capital; Social justice
COMMUNITY LEVEL	Valuing the human element; Practising awareness of challenging situations Challenges related to community context: Living conditions; Resistance from community participants; Getting to services; Safety in communities. Challenges related to community organization: Lack of communication; How participants are selected; Lack of structure in community organizations. Fault lines within communities; Responding to different expectations; Theory-practice divide		*Values for relational and collective well-being*
SOCIETAL LEVEL	Awareness of South Africa as a divided society; Facing racial prejudice; Scrutinizing 'knowledge in the blood'; Becoming unstuck through awareness		*Values for relational and collective well-being*

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, there is a need for a stronger focus on well-being before and throughout the engagement process. The diagram below (Figure 8) presents several considerations to take into account when developing care plans for enhanced student support and well-being.

Pre-engagement

- Acknowledge that CE is a holistic endeavour

- Create a non-threatening space for identifying and engaging with possible biases

- Explore the purpose, aims and expectations

- Clarify roles and limitations

- Become familiar with the environment and ease the 'fear of the unknown' (e.g. site visit or story telling among diverse student groups)

- Discuss safety concerns

During engagement

-Stronger focus on well-being during supervision (ethics of care)

- Individual and group critical reflection sessions (e.g. classroom based discussions, creative sessions, workshops)

- Identify and engage with sources of disorienting dilemmas and dissonance

- Take note of the cognitive and emotional responses to experiences

- Explore how do students respond to sensitive information shared

- Provide programmatic support (e.g. lecturers, other SU staff, residence leaders and community organization staff)

- Assist students with managing multiple roles and demands

Preparing for termination

- Consider termination as part of the CE process from the start

- Consolidation of learning, growth and challenges through processing

- Consider the effects on the individual's frames of reference and habits of mind

Closure

- Ensure that succession plans are in place

- Reflect on influence or impact of engagement on students and the participants

- Consider that how the process is terminated may influence further actions and commitments beyond CE

Figure 8. Care Plan Considerations: Guidelines for Psychological Preparation and Support for Students.

Chapter Summary

In the present chapter the findings of this study were discussed and anchored in current literature and theories. The chapter commenced by discussing the themes related to the individual level, which emphasized that CE is of a profoundly psychological nature and involves cognitive and emotional aspects. Thereafter, the findings on the interpersonal level pointed out that issues such as age, language and culture informs the engagement context, and that students need interpersonal skills to navigate through often challenging situations. Findings related to the university context revealed that history, the university's orientation and commitment to CE, amongst other programmatic elements form part of the engagement context, and may influence the engagement experiences for students even on the individual and interpersonal levels. The community and societal level aspects revealed that aspects that operate on seemingly independent levels from the university students forms part of the broader context in which engagement takes place. In light of these aspects discussed in this chapter, the interconnected nature of CE was displayed, as the aspects on any of the levels discussed, had the potential to influence the individuals involved in the engagement – in this case, the focus is on the students. Lastly, a summary of the main themes were provided, followed by care plan considerations, as guidelines towards developing a more supportive environment for students involved in CE. In the concluding chapter the main findings are reiterated while answering the research questions. Study limitations, conclusions and considerations for further research are also presented.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

'We still have a way to go, and as long as we continue being honest with

ourselves and honest about the challenges… and we create the space where we

can co-interrogate the challenges, we can navigate our way through.'

(George, SU staff member)

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings in relation to the research questions, implications and limitations of the study, as well as considerations for further research.

Study Aims and Research Questions

CE is set against an intricate background as described in depth in Chapters 1 and 2. It is against this dynamic background that this study foregrounded the psychosocial aspects that inform CE experiences of university students (including volunteers and service-learning) on different levels of analysis. Since the engagement does not take place in isolation from other role players, such as university staff members and community project representatives, a multilevel perspective was adopted. The study set out to answer six interconnected research questions that are presented below:

1   How do the participants describe the role of psychology in the context of CE?

2   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the individual level of analysis?

3   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the interpersonal level of analysis?

4   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the university context?

5   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the community context?

6   What are the psychosocial aspects related to the societal context?

Summary of the Findings According to the Research Questions

Each research question is answered below by providing the key findings that relate to the specific question. The findings highlighted here are based on the themes that are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 and that are discussed in relation to current literature in Chapter 7. The particular literature that the findings relate to is not repeated here again to avoid duplication.

Research question one. The participants' description of the role of psychology in CE was intricately linked to the different levels of analysis. Fundamentally, participants indicated that human interaction is the crux of both CE and psychology, as was shown in the first chapter heading where George indicated that *'I think community engagement is from the word go, psychological, because it involves people from different walks of life, engaging with each other to learn'*. The participants also viewed CE as having a psychological dimension in that it involves processes such as self-awareness, personal growth, cognitive and emotional effects, and had a discernible influence on their behaviour. Furthermore, CE involves social and group processes and learning in the context of relationships. Moreover, psychology is considered an important aspect on the societal level where Abraham noted that South African society has been wounded on multiple levels. Therefore, CE cannot be done in a very superficial manner.

Research question two. Findings on the individual level indicate that CE is of a profoundly personal nature. As such, the participants reflected on their intensely personal investment in the programmes and on being affected by their involvement in CE cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. This finding is in line with current literature that describes CE as involving cognitive, emotional and affective dimensions, and that the process is often transformative for participants involved. In the current study, the participants reflected on their enhanced personal growth and self-awareness, especially with regard to skills and abilities that they did not know they had.

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Furthermore, being exposed to unfamiliar settings, in other words, stepping out of their comfort zones, challenged the students in various ways. In turn, this helped them to contend with the unease or dissonance experienced with having to cross contextual boundaries. In this regard students also learned critical thinking in managing novel situations in order to resolve the challenges they faced. On the other hand, the participants pointed out that engaging with dissonance should not be taken as a given, but depends on the extent to which the students engage with their newfound awareness thereof.

An important finding that speaks to a currently small body of literature is the notion of psychological preparation and preparedness for the engagement, and the link to burnout and ethics of care. Whereas current literature describes training and orientation sessions for students, in this study the students emphasized a deeper form of preparation required before engagement due to the pervasive disparate contextual differences between themselves and engagement partners. Furthermore, the information shared in the engagement space is often of a sensitive nature. This particular need was presented by an engineering student and is therefore particularly important for students in faculties other than the human and social sciences who may need more structured preparation sessions based on their needs.

Additionally, the students in service-learning and volunteers emphasized a need for psychological support throughout the process. This finding was surprising in the context of service-learning modules, since reflection is usually part of the module structure. However, the students in service-learning modules, social work students in particular, mentioned that the focus of their supervision sessions is on reaching learning outcomes and managing clients and projects. Concerning the volunteers, however, some of them had to contend with their experiences on their own as no regular reflection sessions were available to them. This finding is imperative in light of the transformative processes that take place during CE, since the transformation can be positive in that students contend with dissonance, become aware of their identities and role in society. On the

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other hand, exposure to situations of contextual differences, especially of a racial nature, may serve to reinforce stereotypical thinking. Creating opportunities for student debriefing and reflexivity may be pivotal in attaining transformative outcomes at the individual level. Once again, the findings point to a need for greater focus on ethics of care and efforts to prevent burnout.

An innovative finding on the individual level is the phenomenon of the psychological storm. This refers to the sense of being overwhelmed due to the complex challenges related to CE. The elements that may lead up to the experience of a psychological storm include crossing contextual boundaries; managing multiple roles; experiencing cognitive and emotional effects; responding to multiple demands; not being adequately prepared for the engagement; and an unsupported environment. Upon consideration of the psychological storm, the link to burnout was illuminated – a concept widely studied in education, health care and other service and care professions – but not readily in CE.

Findings on the individual level also indicate a range of emotions and visceral effects experienced by the students. Prominent emotions include sense of enjoyment; feeling appreciated; sense of achievement; satisfaction; sense of purpose; anxiety; fearfulness; sadness; sense of failure; stress and emotional exhaustion. These emotions and visceral effects were in line with current literature on the topic and confirmed the notion that CE, and specifically boundary crossing, is profoundly emotional. The students also mentioned that their engagement in the projects invoked in them such passion for the work that they wanted to continue with it after the termination of the specific project. This finding is also in accordance with current literature that indicates that students were more likely to make commitments to further volunteering if they enjoyed their engagement and felt that they had support. Examples from the current study to highlight on the negative spectrum were that of Alegra, who became depressed because of the complexities that she had to deal with, and Heidi's description of secondary traumatization through working with cases of violence and abuse, and ensuing strategy of desensitization to help her deal with it. In that regard

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the students' well-being in the process of engagement is foregrounded, especially in light of the possible changes towards negative or positive affective experiences.

Research question three. Findings on the interpersonal level of analysis indicate that language is part of the students' skillsets or biographical baggage that they bring with them to the engagement setting. This finding relates to current literature on transformative learning. Language differences between the students and project participants invariably influenced the engagement experience positively or negatively. The students in this study found creative ways to deal with language divides such as asking the project participants to translate key words for the students to learn and practise at home. This activity was also perceived as beneficial for forming bonds.

Speaking the same language as the project participants was seen by some students as a privileged position. However, being the only student or one of few who understand the project participants' language was also found to be a burden sometimes as the one with the language ability had to take on more duties and act as interlocutor to both the student group and community participant group. This finding was in line with current literature.

In the same vein, a group of students contested whether the project participants should be compelled to speak English as a common language and as a language that they need to be able to become more conversant with in preparation for the context beyond school. In some cases, when given the opportunity to speak in their mother tongue, the project participants reverted to English.

Age also played a prominent role in the CE experience. First, since many projects are collaborations between the university and schools in the surrounding area, big age differences between the students and learners are common. For some students it was more challenging than for others to engage with younger learners. Age also was a factor in professional activities with the social work students relating that they felt judged based on their age. As such they were considered as too young to be advising older people, which in turn influenced whether they could work with the people assigned to them. Age also influenced engagement when the students and community

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participants were very close in age. In that regard, the students evaluated themselves against their project participants, which consequently made way for judgemental attitudes. Furthermore, due to the students' own age or developmental stage, they became aware of their own values, needs and tendencies as young adults.

The participants in this study reported acquiring similar skills as presented in current literature, such as group facilitation skills; developing patience and adaptability; respectful interactions; maintaining an approachable attitude; and time management. The findings also include other skills not commonly reported in current literature, such as: 'being present', which refers to mindfulness or being aware and deciding how to respond to a situation; managing the nature of conversations, especially with regard to sensitive topics; acknowledging possible bias; and affirming and acknowledging, which refers to giving positive feedback and recognition for someone's efforts, and to affirm him/her for persisting in the face of challenging circumstances.

Group spaces provided students opportunities for engaging with people socially and culturally different from themselves, and in that regard to grow personally as they deal with the differences, but also become aware of their similarities. In line with current literature, the students in this study formed bonds with a small number of project participants within big groups, and these bonds developed over time. In light of forming connections, students at times experienced uncertainty as to how much to share of themselves in the engagement relationship.

Similar to other processes in CE, the termination phase was also an emotional experience involving sadness, frustration, sense of achievement or sense of failure. This study emphasizes preparation for termination that is more than just an event on the last day. Preparation for termination is not often discussed in detail in the literature. Similarly, this study emphasizes the importance of preparing for termination as part of the entire engagement-closure process. It also foregrounds that termination may set the tone for the next engagement experience for the project participants and for the students.

Another important component of the CE experience that emerged from this study is the 'psychological block'. This refers to learners' openness or resistance to new students in a project, following the termination of a very strong bond with a previous student. In this regard, the project participant may resist engaging with new volunteers, since it feels like being disloyal to the previous student.

This study presents closure as a further step in the termination process. This is not addressed in the CE literature. Students' sense of closure was influenced by succession plans, their reflection on the impact that they had made, and their sense of satisfaction over their involvement in a bigger cause.

Research question four. Stellenbosch University, where this study was located, is well aligned with national policies on CE and has an institutional policy towards social impact. The university has an established unit with staff and financial resources dedicated to the task of CE. Training programmes in CE are available for staff and students. These aspects form important programmatic contextual elements, which in turn sets the stage for CE initiatives on the institutional level.

Due to SU's history with the surrounding communities, there may still be underlying dynamics that may influence the engagement. There should be awareness of this. Respectful engagement and collaborative approaches like power sharing and mutual decision making can assist in this regard.

Although several staff members are incorporating CE into modules and community-based research projects, there are still some members that are sceptical of the relevance of CE as part of the university's core business. Many of the engagement projects are said to be more geared towards ameliorative initiatives rather than transformative outcomes.

In line with current literature, this study emphasizes that the university's investment in CE does not come and should not come at the expense of quality teaching and learning, and research.

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Staff members' reflections are presented in this study, which speaks to a shortage in the South African literature. Most studies in CE are focused on service-learning students' experiences. Staff member reflexivity is imperative. Given their position of influence and power, they conceptualize and implement CE programmes, which in turn influence the students' experiences.

Research question five. The community context is an important component in CE. Students' observations of the communities where they mostly engaged were characterized by awareness of poverty; discrepancies between housing and public facilities in the same community; unemployment; lack of basic service provision and crime.

Issues of safety in communities are also discussed. The students' perception of crime in the communities influences their sense of safety during the engagement experience. Additionally, the findings indicate a need for more engagement and preparation regarding the safety concerns of students.

Socio-economic differences provided students with information to engage with, such as differences or similarities between their own houses, schools, parents' level of income and living environments and that of the project participants. In a similar vein, the students had opportunities to build relationships with people from different language, cultural and socio-economic circumstances.

The social work students reported instances of working with people who did not want to cooperate, which hampered the extent to which they could assist their clients.

Community project representatives in this study expressed appreciation for the investment of time and skills by the students in their projects or organizations, which is a noticeable shift from previous service-oriented initiatives and material contributions (handouts). This study therefore indicates the juxtaposition between two different sets of expectations from community partners that may inform the collaborative relationship. Additionally, the types of engagement with the organization and participants' needs influenced students' perception of whether their involvement

made a meaningful difference in the community. This finding links with the notion of ameliorative versus transformative initiatives.

Communication between the students and community project representatives is an important facilitative element in relationship building. Similarly, a lack of communication also influences the engagement, as reported in current literature. Furthermore, the manner in which project participants are selected and a lack of structure at some organizations also inform the engagement context.

Participants also became aware of fault lines within the community that they have to factor into their planning. Fault lines refer to hidden politics and disputes on who may speak on behalf of the community. In that regard, it is imperative to follow collaborative approaches when initiating and implementing projects.

Lastly, some students observed a theory-practice divide as some theories that had been developed in non-South African contexts, were found mismatched in this context. Considering that one of the goals of CE is to provide students a chance to apply theories in real world contexts, students experienced difficulties in having to meet university expectations to apply theories and finding that the theory and practice did not always fit.

Research question six. Even though it may seem unrelated, the broader South African context influences CE too. The mandate to incorporate CE as an integrated third core function of higher education in South Africa informs the macrosystem in which CE takes place.

The study provides findings on the divided nature of South African society, racial prejudice and how it may inform the engagement space even on the individual and interpersonal levels.

The study emphasizes that practising awareness helps to identify and engage with these dynamics as they arise. It also points out that students are guided in 'scrutinizing the knowledge in their blood', which refers to thinking about the privileges associated with race, gender, class and other social variables and adjusting beliefs that are set along these lines. Spaces for group reflection

and discussion of issues related to race are presented as tools or mechanisms to help both students and staff members to engage with issues of race, identity and social positions in society, in the context of past and current inequalities.

The final theme presents the idea of 'becoming unstuck through awareness'. This notion refers to a continuation of 'knowledge in the blood'. The process of becoming unstuck may be very challenging for the different role players involved as they contend with the dissonance of reconsidering and adapting deep-seated beliefs about themselves in relation to others.

Implications of the findings

As demonstrated in this study, CE is undergirded and informed by psychology, on the premise that people are engaging with other people, with the aim of learning and developing the self in relation to others and towards the greater good of society. This dissertation argues that in order to achieve the greater societal good, it is imperative to adequately prepare and consistently support the students who stand in this critical position between the university and its engagement with external organizations and communities. Moreover, students should be critically evaluating their work to ensure that transformative objectives are being pursued.

This study involved a multilevel approach, as such the implications can be considered at each of these levels.

Firstly, on the **individual and interpersonal level** the most pertinent consideration is to place greater emphasis on student well-being throughout the process of CE. This research has noted that more attention should be devoted to improving students' preparation and psychological support before commencing the CE and also through the CE process. This is particularly important in light of the psychological storm presented in this study, which refers to a set of contextual elements that are lacking and in turn may leave students feeling vulnerable and exposed to deal with the complexities alone. In this regard, it is imperative to provide protective factors that may prevent burnout, the sense of being overwhelmed. As such, each element of the psychological storm could

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be considered individually and structural and programmatic support should be provided. These include crossing contextual boundaries; managing multiple roles; managing cognitive and emotional effects; responding to multiple demands; not adequately prepared; and an unsupportive environment. Group-based and individual reflection can be applied with a stronger focus on scrutinizing their 'knowledge in the blood'; becoming unstuck as current frames of reference are being reconsidered and engaged with.

Elements in political ethics of care should be considered in developing support structures and processes for students and staff. These include: '*attentiveness'* (recognizing that care is necessary); '*responsibility'* (taking responsibility for and acting on an identified need); '*competence'* (ensuring that care work is completed and done well); '*responsiveness'* (being receptive to the way care is received); and '*trust'* (which can be considered a consolidating element for the rest) (Tronto, cited in Bozalek et al., 2014, p. 405 – 454).

Peer group support for students to strengthen their own social bonds can be considered and applied in various settings on campus. As such, more structured activities to debrief and reflect on regular basis could be provided.

On the **university level** more advocacy efforts could be considered to elicit support for CE in its various forms amongst staff, considering that some may still be sceptical of CE and its place within the university (as pointed out in this study). Furthermore, workshop opportunities could be considered to provide training and support for student volunteers with a focus on the psychological dimensions. Workshops can also be developed for non-social science students and volunteers to acquire more preparatory skills and information about the CE process and the settings where they will be involved. Interdepartmental links should be explored with regard to reflection and support processes. For example, honours and masters level students in psychology and social work could be recruited and trained to facilitate group sessions with students involved in CE across campus. This

would help in providing peer group support, and enhance inter-institutional engagement among the students, considering that the campus is becoming more culturally diverse.

The amount of time that students spend at projects should be reconsidered with the aim of minimizing disruptions due to student turn-over in projects, and to allow enough time for termination and succession planning.

Another consideration is to involve students from various campuses to share their experiences and practices of CE. This can enhance the relations between universities, student groupings, and community networks are advanced (as demonstrated by Carolissen et al., 2010).

On the **community level**, the community partners could be trained and assisted to fulfil the roles of working alongside students in the projects as assistants, interpreters and co-facilitators. In so doing they can help shift the focus from ameliorative initiatives to empowerment and transformation. In the same way, the power imbalances are addressed in that the strength of both parties become more visible when the students and community partners work together in close proximity. Drawing on the contact hypothesis, this more equal-levelled working arrangement may help in recognizing each other's strength and assist in diminishing stereotypes toward each other.

Implications of advancing CE on the **societal level** could involve drawing more strongly on the private sector and the media in building collaborative partnerships towards the mandate of advancing social impact. With the help of the media these engagement efforts can be publicized to enhance the 'good news' element in a divided society. In turn it may therefore help building towards social cohesion.

Limitations and strengths of the study

Any study has inherent limitations and strengths which are related to the research design and the adaptations that arise in the implementation of the study. A seminal limitation of this study is related to its qualitative design which favoured purposive non-random sampling. As a consequence,

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the findings of the study are limited in their generalizability as the sample was not representative of the entire student population that are involved in CE. Furthermore, there are many registered CE projects at the university that could potentially have been included but that were not because of the purposive sampling and following participants' recommendations regarding participant recruitment.

This research also did not include research-based CE. Even though the inclusion of research-based projects was considered, I decided to keep the study focused on the volunteer and service-learning options as these modes generally offered more interaction time over a long period in organizations, and had a better fit with the goals of CE.

Furthermore, the project participants (for example learners or adult service users in community-based programmes) were not included due to the decision to keep the study focused. While engaging with the literature though, it is clear that there is a lacuna regarding the project participants' experiences of CE. In that regard, including project participants may have widened the scope of this research and added to the literature on project participants' perspectives in CE. However, a considerable strength of this study is that the themes are explored in depth, which may have been compromised if too many categories of participants were added, considering the confines of this dissertation. Further research could potentially focus on exploring project participants' perspectives of CE. The research methodology used is a considerable strength of this study, as it involved multiple perspectives of role players in the CE process including student, staff member, and community stakeholder perspectives. A further strength was to combine service-learning and volunteer project leaders as their perspectives could be compared and gaps in current practice identified. A limitation in this regard is that only one of the six focus groups involved service-learning and volunteers in the same group. Further research could potentially combine these categories of students in the same groups to help illuminate the gaps in practice even more.

This study may make a contribution to improved research methodology by considering the following strengths observed during this study:

First, the grounded theory approach to the research and the involvement of multiple perspectives resulted in thick description of the context under study and findings grounded in the data. This allows readers to look for possible relations to similar settings and to become aware of how these influences may operate and exert influence.

Second, the use of focus groups yielded an unexpected advantage that illuminated a theme that may have remained unnoticed if interviews were conducted with students, or if reflective reports were used, as is mostly the case in the literature. The group setting provided a communal reflective space which informed a cathartic effect (as mentioned by Barbour, 2007). In that regard, some of the students could for the first time share their experiences with others who had similar experiences, whereas they usually contended with it by themselves. The participants could observe commonalities with other students related to their joys and challenges, demonstrating to them that they are not alone in this process that can sometimes become overwhelming.

The use of ATLAS.ti in this study to synchronize multiple sources and multiple categories of participants was advantageous. The software-assisted approach facilitated easy management of the data. Similarly, the software was useful in the grounded theory approach that was followed in that previous data could be retrieved easily and links could be drawn between participants and themes across the data set, which would be a mammoth task if done manually.

Additionally, by facilitating the sessions personally, I could ask for clarification at the point of data collection. Moreover, I could explore subtle nuances in what and how students conveyed their views and experiences during the sessions, which helped in analysing the data.

The research methodology applied in this study was therefore appropriate for the purpose of the study and it was an advantage to the participants as it assisted them in making sense of their experiences, albeit post hoc.

Considerations for Further Research

Consecutive studies could potentially explore the preparation and support procedures or structures that are currently practiced at higher education institutions. Additionally, research could be undertaken to track what kinds of support students may need over the course of the CE process. Based on that, training instruments could be developed to assist staff, especially those that are new to CE in its different facets. Similarly, these instruments could assist in training community project representatives who liaise with the staff and students regarding the needs and expectations of the organization as a learning site for students.

Furthermore, consecutive studies could explore what innovative and creative kinds of reflective practice may be helpful to students in service-learning programmes and volunteers in particular, considering the current shortage thereof.

A study exploring the community project participants' (for example the learners and social work clients) experiences would illuminate the CE context even more, in addition to what is done in this research. Implications thereof would in turn highlight strengths and weaknesses in how CE is conceptualized and practiced, something that is currently not visible due to repeated foci on students' experiences.

Recommendations for Policy

Considering the strong focus on well-being in this dissertation a recommendation is made for advancing ethics of care as part of policy on CE. As such, institution specific (context based) care plans and processes at institutions should be developed, and evaluated during internal and external monitoring and evaluation processes.

It is recommended that universities, with assistance from national government and the private sector, provide capacity by means of more staff in order to provide more time for student support (which indirectly implies monetary investment). Providing the kind of reflection spaces that the

research speaks of will be taxing on the staff members' already demanding schedules. It is therefore also recommended registered counsellors, teachers and other trained professionals that may currently be unemployed be appointed to facilitate psychoeducational and reflection sessions at universities and community-based organizations and schools where the engagement takes place.

Conclusion

This study provides a rich description of the psychosocial aspects related to the individual, interpersonal levels, and the university, community and societal contexts of CE. The findings indicate that CE is of a profoundly dynamic nature; the students, staff members and community project representatives invest considerable time and effort in their initiatives, and are affected by it in various ways. Practising awareness of these contextual influences may assist in developing respectful relationships between the university and communities, providing supportive learning and growing contexts for students as active citizens who are advancing the goal of CE towards the greater good of society.

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot · your knowledge partner

Approved with Stipulations
New Application

07-Aug-2012
Williams, Lorenza LL

Protocol #: HS847/2012
Title: Exploring how community psychological principles are operationalized in University-community interaction projects.

Dear Miss Lorenza Williams,

The New Application received on 17-Jul-2012, was reviewed by Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Committee Review procedures on 26-Jul-2012.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: 26-Jul-2012 -25-Jul-2013

Present Committee Members:
Theron, Carl CC
Somhlaba, Ncebazakho NZ
Viviers, Suzette S
Van Zyl, Gerhard G
Fouche, Magdalena MG
Van Wyk, Berte B
Hansen, Leonard LD
Horn, Lynette LM
De Villiers-Botha, Tanya T
Newmark, Rona R
Prozesky, Heidi HE
Beukes, Winston WA

The Stipulations of your ethics approval are as follows:
The researcher is thanked for the good quality application submitted.
The researcher is requested to submit copies of the relevant permission letters (including that of Dr Slamat and the SU Division of Institutional Research and Planning) to the Division of Research Development (Mr WA Beukes) as soon as they are available.

Standard provisions
1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your **protocol number** (HS847/2012) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

After Ethical Review:
Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required.
The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

Appendix B

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
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Approval Notice
New Application

15-Jul-2013
Williams, Lorenza LL

Proposal #: HS847/2012
Title: **Exploring how community psychological principles are operationalized in University-community interaction projects.**

Dear Miss Lorenza Williams,

Your New Application received on 17-Jul-2012, was reviewed by members of the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on 15-Jul-2013 and was approved.
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: 15-Jul-2013 -14-Jul-2014

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (HS847/2012) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218839027.

Included Documents:
Questionnaire
Admin Review
Letter of reponse
REC App
Permission letter
Consent Form
Permission letter -community
Research Proposal

Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Appendix C

UNIVERSITEIT · STELLENBOSCH · UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot · your knowledge partner

17 April 2013

Ms Lorenza Williams
Department of Psychology
Stellenbosch University

Dear Ms Williams

Concerning research project: *Exploring how community psychological principles are*
operationalized in university-community interaction projects

The researcher has institutional permission to proceed with this research project. The researcher
may solicit the participation of Stellenbosch University staff, students and other persons
associated with the University, who are role players in university-community interaction projects,
for the purpose of this study, as indicated in the research proposal. This permission is granted on
the following conditions:

- the researcher must obtain the participants' full informed consent,
- participation is voluntary,
- participants may withdraw their participation at any time, and without consequence,
- data must be collected in a way that ensures the anonymity of all participants,
- individuals may not be identified in the results of the study,
- data that is collected may only be used for the purpose of this study,
- data that is collected must be destroyed on completion of this study,
- the privacy of individuals must be respected and protected.

The researcher must act in accordance with Stellenbosch University's principles of research ethics
and scientific integrity as stipulated in the *Framework Policy for the Assurance and Promotion of*
Ethically Accountable Research at Stellenbosch University.

Best wishes,

Jan Botha
Senior Director: Institutional Research and Planning

Afdeling Institusionele Navorsing en Beplanning · Institutional Research and Planning Division
Privaatsak/Private Bag X1 · Stellenbosch · 7602 · Suid-Afrika/South Africa
Tel. +27 21 808 3967 · Faks/Fax +27 21 808 4533

Appendix D

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

20 August 2012

Dear Mr Beukes

Protocol #: HS847/2012

I wish to advise that Ms Lorenza Williams (student number 13833502) has my permission and support for any information and assistance she requires from the Division for Community Interaction for her PhD research "Exploring how community psychological principles are operationalized in university-community interaction projects".

Yours sincerely

Dr JA Slamat
Senior Director: Community Interaction

Afdeling vir Gemeenskapsinteraksie • Division for Community Interaction
Privaatsak/Private Bag X1 • 7602 Matieland • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
Tel +27 21 808 3639 • Faks/Fax: +27 21 808 2976 • E-pos/Email: jaslamat@sun.ac.za

Appendix E

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20150513-47795
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Lorenza Williams
22 Gardenia Street
Wellington
7655

Dear Ms Lorenza Williams

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING HOW COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPALS ARE OPERATIONALISED IN UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY INTERACTION PROJECTS

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:
1.   Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2.   Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3.   You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4.   Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5.   The Study is to be conducted from **02 May 2014 till 30 June 2014**
6.   No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7.   Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8.   A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9.   Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10.   A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11.   The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
        The Director: Research Services
        Western Cape Education Department
        Private Bag X9114
        CAPE TOWN
        8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 13 May 2015

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272   fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
www.westerncape.gov.za

Appendix F

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(PROJECT FACILITATORS – STUDENTS OR OTHER ADULT FACILITATORS)

Title: Exploring how community psychological principles are operationalized in university-community interaction projects

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Lorenza Williams, from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will be contributed to the writing of a dissertation to obtain a doctorate degree in Psychology. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because the particular community interaction project where you work or volunteer operates within a specific type of community interaction (Volunteerism/ Service Learning/ Research/ Integrated types) that the researcher seeks to study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the specific research project is to explore how social justice as a community psychological principle is being operationalised within selected community interaction projects at Stellenbosch University. This principle will be used as an umbrella principle under which various community psychology values will be incorporated. The secondary purpose is to bring the community psychological principles that may be underlying in the interaction between the university and partnering communities, to the forefront and in that way contribute to improved mutual understanding and mutually beneficial university-community relationships.

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PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to have a one-on-one interview with the researcher or participate in a focus group. We will be using an interview schedule in order to guide the discussion. The duration of the interview or focus group will be approximately 40 minutes to an hour and will be once-off unless further clarification or validation of data may be required. The interview can be done at your project site or any other private space that we will agree upon. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to help the researcher obtain accurate information.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts and inconveniences associated with this research. If however, any of these should occur it will be managed with the help of the research supervisor.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits for you as participant associated with participation in this study.

This study may however benefit your project as it will contribute to a better understanding of the community and your activities in the community. The broader society may also benefit as this study will contribute to a better understanding of the university-community relationship and thus contribute to mutually beneficial partnerships between community interaction projects and partnering communities. There are also potential scientific benefits as this study will contribute to the conceptualization of the university-community relationship from a community psychological perspective.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not be paid for your participation in this study, or for referring the researcher to other possible participants and contextual documentation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality with regards to the different projects will be maintained by means of giving aliases for the different projects (e.g. Project W; Project X; Project Y; Project Z) from the start of the study up to its completion and publication. Only the researcher and supervisor will be able to correctly identify the different projects. Confidentiality with regards to you as individual will be maintained by giving different numbers to refer to participants where only the researcher and supervisor will be able to identify the participants (e.g. Participant 1; Participant 2, Participant 3, etc.). The data will be kept on the researcher's private computer which is password secured. Copies of the data will be kept on a computer at the Psychology Department which is also password secured and only the administrator will have access.

With your permission, the interview or focus group will be audio recorded in order to help the researcher obtain accurate information. You have the right to review the recording if you wish to do so. The recording will be kept on the researcher's private computer and will be password secured. The researcher will also do transcribing personally and assign numbers to participants as to further protect the participant's identity.

The results of this study will be written up in a doctoral dissertation and will also be used for writing articles to scientific journals and related scientific conferences. In all publications the real names of projects and individual participants will not be revealed since aliases of projects and participant numbers will be used. Recordings will be erased from the Psychology Department's recording device as soon as the transcribing has been completed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator, under the guidance of the research supervisor, may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Lorenza Williams – PhD student, Principal Investigator

Cellphone:	073 186 4248
E-mail:	lorenzawilliams@sun.ac.za
Postal Address:	Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University
	Private Bag X1
	Matieland
	7602
Physical Address:	Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University
	C/O Ryneveld and Victoria Street, RW Wilcocks Building
	Stellenbosch
	7602

Prof AV (Tony) Naidoo – Research Supervisor

Office telephone:	021 808 3441
E-mail:	avnaidoo@sun.ac.za
Postal Address:	Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University
	Private Bag X1
	Matieland
	7602
Physical Address:	C/O Ryneveld and Victoria Street, RW Wilcocks Building
	Stellenbosch
	7602

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [me/the subject/the participant] by [name of relevant person] in [Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other] and [I am/the subject is/the participant is] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [me/him/her]. [I/the participant/the subject] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [my/his/her] satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant]* and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix G

Focus Group Guide: Student Project Leaders

Date: _____

Moderator introduces the research project and goes through consent forms. Participants sign consent form.

Focus group guide

1. Please introduce yourself by stating the following:
    a. Your name
    b. Residence or organization that you represent
    c. Where your project is located
    d. What is your project's target group and main activities

2. What has your experience been like as a student volunteer and/or project leader?
    a. In terms of managing/ coordinating the project
    b. Managing the volunteers
    c. Facilitating the community interaction (programmes with the participants)

3. Do you think that psychology plays a role in community interaction? If so, how would you describe that role?
    a. Think of the different phases of community interaction
        i. Preparing for the interaction
        ii. During the interaction
        iii. Terminating the relationship

4. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?

Lorenza Williams – PhD student in Sielkunde; e-pos: lorenzawilliams@sun.ac.za
Supervisor: Prof Tony Naidoo; e-pos: avnaidoo@sun.ac.za

Appendix H

Focus Group Guide: Service-Learning Students

Date: _____

Moderator introduces the research project and goes through consent forms. Participants sign consent form.

Focus group guide

1. Please introduce yourself by stating the following:

    a. Your name

    b. At which organization do you have your service-learning?

    c. In which community is it located?

    d. Who is your target group that you work with?

    e. What are the main activities that you are involved with?

2. What has your experience been like as a service-learning student, concerning community interaction/practical?

    a. In terms of managing and coordinating the project?

    b. Managing the relationship with the community partner

    c. Facilitating the community interaction (specific interaction with the adults or learners in your project)

3. Do you think that psychology plays a role in community interaction? If so, how would you describe that role?

    Think of the different phases of community interaction

    - Preparing for the interaction

    - During the interaction

    - Terminating the relationship

4. Is there anything else that you would like to add to our discussion?

Lorenza Williams – PhD student in Sielkunde; e-pos: lorenzawilliams@sun.ac.za

Supervisor: Prof Tony Naidoo; e-pos: avnaidoo@sun.ac.za

Appendix I

Onderhoudskedule: Gemeenskapsverteenwoordiger

Datum: _____

Verkorte onderwerp: Sielkundige aspekte in gemeenskapsinteraksie

Shortened title: Psychological aspects in community interaction

1   Sal u my vertel oor die projek waarby u betrokke is?

2   Sal u my vertel oor die verhouding tussen u projek en Stellenbosch Universiteit?

3   Hoe verstaan u die konsep/veld van sielkunde?

4   Vanuit u perspektief, dink u dat sielkunde 'n rol speel in gemeenskapsinteraksie? Indien wel, hoe sal u hierdie rol beskryf?

5   Wat is volgens u belangrike aspekte wat 'n rol speel in gemeenskapsinteraksie tussen die universiteit en die gemeenskap? Is hierdie aspekte voor die hand liggend (eksplisiet) of is dit onderliggend (implisiet)?

6   Wat sou u sê sou die voordele en nadele daarvan wees om sielkundige aspekte na vore te bring of in gedagte te hou tydens gemeenskapsinteraksie tussen die universiteit en gemeenskappe?

Baie dankie vir u deelname aan hierdie studie. Dit word hartlik waardeer.

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Appendix J

Onderhoudskedule: Stellenbosch Universiteit Personeellede

Datum: _____

Verkorte onderwerp: Sielkundige aspekte in gemeenskapsinteraksie

Shortened title: Psychological aspects in community interaction

1. Skets asseblief u indruk van die ontwikkeling van gemeenskapsinteraksie by Stellenbosch Universiteit: 'n terugblik op die verlede, hoe dit huidiglik is, en waarheen die universiteit beweeg.
2. Wat is u seining van die rol van sielkunde in gemeenskapsinteraksie?
3. Watter aspekte (verhoudingsaspekte of andersins) beskou u as die belangrikste in gemeenskapsinteraksie tussen die universiteit (studente en personeel) en vennootgemeenskappe?
4. Wat is u indruk van hoe die volgende aspekte in gemeenskapsinteraksie projekte toegepas of nagestreef word?
   a. Bemagtiging (om mense in staat te stel om hul lewensomstandighede te kan hanteer)
   b. Voorkoming (van siekte, geestesversteurings of negatiewe sosiale gedrag)
   c. Holistiese perspektief (beskou die person in konteks)
   d. Die bevordering en aanmoediging van gemeenskapsbesit/verantwoording
   e. Die bevordering van wederkerige besluitneming (universiteit en gemeenskapslede)
   f. Die bevordering van 'n gemeenskapsgevoel/samehorigheid
   g. Die bevordering van sosiale geregtigheid/sosiale verandering
   h. Menswaardigheid en respek vir diversiteit
   i. 'n Positiewe uitkyk – beklemtoning van vaardighede en bevoegdhede
   j. Medewerking tussen disciplines
5. Wat meen u sou die voordele en nadele daarvan wees om sielkundige aspekte in gedagte te hou tydens die gemeenskapsinteraksie projekte vir die volgende groepe:
   a. Studente
   b. Gemeenskapslede
   c. Die universiteit

Baie dankie vir u deelname aan hierdie studie

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