ENHANCING STUDENTS' PERSONAL RESOURCES THROUGH NARRATIVE

by

VALERIE JOAN RAPMUND

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY in the subject PSYCHOLOGY at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF C MOORE

AUGUST 2000
I declare that ENHANCING STUDENTS’ PERSONAL RESOURCES THROUGH NARRATIVE is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

V J RAPMUND

24 August 2000

DATE
ABSTRACT

The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP), formed a resourceful context for this study, which was action-oriented and experience-based. The aim of the SSEEP was to disseminate knowledge, and to create a domain for dialogue that facilitated connection with others and created spaces for the telling and sharing of stories.

The philosophy which informed this study was that individuals interpret their experiences and make sense thereof through narratives or stories, which are socially constructed through language. Qualitative research methods were used to interpret the data. Facilitators' and students' experiences in the SSEEP were recorded in field notes, and photographs and 'memory boxes', which were analysed using a hermeneutic method. Personal interviews with four students were analysed using narrative analysis.

The purpose of this study was to identify the processes, themes and meanings that contribute to the enhancement of students' personal resources. Facilitators and/or students co-constructed alternative stories to ones that thwarted their growth, or subjugated them, which led to the creation of new realities that individuals could 'perform', and to recreating themselves in new ways. They could not but be changed by the encounter, and moved from the anonymity of silence to the healing of affirmation through narrative. The promotion of healing, the provision of support or education, and improvement of self-understanding and personal efficacy, were goals that seemed to have been attained. It was also hoped that personal growth would bring life-enhancing contributions to other contexts as well, such as the students' personal, family and community contexts. The guidelines proposed in this study could be of value to those who wish to become involved at grassroots level in designing and implementing their own programmes in the tertiary-education context. They are particularly relevant within present day South Africa taking the diversity of the population into account.

Key Words: action-oriented and experience-based; domain for dialogue; narrative/stories; qualitative research methods; processes, themes and meanings; 'performing' new realities; facilitators; tertiary-education; diverse population, South African context.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My grateful thanks to:

Professor Cora Moore, my promoter, colleague, mentor and friend. Your sensitivity to where I was ‘at’, and words of wisdom, helped me to find a rhythm in writing this thesis which made my task so much easier and more enjoyable. Thank you for your affirming comments which were always such a source of encouragement and inspiration to me. It was truly an uplifting experience to work with you, Cora!

The co-facilitators of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme, Professor Cora Moore and Dr Teria Shantall. Thank you for sharing your lives with me. I feel the richer for your friendship and the experience of working with you both! Thank you also for the support when the going got tough, and for the many laughs and fun times we had together.

The students who attended the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme over the years, who enriched my life, and taught me so much.

The four students, Helen, Samuel, Mary-Jane and Celeste, whom I interviewed. Thank you for sharing so much of your lives with me. I feel truly humbled by the experience.

Professor Simon Maimela, and the Department of Psychology of the University of South Africa, for funding the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme in the various regional learning centres.

Quentin Moore, for taking the photographs.

Claudette Nöthnagel, for the technical guidance.

Paul Prinsloo, from Unisa’s Pietersburg Regional Centre, who assisted with the logistical arrangements for interviews in Pietersburg, and also in making contact with Mary-Jane so that she could validate the analysis of her interview.
James Kitching, for always being willing to provide the information that I needed from the library.

The University of South Africa for the Doctoral Exhibition awarded to me for my doctoral studies.

Louis, a husband in a million! You always believed in me and encouraged me, and tried to remove the stumbling blocks so that I could succeed. Thank you so much!

Grant and Andrew, my two sons, for being so proud of their mother!

My parents, Emma and Ivan Boughton, my sister, Pam Arthur, and her children Robbie and Kim, for their faith in me, and their interest and encouragement. Thank you my dearest Robbie for teaching me to ‘see’ the personal resources in each one of us, despite adversity. When I told the students your story at the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme, you could hear a pin drop - such was the impact thereof!

Julia Masemola for her companionship and support during my study leave.
Dedicated to the memory of my beloved Mother,

Emma Catherine Elizabeth Boughton,


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher’s Story of <em>The Wizard of Oz</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Story as an Analogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining the Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim and Rationale of this Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| 2 PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING THE STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME | 12 |
| Introduction | 12 |
| Contextualisation of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme Within Open and Distance Learning at the University of South Africa | 12 |
| Learner Support Strategies at Unisa | 15 |
| The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme | 17 |
| The Rationale of the Initial Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme | 18 |
| Invitation to Students who Failed | 18 |
| Presenters’ Thinking Based on a Deficit Model | 20 |
| Traditional Instructional Design Model | 21 |
| A Traditional Hierarchical Lecturer/Student Relationship | 22 |
| An Exclusionary Approach - Homogenous Group Composition | 23 |
| The Development of Cognitive Skills, Students’ Self-Esteem and Responsibility, and Exam Coping | 24 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page number</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Development of Cognitive Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Development of Students' Self-Esteem and Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Motivational or Inspirational Talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Hints on How to Cope with Exam Anxiety and a ‘Mock’ Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>The Rationale of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Invitation to All Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Presenters’ Thinking Evolved in the Direction of a Resource/competency/Strengths Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Students and Presenters as Equal Participants in the Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dancing in Tune with the Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Course Content - A Context for Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>An Inclusive Approach - The Richness of Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>A Holistic Approach to Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>3 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>A Pre-Programme Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Day 1: Facilitating A Domain for Discourse, Activating and Enhancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Students' Cognitive Resources, Contextualising the Monitoring Study Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>and Practising Memory Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Day 1 - First Session: Facilitating a Domain for Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Getting to Know One Another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Stating Objectives and Forming a Group Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Comments on the Initial Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Awakening Community Sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Day 1 - Session 2: Activating and Enhancing Students' Cognitive Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Comments on Session 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 1 - Session 3: Contextualising the MSM and Practising Memory Strategies ................................................. 48

Day 2: Discussion of the Personality Theories ................................................................. 49

Day 2 - First Session: Explanation of Freud’s, Erikson’s, and Jung’s Theories - Exercise Based on Freud’s and Erikson’s Theories ........................................... 50

Comments on the Exercise Based on Freud’s and Erikson’s Theories ............................... 51

Day 2 - Second Session: Exercise Based on Skinner’s Theory and the Social Cognitive Learning Approach ................................................................. 52

Comments on the Exercise Based on Skinner’s Theory and The Social Cognitive Learning Approach ......................................................... 53

Day 2 - Third Session: Explanation of Rogers’, Allport’s, Kelly’s and Frankl’s Theories ......................................................... 54

Exercise Based on Rogers’ Theory .................................................................................. 54

Comments on Rogers’ Exercise .................................................................................... 55

Exercise Based on Allport’s Theory ............................................................................. 55

Comments on Allport’s Exercise ................................................................................. 55

Initial Exercise Based on Kelly’s Theory ...................................................................... 56

Comments on Rumours ............................................................................................... 56

Change in the Exercise and Approach to Kelly’s Theory ............................................. 58

Comments on the Kelly Exercise ................................................................................ 58

Day 2 - Final Session: A Story Based on Frankl’s Theory ............................................ 59

Comments on the Story Based on Frankl’s Theory ...................................................... 59

Presenters’/Facilitators’ Reflections on Day 2 ............................................................ 59

Day 3: Discussion of Developmental Psychology ......................................................... 62

Day 3: Explanation of the Stages of Human Development ........................................... 62

Comments on the Way that the Stages of Human Development were Explained ................................. 62

Changes in the Way that Human Development was Presented .................................. 63

Day 3 - Exercise 1 .......................................................................................................... 63

Comments on Exercise 1 .............................................................................................. 64

Day 3 - Exercise 2 .......................................................................................................... 64

Comments on Exercise 2 .............................................................................................. 64
Day 3 - Exercise 3 .......................................................... 65
Comments on Exercise 3 .............................................. 65
Day 3 - Exercise 4 .......................................................... 66
Comments on Exercise 4 .............................................. 66
Day 3 - Exercise 5 .......................................................... 66
Comments on Exercise 5 .............................................. 67
Reflections on Day 3 ..................................................... 67
Day 4 ........................................................................... 68
Day 4 - Community Session .......................................... 68
Comments on the Community Exercise ......................... 69
Day 4 - Examination Session ........................................ 71
Comments on the Examination Session ......................... 71
Day 4 - Final Session ..................................................... 72
Presenters'/Facilitators' Reflections on their Role ............. 72
Sharing of Ideas Amongst the Presenters/Facilitators and the Supportive Nature Thereof ................................. 72
Modelling a Respectful Relationship ................................ 72
Maintaining a Balance Between Openness and Structure .... 73
Valuing Diverse Teaching Styles .................................... 73
Valuing Student Diversity ............................................. 74
Accommodating and Valuing the Diverse Voices of Students 74
Adopting an Inclusive Approach .................................... 75
Cultural Sensitivity of the Presenters/Facilitators .............. 75
Presenters'/Facilitators' Reflections on the Enhancement of Students'
Resources in the Programme ........................................ 75
Students as Active Participants in an Interactive Learning Context 75
Encouraging Students to Draw on their Own Experiences .... 76
The Purpose of Knowledge ............................................ 76
Shifts in Students' Perceptions and Behaviour .................. 76
Presenters'/Facilitators' Reflections on the Interactive Nature of the Programme 77
A Focus on Dialogue Rather than Text ............................ 77
Interaction Between the Presenters/Facilitators and Students 77
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Reversal between Presenters/Facilitators and Students</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing and Accommodating the Voices of Both Presenters/Facilitators and Students</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Understandings Among Presenters/Facilitators and Students</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Content as a Context for the Telling of Stories</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Reflections</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme -</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Narrative Context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme - A Context for Intervention</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 EMPOWERMENT VERSUS ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL RESOURCES</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Empowerment</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment Versus Enablement</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation Definition Versus Structural Change Definition</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the Powerlessness of Disadvantaged Communities</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Paradox of Empowerment</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Empowerment/Psychological Empowerment</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Choosing the Term Enhancing Above the Term Self-Empowerment</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 ENHANCING STUDENTS' PERSONAL RESOURCES THROUGH NARRATIVE</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating Narrative Within Postmodernism and Social Constructionism</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernism</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism, Social Constructionism and Narrative</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 THE RESEARCH METHOD .................................. 125

Introduction ............................................. 125
Rationale for Selecting an Interpretive Qualitative Approach .......................... 125
The Narrative Approach .................................. 127
Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research ........................................... 128
Qualities of a Satisfactory Narrative Account .............................................. 130
From Field of Experience to Field of Text ...................................................... 132
Field Notes ................................................... 133
Photographs and Memory Boxes ................................................................. 134
Research Interviews as Oral Conversations .................................................... 134
Sampling ....................................................... 136
A Note on Ethics ............................................. 137
From Field Texts to Research Texts .............................................................. 138
Data Analysis .................................................. 138
The Three-Part Nature of the Research and Analysis Process ....................... 139
Parts I and II: Inferring Processes and Themes in the SSEEP and Telling
Stories Around Artefacts ............................................................................ 140
Part III: Participants' Accounts of Their Experiences of the SSEEP ............... 142
Situated and General Accounts .................................................................... 145
The Role of the Researcher .......................................................................... 146
Conclusion ................................................................................................. 147
# RESULTS - PART 1

## PATTERNS AND THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Interconnectedness Among Presenters/Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Resources of the Presenters/Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Initiating Conversations - Getting the Ball Rolling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Presenters'/Facilitators’ Narrative Informs Students’ Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>The Nature of Groups and Their Effect on Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>Facilitating Change in Terms of Renegotiating Personal Boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Multi-Cultural Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>Theme of Tolerance versus Intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Theme of Distrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Gaining Grassroots Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 7 CONNECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Interconnectedness Among Presenters/Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Resources of the Presenters/Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Initiating Conversations - Getting the Ball Rolling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Presenters'/Facilitators’ Narrative Informs Students’ Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>The Nature of Groups and Their Effect on Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>Facilitating Change in Terms of Renegotiating Personal Boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Multi-Cultural Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>Theme of Tolerance versus Intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Theme of Distrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Gaining Grassroots Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 8 FACILITATING GROUP PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Strong Convictions of the Presenters/Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>Introducing Different Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>Structure and Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Accommodating Diversity and Homogeneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>Facilitating Groups of Different Sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Presenters/Facilitators as Role Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Dealing with the Unanticipated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Encouraging Through Positive Reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>An Outcomes-Based Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Technical and Logistical Support from Unisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9 UNLOCKING STUDENTS' CAPACITY

Introduction ................................................................. 179
Providing Knowledge About How to Use the Study Material .......... 179
Contextualising Exercises and Course Material .......................... 180
Committing Ideas to Paper ............................................... 181
Providing Thick Description ............................................. 181
Keeping it Simple versus Labouring the Point ......................... 182
Shift from an External to an Internal Locus of Control .............. 183
Realistic Self-Efficacy Perceptions ....................................... 184
Co-evolving Ideas ........................................................... 185
Learning from Personal Experiences ...................................... 185
The Need to be Part of the Whole Process .............................. 187
Authoritarian Narrative .................................................... 188
Conclusion ....................................................................... 190

SELF-REFLECTIONS - PART I .................................................. 191

RESULTS - PART 2
INTERPRETING PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORY BOXES .............. 192

10 STORIES, PROCESSES AND THEMES ................................. 193

Introduction ....................................................................... 193
Memories Stored in Photographs ............................................ 193
Photograph 1: Students Discussing Their Objectives for the SSEEP .... 193
Photograph 2 - Group work can be fun! .................................... 194
Photograph 3: Lining Up to Introduce Their Groups and Objectives to the Larger Group ....................................................... 195
Photograph 4: I can use a microphone! ..................................... 196
Photographs 5 and 6: Posters Stating Students' Objectives ........... 197
Photograph 7: Sharing Ideas Is Fun! ........................................ 199
14 CELESTE'S NARRATIVE: ESTABLISHING LEGITIMACY

Introduction ............................................. 255
Personal Information .................................. 255
Setting ................................................... 255
Structural Analysis of the Data ....................... 255
  The Meaning of the Programme for the Student .... 255
  The Meaning of the Interview for the Student .... 270
Analysing the Abstract Structure of Moves ........... 273
Thematic Coherence ..................................... 274
Reflections on the Relationship Between Respondent and Interviewer ... 275
Concluding Comments .................................. 275

15 NARRATIVE THEMES .................................... 277

Introduction ............................................. 277
Narrative as a Source of Information or Ideas ....... 277
Narrative as Connection or Alienation ............... 280
The Relationship Between Interviewer and Respondents ... 282
A Narrative of Responsibilities ........................ 284
Communication ......................................... 286
Narrative of Participation .............................. 289
Constructing an Identity ............................... 290
Change .................................................... 292
The South African Context ............................. 294
Issues of Control ....................................... 295
Personal Problems ...................................... 297
Focus on Strengths ..................................... 298
Conclusion ............................................... 299
SELF-REFLECTIONS: PART 3 .......................................................... 300

CONCLUSION ........................................................................... 301

16 ENHANCING STUDENTS’ PERSONAL RESOURCES: A GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS ......................................................... 302

Introduction ........................................................................... 302
Creating a Domain for Dialogue ........................................... 302
   Personal Involvement of Academics in Programmes ............ 302
   Technical and Logistical Support ...................................... 303
Inclusive Invitation ................................................................. 303
The Need for Students to be Part of the Whole Process .......... 304
Facilitating Connection in Small Groups ............................... 304
Participation ........................................................................... 306
Multi-Cultural Connection .................................................... 307
Theme of Tolerance versus Intolerance ................................. 308
Resources of the Facilitator ..................................................... 308
   Interconnectedness and Complementarity Amongst Presenters/Facilitators 308
Facilitators as Role Models ................................................... 309
The Role of the Facilitator in Facilitating Group Process ........ 310
   Facilitators’ Convictions ................................................... 310
   The Outcomes-Based Narrative ...................................... 311
   Encouraging the Telling of Stories and a Focus on Strengths .... 311
   Encouraging Through Positive Reinforcement .................. 313
Structure and Flexibility ......................................................... 313
Embracing Homogeneity and Diversity ................................. 314
Coping With the Unexpected .................................................. 315
Facilitating Groups of Differing Sizes .................................... 316
Benefit to Students ................................................................. 316
   Facilitator’s Role in Providing Students With a Framework for Learning 317
   Providing Knowledge About How to Use the Study Method .... 317
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextualising Exercises and Course Material</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committing Ideas to Paper</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Responsibility</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Communication</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Rich Description</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping Instructions Simple</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift from and External to an Internal Locus of Control</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic Self-Efficacy Perceptions</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Information or Ideas</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the Relationship Between Facilitators and Students for</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions of which Facilitators should be Cognisant</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Problems</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian Narrative</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The South African Context</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme of Distrust</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH       | 330         |
| Introduction                                                           | 330         |
| Strengths of the Study                                                 | 330         |
| Limitations of the Study                                               | 337         |
| Recommendations for Future Research                                    | 340         |
| General Conclusion                                                     | 341         |

REFERENCE LIST                                                            | 342         |
<p>| APPENDIX A                                                             | 358         |
| APPENDIX B                                                             | 364         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX F</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX G</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX H</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX J</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX K</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX L</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX M</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX N</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

This study begins with a story, the children's story of *The Wizard of Oz*, by L. Frank Baum. It is the researcher's account of this story. As is the nature of storytelling, the researcher, as narrator, does not tell the whole story, only those aspects of the story that are consistent with the aims, underlying approach and philosophy of this study (Marcia & Strayer, 1996). In the telling of this story, the researcher has also included some of her interpretations which have shaped the story in a certain way.

The Researcher's Story of *The Wizard of Oz*

In *The Wizard of Oz*, a little girl, called Dorothy, and her dog, Toto, are in their house when it is carried away by a cyclone to the magical Land of Oz. On her journey to find out how to get back to her home town and family, Dorothy meets and saves the Scarecrow, who complains of a lack of brains, but is the one who solves their problems, and the Tin Woodman, who believes he has no heart, and yet is kind and gentle. The little group also encounters the Lion, who tells how cowardly he is, and yet behaves bravely when an opportunity presents itself. The perceptions of the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Lion, colour their beliefs about themselves. This trio believed that they had specific needs and yet they demonstrated these behaviours even while they believed that they lacked these very behaviours!

They journey to see the Wizard, who was considered to be the greatest magician in the land of Oz, in order to find out how Dorothy can get back home, and to meet her friends' perceived needs. However, there are a number of forces that block her along the way, which she nonetheless overcomes in the course of her journey.

The Wizard is an enigma, and according to one man, "sits day after day in the great throne room of his palace, and even those who wait upon him do not see him face to
face” (Baum, 1984, p.64). However, when Dorothy and her friends meet the wizard face to face he reveals himself to be a fake and a charlatan.

Nonetheless, the Wizard’s words are able to unlock capacity and change the perceptions of the Scarecrow, the Lion, and the Tin Woodman, who then ‘perform’ new meaning in accordance with their new perceptions. After meeting the needs of Dorothy’s three friends, the Wizard remarks to himself:

> How can I help being a humbug ... when all these people make me do things that everybody knows can’t be done? It was easy to make the Scarecrow and the Lion and the Woodman happy, because they imagined I could do anything (Baum, 1984, p.123).

However, granting Dorothy’s wish is more of a problem! Oz’s plan to get Dorothy to her home town, Kansas, does not work, and it is up to Dorothy to find a way home - a journey that involves her friends, others along the way, and of course a bit of magic.

**The Story as an Analogy**

This story is an analogy of the processes that occurred in a programme, called the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP), which was offered to the University of South Africa’s (Unisa’s) second-year Psychology students, and forms the context of this study.

Students, like Dorothy and her friends, often encounter many difficulties, such as alienation, personal problems, poverty, poor education, and so on, in the journey of life. They too quite often fail to see the resources that have enabled them to cope thus far, despite these hindering factors and experiences.

Students at Unisa, which is a distance teaching, tertiary education institution, tend to have minimal contact with their lecturers who probably appear, like the Wizard, quite remote. Many students come to see their lecturers with the same awe and expectation that Dorothy and her friends had of the Wizard. They believe that their lecturers are
‘experts’, “the omnipotent wizard[s] that heal with the touch of the magic words” (London, Ruiz, Gargollo, & MC, 1998, p.65). However, when they meet their lecturers face to face they discover that they are in fact ordinary mortals just like themselves - experts in some areas of their lives but quite ordinary in other areas. Yet they still want their lecturers to weave their magic to pass them, which lecturers are quite incapable of doing, but which lies within the ambit of students’ own powers in interaction with the competence of their lecturers. Lecturers would indeed be fakes and charlatans if they behaved as if they had this power!

The lecturers’ role was facilitatory in the SSEEP as opposed to the Wizard’s role in the story, which was authoritarian. There was similarity, nonetheless, in that both students’ personal resources, as well as the personal resources of Dorothy’s three friends, were unlocked, or enhanced, in the interpersonal and dialogical encounter. However, the nature of the facilitators’ relationship to students differed from that of the Wizard to Dorothy and her friends, who did not have access to the decision-making process. The facilitators’ relationship with students was based on mutual respect, reciprocal sharing and shared responsibility. Students were given the opportunity to speak about their experiences which had often remained unarticulated, unrecognised, and unacknowledged, which lecturers and students could affirm. This enabled them to recognise their strengths and coping resources which were restored from invisibility. This focus on strengths, or personal resources, in a narrative context, reflects the underlying philosophy of the SSEEP, and the topic of this study.

**Explaining the Title**

The terms in the title of this study, *Enhancing Students’ Personal Resources through Narrative*, will now be explained. These terms capture the *action orientation* of this study, reflect the *interactional, dialogical process* that occurred, and imply the involvement of *mediators or facilitators*.

According to White (1995, p.13), “human beings are interpreting beings” and they make sense of their experiences through *narrative* or *stories*, which are socially constructed through *language* (Coale, 1994). The terms, 'narrative' and 'story' are used inter-
changeably in the literature (Dean, 1998; Rappaport, 1993; Sarbin, 1986). Narratives or stories function to "order experience, give coherence and meaning to events and provide a sense of history and of the future" (Rappaport, 1993, p.240). They explain people to themselves and to others. In addition, they also create identities and influence how people manage their lives (Dean, 1998). People tend to live by the stories they tell (Cobb, 1993; White, 1995). The good news is that because narratives or stories are constructed in language, they can be revised or transformed. Retelling stories that facilitate growth and change is the main focus of researchers following the narrative approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). For participants, the important issue is to foster an openness to an ongoing process of reconstruction that is able to accommodate new experiences (Marcia & Strayer, 1996).

The sharing of stories seems particularly helpful in creating new and 'healing' stories. In this study, it is through the dialogical encounter between facilitators, students, and between facilitators and students, that facilitators and/or students can be helped to reauthor their lives by drawing their attention to instances when their behaviour revealed their personal agency in coping with problems, and which, according to White and Epston (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.284), contradict "problem-saturated descriptions". ‘Blaming’ stories can be challenged and healing stories can replace subjugating stories (Dean, 1998). In the context of the SSEEP, the facilitators and students were engaged in the process of making meaning in conversation with one another (Dean, 1998; Florio-Ruane, 1997). This meant that facilitators and/or students could enter alternative stories to ones that blocked growth, or subjugated them, and to move from the anonymity of silence to the healing of affirmation through narrative. This could only occur in a context of caring, empathic and respectful conversations. The emphasis in this approach is on individuals “beginning to perform an alternate meaning, a new story” (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.87).

According to White (cited in Hart, 1995), in sharing stories, different ‘voices’ are able to enter the story-telling process and participate in the creation of meaning through an interactive process, which facilitates change as students are encouraged to ‘perform’ new meaning. It involves therefore, focussing on unique outcomes (or exceptions), preferred accounts, health, strengths, resources, “possibilities”, “visions”, “values”, 

“hopes” and “competencies”, in the stories that facilitators and/or participants tell, rather than focussing exclusively on deficits or problems (Saleeby, 1996, p.297). The aim is for the expertise of both facilitators and students to be “engaged to dissolve the problems” (Anderson, cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.287). The perspective referred to here is the **strengths perspective**, which implies a different way of viewing people to seeing them merely as powerless victims in their stories. Benard (cited in Saleeby, 1996, p.301) believes that the goal should be to “reconnect people to the health in themselves” first, and then to “direct them in ways to bring forth the health of others in their community”. This of course does not mean that existing realities are to be ignored (Baillie & Corrie, 1996; Speed, 1991). Realities, such as the academic political context, educational disadvantage, poverty, and so on, should be taken into account.

On another level, the written component of this study is also a narrative in that it tells stories in and by many voices. Narrative, therefore, also refers to the activity of the researcher who recounts her experiences, and those of the students who attended the SSEEP, informed by the ‘voices’ of the co-facilitators and students.

**Participants**

All second-year Psychology students at the University of South Africa were invited to attend the programme. The view was held that all students have developed resources in the course of their life experiences which could be used in the healing or growth of not only a particular individual, but in the healing or growth of other students as well. It seems that “[h]ealing is something that everyone needs”, and “is not only for the weak” (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991, p.33). Healing “is a process that is proactive as well as reactive. Everyone who experiences healing is better equipped to enter into new life challenges” (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991, p.33). Individuals can heal themselves as well as others, and they can also be “both a giver and a receiver of help, and the more that help is given and received the more the community is energized” (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991, p.33). It is for these reasons that all students were invited to attend the programme and to participate in the dialogue. The ripple effects of adopting an inclusive approach for the community of learners, appear to be far-reaching.
Aim and Rationale of this Study

This study was action-oriented and experience-based. It was not a static enterprise but was fluid, and evolved continuously with the ebb and flow of new ideas which informed it, and which it informed. It therefore began with experience which was thereafter linked to theory (Weedon, 1997).

This study was located in the SSEEP which created domains for the dissemination of information, as well as for the sharing of stories. Of importance for students from Unisa, who tend to feel excluded from such domains because of Unisa’s distance teaching nature, is the creation of a sense of connection or community between individuals, and spaces for the telling, sharing and co-evolving of new healing stories. Bearing in mind the academic context of the SSEEP, the challenge to facilitators was to assist students to master the second-year Psychology course and the skills required to pass, as well as to bring forth stories that had been silenced, or did not fit with the dominant narratives, which would have a bearing on their lives more generally.

The larger context of this study was located in the ‘new’ South Africa, the ‘rainbow’ nation, where many of the vestiges of the past still remain despite the dismantling of the formal structures of apartheid (Brook, 1997; Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998; Hickson & Kriegler, 1991; Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997; Kagee & Price, 1995; Klasen, 1997; May & Norton, 1997; Möller, 1998; Stadler, 1995). South Africans find themselves in a transitional phase. A gap still exists between the expectations and hopes of the previously disadvantaged, and their actual experiences.

Although all people are now free to interact socially with one another across the racial divide, and to be exposed to, and enriched, by the cross-fertilisation of ideas, this has not yet come to pass on a large scale. Creating growth-promoting contexts that facilitate contact, and where personal voices may be heard, and personal resources enhanced, will assist people to cope with the many new challenges that face them in diverse contexts, such as the personal, relational, and community contexts. In this study, the SSEEP, formed such a context.
The aim of this study was not, however, programme evaluation which refers to the assessment of “the efficacy of social programmes ... in human and social terms” (Potter, 1999, p. 210). The emphasis in this study was on the processes, themes and meanings that could be lifted out of the programme, rather than focussing on the programme per se. The goal was not therefore, to assess whether the programme had been successful. The aim was to identify the processes, themes and meanings that contribute to the enhancement of students’ personal resources and lead to the creation of new realities that individuals can ‘perform’. It was also hoped that personal growth would bring life-enhancing contributions to their personal, family, and community contexts. The SSEEP formed the context in which these processes and meanings occurred.

It is hoped that this study will make a valuable contribution in the domain of experience-based, narrative research. The suggestions are action-oriented and based on experience. They include a multiplicity of voices and engender an ongoing process of meaning construction that is never finalised. Reflection and self-reflection form part of this process. It is hoped that these suggestions will be of value to those who wish to ‘walk the talk’ in designing and implementing their own programmes in the tertiary-education context within present day South Africa taking the diversity of the population into account.

**Design of the Study**

Traditional research methods seemed too restrictive to capture the complexity inherent in experiences, which therefore seemed better served by a free-narrative approach (Callahan & Elliott, 1996).

Qualitative research, and in particular the narrative research approach, in which interpretation is used in its broadest sense to provide both an empathic, subjective account as well as a distanced perspective (Kelly, 1999b), seemed particularly suited to making meaning of experiences in the SSEEP.

The following sequence was followed in the execution of this study:
In Part I of this research, field notes, were made throughout the duration of the SSEEP in 1999.

In Part II of this research, a sample of photographs, thank you cards, letters, and written comments received from students attending the SSEEP, was collected.

In Part III, individual interviews, in the form of conversations, were held between the researcher and four students, four months after they had attended the programme in 1999. The aim was to discover the meaning that participation in the programme had for students in the different domains of their lives, such as the personal and the interpersonal, as well as what the interviews meant to them. Maximum variation sampling (Kelly, 1999a) was used. The researcher obtained the written consent of participants to tape record sessions and to use the information solely for the purposes of research. Four interviews were selected for analysis. These interviews tended to be representative of the student population that attended the SSEEP.

The researcher then moves from field texts to research texts, but first analysis has to take place. Hermeneutic analysis was selected as the method of data analysis for Parts I and II of this study, and narrative analysis for Part III.

In Part I, the field notes were used as the basis to extract themes relating to the processes that occurred during the SSEEP. The researcher, as one of the facilitators of the SSEEP and a participant in the process, therefore made sense of her experiences, informed by the 'voices' of the co-presenters and students, which she reported in narrative form.

In Part II, stories were constructed around the aforementioned mementoes, and thereafter themes were extracted therefrom.
In Part III, accounts that were derived from the analyses of the interview narratives of four students were discussed. Thereafter, themes that link the experiences of the four participants were discussed.

Finally, suggestions for facilitators who wish to implement a programme in their particular discipline, were offered. The guidelines were presented in the form of processes, themes and meanings, which have the potential to benefit students on a personal, relational and community level.

**Format of this Study**

This study comprises a description of the context of this study, a literature survey, and a practical component based on experience.

The format of this study is as follows:

In Chapter 2, the SSEEP is contextualised within open and distance learning at Unisa. The rationale of the initial SSEEP, as well as the rationale for the subsequent programmes are discussed. The reflections of the facilitator/researcher are also elucidated.

In Chapter 3 the different phases of the SSEEP, and the changes that evolved between 1996 and 1999, are discussed. In addition, this chapter includes comments and reflections by the researcher, who as a presenter/facilitator, was also part of the programme.

The term *empowerment* was used in the title of the SSEEP. However, the terms *enhancement of students' personal resources* were selected for the title of the thesis. In Chapter 4 the meanings of empowerment, the paradox of empowerment, the meanings of self-empowerment/psychological empowerment, and the implications for this study, are discussed. Finally, the rationale for giving preference to the terms *enhancement of students' personal resources* in the title of this thesis over the terms *self-empowerment and enrichment* are provided.
The narrative approach to therapy and groups was used in order to understand the processes that occurred in the SSEEP. The underlying assumption was that students' personal resources could be enhanced through the meaning that develops between people through conversation as they interact with one another in a warm and encouraging atmosphere. In Chapter 5, narrative is contextualised within postmodernism and social constructionism. This is followed by a discussion on constructing and re-constructing stories, the narrative approach in general, and the narrative approach to therapy and groups.

In Chapter 6, the rationale for selecting an interpretive, qualitative approach is discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the narrative research approach. The processes involved in moving from field experience to field text, and then from field text to research text are then outlined.

In Chapters 7, 8, and 9, various patterns and themes that emerged from field notes made in 1999, are discussed.

In Chapter 10, stories are constructed around memories 'stored' in photographs and 'memory boxes'. From the stories, processes and themes that emerged are discussed.

In Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14, the accounts that were derived from the analyses of the interview narratives of four students are discussed. Then in Chapter 15, the narrative themes that emerged from the discussions in the aforementioned chapters form the basis of the discussion.

In Chapter 16, suggestions for facilitators, based on the experiences of the facilitators of the SSEEP, and the students who attended, are provided.

In Chapter 17, the study is evaluated in terms of its strengths and limitations, and recommendations for future research are proposed.
Conclusion

In the South African literature, little attention has been paid to identifying the processes, themes and meanings that occur in programmes which have the potential to benefit students on personal, relational and community levels. Therefore this study, based on personal experience methods and the narrative approach, will attempt to address this shortcoming by offering suggestions for those who wish to develop and implement their own programmes.
CHAPTER 2

PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING THE STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

Introduction

In this chapter, the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme, which forms part of learner support in the Department of Psychology, will be contextualised within open and distance learning at the University of South Africa. The rationale of the initial Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme, as well as the rationale for the subsequent programmes will be discussed. The reflections of the facilitator/researcher will also be elucidated.

Contextualisation of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme

Within Open and Distance Learning at the University of South Africa

The University of South Africa (Unisa) is at present the largest open and distance teaching, tertiary institution in Africa. It has been described as South Africa’s "university without walls" (Richardson, Orkin & Pavlich, 1996, p.250). It caters for students who are unable to attend a residential university, or who prefer to study independently at their own time and pace. The main campus of the University of South Africa is located in Pretoria, South Africa. In addition, it also has five regional learning centres and eleven satellite learning centres in South Africa. It is committed to the following interrelated functions:

- **Tuition**: It provides opportunities for higher education, for all creeds and cultures in South Africa, the rest of Africa, and the world, with the aim of developing independent graduates who will make a meaningful contribution to their communities and to society in general. Tuition is provided through distance teaching, and students are assisted through an integrated support system.

- **Research**: It conducts and fosters research.
• **Community partnership:** It aims to serve the community, through building partnerships with communities, to address the needs and challenges of South African society, "through its expertise, teaching and research" (Unisa Tuition Policy, 1999, p.1).

The tuition function will be addressed in more detail. Firstly, distance education, the outcomes-based approach, and resource-based learning, will be described briefly, and then learner support will be discussed within the Unisa framework.

**Distance education** refers to a mode of learning and delivery. The process comprises the following central elements:

- Open learning, which refers to learning that is independent of the lecture room and rostered lectures (and which distinguishes it from teaching in a conventional residential university (Naidu, 1994)), allows students to set their own time and pace, and gives them open access to courses. It indicates "a shift in emphasis from the institutional lecturer or content-centred learning to a learner-centred and outcomes-based approach" (Unisa Tuition Policy, 1999, p.1), which is flexible and can be honed to suit individual needs and lifestyles.

- The design and development of learning material/experiences with educational content using various multi-mode delivery systems (technologies and student-support strategies) to effect interaction among teachers and learners (Unisa Tuition Policy, 1999).

- "Assisting students to become independent learners and to attain their educational goals" (Draft report on integrated learner support, 1997, p.6).

According to Thorpe (1995), one of the major challenges facing distance education is the effective teaching of a diverse range of students, who are at different levels, in a range of subject areas. Geidt (1996) also highlights the importance of establishing a fit between the social context of students and the delivery system. He believes that "[a] substantial degree of face-to-face interaction is pedagogically essential" for students, who were disadvantaged by the apartheid system, in the South African context (Geidt, 1996, p.19).
An outcomes-based approach refers to "a focus on skills development, on what learners can do with their knowledge" (Mason, 1999, p.137). It appears to embrace outcomes that are clearly articulated by a course team, and on the other hand, students' personal outcomes, which cannot be predicted. It seems that learning is facilitated when people become aware of these outcomes (Thorpe, 1993).

Distance education consists essentially of resource-based learning. Resource-based learning emphasises "the learning process, the experiences of the everyday world, and the empowerment of learners as engaged intellectuals" (Pence, 1992, p.121). It refers to empowering learners to make effective and meaningful use of information resources (Shelley, 1992). This would imply that a collaborative process needs to exist between lecturer and learner. The lecturer's role is to facilitate the learner's acquisition of information skills (Snider, 1992). It seems that a variety of resources is better able to meet the different needs of individual students (Meyer & Newton, 1992). It is also apparent that many aspects of resource-based learning, such as "choice, breadth of materials and new technology delivery" appeal to students and seem to support a range of learning styles (Macdonald & Mason, 1998, p.42).

Learner support can be described as "the entire range of methods and strategies employed in the presentation and delivery of courses which are aimed at assisting and enabling learners to comprehend fully, assimilate and master the skills and knowledge needed to achieve success in their studies" (Draft report on integrated learner support, 1997, p.11).

Learner support strategies have two distinct but interrelated functions. The first, is to address the problems of distance learners in general. The second, is to address the needs of students with other special learner needs, such as those caused by previous educational disadvantage. The first is addressed by the core study package and is included in the standard study fee, the second, by additional support strategies which are optional and are not covered by the standard study fee and have to be funded from some other source.
The concepts of "open learning, increased access to higher education and enhanced articulation between institutions of higher education, the goal of flexibility contained in the concept of resource-based teaching and learning, the emphasis on increased student support and the implications of novel proposals for state funding of higher education" (Draft report on integrated learner support, 1997 p.7), seem to be congruent with the Constitution of South Africa and the principles contained in various policy documents which pertain to higher education.

**Learner Support Strategies at Unisa**

The focus in this study is on learner support provided by the Department of Psychology at Unisa. This department makes use of the following **learner-support strategies** in its undergraduate courses:

- **Print-based strategies:**
  (a) *Strategies built into printed materials containing course content:*
  Students enrolled for Psychology courses at undergraduate level receive a core study package which consists of study guides that include self-assessment exercises and answers; various assignments to guide them through the course; tutorial letters containing general information, feedback on the assignments, and information on the examination; and in some cases video- and audiotapes.
  
  (b) *Separate support material additional to course content* includes generic study skills packages; separate course-related support material directed at addressing special learner needs in some courses; and separate access and introductory courses, including accredited courses.

- **Contact strategies:**
  (a) *Multi-media correspondence-based strategies* include comments on individual assignments, personal letters, and faxes.
  
  (b) *Face-to-face strategies* include personal contact with students who make appointments with lecturers, group visits and/or discussion classes which are held in the regional centres in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Pietersburg. In the Department of Psychology, group visits...
and/or discussion classes are not compulsory but are optional learner support mechanisms.

(c) **Subject tutor services:** In the Department of Psychology, tutor support services are not regarded as an integral part of the core study package, but "as an add-on optional component aimed at special learner needs" (Draft report on integrated learner support, 1997 p.37). Tutor support services provide a context for students to interact with one another and the subject-specific tutor, and help students to overcome the isolation of being a distance-teaching student. At present (1999), students are required to pay a fee for tutor support services.

(d) **Student counselling services** are offered at all regional/provincial centres of Unisa by the Bureau for Student Counselling. Part of their work is to assist students to solve problems that may be hampering their academic progress. These services will soon be available on the Internet. In addition, as part of the training of its student clinicians, a psychotherapeutic service is available at Unisa’s Centre for Applied Psychology, Department of Psychology, Pretoria.

(e) **Peer counsellors** assist first-time students at Unisa to adapt to distance teaching.

- **Technologically enhanced strategies**
  Technology underlies the delivery of materials containing course content as well as strategies aimed at direct contact between teacher and learner. Students may contact lecturers by telephone. *Computer-aided* delivery and contact strategies include the Internet, the SOL (Student online system), and delivery of course material through the Internet.

- **Environmental support strategies**
  These include *library facilities and services*, facilities to enhance the establishment of a *learning environment*, such as study space, and the *facilitation of self-study* through the formation of study groups.

The focus in this study is on the benefits of *face-to-face interaction* amongst students and between lecturers and students, who come from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and who have different life and educational experiences. A programme
called the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP) was
designed and developed for the second-year course of Psychology at Unisa and
facilitated a domain for discourse. This programme replaced the group visits and/or
discussion classes for second-year Psychology students. Group visits and/or discussion
classes still take place for Unisa’s third-year Psychology students, and for students
studying other courses at Unisa. The SSEEP appears to correspond with Unisa’s
functions and philosophy, and was contextualised within the distance learning
framework. It formed part of the tuition function.

The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme

The aims of the SSEEP seemed to correspond with three important aspects relevant to
learner support mentioned in the Draft report on integrated learner support (1997).
Firstly, the development and implementation of this programme highlighted the
importance of allowing a department the flexibility to use a strategy which fitted the
course content and learner needs at a particular level. This programme was aimed at all
second-year Psychology students and attempted to address not only the needs of
distance learners in general by facilitating a domain for discourse, but also the needs of
students with other special learner needs, such as “remedial and skills development
strategies” (Draft report on integrated learner support, 1997 p.43). Secondly, the
compact and intense nature of the programme which was initially presented over five
days but was later modified to a four-day programme, seemed more appropriate to a
distance teaching context where time pressure for students, many of whom are
employed, was an important factor. Thirdly, the aims of the SSEEP seemed to
correspond with the goal of distance education which is the development of independent
learners.

The programme formed part of the core study package and was optional. This meant
that students were not required to pay for this programme. In 1996, funding for the
programme initially came from a special fund. In subsequent years (1997 - 1999),
funding came from the funds earmarked for group visits. Funding however, remains an
ongoing problem.
This programme was aimed at both adult learners, and students of traditional university age. Some students of traditional university age were full-time students at Unisa, whereas others were employed. Some students were single whereas others were married, and in some cases, some were even parents. According to MacKinnon-Slaney (1994), adult learners differ from students of traditional university age, whose main task is to prepare for adulthood. Adult learners are "self-directed", "pragmatic", they "are already self-supporting, mature, and responsible, and lead lives as independent citizens with family and career responsibilities" (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994, p.268). However, some of these factors may also be applicable to students of traditional university age at Unisa. The vast majority of students who attended the programme seemed to be female and tended to fall into the category of the adult learner. They appeared to represent the different ethnic groups in South Africa. The diverse nature of the student population needed to be accommodated in the programme.

The Rationale of the Initial Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme

Students who failed Personology, and/or Developmental Psychology, which until the year 2000 will comprise the second-year course in Psychology at the Unisa, made their feelings of helplessness and hopelessness known to the lecturers at the end of 1993. In 1994, this prompted some of the lecturers involved in that course, to instigate a five-day programme in Pretoria, that would attempt to address the needs of students who failed. A context was initiated with the aim of providing more personal and intense contact with students to try and help them to become more competent students.

Invitation to Students who Failed

Students who had failed the course in 1993 were invited to attend the programme in Pretoria. It might be of interest to note that the programme was conducted just prior to the elections in April, 1994, which ushered in the first democratically-elected government representing all the peoples of South Africa. The majority of the students who attended the programme were Black African students. Although Unisa, as a distance teaching institution, provided open access to all people in South Africa, the
negative effects of the apartheid legacy and the inequality in educational opportunities, seemed to place Black students at an educational disadvantage, which could not be ignored.

This programme was initially instituted as a form of academic support and development with the aims of empowering and enriching students on the cognitive, affective and motivational levels. According to Richardson et al. (1996), academic support programmes are needed to assist students to overcome the problems of unequal educational opportunities. However, programmes “targeted on African students must be seen as a very short-term strategy in a nonracial South Africa for political as well as economic reasons” (Richardson et al., 1996, p.263). Nonetheless, this programme seemed to offer students hope (Polmear, 1993) and the chance to develop new ways of approaching their studies, perhaps correcting mistakes that they tended to repeat, which could possibly have hampered their success.

By extending the invitation only to students who had failed and not the body of second-year Psychology students, the dominant discourse of apartheid South Africa, in thinking about people in separatist terms, seemed to be unwittingly reinforced. Although the aim was to empower students who had failed, which reflected noble intentions, in looking back, it seemed to entrench divisiveness and ‘seeing’ people in divisive ways, which could in effect have been disempowering.

It also seemed to imply that students who failed needed special help, which of course appears to be true in one way, but in another seemed to place the onus of responsibility to change the status quo on the lecturers and seemed to exclude the role that students needed to play. Nonetheless, Vygotsky (cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997) firmly believes that social interaction, in this case amongst students, and between lecturers and students attending the programme, facilitates learning and cognitive development. According to Tudge (cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997), shared understandings may evolve when different views are introduced which seem to expand possibilities for change. Different views would need to come not only from the lecturers/presenters, but also from a diverse range of students. However, the views from only the students who had failed did not seem to reflect sufficient diversity to generate shared understandings.
and new levels of growth, but the views from the lecturers/presenters possibly accomplished this.

**Presenters' Thinking Based on a Deficit Model**

The thinking of the initiators of this programme seemed to be based on a deficit model (Albee, 1980). A deficit model seems to focus on structure rather than on process, the topic of concern tends to be problems, and the major independent variable seems to consist of structural dimensions (Becvar & Becvar, 1996), such as, for example, a lack of the correct studying methods in the context of students' failure in the second-year level of Psychology. This means that students who had failed were viewed as possibly lacking in a particular way, and that the lecturers/presenters, as 'experts' in their fields, would try and address this deficit, by providing students with what they were perceived to need.

MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) cautions against an emphasis on deficiency in the adult learning process. Such an emphasis could imply a certain way of 'seeing' which sees a deficit, as a 'reality', as if it has an objective existence, simply because the presenters defined it in that way (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). This way of 'seeing' can be linked to the ideas inherent in constructivism, which refers to the process by which reality is created by the observer. What is observed (in this case, the failure of students to pass the second-year level of Psychology) is given meaning by the observer (it is viewed by the lecturers as a deficit in the student) and it is in this way that we can say that reality is created (Jonassen, 1991; Von Foerster, 1981; Von Glasersfeld, 1988; Watzlawick, 1984).

In terms of constructivism, the stories of failure told by students also seemed to reflect their ways of viewing and making sense of their worlds. The way in which they perceived or made sense of their worlds, appeared to be informed by their social and cultural context. In the academic context, success is 'demanded' in order to be regarded as successful. This means that the students' perceptions and their experiences of failure were not coherent with the dominant discourse. Thus the effects of a dominant social reality influenced the creation of meaning (Held, 1990) of both the presenters and the
students. This is referred to as social constructionism\(^1\) which is the claim and viewpoint that the content of our consciousness, and the mode of relating we have to others, is taught by our culture and society: all the metaphysical qualities we take for granted are learned from others around us (Owen, 1992, p.386).

These ideas were pertinent in this context.

**Traditional Instructional Design Model**

‘Seeing’ a student in a certain way, also seemed to imply a certain way of ‘doing’. Although exercises were introduced to facilitate participation from students, the main thrust of the programme appeared to be in the direction of a traditional instructional design model as the mode of ‘doing’. In essence, a traditional instructional design model means that knowledge is transferred from an external agent, in this case the lecturers, to the learners, in this case the students. This model has been criticised by Duffy and Jonassen (cited in Vermunt, 1998, p.150) who state that

‘learning’ is not a passive, knowledge-consuming and externally directed process, but an active, constructive, and self-directed process in which the learner builds up internal knowledge representations that form a personal interpretation of his or her learning experiences. These representations constantly change on the basis of the meanings people attach to their experiences.

This model seems to be based on ideas from behaviouristic psychology, “where the learner was seen as being passively filled up with knowledge, by reacting to stimuli in the environment and building up particular sets of associations that informed all behaviour” (Weedon, 1997, p.41).

\(^1\)The term *social constructionism*, is a generic term, which should be differentiated from the term, *social constructivist/constructivism*, which is used in a more specific sense, namely, in the learning context.
An alternative model to the instructional design model seems to be the constructivist model, which places learning activities under the control of the learner (Vermunt, 1998). According to Mehan (cited in Au, 1998), knowledge construction is thus of a personal and subjective nature. A preferred model would be the social constructivist model, which focuses on the "social, intersubjective nature" of knowledge construction (Mehan, cited in Au, 1998, p.299) and seems to highlight what occurs between people in mediating learning.

However, the approach in this initial programme could also be seen as 'scaffolding' in which "the more knowledgeable person", in this case the lecturer, "assumes the responsibility of offering the learner support to facilitate learning" (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p.508), and as the learner acquires the requisite skills, the supportive scaffolding is slowly removed. This idea from Bruner (cited in Weedon, 1997) seems to be coherent with a social constructivist model. Weedon (1997, p.41) also believes that the potential of learners "can only be achieved initially through the intervention of another, more experienced, person guiding the learning process". However, it is important that there should be a shift in the relationship between learner and lecturer towards more learner independence otherwise 'scaffolding' would also not be ideal as all parties need to share the responsibility. According to Vygotsky (cited in Au, 1998, p.300), "the internalization of higher mental functions involve(s) the transfer from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological, that is, from socially supported to individually controlled performance". Therefore, depending how one looks at it, the approach could be described as either an instructional design model or a social constructivist model. However, it is believed that the philosophy behind the initial approach leaned more towards an instructional design model than a social constructivist model.

A Traditional Hierarchical Lecturer/Student Relationship

In this initial programme the lecturers/presenters seemed to assume the more active and supportive role, and the student the more passive role. This idea appeared to be further reinforced in the way students were seated in rows all facing the front where the lecturer stood. The traditional unequal distribution of power in the relationship between
lecturers/presenters and students thus seemed to be perpetuated. It seemed apparent that students were still accustomed to the lecturers/presenters assuming a position of more power than the students. As Freire and Faundez (1989, p.32) put it, “the great majority of students...are used to the teacher, the wise man, having the truth, hierarchically”. However, Driscoll (cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997) warns that power-sharing and shared understanding are necessary for the ZPD (i.e. each individual’s zone of proximal development or an area of potential learning in an individual) to function. As mentioned, this potential can only be developed initially through the intervention of a more experienced person to guide the learning process and to facilitate a learning environment that allows the learner to progress from the intermental (the interactions between teacher and learner, and between learners) to the intramental stage (the learning that takes place within the individual). It seems that if there is inequality in the relationship, co-construction of knowledge, which results from the sharing of ideas, may not occur and this could hamper learning. However, a beginning was made to introduce some group interaction during some of the exercises which introduced a different and new way of ‘doing’. Nonetheless, the emphasis appeared to be on the individual students’ reflections on their experiences, which they sometimes shared but did seem to reach a level where they co-evolved ideas to reach a ‘new’ level of understanding.

An Exclusionary Approach - Homogenous Group Composition

Only students who had failed were invited to attend the programme. This seemed to reflect an exclusionary rather than an inclusive approach. The group tended therefore to be homogenous in its composition and appeared to lack the richness that diversity introduces. It should be noted, however, that even though such a group may share many commonalities and be characterised by them, the group may still be composed of members who are individually very different (Wood, 1993).

Although there seem to be advantages to homogenous groups, such as sharing the same problem, thus providing strong ties and consensus on values or action, there also appear to be disadvantages, such as they tend to lack resources. In situations where change is
required, such as for example in this programme which required students to embrace a new approach to their studies and to see themselves differently, a dense, homogenous network tends to inhibit change. Heterogenous groups seem to be more suitable for promoting change (Robertson, 1988; Vaux, 1988).

Lan and Repman (1995, p.65) propose that sharing information is an important factor in learning as students not only learn from one another “but also motivate each other to respond constructively to failure and progressively to success”. Information needs to come from a rich variety of sources for this to happen, and it is doubtful whether this was possible in a group that seemed to share the negative identity of failure.

Nonetheless, these students who had failed seemed to feel that they really mattered to their lecturers. According to Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (cited in Amundson, 1993, p.146), “[m]attering” refers to the perceptions of people, “whether right or wrong, that they matter to someone else, that they are the object of someone else’s attention, and that others care about them and appreciate them”. It seems that the positive effects of mattering cannot be underestimated. It appears to meet people’s “basic needs for relationships and meaning in life” (Amundson, 1993, p.147).

The Development of Cognitive Skills, Students’ Self-Esteem and Responsibility, Motivation, and Exam Coping

In the initial programme, the focus was on developing cognitive skills and the programme was weighted heavily in this direction. A decision was therefore made to exclude a discussion of the course content, which in this case refers to explanations of the personality theories in the Personology course, and human development in the Developmental Psychology course, so as not to detract from the main aim. With the wisdom of hindsight, this decision did not seem to be a judicious one. It seemed at the time, more important for students to learn a new way of learning and they were introduced to the Monitoring Study Method (Van Ede, 1991;1993; 1995;1996), as a method to help them improve their memory in order to improve their academic achievement. However, according to MacKinnon-Slaney (1994), it should be remembered that study and learning skills are idiosyncratic, and are contextualised
within a specific discipline, such as Psychology, for example. This seems to highlight the importance of context. It seems that an explanation of the course content in the programme would have created a relevant context for learning and would possibly have been most beneficial to students. MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) also noted that students' prior learning experience could possibly also thwart the acquisition of new methods.

It was also felt that students needed to overcome affective and motivational deficits that result from failure, and exercises aimed at the improvement of their self-esteem, the setting of goals, the development of personal responsibility and self-awareness, and the replacement of expectations with intentions to counter passivity, were instigated. These exercises were designed to stimulate change.

A motivational or inspirational talk was also given to highlight the worth of students as dignified human beings, to focus their attentions on the 'fact' that they are not hapless victims of their circumstances but are able to exercise freedom of choice, and to direct their own lives.

Finally, in order to help students cope better with examinations, on the final day of the programme, students were given hints about how to cope with exam anxiety, and were required to write a ‘mock’ exam.

**Development of Cognitive Skills**

The focus on cognitive skills comprised quite a large theoretical component. The integrated metamemory model of Van Ede (1993) provided the theoretical framework for the explanation of metamemory. Van Ede (1996, p.161) maintains that before the Monitoring Study Method (MSM) is taught to students, it is important to first explain "the various aspects of metamemory and their role in information processing". This was explained to the students. The MSM, which is a practical application of the integrated metamemory model, consists of "forming a frame of reference, broadening the knowledge base in a systematic way, and revising, concentrating especially on information that is difficult to remember" (Van Ede, 1996, p.157). It is "a well-structured method that guides students to learn in an organized and systematic way".
In a study by Van Ede (1996), it was found that when students applied metamemory using the MSM, their memory performance improved. Merely telling students about metamemory and allowing them to use their own study methods seemed less effective. The students were taught this method and were encouraged to foster a questioning attitude and to use schematic representations (such as mindmaps) of the material that they learned.

Although the students were given exercises on how to apply the skills, the exclusion of the course content from the programme, did not seem to facilitate a relevant context for learning. And so instead of the exercises being firmly rooted in the course content, which would have been meaningful for students, they possibly lacked the potential to fully benefit students because they were decontextualised. This tended to leave students frustrated at not having their needs met. It seemed that they required explanations of the personality theories, and developmental stages to help them become successful as Psychology students. Nonetheless, the introduction of new information would have provided students with possibilities for learning in a new way.

Development of Students’ Self-Esteem and Responsibility

The exercises in this initial programme which aimed to develop self-esteem, to encourage students to set goals, develop personal responsibility and self-awareness, centred around the use of imagination and metaphor. Two of these exercises are explained below. The exercises are based on the work of Siccone and Canfield (1993), and are aimed at the development of student self-esteem and responsibility.

In the first exercise, students were asked to identify a highlight event that occurred during the last five years of their lives. They were requested to represent this highlight either by drawing a picture of it, or using a symbol to depict it, or even words to describe it. They then had to consider the role they played in this event. In small groups, each member was required to share his or her experience explaining the role he or she played in the event to make this event possible. The sharing of experience seems to enable students to learn from each other (Lan & Repman, 1995; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). The lecturer then asked each student to write down what he or she learnt from
this experience, thus making it personal. Volunteers were asked to share their experience with the audience. However, although the exercise had the potential to be exciting and to promote change, it seemed in retrospect, that it may have been too abstract for many of the students. Students did not always seem able to extrapolate from this more abstract situation to their present academic situation, the importance of the role they needed to play to ensure academic success. Nonetheless, the students appeared to enjoy participating and interacting in this way.

Other exercises involved the imaginary or metaphorical, but did not seem to fit the context of their real life situation. For example in order to develop self-awareness, and to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, students were told to imagine themselves walking down a passage towards a room that was exactly like the one they always wanted. They were told to imagine themselves in the present on their way to their future. They were also asked to focus on themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and to choose an animal which would best express themselves. On a sheet of paper they were to explain why they had chosen this particular animal and to write down at least five to ten strengths and at least five weaknesses that they recognised in this animal and identified with. Those who felt comfortable to do so shared their experience with their group members. The lecturers also participated in this exercise and shared with the students the reasons why they had chosen a particular animal that they felt best expressed their strengths and weaknesses. The students seemed to really enjoy the lecturers’ participation.

Although the exercises were devised to be personally challenging, students battled with the concept of identifying with an animal. The difficulty seemed to lie with the layers upon layers of abstractions. It seemed that the aims of personal empowerment and enrichment could be addressed within the relationship context that existed in the group, and through the conversations between students, and between student and presenters. It appeared that exercises could perhaps be better contextualised in terms of the course content, and meeting students where they were ‘at’.
The Motivational or Inspirational Talk

The motivational talk seemed to inspire many students. Possibly this was due to what the social cognitive learning theorists, especially Bandura, refer to as modeling (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997). Bandura contends that observers can be influenced by models who appear to have a high status in their eyes and with whom they can identify. Students who are presented with a lecturer who seems to model positive beliefs and attitudes, could decide to imitate the model by adopting these beliefs and attitudes.

However, other students seemed to find that the talk was too abstract to have any beneficial effect. Perhaps a more interactive and contextualised approach would have been more helpful to these students. According to Fingeret (cited in Knott, 1991), within the oral culture, which is the traditional culture in Africa, people tend to observe experienced adults in order to learn to do something specific. Therefore if Fingeret’s ideas had been incorporated into the talk, it might have possibly been of greater benefit to the majority of students who belonged to the Black African culture. Nonetheless, the motivational talk provided the students with ‘new’ information.

Hints on How to Cope with Exam Anxiety and a ‘Mock’ Exam

The previous day the students were given a portion of work in both Personology and Developmental Psychology to study, using the cognitive skills that they had been introduced to.

In the first session of their final day, students were given hints on how to cope with exam anxiety. They were informed of the different types of anxiety, and were told that a ‘normal’ level of reality anxiety is a necessary ingredient for examination success as it sharpens the senses, and gives them energy. They were then given an exercise which they carried out in which they put aside the ‘bad’ anxiety when they put their textbooks away, and retained the ‘good’ anxiety. The students seemed to benefit from the exercise.

In the second session, they were required to write a short examination in both papers which required paragraph-type answers. They also answered a few multiple-choice
items from both papers. The answers were discussed with the students and they were
given model answers. It seemed that many of the students felt that if they wrote
information that was correct, regardless of whether or not it was relevant to the
question, it should be marked as correct. It appeared as quite a shock to some of them
when they realised that it was information relevant to the question that was required.
From this point of view, this session was beneficial to them as they realised how ‘to the
point’ their answers were required to be, and realised, perhaps for the first time, why the
answers that they had written in the examination the previous year, were possibly
incorrect. However, the potential of this exercise to help students was possibly
minimised due to the exclusion of the course content from the rest of the programme.

**Reflections**

Although many criticisms may be levelled at this initial programme, it should be seen as
pioneering work and a humble start. The lecturers/presenters are to be acknowledged
for their courage to *do* something rather than nothing at all. This initial programme
should be viewed as occurring in the context of an ongoing and evolving process. The
intentions of the lecturers, who were also the presenters of the programme, arose out of
a genuine desire to be of help to their students. The attitude of the presenters seemed to
reflect the typical lecturer-student relationship at the time, and as such was congruent.
However, it is to the credit of the presenters of the programme that they tended to
remain open to new developments, and changing attitudes and circumstances, and
appeared to embrace into their thinking the paradigm shifts that the new South Africa
heralded. They seemed to demonstrate a willingness to enter into the unknown and
unpredictable. Their approach could be described as a form of action research. Action
research rests on the belief that knowledge is gained in action by reflecting on it, and
amending it for the purpose of more effective action (Reason, 1994). “Action research
tends to ally itself with organizational authority and to introduce problem solving
strategies in a top-down manner” (Yeich & Levine, 1992, pp.1898-1899). It also
attempts “to appease all sides and to not threaten the interests of the powerful” (Yeich
& Levine, 1992, p.1899). These ideas seemed to apply to the approach of the
programme at that point in time.
The Rationale of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme
Since 1996

The programme was not presented in 1995. The presenters were thus given the opportunity to reflect on the programme and to make changes which were incorporated into a revised version that commenced in 1996. The programme stretched over five days and was offered in five of the major centres (Durban, Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Pietersburg) in South Africa. The following year, the programme was further streamlined to fit into four days. In 1998, Port Elizabeth was included to accommodate students from the outlying areas in the Eastern Cape and, and in 1999, East London rather than Port Elizabeth was included in order to reach more students in that area and to meet students’ requests for this change. The decision was made to offer it in the different regional learning centres to improve access, and to reduce travel and accommodation costs to students.

Invitation to All Students

There seemed to be evidence of a shift in the attitude of the presenters. Instead of limiting the invitation to attend the programme to students who had failed, an open invitation was extended to all students. The programme was no longer geared only towards students who had failed but all students enrolled for the second-year course in Psychology were invited to participate in the programme. The programme replaced the traditional group visits offered as part of the core study package to second-year Psychology students.

This shift in the attitude of the presenters seemed to imply that students were also perceived differently. Each student seemed to bring his or her particular ideas, stories, personal and interpersonal skills, into the context. The presenters/facilitators needed to work with what the students contributed. These ideas, stories, personal and interpersonal skills could be engaged for further growth, and to facilitate students’ own healing, and the healing and growth of others.
The presenters/facilitators embraced the idea that students, like people in general, are engaged in the process of living and learning. This meant that their role as students, as participators in the programme, was part of the process of living and learning in their lives, which is a lifelong process.

It also appears to mean that no one is in the position to say that he or she has reached a point where no more learning or growth can take place. The implication thereof seemed to mean that even if a student did not fare well academically in the Unisa context, it did not mean that the student was deficient in all areas of his or her life. This student also brought his or her ideas, stories, personal and interpersonal skills into the programme context. The student’s ‘failure’ in this regard would need to be seen in the context of the student’s whole life. Also students who seemed successful in the Unisa academic context, were maybe in need in other areas of their lives.

The significance of this change in attitude seemed to mean that all students could probably benefit by attending the programme as all people’s resources could be used in the healing or growth of not only a particular individual, but in the healing or growth of other students as well. Thus a view of seeing some students as only deficient, which seems to perpetuate divisiveness and is antithetical to the aims of this programme, seemed to be avoided.

The ideas here seem to be supported by Rappaport and Simkins (1991, p.33), who believe that the term “healing” should be considered as “something that everyone needs” and should not be limited only “to the repair of past hurts for weak people”. They refer to healing as “a process that is proactive as well as reactive. Everyone who experiences healing is better equipped to enter into new life challenges” (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991, p.33). This also seems to carry the assumption that people can be “both a giver and a receiver of help, and the more that help is given and received the more the community is energized” (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991, p.33). It seems that people have the personal resources to participate in their own healing and the healing of others. It is for this reason that all students were invited to attend the programme and to participate in the dialogue. The ripple effects of adopting an inclusive approach for the community of learners, appear to be far-reaching.
This of course did not mean that existing realities were ignored. These realities might include not only educational disadvantage, but disadvantage in other areas as well. Speaking of existing realities means that one seems to have entered the debate of objectivity versus subjectivity. In other words, do these realities (of disadvantage) referred to, have an objective existence or are they simply subjective interpretations? Speed (1991), refers to co-constructivism, which acknowledges that a structured reality does seem to exist but recognises that people tend to highlight different aspects of it according to their ideas or meanings about it, and the ideas and meanings of their social and cultural context, which becomes their ‘reality’. Speed (1991, p.407), says “just because reality is filtered through our perceptions does not mean it does not exist and does not reflect those perceptions”.

Rather than focus exclusively on the healing and empowerment of the individual as proposed in the aforementioned, White and Potgieter (1996, p.83), maintain that if psychology is to be relevant in the ‘new’ South Africa, psychological interventions “must go hand in hand with clear political interventions or actual community empowerment”. The strengths perspective of this study, on the other hand, in agreement with Benard, aims to

reconnect people to the health in themselves and then direct them in ways to bring forth the health of others in their community. The result is a change in people and communities which builds up from within rather than [being] imposed from without” (cited in Saleeby, 1996, p.301).

Freire and Faudez (1989) share a similar opinion, in believing that by individuals gaining power in everyday activities, they bring about a transformed society where power will belong to everyone. This perspective seems to reflect the aims of this study.

**Students and Presenters as Equal Participants in the Process**

The strengths perspective also seemed to imply that the presenters had to ‘do’ things differently. The presenters were also learners in the process, and seemed to evidence a
more humble approach. According to Freire and Faundez (1989, p.33), it is important for teachers, or lecturers in this case,

to realize that as they teach they are also learning. First, because they are teaching, in other words, the actual process of teaching teaches them to teach. Secondly, they learn with those they teach, not simply because they have to prepare themselves for teaching, but also because they revise their knowledge in the quest for knowledge the students engage in.

No longer were students to be regarded as passive recipients of knowledge as the 'mug and jug' approach implied, but they now seemed to be regarded as equal participants in the process. Equal participation entails power-sharing and mutual understanding which refers to intersubjectivity, and seems important if learning is to take place. A view, which seems to be more coherent with the idea of more equal participation between students and presenters, is referred to as social constructivism. Social constructivism emphasises the social, intersubjective nature of knowledge construction. Driscoll says:

It is not enough ...for the partners to simply work together or for one partner to dominate and demonstrate solutions to the other. They must co-construct the solution to a problem or share in joint decision-making about the activities to be coordinated in solving the problem (cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p.508).

Therefore it seems that the previous power inequities were reduced. Even the seating arrangements changed. Students no longer sat in rows facing the front. They now sat in groups of about eight to ten students, depending on the group’s overall size. This seemed to encourage interaction amongst the students and also between the students and the presenters. There also seemed to be a shift towards greater participation from the students.

However, it seemed that students have become so used to the 'mug and jug' approach, that initially they appeared to feel uncomfortable to be seated in a circle, and it seemed that some students still preferred to remain passive and to allow the presenters to
maintain their traditional 'teaching' role. Freire and Faundez (1989) concur that the majority of students still seem to want the teacher to function in the traditional sense - as the one who has all the knowledge, which he or she imparts to the student, and therefore what he or she says must be true. This idea seems to be confirmed by a study using focus groups conducted by the Bureau for University Teaching at Unisa in 1998. This study found that Unisa students still seemed to prefer study material produced in the traditional style. Perhaps this reluctance to change could be seen to be the result of students' familiarity with "a hierarchical culture of authoritarianism" which characterised many South African schools during the apartheid era (Mason, 1999, p.141).

Dancing in Tune with the Process

It seemed that because students were now more equal participants in the process, the presenters needed to listen to the voices of their students. Students were given the opportunity to dialogue and communicate their expectations and needs in a context facilitating dialogue and the sharing of ideas. Because of the lessons learnt from the previous programme, the presenters' ideas were informed by the students' ideas, and the programme was structured accordingly, but the presenters remained open to accommodate expectations that they perhaps had not anticipated. Therefore, although the programme seemed well-structured and appeared to flow well, the process remained open and evolved continuously. This required the presenters to be open and sensitive to what was happening in each programme and the particular context that they participated in. The context and process of each programme seemed to differ in the different centres. The presenters/facilitators did not go in with preconceived ideas but seemed to be continuously involved in moving in tune with the process, which required flexibility and adaptability on their part. It seems that the presenters had to be prepared to move into the uncertain zone, and remain open to the processes that were occurring, without trying to force them into a direction which suited the presenters. This idea seems to be coherent with the constructivist view that challenges the existence of a stable and predictable reality, and replaces it with a measure of uncertainty. According to Fuks (1998), it is impossible to predict that behaviour will go in a certain direction. Maturana and Varela (cited in Leyland,1988, p.360) believed that any change in a system will be
determined by its own organisation and structure, and not by the "properties of the disturbing agent".

Course Content - A Context for Dialogue

One of the expectations of students was their need for course content to be included in the programme. It seemed that the students needed explanations of the personality theories in the Personology course, and the stages of human development in the Developmental Psychology course, in order to assist them to become more successful as students. It had become clear to the presenters that a decontextualised programme did not seem to work and that course content needed to be included. According to Dewey and Bruner (cited in Cordova & Lepper, 1996), the decontextualisation of instruction was identified as an explanation for a decline in intrinsic motivation for learning. It seems that course content provides the context for dialogue, thus enabling students to express their needs. It tends to anchor the discussions, and provides a framework for theoretical application in real life situations.

Fingeret (cited in Knott, 1991), also referred to the importance of learning through personal experience in a specific context in an oral subculture. This seems to be of particular significance for Black African students at Unisa who are traditionally rooted in an oral subculture (Magona, 1995), and would appear to be particularly relevant to many of the students who attended the programme. It seems that facilitating such a context would assist them to become competent learners in the broadest sense.

An Inclusive Approach - The Richness of Diversity

The richness that diversity, in terms of belonging to different ethnic, gender, or age groups; having different life and personal experience; different language proficiency; or functioning on diverse academic levels; and so on, brings into a situation seems to benefit most students. Instead of being limited by only one type of group composition, a diverse group composition seems to open up the possibilities for growth as has already been alluded to previously.
In referring to the benefits of large support networks over small networks, Vaux (1988) believes that a large support network seems to offer the following advantages: **accessibility** (there will always be someone available to provide support), **stamina** (it will be less vulnerable to exhaustion from chronic demands), **expertise** (it is likely to contain a member with specific expertise), **information** (it is likely to be a rich source of information), and **perspective** (it is more likely to offer greater perspectives on a problem or issue). However, many of these advantages depend more on diversity than on size per se (Vaux, 1990). These findings appear to be particularly pertinent to this programme.

According to Pai (cited in Knott, 1991), diversity also implies the need to respect cultural differences. This seems to be based on an underlying belief in the intrinsic worth of all people as dignified human beings. Pai (cited in Knott, 1991) cautioned against framing cultural diversity negatively and viewing it as a deficit. It appears to be important for educators to accept that people from diverse cultures may deal in different ways with the same things. It seems that if educators are able to embrace this idea, then a diversity of solutions becomes possible, which is potentially enriching. This also enables educators to appreciate the strengths of each culture. As Knott (1991, p.15) puts it: “The literature talks of managing diversity but a more positive stance would be to value and support diversity”.

Unfortunately, what often seems to transpire when students, especially those from a ‘disadvantaged’ culture, enter a university, for example, which reflects a particular ‘dominant’ Western, academic culture, they are expected to conform to the dominant discourse and in a way ‘give up’ their culture. In this programme, many of the students represented the previously disadvantaged group. However, the interactive nature of the programme and the conversations that took place throughout, seemed particularly coherent with their oral culture, and seemed to take cultural diversity into account.

Nonetheless, Wood (1993) cautions against an emphasis on diversity, and proposes that the tension between commonality and diversity should be embraced. This also seems to be what Pai (cited in Knott, 1991) is saying. Thus it seems that both commonality (of
being students together and humans), as well as diversity (in terms of differences among students) were taken into account in the programme.

**A Holistic Approach to Students**

Instead of focussing on areas of perceived academic deficit only, the needs of the whole student were addressed, that is, their needs were addressed on a personal, interpersonal, and community level. The exercises were contextualised within the course content, and their own personal, interpersonal and community contexts were brought into the situation in the dialogue. The phases of the programme will be discussed in the following chapter.

**Reflections**

The philosophy underlying the programme evolved over the years. The movement seemed to occur in the shifts from:

- an invitation only to students who failed, to an invitation to all students;
- the thinking of the presenters' based on a deficit model to the way the presenters' thinking evolved in the direction of a resource/competence/strengths model;
- an instructional design model to a social constructivist model which emphasises process;
- a traditional hierarchical lecturer/student relationship to the equal participation of students and presenters;
- an exclusionary approach and a homogenous group composition to an inclusive approach embracing both diversity and commonality;
- a programme devoid of providing explanations of the course content to utilising the course content as a context for dialogue; and
- a more cognitively weighted approach to a more holistic approach.
The effects of the aforementioned changes were the following:

• All students, as opposed to only those who failed, were invited to attend the programme, which seemed to ensure diversity and richness in many of the groups in the different centres. Diversity seemed to foster creativity in the students which was greatly appreciated by the lecturers as presenters/facilitators of the process, and added to the richness of the experiences of both students and presenters alike.

• 'Seeing' students in a completely different and more optimistic way influenced the way that the presenters/facilitators interacted with the students. The effects of this were evident in the way that students responded positively to the presenters'/facilitators' affirmation of them as people of infinite human worth. It also affected the facilitators positively.

• The equal partnership between facilitators and students imparted a sense of respect. Students were given a 'voice' in the programme. This was especially beneficial to those students who had been disadvantaged and silenced during the apartheid years.

• The needs of the student as a whole were addressed in addition to particular needs, such as the need for an explanation of the course content. This also benefited students on different levels and in different contexts.

• The facilitators seemed to become more flexible in their approach, open to the processes, and willing to live with uncertainty.
CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT
AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

Introduction

In this chapter the different phases of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP), and the changes that evolved between 1996 and 1999 will be discussed. In addition, this chapter will include comments and reflections by the researcher, who as a presenter/facilitator, was also part of the programme.

All students registered for the second-year level of Psychology received an invitation to attend the programme in a general tutorial letter. (See Appendix A.) The following phases of the programme can be identified and will be discussed.

A Pre-Programme Phase

Students were required to register for the programme, although at every regional centre where the programme was held, there were always those students who registered but did not attend, and always those who attended but had not registered. Students up until 1998 were required to fill in and send back a questionnaire relating to their personal details and their approach to their studies (Student-at-a-Desk-Test). (See Appendix B.) However, a questionnaire relating only to their personal details formed part of the registration prerequisites in 1999 and was included in the general tutorial letter. (See Appendix A.)
Day 1
Facilitating a Domain for Discourse,
Activating and Enhancing Students’ Cognitive Resources,
Contextualising the Monitoring Study Method and Practising Memory Strategies

Day 1 - First Session: Facilitating a Domain for Dialogue

Getting to Know One Another

When students arrived at the venue at one of the regional learning centres in South Africa to attend the programme, they completed a pre-test. The pre-test from 1996 to 1997 comprised a number of questionnaires relating to locus of control, self-efficacy perceptions, and students’ general orientation to life (Purpose in Life Test). (See Appendix C.) In 1998, in addition to those already mentioned, open-ended questions were included regarding their perceptions of their personal and interpersonal skills, personal influence, and self-efficacy in different contexts. (See Appendix D.) In 1999, students were only required to complete one questionnaire on skills assessment. (See Appendix E.) Although students were informed that they should register between 8:00am and 8:30am, and that the programme would commence at 8:30am, many students seemed to arrive any time between 8:00am and 9:00am, which could possibly have been due to problems that especially the Black students experience in having to rely on taxi transport. Completing the pre-test therefore seemed to have the advantage of giving those who arrived early something to do, and in this way seemed to prevent boredom and frustration.

The programme usually began at about 8:45am with a brief welcome address by the one presenter/facilitator. However, in 1997, one of the students who had attended the programme in Pretoria the previous year, decided on her own initiative to come to the opening session, to make this brief welcome address herself. She motivated students to become involved in their communities in the way that she had done, which she seemed to have experienced as personally rewarding.
All the presenters then introduced themselves in a personal way to the students. In 1996 and 1997, four presenters were involved, but in 1998 and 1999, the number of presenters was reduced to three, due to financial constraints. The personal introduction seemed to set the tone for the programme and ‘defined’ it as an interpersonal encounter, which differed from the formal hierarchical relationship that traditionally characterised the lecturer/student relationship.

The students then formed themselves into smaller groups of about eight to ten students. Initially, the presenters/facilitators encouraged cross-cultural participation in the groups. Possibly as a result of the euphoria of the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, students in 1996 seemed keen to mix with students across the cultural and racial divide. However, students in successive years appeared less keen to mix with one another. The presenters/facilitators believed that it would be in the best interests of students rather to give them the choice to form a group with those with whom they felt comfortable. Some students elected to form a group with their friends, or with students of the same sex or race as themselves, whereas others were comfortable joining a multicultural or mixed gender group.

In their groups, they were asked to introduce themselves in a personal way to one another, in much the same way as the presenters/facilitators had introduced themselves to the students. The aim was to encourage students to get to know one another and to form relationships with one another. A context or setting for dialogue was thus facilitated by the formation of the participants into groups. Students stayed in these groups for the duration of the programme.

The total number of students who attended the programme in any one of the regional centres, could range from approximately 50 to about 450 students. It seemed that one of the advantages of forming the students into groups, and thus imposing some sort of order, was, therefore, to model to students how to approach the unmanageable, in this case the mass of students who arrived at a particular venue. It seemed to have the effect of making the experience less personally threatening to students.
Stating Objectives and Forming a Group Identity

Once the students had introduced themselves to one another in their groups, they were asked to discuss their objectives for the week, in other words what they expected from the programme, which they wrote down on a large sheet of paper. The fun and creative part of the exercise seemed to be in naming their group and providing reasons for the name that they gave to their group. Each group nominated a representative and each representative was given a chance to introduce the group to the body of students, explain why they had chosen their name, and to state their objectives.

This exercise seemed to provide the impetus for the programme and was characterised by easy interaction between students and presenters. In addition, students were interacting with one another, which in the traditional lecture setting, did not often seem to occur.

This exercise began with what the students themselves seemed to want. They were given the chance to articulate their expectations - their ideas of what they expected out of the five-day programme (later streamlined to a four-day programme). Most of the expectations seemed to centre around the following needs:

- The need for cognitive skills which includes effective study methods, improved memory skills, and guidelines on how to study with understanding.
- The need to gain an overview of the course in order to make the course more manageable and comprehensible. This would include an explanation of the various personality theories which comprise the Personology course, and an explanation of the Developmental Psychology course.
- Guidance for the examination.
- Personal enrichment (including a desire 'to get to know themselves', tips on how to stay motivated, and ideas on how to develop confidence).
- Interaction with other students and the lecturers, and the sharing of ideas.
- How to apply what they have learnt in their everyday lives for their own personal upliftment and the upliftment of their communities.
• How to manage their time between their studies, and their personal and social lives.
• Indications of the employment opportunities that would be open to them with Psychology as a major.
• The requirements needed to become a Clinical, Counselling, or Educational Psychologist.

Other more general concerns can be illustrated in the following examples. In 1998, the Cape Town students’ ‘voiced’ their anxiety regarding the workload and what was expected of them with respect to the second-year Psychology course. The Pretoria students, on the other hand, ‘voiced’ their desire to know what to do with the knowledge, and how to apply it in community contexts. These examples also seem to illustrate how diverse the groups were in the different regional centres.

Therefore, instead of what occurred in the initial programme in 1994 where the lecturers/presenters informed the students of what they could expect based on the lecturers’ perceptions of their needs, in this programme it was the students who informed the presenters/facilitators of their expectations. This exercise seemed to give them a sense of ownership of the process as they felt that their needs, and expectations were taken into account in the initial session of the programme. It seemed that they felt that their needs or expectations were being listened to and were directing the contents and nature of the programme. This seemed to occur despite the fact that the invitation to the programme contained details of the structure and aims of the programme which were nonetheless based on what the presenters had learnt from the frustrations that students experienced in the initial programme in 1994. It seemed evident that the presenters/facilitators had listened to what it was that students wanted. Therefore, the fit between the students’ expectations and the contents of the programme that the presenters/facilitators structured, was not entirely unexpected.

The exercise seemed to introduce a fun element in having to choose a name and many groups were quite innovative in their choice of name. They chose names such as Knowledge Seekers, the Rainbow Group, the Optimists, the Neonates, D.I.F.Y. (an acronym for Do It For Yourself), Sisize Sonke (which translated from the Zulu means
'help us all'), the Panic Mechanics, U.P. (an acronym for Understanding People), Simunye (which translated from the Zulu means 'we are one'), Bafana Bafana (the name of the South African national soccer team, which translated from the Zulu means 'our boys'), STUDY (an acronym for Success, Tolerance, Unity, Determination, and Youth), Ba Dira Mmogo (which translated from the Sotho means 'people working together'), and so on. One of the groups was called Phenyo which translated from Sotho means 'winner'. The reasons that they gave for choosing this name were the following: they are willing to learn so that they can be winners, winning seems to draw attention, it reminds them of their past and how the 'struggle' made them winners, and winning will give them self-confidence. Another group called their group the Melting jigsaw. They said that they gave their group this name because "we want to melt and fit together to the benefit of all."

The opportunity to use a microphone and introduce the group, give the group's name, the reasons for the name, and the group objectives, to the student body, seemed to be a novel experience for many. After the initial feeling of reserve, students appeared to really enjoy using the microphone. It seemed that this was their chance to be someone, to feel really important, and the students appeared to rise to the occasion. However, although the group spokesperson was asked to mention only those objectives that had not been referred to by previous group spokespersons, they did not always seem to do this, and it therefore became necessary in the larger centres, such as Pretoria and Durban, to ask group representatives to mention only one group objective, as the process at times tended to become bogged down by repetition. By doing this, it was felt that respect for the other group representatives, who were waiting for their chance to present, was demonstrated.

Comments on the Initial Session

Right from the initial session of the programme, a more equal relationship was established between presenters/facilitators and students in the exercises. Respect for one another as human beings thus seemed to set the tone for interaction between presenters/facilitators and students, and between students. Pai (cited in Knott, 1991) contends that respect is shown to people as a result of one's belief in the intrinsic worth
of people. Dialogue and the sharing of ideas was therefore encouraged in order to enable people to connect with one another. A further advantage of the interactional tone was that students were given a voice, and it appeared that they felt that they were being listened to, and were also active in guiding the process. This seemed to be an empowering experience.

The experience of working in small groups and sharing ideas was quite an uncommon experience for many students, but they soon ‘warmed’ to the idea. It seemed that being part of a small group tended to be less threatening than being one of a large group of ‘faceless’ students.

**Awakening Community Sensitivity**

In 1996, after students stated their group objectives, the presenters/facilitators informed students that one of the functions of Unisa is to serve the community in order to address the needs and challenges of South African society. Students were informed that the Department of Psychology was also involved in community outreach and encouraged students to become involved in their communities. This section enjoyed minimal importance at the time and yet seemed to make an impact on some of the students who later became involved in their communities. In 1997 more prominence was granted to this section of the programme and the community session was moved to the final day of the programme. More will be said about this session later on.

**Day 1 - Session 2: Activating and Enhancing Students’ Cognitive Resources**

In the following sessions, students were introduced to the Monitoring Study Method (Van Ede, 1991; 1996) and they practised memory strategies (Van Ede, 1995; Van Ede, Miltiadous & Kilpert, 1996). (The Monitoring Study Method was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.) In 1994, 1996 and 1997, “the various aspects of metamemory and their role in information processing” (Van Ede, 1996, p.161) were explained to the students before the Monitoring Study Method (MSM) was taught to them. However, the presenters/facilitators felt that if they wanted to maintain the impetus created in the first session in the subsequent session dealing with the Monitoring Study Method, they
would need to change their approach. It seemed to the presenters/facilitators that when they tended to speak to the students in monologue, it stifled dialogue which was created in the first session.

In 1998, in order to facilitate dialogue, information from the students was elicited regarding the study methods that seemed to work for them. The presenter/facilitator then expanded on some of their ideas, and established links to the theory. Students thus seemed to move from the "'Particular' (Experience) to generalising ('Theory'), and then, later on to a new experience, to test theory" which "is a testimony to the facilitative importance of the tutor/learner relationship" (Weedon, 1997, p.41). The presenter's/facilitator's role had thus changed in the direction of a facilitative rather than an instructional role, and dialogue was encouraged. Students were encouraged to foster a questioning attitude and to use schematic representations (such as mindmaps) of the material that they learned in this session.

Some students, who were themselves teachers, reflected on and shared how they taught study methods to their learners. Other students discussed their fears, and some of the ineffective methods they still seemed to maintain. These discussions thus introduced many different ideas into the session. When the presenter/facilitator highlighted the different ideas that different students contributed to the discussion, students began to appreciate how different ideas from diverse sources could enlighten them. The students seemed to feel challenged by the discussion and this tended to lead to dialogue and the co-evolution of ideas in a new direction. These ideas seem similar to the findings in a study by Nyikos and Hashimoto (1997, p.516), who found that learning through social interaction and the way that language mediates these processes, has "the potential to promote co-construction of knowledge and to arrive at an elevated, but mutual understanding of the topic".

**Comments on Session 2**

This session seemed to benefit many students. The input of those students who already seemed to have acquired effective study methods had them confirmed, and in addition, their input appeared to be a valuable source of information for other students. Students
whose study methods seemed less effective were able to recognise and dialogue about what they were doing that was perhaps hampering their progress. New information was introduced into the thinking of students which seemed to allow them to see things differently and to behave in a different way. According to Nyikos and Hashimoto (1997, p.507),

within the ZPD (i.e., each individual’s zone of potential learning) more capable students can provide peers with new information and ways of thinking so that all parties can create new means of understanding. This mutually beneficial social process can also lead more experienced students to discover missing information, gain new insights through interactions, and develop a qualitatively different way of understanding.

The meaning system which underlies behaviour (in this case, students’ study methods) seemed to change through ‘languaging’ about it (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). It seems that in dialoguing about the problem, the problem is externalised and can be examined in a more objective way than when it remains unarticulated within. Epston and White (1992, p.12) refer to Van Gennep’s “rite of passage” analogy as a metaphor for the process of therapy. In this case it can also be used as a metaphor to describe the process of enabling students to discard their ideas that tend to hamper their academic mastery and to incorporate new ideas into their thinking. The analogy refers to a process that seems to facilitate transitions, consisting of the stages of separation in which the person externalises the problem and the person is ‘dislodged’ from the familiar notions about the problem that seem to keep him or her stuck. This seems to initiate the experience of what Van Gennep terms, liminality (Epston & White, 1992, p.12), where new possibilities can be explored or alternative knowledge can be awakened or generated, and the final stage of reincorporation which tends to bring forth new possibilities.

**Day 1 - Session 3: Contextualising the MSM and Practising Memory Strategies**

The Monitoring Study Method (MSM) (Van Ede, 1991) was put into practise within the framework of the Developmental Psychology course and the Personology course in the final session of Day 1. Students were required to identify key words in the
Developmental Psychology textbook and to draw mindmaps to represent certain sections of the work. The Personology textbook was used to illustrate how students could look at the *title of a book* to establish what information they could expect to find in the book. The table of contents of a book indicated to students the different *chapter headings*, and what information they could expect. The students were then told to look at the *subheadings* in each chapter in the book. In this way, students *established a frame of reference* of the prescribed book, which became more manageable to students. Instead of trying to remember separate bits of information, they became better equipped to remember information in a more organised way.

The remainder of the day was spent practising the memory strategies with examples taken from the Personology and Developmental Psychology courses. Memory strategies that were practised include rhymes, acronyms, and imagery to help students to remember complex information. Students seemed to find this session practically useful in remembering information that was anchored in the course content despite the fact that the discussions of these two courses had not yet taken place. However, presenters/facilitators continually referred students back to these strategies during the discussion of the personality theories and themes of human development in subsequent sessions.

**Day 2**

**Discussion of the Personality Theories**

The second day of the programme was devoted to the explanation of the various theories prescribed for the Personology course. Initially far too little time was given to this section of the programme, but after the presentation of the first programme in Durban in 1996, the schedule was rearranged and a whole day was devoted to this task in the subsequent programmes, which from the feedback received, appeared to have been far more beneficial to students.

Two presenters alternated in their presentation of the theories, indicating how the theories fitted into the various classification systems, and how the classification systems and theories differed from one another.
Students were also required to participate in group exercises. They were shown the picture of a parachutist jumping from an aeroplane (See Appendix F.), and they were asked to explain this person's behaviour in terms of the various theories. However, from 1997, exercises which were more relevant to real life situations were introduced and students seemed to find them more practically useful. When students experienced for themselves the relevance of applying the theories to different experiences, the theories seemed to come alive for them. They tended to reflect on a theory and personalise it, making it personally meaningful to themselves and their situation. The exercises appeared to progress from the less personally threatening, to exercises that seemed to require more personal reflection and input, and the exercises were quite different from one another.

Day 2- First Session: Explanation of Freud’s, Erikson’s, and Jung’s Theories - Exercise Based on Freud’s and Erikson’s Theories

In the first session, the theories of Freud and Erikson were explained to students. From 1997, although Freud’s theory remained a compulsory theory in the Personology course, students were given a choice between Erikson’s theory and Jung’s theory. However, the vast majority of students tended to choose Erikson’s theory and it was for that reason that the exercise that followed the explanation of the three theories, focussed on the theories of Freud and Erikson only. After the explanation of Freud’s and Erikson’s theories, the students were given a story which they were asked to interpret in accordance with these theories. The story read as follows:

John, is two years old. His mother is very impatient with his toilet training and smacks him if he does not go to the toilet in time and has an accident. John is a very unhappy little boy as a result of his mother’s handling of his toilet training.

They were then asked the following question:

According to Freud’s/Erikson’s theories, how will this influence the boy’s development?
After discussing it in their groups, students were required to collaboratively formulate an answer to the following:

**According to Freud's theory, the possibility of John spontaneously recovering from this problem is (a) ........ , because (b)........ .** (5 marks)

**According to Erikson's theory, John will probably experience a feeling of (c) ........ , because he had an accident. At this stage he will therefore not develop the ego strength of (d) ........ . John's chance of spontaneous recovery according to Erikson is therefore (e) ........ because (f) ........ .** (5 marks)

The presenter/facilitator explained to the students how to go about answering the question which required them to fill in missing words at (a), (c), (d) and (e), and to provide a paragraph-explanation for (b) and (f). The groups were divided into those that were required to answer the question in terms of Freud's theory and those that answered it in terms of Erikson's theory. The presenters/facilitators went from group to group and became part of the discussion during the time allotted for this exercise. This seemed to be especially beneficial to those groups who did not appear to know how to start such a discussion or to go about answering the questions.

**Comments on the Exercise Based on Freud's and Erikson's Theories**

This exercise seemed to be very beneficial to students. In the first place, the subject of toilet training is universal, but did not appear to be personally threatening. Secondly, the question was taken from a previous examination paper which tended to highlight its relevance to the Personology course. It was also the kind of question which lecturers seemed to like to ask as it required not only a knowledge of the theories concerned, but also tested the students' ability to apply it to a real life situation. Thirdly, it tested the students' ability to communicate their ideas clearly and logically. As is clear from the question, part of the answer required the student to fill in one or two words, and the remainder of the question compelled them to complete a sentence and provide an explanation in paragraph form. The missing words were required to fit the context of the question and the explanation needed to be coherent with what went before.
Also, when spokespersons from the groups came up to present their answers, the students seemed to gain from realising that answers that might be quite different from one another can still be correct. It became clear that learning in a parrot-fashion was not only unnecessary, but quite impossible, when an application of the theory to a real life situation was required.

One of the most important aspects of this exercise was that it tended to facilitate a domain for dialogue. Apparently, for many students this was the first time that they had shared ideas in the context of their studies in order to generate a collaborative answer. They seemed to experience the richness that comes from sharing ideas and building on one another’s ideas. Another important aspect of this exercise was that they were asked to give another person in the group a chance to be the spokesperson. This also tended to serve to build the self-confidence of students and fostered respect for one another.

A further advantage seemed to be the feedback from the presenters/facilitators. This presented them with a ‘sounding board’ to check whether they had in fact understood the theories. Therefore, the voices that had remained silent within, now seemed to engage with other voices.

**Day 2 - Second Session:**

*Exercise Based on Skinner’s Theory and the Social Cognitive Learning Approach*

During the second session on Day 2, Skinner’s theory and the Social Cognitive Learning approach, in particular Bandura’s theory, were explained to the students. In 1996, in their groups, students discussed the following question:

**Do you think that aggression on television has a negative effect on viewers? Justify your answer.**

Half of the groups discussed the question in terms of Skinner’s theory and the other half in terms of Bandura’s theory, as representing the Social Cognitive Learning approach. Once again they were required to draw on their knowledge and understanding of the
theories in order to answer the question. From 1997, the question for discussion changed and tended to be more personal. The question read as follows:

*In considering your ways of showing anger and care, do you think that the Social Cognitive Learning theory offers an explanation for the development of your behaviour?*

*Think of an instance when you were very angry or showed care.*

*How did you show your anger or care?*

*Where did you learn that?*

*From whom?*

*Did you learn through direct learning, observational learning and/or self-regulation?*

They were asked to share their experiences with one another in their groups. Once again the presenters/facilitators joined the different groups during the exercise. They encouraged some of the students to share their stories with the student body. The presenters/facilitators took this opportunity to remind students that when another person shares something personal with you, it is like standing on hallowed ground and is to be respected. Once the student had recounted his or her story, the student and presenters/facilitators would collaboratively link it to the social cognitive learning approach indicating how the person had possibly learnt this behaviour.

**Comments on the Exercise Based on Skinner’s Theory and the Social Cognitive Learning Approach**

This exercise seemed to facilitate the telling of personal stories that others could identify with and tended to be a lot of fun, eliciting much laughter. It seemed to allow students to appreciate that different people show anger or care in different ways, and that different people have diverse perceptions of what constitutes caring or angry behaviour.

This exercise tended to be on a deeper and more personal level than the exercise in 1996. Appearing as it did in the second session, it seemed to be less threatening to students than it would have been if it had been incorporated in the first session. This
Day 2 - Third Session: Explanation of Rogers’, Allport’s, Kelly’s and Frankl’s Theories

In the third session on Day 2, the theories of Rogers and Allport were explained. However, from 1997, while Rogers’ theory still remained a part of the syllabus, students were given a choice between Kelly’s theory and Frankl’s theory. Allport’s theory no longer formed part of the Personology course at the second-year level of Psychology at Unisa at this stage.

Exercise Based on Rogers’ Theory

In the exercise on Rogers’ theory, students were given an exercise at the beginning of the session. They were asked to reflect on the following questions:

*Who am I? What does my family want me to be? Who do I want to be?*

These questions tended to be very personal. One or two students shared their reflections with the group. The presenter/facilitator then linked the students’ reflections to Rogers’ theory which she explained to the students. Students were then asked the following question:

*According to Rogers, the three major conditions necessary for therapeutic change are congruence, empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard. Do you have a current relationship within which you are able to supply these nurturing conditions for growth?*

In their groups students shared their stories with one another, and a couple of students volunteered to share their stories with the larger group.
Comments on Rogers' Exercise

Perhaps more sharing of stories should have been encouraged as it seems “that knowledge of Others can (and should) lead to self knowledge” (Wood, 1993, p.377). Nonetheless, the first set of questions seemed to lead naturally to a discussion of the theory and its application to an example provided by the presenter/facilitator. The second question seemed to challenge students as the focus usually fell on how a favourable social environment influenced them, rather than reflecting on whether or not they were providing nurturing conditions for the growth of others.

This theory tended to make a great impact on many of the students and seemed to provide them with an explanation for the story of their own lives. It appeared that students started to understand why they saw themselves in a certain way, and their newfound insights and understanding appeared to challenge many of them to become the persons they wanted be. It seemed to be a very liberating experience for many students and appeared to herald a new beginning.

Exercise Based on Allport's Theory

The questions on Allport’s theory required students to reflect on Allport’s list of the qualities of the optimally functioning person. They answered the following questions:

- Which of Allport’s criteria of the optimally functioning person do you possess?
- Which of these criteria do you lack?
- Do you regard yourself as a mature healthy person?
- What still needs improvement?

Comments on Allport Exercise

These questions seemed to lead to the telling of many, very personal, and touching stories. The effect tended to be therapeutic as students acknowledged in their stories the strengths that they seemed to possess, and recognised the potential for improvement in other areas. These ideas seem to be coherent with Saleeby’s (1996) ideas of focussing
on personal resources, and Rappaport and Simkins' (1991, p.33) belief that 
"[h]ealing is something that everyone needs".

**Initial Exercise Based on Kelly's Theory**

The explanation of Kelly's theory proved quite a challenge. Each of the two presenters alternated in their attempts to provide a clear explanation, until an explanation evolved that seemed to satisfy the presenters/facilitators and students. In 1997, an explanation of the theory was provided first. Thereafter, an opportunity was given to the students to discuss the rumours that seemed to abound about the second-year Psychology course amongst students. These were *their* perceptions and as such seemed to be linked to Kelly's ideas which are about how people make sense of their worlds.

The exercise appeared to provide a context in which students could voice their anger which seemed to be linked to their perceptions of academic failure, and their anxiety over career choices and opportunities available to them. For example, it seemed to some students that only a certain percentage of students were passed each year, that their mark for the supplementary examination remained the same as the mark they received for the main examination, that examination papers were not really marked, that there was a vast difference between the assignments and the examinations, that the course was very difficult, that they were not able to do anything worthwhile with a BA degree in Psychology, and that they were given only a slim chance of being accepted for the Masters degree in Clinical Psychology. There were some positive perceptions, such as the possibility of doing really well, and the view that you would still have gained even if you failed.

**Comments on Rumours**

It seemed that because the presenters/facilitators had created a context for discussing rumours, they also needed to deal with them in a constructive and interactive manner. But first the following questions need to be answered: What constitutes rumour? And what role do rumours fulfil in the lives of students? According to Rosnow (1988, p.12),
"Rumors are public communications that reflect private hypotheses about how the world works. Embellished by allegations or attributions based on circumstantial evidence, they are attempts to make sense of uncertain situations."

It seemed that students constructed their own explanations, mainly for possible academic failure, in order to allay their anxieties and uncertainties regarding the course. Rosnow (1988, p.15) seems to concur in stating that "personal anxiety, general uncertainty, credulity (belief in the rumor), and the nature of the rumor" mediate the way in which rumors originate and circulate within a given context.

The way in which the presenters/facilitators attempted to deal with the rumors seemed coherent with the first three general principles of rumor management proposed by Rosnow (1988). The first principle is to try and prevent rumors by anticipating and confronting anxieties and uncertainties. The second is to "give people the facts and keep lines of communication open" (Rosnow, 1988, p.25). The third is to "be open and truthful" (Rosnow, 1988, p.25). To a large extent the programme was designed to try and allay students' anxieties and uncertainties concerning the second-year Psychology course, and this exercise in particular, provided students with the opportunity to voice these to the presenters/facilitators. Secondly, the programme seemed to provide a context characterised by open communication between presenters/facilitators and students which instilled trust and fostered the sharing of ideas. Difonzo, Bordia and Rosnow (1994) also emphasised the importance of establishing trust in relationships. Thirdly, this exercise in particular fostered the introduction of different voices and ideas, and students possibly felt that they were being listened to. When students articulated the different rumors mentioned previously, the presenters/facilitators engaged in conversations with the students and discussed the issues that seemed to bother them.

Iyer and Debevec (1991, p.173) also proposed that "if the origin [of a rumor] is perceived to be a positive stakeholder, then a vigorous and active refutation may be the most effective strategy" that should be conveyed in a conciliatory tone. Students were perceived as positive stakeholders and therefore rumors that appeared to have no foundation were countered in an amiable manner.
Change in the Exercise and Approach to Kelly's Theory

In 1998, the presenters/facilitators decided to change the exercise based on Kelly's theory. They believed that by encouraging students to discuss the rumours that seemed to abound about the second-year Psychology course, the focus tended to be on the negative which was antithetical to the aims of the programme. Nonetheless, rumours and issues of distrust still seemed to surface in the different regional centres at times.

The presenter/facilitator started the session by asking students to voice their perceptions of the programme thus far. They were asked to voice what they liked and disliked about the programme. The presenter/facilitator then linked their perceptions to the theory.

Comments on the Kelly Exercise

According to Bateson (cited in Fuks, 1998, p.245), “[o]ur experiences are interpreted in terms of our epistemology incarnated in language”. Fuks (1998, p.245) says: “The emerging world is, therefore, a world conceptually articulated in language”. Therefore, students' perceptions of the programme, and the constructs that they formulated, indicated how they made sense of their experiential worlds.

It seemed that, mediated by the presenters/facilitators, students moved from their own unique experiences of the programme, to the theory, and then to new experiences, which they could test in their interaction with the presenters/facilitators (Weedon, 1997). According to Thorpe (1993), experiential learning refers to learning that occurs as a result of a significant proportion thereof being contributed by direct experience either prior to or concurrently with the programme. This clearly occurred in this session, and in fact, throughout the programme.

The exercise also provided an unexpected bonus for the presenters/facilitators as students tended to voice mainly favourable perceptions of the programme. However, negative comments were also accommodated and dealt with in a respectful and amicable manner. It seemed that the students ‘imitated’ the presenters/facilitators in focussing on
what was 'good' and uplifting about the programme. This seemed to facilitate conversation.

In addition, this exercise appeared to provide the students with an opportunity to reverse roles with the presenters/facilitators in assuming the reassuring role which is the role the presenters/facilitators usually undertook. This seemed to be an empowering experience for the students.

Day 2- Final Session: A Story Based on Frankl’s Theory

The final discussion of the day was on Frankl’s theory. By this time the students tended to be quite exhausted. The presenter/facilitator therefore decided to tell a story from her own life, which would illustrate Frankl’s theory. It was a particularly poignant story that revolved around the presenter’s/facilitator’s nephew who is a mentally and physically challenged child. The explanation of Frankl’s theory was linked to the story throughout its telling. The story illustrated the triumph of the human spirit in the face of adversity and it seemed to facilitate the telling of other personal stories within the framework of Frankl’s theory.

Comments on the Story Based on Frankl’s Theory

By including the example of a ‘special’ child, the presenter/facilitator initiated an opportunity to affirm the life of someone who was ‘different’ from most others. Wood (1993) believes that by weaving stories of diversity and commonality into learning experiences through conversations, as in this instance, the worth of people who are different can be appreciated. The way that this session was presented differed from the presentations of other sessions, and emphasised that diverse ways of communicating or experiencing can enlarge students’ knowledge and experience (Wood, 1993).

Presenters’/Facilitators’ Reflections on Day 2

The presenters/facilitators were well-acquainted with the theories and discussed them without reference to notes. They tended to make minimal use of transparencies which
appeared to hinder the learning process rather than facilitate it. It seemed that instead of listening to the explanation of a theory, students would be too busy copying down what was on the transparency, and therefore would miss the gist of what was being said.

During conversation with one another, the presenters/facilitators were of the opinion that the progression, from exercises requiring less personally threatening input to exercises requiring students to draw on their own personal experiences, seemed to facilitate an opening to experience and to subsequent personal growth and enrichment.

Throughout the day, stories were articulated by both students and presenters/facilitators, and the response from students and presenters/facilitators seemed to lead to other stories of personal enhancement and deeper understanding.

Students' participation also appeared to lift the discussions to higher levels with specific questions highlighting 'difficulties' or points that were not clear in the theories.

The presenters involved in the presentation of the theories reflected on their high degree of instruction as they explained the prescribed personality theories. Their reflections tended to centre around whether they were not perhaps being too directive, and they contemplated alternative ways of approaching this session so that their input would be reduced. However, in dialoguing about the problem, they believed that

- it was necessary to provide a comprehensive synopsis of each theory to meet the students' need to grasp the theories in a more comprehensible and meaningful way. It was felt that students would be frustrated if their needs were not met.
- as the discussion of the theories fell on the second day, they believed that a more structured approach would provide students with a sense of security which would facilitate students' movement towards less structure where integration could take place at a later stage of the programme. It also seemed that more structure tended to be more coherent with the way in which students had been taught previously.
- because the theories tend to be eurocentric in their approach, the relevance of their application within the South African context needed to be explicated. This
idea fits with the idea of 'scaffolding' in which guidance or support is initially offered to the learner by a more experienced person to facilitate learning, and as the learner acquires the requisite skills, the supportive 'scaffolding' is slowly removed (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997; Weedon, 1997). The relevance of the theories in explaining human behaviour was illustrated by means of examples, stories, and exercises. According to Au (1998), from a social constructivist point of view, academic knowledge, in this case theoretical concepts, can be acquired by building on personal experience (everyday concepts). This means that students gained insight into their own lives by applying the theories to their own lives. This seemed to be facilitated by means of exercises.

The presenters/facilitators attempted to accommodate student diversity by

- balancing a high degree of instruction, which seems reminiscent of the traditional style of lecturing, with more interactive discussions.
- including research findings as well as personal examples from the experiences of both students and presenters/facilitators.
- facilitating both independent and collaborative work among students, and
- assessing their understanding by written work as well as oral accounts.

This seemed to provide many different 'pathways' to reach diverse students and encouraged participation amongst as many students as possible with their diverse needs (Wood, 1993).

The diversity that existed amongst the two presenters/facilitators, who alternated in their presentations of the theories, also seemed to be appreciated. The following seems to illustrate this:

- The way that the two different presenters/facilitators interacted with the students, seemed to capture the diversity and uniqueness that exists among people, and different students tended to identify with different presenters.
- The way that the two presenters/facilitators alternated in their presentations was like an interactional dance that was well synchronised.
• The diversity also appeared to help maintain the impetus which was generated in the first session of Day 1.
• There appeared to be a movement from uni-verse to multi-verses (Tjersland, 1990) as the different voices of the presenters were accommodated.
• Presentations by different presenters/facilitators also seemed to prevent boredom amongst the students.

Diversity was also accommodated in terms of different types of exercises which seemed to meet the needs of different students and allowed different students to 'shine'.

**Day 3: Discussion of Developmental Psychology**

**Day 3 - Explanations of the Stages of Human Development**

In 1996 and 1997, the third day of the programme was initially devoted to the explanation of the various stages in human development. The presenter/facilitator began with an explanation of childhood and adolescent development which tended to be more structured. In the first few years of the programme, the presenter/facilitator made use of transparencies to lead the students through the different stages of childhood and adolescent development. This seemed to benefit those students who tended to struggle with the course, especially those whose past educational experiences were not optimal. The explanation of childhood and adolescent development was followed by a discussion of adulthood which was less structured, and seemed to afford many students the opportunity to provide their input of what constitutes maturity.

**Comments on the Way that the Stages of Human Development were Explained**

Although the presenters/facilitators who discussed the personality theories found that the use of transparencies seemed to hinder the learning process, the presenter/facilitator who was part of the programme in 1997 only, decided to use them because she believed their use would be more beneficial to the more educationally disadvantaged students. Mason (1999), seems to offer a plausible explanation for why the use of transparencies seemed to help those students who tended to struggle with the course. Apparently,
during the apartheid era, rote learning was required of learners and thus a more structured style of teaching, focussing on facts as was done in this session, would have been coherent with their expectations. Ryle (cited in Mason, 1999), distinguished between propositional knowledge (associated with facts or content) and procedural learning (associated with knowledge of skills). Rote learning tends to be more congruent with propositional learning, and it seems that it was facts that the students perceived to be important. Procedural learning appears to be more coherent with outcomes-based learning. This approach seemed to illustrate Wood’s (1993) contention that different ways of presenting seem to benefit different groups of students.

Changes in the Way that Human Development was Presented

During 1998 and 1999, the approach was changed to a more experiential and outcomes-based approach. The presenter/facilitator allowed the students to begin this time with their own reflections or experiences. As was mentioned previously, their experiences, captured in language, were then linked to theory. This then seemed to lead to a higher level of learning, which they could test (Weedon, 1997), as they became aware of the course outcomes, as well as their own personal outcomes (Thorpe, 1993), and on what they could now do with their ‘new’ knowledge (Mason, 1999).

Important themes pertaining to human development were stressed. Highlighting certain aspects of the work seemed to give students the impression that their workload was substantially decreased and appeared to increase their perceptions of manageability.

Day 3 - Exercise 1

In the section on optimal development, students contemplated the theories of Freud and Rogers on the essence of human nature and discussed the following question:

As human beings, are we basically good or evil, or do we have the potential to be both good and evil?
After discussing it in their groups, a group spokesperson reported back to the larger group after which the following question was discussed:

Which factors may possibly influence children to become prosocial or antisocial as they grow older?

**Comments on Exercise 1**

In thinking about the questions, it seemed that students were able to draw on the ideas of the theorists and yet introduce their own ideas, which tended to make it more personally meaningful to them.

**Day 3 - Exercise 2**

In this second exercise, they were asked to consider the following question:

Who were you most attached to in your life and why?

In their groups they discussed this person or persons with one another, and decided as a group which features characterise a true or secure attachment relationship. A spokesperson informed the body of students of their group’s views of the importance of secure attachment in the life of the growing child, and the implications of good attachment relationships in other contexts, such as in the family, between friends, marriage partners, and in the community.

**Comments on Exercise 2**

This exercise probably increased students’ awareness of the way in which different people connect to others. It would have probably also increased their awareness of how similar people in fact are. Thus students would have begun to appreciate both commonality and diversity. This question seemed to make the course come alive. They also tended to realise that the stories of their experiences and their ideas about them were personal resources that they could rely on.
Day 3 - Exercise 3

The third exercise involved students’ experiences of how they were parented. They were asked the following question:

**How were you disciplined as a child, and what effects did it have on you?**

They were asked to make notes of the various ways in which they were disciplined as children and how it affected them. In their groups they discussed the most effective ways of disciplining a child. The presenter/facilitator linked their stories to the research and theories in discussing the different parenting styles, and especially focussed on the ideal way to parent children.

**Comments on Exercise 3**

This exercise tended to lead to the telling of many poignant and heart-wrenching stories. Students who had suffered at the hands of punitive parents were given a chance to have their voices heard. This seemed to strengthen their resolve to do things differently with their children.

It also provided an opportunity to bridge the cultural gap as students from different cultural groups were introduced to stories that were different from their own, but which nonetheless united them in their resolve to implement healthier parenting practices.

It seemed that in self-reflecting, students were able “to view themselves and their lives in light of others’ experiences and situations and to reflect on how that new vantage point refines knowledge of themselves” (Wood, 1993, p.377). In their conversations with one another, students thus discovered both differences and commonalities in their experiences which revealed how differences and commonalities may co-exist and do not have to be seen in opposition to one another (Wood, 1993).
Day 3 - Exercise 4

The theme of identity formation during adolescence was the focus of the fourth exercise. Students were required to answer the following questions:

- Which things in your life have had a positive influence on your development as a person?
- Which things in your life have had a negative influence on your development as a person?
- What could you yourself do to build on the positive and to overcome the negative things in your life and to become the very best person you could be?

Their consideration of these questions led to a discussion on the following question:

- What does any growing child or developing person need to develop optimally and to achieve a psychologically mature and healthy personality in adulthood?

A group spokesperson shared the finding of their discussions with the larger group of students.

Comments on Exercise 4

This exercise also tended to foster a recognition of both the positive and the negative influences in their lives, while at the same time encouraging an active approach in dealing with factualities in their lives. It seemed to encourage personal responsibility and tended to generate new possibilities - making students aware of the choices that they did in fact have, but which they might not as yet have fully embraced.

Day 3 - Exercise 5

In dealing with the section on the achievement of psychological maturity and moral responsibility, students were challenged in Exercise 5 to consider whether they viewed themselves as the hapless victims of the kinds of circumstances they were, and are,
subjected to. This seemed to motivate them to accept the challenges implicit in making choices and living their lives responsibly. They were required to fill in a questionnaire and answer the following:

**Name those things in your life that make you truly happy and make you believe that your life has meaning and is really worthwhile.**

In their groups, they discussed their findings with one another and as a group answered the following question:

**What do all human beings need to make them experience happiness and to give them a sense of worth and meaning in their lives?**

**Comments on Exercise 5**

The provocative questions in Exercise 5 seemed to lead them to contemplate and articulate those things that were personally meaningful. The articulation of these ideas tended to bring these ideas out of obscurity and gave them life.

**Reflections on Day 3**

The exercises on Day 3 differed from the exercises on Days 1 and 2. After each exercise, the students were directed back to the prescribed book to compare their own findings with what the theory and research in the field had to say on the subject. Students were able to link their own personal experiences to the text. According to Claxton (cited in Knott, 1991), allowing students to learn through their own experiences enables them to reach new levels of learning and helps them to develop self-confidence. ‘Dialoguing’ with the text seemed to lead to richer and deeper understandings, and descriptions that appeared to be ‘thicker’ than they had previously been. It seemed that a balance had been achieved in including both procedural (knowledge *that*) as well as propositional knowledge (knowledge *how*) (Mason, 1999). However, it seemed that dispositional knowledge (knowledge *to*) which includes attitudes, values and moral dispositions (Mason, 1999), was also included in these sessions.
In the exercises on Day 3, it seemed that students collaboratively constructed knowledge. Knowledge then shifted "from socially supported to individually controlled performance" (Au, 1998, p.300). Such a shift seems to be facilitated by a favourable learning environment and the nature of the teacher/learner relationship. Learning appears to occur for both parties in the relationship (Weedon, 1997).

The change in approach on Day 3 seemed to be a particularly beneficial change to the programme as it appeared to provide a forum for telling stories which until then had remained silent within. It also seemed to teach students that experiences had equipped them with knowledge which they could rely on.

Because only one presenter/facilitator was involved with the students on Day 3, a conversation with a co-presenter could not take place as it did on Day 2 when there were two presenters/facilitators. However, at the end of Day 3, the presenter/facilitator shared her insights with the other two presenters/facilitators and new levels of understanding were co-evolved.

**Day 4**

**Day 4 - Community Session**

In the first session on Day 4, students were asked what they perceived were the needs in their communities. Themes around the needs in their communities were thus generated from the students themselves. New groupings formed around these themes which were usually personally meaningful to the students who joined these groups. Students were asked to define the nature of the problems that existed in their communities, and how they could go about addressing the needs that seemed to exist.

Themes that were frequently mentioned were violence and abuse in the home, child abuse, substance and alcohol abuse, Aids, learning problems, physical and mental disabilities, marital and communication problems, problems of adolescence including teenage pregnancy, prostitution, depression, problems of old age, and poverty.
Students were encouraged to embrace the spirit of *Ubuntu* and to become involved in their communities or join voluntary organisations - to do their part in nation building which could possibly lead to community upliftment. By doing so they could put Psychology into practice. This would provide them with experience which would stand them in good stead should they choose to further their studies in Psychology. They were provided with lists of institutions in their provinces which need voluntary helpers.

Some students ‘heard’ a loud call to become involved in voluntary work. One student offered her services to a psychiatric hospital in the Northern Province. The presenter/facilitator wrote a letter to the superintendent of the hospital explaining that Unisa encourages its students to become involved in voluntary work but is unable to supervise them, and that this responsibility will fall on the institution and/or persons involved. After this student’s stint of voluntary work in the hospital during the academic recess, the superintendent wrote a progress report to the presenters/facilitators indicating that she was regarded as a valued member of the team. Other students volunteered at a local psychiatric hospital and were involved in home visits of a supportive nature to those who had received psychiatric treatment, and also in obtaining important information regarding patients in the hospital and their families, from home visits to the families. And yet other students became involved in POWA (People Opposed to Women Abuse), care of the aged, street children, child abuse and so on.

**Comments on the Community Exercise**

Although the intention was to awaken students to the needs in their communities and to encourage their involvement, something else seemed to occur which was not anticipated. Students appeared to demonstrate the ability to integrate the information that they had gained from previous sessions on the personality theories and human development into their discussions. Students generated valuable ideas regarding the problems that they perceived to be prevalent in their communities and made thoughtful suggestions about how these problems could be dealt with. Their insights into the problems and how to address them astounded the presenters. It seemed to highlight the importance of providing meaningful and relevant contexts which facilitate the integration of information, and to hear the ‘voices’ of those within the community and their
‘healing’ stories (Saleeby, 1996). It seemed that it was through dialogue that students from different communities appeared to learn from one another’s viewpoints and to gain different perspectives.

Students, as members of their communities, tended to be co-constructors of “an interpretational framework for common action” (Fuks, 1998, p.247). Community themes were identified from a position inside and not outside of the community. This idea, that people in communities should ‘name’ their own problems and solutions, rather than have them named for them by another group, seems to be supported by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1994). They believe that effective transformation in communities and community empowerment will be facilitated when individuals, who participate in the change process, become transformed. In agreement with Wallerstein and Bernstein (1994), Saleeby (1996, p.303) believes that it seems important for individuals and groups to ‘name’ their circumstances, their struggles, their experiences, themselves. Many alienated people have been named by others - labeled and diagnosed - in a kind of total discourse. The power to name oneself and one’s situation and condition is the beginning of real empowerment.

It seemed that students embraced the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 1996) by focussing on strengths that could be harnessed in their proposed solutions to the problems in their communities. Some students who had personally experienced some of the problems mentioned, related how they invoked their own strengths and resilience in overcoming their own personal difficulties. What they learnt in adversity, seemed to help them to rise above their difficulties and their stories could possibly help others to triumph over their difficulties as well. This seems to be in line with what Saleeby (1996) tends to say on the subject. It is all the more remarkable given the circumstances under which many of the students lived.
Day 4 - Examination Session

The final session of the programme was a session on the examination. The presenter/facilitator provided clear guidelines on how to approach the examination and to answer questions in the examination at the end of the year. This was to help allay students' fears, prepare them for what they could expect, and assist them to develop an effective way of tackling the exam. Issues that were discussed were the following: The allocation of time to the various sections in the examination paper; the structure of the examination paper; and the importance of answering the question. Thereafter, the students wrote a 'mock' examination for which they had to study. They were given a question from the Personology course as well as one from Developmental Psychology to answer. Some students were asked to write their answers on a transparency.

At the end of the examination, students awarded themselves a mark that they thought they deserved for their answers. The students who wrote their answers on a transparency were treated sensitively as their answers were then marked in front of the group. Students were thus able to experience how the presenters/lecturers allocated marks and what their expectations were. Students were then asked to mark their own attempts and to compare the first mark that they awarded themselves with the mark they now gave themselves in the light of the presenters'/facilitators' explanations.

Comments on the Examination Session

The purpose of this exercise was to make the expectations of the lecturers known to the students and to help students assess the standard of their own work in a more realistic way. This approach differed from the approach in 1996 and 1997 when a model answer was provided to students which students could copy down - a far more passive process. Copying down an answer, which they could learn by rote, seemed to have a better fit with a more authoritarian style of teaching and the acquisition of propositional knowledge (associated with facts or content) that tended to characterise apartheid education (Mason, 1999). The change was made in 1998 because the emphasis shifted to understanding the subject matter and being sufficiently flexible to answer any
question relating to the subject matter, rather than simply regurgitating facts in a model answer. It also seemed more coherent with a different ways of ‘doing’.

Day 4 - Final Session

At the conclusion of the programme, students completed a post-test (which was the same as the pre-test), and wrote a paragraph on what the programme meant to them, indicating improvements that could be made. (See Appendix G.) The post-test was excluded in 1999.

Presenters'/Facilitators' Reflections on their Role in the SSEEP

Sharing of Ideas Amongst the Presenters/Facilitators and the Supportive Nature Thereof

The presenters/facilitators continually reflected on the processes, and shared information and insights with one another, which seemed to lead to heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, the unfolding processes. It also appeared to have the added advantage of buoying one another up as the stress of their intense involvement seemed to affect the presenters/facilitators in different ways and at different points in the programme.

Modelling a Respectful Relationship

The presenters/facilitators modelled a respectful relationship to one another and to the students. A decision was made that if one presenter/facilitator was busy with her input, the other presenters/facilitators would only join the process once the main presenter/facilitator had finished with her input. The presenters/facilitators believed that this would model a respectful relationship to the students (Meyer et al., 1997). Also, one presenter/facilitator interrupting another might create a sense of one-upmanship, which would be antithetical to the interactional and equitable spirit of the programme. Respect was also modelled by the presenters/facilitators in terms of respecting the diverse nature of the student population, the different ideas shared by the students, and the different ways of doing things.
Maintaining a Balance Between Openness and Structure

It seemed essential for the presenters/facilitators to be open and sensitive to what was happening each time that they presented and participated in the programme. They tried to avoid going in with preconceived ideas and were continuously involved in trying to move in tune with the process, which required flexibility and adaptability on their part. This did not however, mean that they avoided structure. In fact, it was quite the converse. The programme was well-structured, and the presenters/facilitators well-prepared. The presenters/facilitators though had to be willing to risk uncertainty and remain open to what was happening without trying to control occurrences (Fuks, 1998; Leyland, 1988).

Valuing Diverse Teaching Styles

Different presenters/facilitators seemed to generate opportunities for learning and knowing just by being different from one another, and by doing or saying things differently. For example, one of the presenters/facilitators interlaced the discussions of the developmental themes with her personal philosophy based on Frankl's theory. This tended to make her contribution different from the contribution of the other presenters/facilitators whose approach tended to be more coherent with the different theories that they explained. Nonetheless, their individual epistemological biases were reflected in their approach. The unique way in which each presenter/facilitator contributed and the uniqueness of the presenters/facilitators as individuals, intersected with the lives of different groups of students. It seems that varied teaching styles, as in this programme, have two important functions in recognising and promoting diversity: According to Belenky et al. (cited in Wood, 1993, p.373), they firstly seem to “model different ways of knowing and learning”, and secondly, “they invite multiple voices into classroom conversations”. Wood (1993, p.373) says:

When multiple voices, perspectives, and ways of knowing are represented by teaching processes, a range of intellectual methods are legitimized. In addition, relying on multiple approaches enables all or
most students to participate and learn at least part of the time in the company of methods they find congenial.

Valuing Student Diversity

One of the difficulties of the programme was in trying to accommodate students who seemed to function on different levels of complexity, and who appeared to have developed vastly different resources. Again there appeared to be a lack of fit between the resources that some students brought into the situation, and those that are deemed necessary for academic success. It became important for the presenters/facilitators to take into account the programme context, and to remember that although some students did not appear to demonstrate certain resources that the presenters construed important for academic success, this did not mean that they should not value the resources that these students did demonstrate. These resources might possibly have had a better fit in another context, but they could still be put to advantage and enhanced in the programme context.

Accommodating and Valuing the Diverse Voices of Students

Different ‘voices’ were encouraged to contribute to the dialogue as this seemed to add to the richness of the contributions, and facilitated the group process. However, it became important to address the problem that seemed to arise when ‘bright’ students or students with problems, asked or answered most of the questions, which tended to hinder the group process by stifling participation from other students. It seemed also that the ‘voices’ of some students silenced other voices, whereas other ‘voices’ bringing humour for example into the conversation, appeared to facilitate the process. It seemed that when the dominant ‘voice’ of a student tried to convey his or her ‘cleverness’, it tended to alienate others, whereas when a dominant ‘voice’ conveyed the students’ vulnerability, it appeared to facilitate the process. This seemed to encourage further dialogue and the sharing and co-evolution of ideas. The assistance of ‘clever’ students was solicited to encourage and help those students who were battling. In this way they were acknowledged, and instead of hindering the group process, they now tended to facilitate it. Another hindering effect appeared to be the critical attitude that some
students seemed to adopt to certain of their group members. However, its incidence tended to be very low. These students were encouraged to experience the programme on different levels. For example, if they felt that they already knew the theory and were bored, they could focus instead on the group processes that were emerging.

**Adopting an Inclusive Approach**

It also became a challenge for the presenters to include the individuals and/or groups that had sidelined themselves or been sidelined. The approach of the presenters tended to be inclusive. Therefore it became necessary to be aware of what was happening and to encourage and re-introduce the individuals and/or groups back into the fold. The aim always was to facilitate growth and to unlock personal capacity amongst participants, but not at the expense of others.

**Cultural Sensitivity of the Presenters/Facilitators**

The presenters tried to be culturally sensitive in their interactions with students. Au (1998) deemed it important for teachers to be culturally sensitive and to facilitate contexts that would allow students from backgrounds which differed from the mainstream Western background, to be competent.

**Presenters'/Facilitators' Reflections on the Enhancement of Students' Resources in the Programme**

**Students as Active Participants in an Interactive Learning Context**

Students were encouraged to become active participants in the learning process. According to Collins, Brown and Holum (cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997), observation and social context are essential aspects of what they term, ‘cognitive apprenticeship’, which highlights the active and responsible role in learning that the learner assumes, and seems to be well-suited to students from different cultural backgrounds. These ideas seemed particularly pertinent in this programme. By being
actively involved, it seemed that students gained a sense of ownership of the learning process.

**Encouraging Students' to Draw on their Own Experiences**

Students were also invited to draw on their own personal experiences. Claxton (cited in Knott, 1991), believes that it is important to allow learners to draw on their own experiences. Claxton (cited in Knott, 1991, p.18) is quoted as saying: “Creating learning situations in which students draw on what they already know as a vehicle for reaching new learning is vital if students are to develop the confidence they need to succeed in college”.

**The Purpose of Knowledge**

It seemed that the purpose of knowledge acquisition underwent a change. Students no longer appeared to be content merely with acquiring knowledge for knowledge sake. They now wanted to know what they could do with their knowledge, and how they could apply it, in their everyday lives. Lyotard (cited in Mason, 1999, p.141) coined the phrase, “the ‘performativity’ of knowledge”, to refer to the practical use of knowledge, which is coherent with the aforementioned ideas.

**Shifts in Students’ Perceptions and Behaviour**

The programme was structured in such a way that students were able “to move from the impersonal to the personal, from the unmanageable to the manageable, and from a position of seeking certainty to risking uncertainty” (Moore, Van Ede, Shantall & Rapmund, 1997, p.89). Shifts also seemed to occur in the movement from unrealistic self-efficacy perceptions to more realistic perceptions, from seeing Psychology as something ‘out there’ to be studied, to being able to apply it in their daily lives and seeing its applicability in their families and communities.
Presenters'/Facilitators’ Reflections on the Interactive Nature of the Programme

A Focus on Dialogue Rather than Text

The focus in the programme was on the dialogue that ensued from the presenters'/facilitators' input, the responses, questions and contributions of students, and the exercises. On the whole, the presenters/facilitators found that the use of transparencies seemed to draw the attention of the students away from what was being said, and therefore they tried to keep the use of transparencies down to a minimum. It seemed that dialogue facilitated learning rather than text even though dialogue can obviously not be free of content. The content of the dialogue was linked to the second year Psychology curriculum as well as the application of theory in practical exercises.

Interaction Between the Presenters/Facilitators and Students

Students appeared to be given a voice which tended to feed into and perturb the presenter system, which in turn fed back into the student system, and thus a recursive loop was established and an interactional dance between the two systems, and within systems, commenced.

Role Reversal between Presenters/Facilitators and Students

If the processes that occurred during the programme seemed to stagnate, the presenters would voice their concern, which tended to lead to further dialogue between students and presenters. By voicing their concern, the presenters made themselves vulnerable, and this seemed to have a positive effect on the students, who assumed the role of re-assuring the presenters. The re-assuring voices were usually those of the presenters/facilitators, and this apparent role reversal seemed to empower students.

Valuing and Accommodating the Voices of Both Presenters/Facilitators and Students

This programme was characterised by an interactional mode. An interactional mode differs from the traditional manner of teaching which only permits one version of the
truth’. This single and only version usually comes from the lecturer. However, different voices were encouraged through participation in the discussion which, according to Maher (cited in Wood, 1993), tend to sustain the diversity amongst students. Furthermore, participation tended to promote co-operation amongst students, to advocate a more equitable relationship between lecturer and learner, and to expand their thinking.

**Shared Understandings Among Presenters/Facilitators and Students**

In the group discussions of the various exercises and questions, students’ individual ways of making sense of their experiences and the ensuing discussions seemed to lead to shared understanding. This appears to confirm Tudge’s explanation of the Vygotskian perspective of intersubjectivity (cited in Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). According to Vygotsky’s theory (cited in Weedon, 1997, p.41), the first stage in learning is what he termed, the “intermental” plane. This refers to the interactions amongst people. In this programme it would refer to the interactions between the presenters/facilitators and students, and between students. The next stage occurs on the “intramental” plane and is the learning that takes place within the individual. The concept of a zone of proximal development (ZPD) relates to an area of potential learning in an individual. This potential can only be developed initially through the intervention of a more experienced person to guide the learning process and to facilitate a learning environment that allows the learner to progress from the intermental to the intramental stage. Thus the interactional mode of the programme seemed important in fostering learning.

**Subject Content as a Context for the Telling of Stories**

The contents of the Personology paper and the Developmental Psychology paper tended to lend themselves to the telling of stories which focussed on pathways to develop strengths. Personal stories that are transformed into positive stories can be stories that are told in other contexts and can also transform these contexts, such as interpersonal and community contexts. For example, stories that focussed on the importance of unconditional positive regard as opposed to conditional acceptance from significant others, (which are concepts from Rogers’ theory), in a person’s life, tended to be stories
that students seemed to take with them into their family contexts and that the teachers could take with them into their school communities, and apply in a beneficial way.

General Reflections

The SSEEP, which was offered to Unisa's second-year Psychology students from 1996 to 1999, can be viewed as an evolving context not only where information was disseminated, but which also facilitated dialogue and created a sense of community, or a sense of connection between people.

This programme attempted to focus on the individual as a whole and not only on his or her academic success. In this way its aim appeared to be different from the aim of programmes that were required to conform to the narrative of the institution, which tends to be concerned primarily with outcome data in the form of students' examination results at the end of the year. This does not mean to imply that formal data were not seen to be important, but on their own, they seemed unable to capture the total experience of students. They appeared unable to tell the story of students' perceptions and what such programmes meant to them, or how their encounters or experiences seemed to have changed or touched their lives in some way. These ideas seemed to be congruent with Freire and Faundez's (1989, p.32), belief that "truth lies in the quest and not in the result, that it is a process, that knowledge is a process, and thus we should engage in it and achieve it through dialogue". Therefore, a both/and approach was advocated (Alexander, 1997; Otwell & Mullis, 1997), whereby the meanings that participants attributed to their experiences were regarded equally as important as was passing the second year Psychology course.

The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme - A Narrative Context

A resourceful context was generated. This seemed to mean affirming the strengths that students contributed, and allowing them to develop the self-confidence to utilise their resources and to develop into competent citizens. This focus on the positive did not mean that 'realities', such as past inequalities and unrealistic perceptions of academic standards, were ignored (Speed, 1991).
When learners ‘saw’ themselves as contributing strengths rather than deficits, they tended to behave in accordance with this more positive view of themselves. If students are able to grasp this view of themselves, it seems that they will be able to participate in their own healing as well as the healing of others (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991).

The narrative of the presenters seemed to represent the academic world, and the narrative of the students, the student world. These narratives seemed to change and to be changed by the personal life stories of their members. The idea seems to be that “the community narrative and the personal life story are embedded in a mutual influence process” (Rappaport, 1993, p.247). It should also be borne in mind that people tend to belong to different settings and that these multiple settings also seem to construct and transform people’s personal stories. The potential seemed to exist for new personal stories to emerge that could possibly replace the problem-focussed stories that some students seemed to bring with them to the programme.

Allowing people to tell their stories which seemed to be affected by and in turn seemed to affect collective stories, appeared to be a powerful resource. This tended to occur in a context which seemed to provide what Maton and Salem (cited in Rappaport, 1995, p. 799) refer to as “(a) an inspiring, strengths-based belief system focused beyond the self, (b) an accessible opportunity role structure, (c) inspiring shared leadership, and (d) a peer-based support system that creates a sense of community”. According to Rappaport (1995, p.805), “narratives are understood as resources”. When these are acknowledged and included, “practice....is then woven with the indigenous expression of community approaches where the word ‘community’ means that citizens are equal and collaborative partners” (Kelly, 1990, p.785).

Right from the beginning, the narrative communicated to students seemed to be the following:

- that the programme required the active participation and input of both students and presenters;
- that a context had been facilitated for them to get to know one another as well as the presenters; and
that this encounter would possibly influence a person in some way.

The students' narrative seemed to be different for different groups. However they seemed to centre mainly around the following:

- their anxieties and uncertainties
- their feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- their need for help
- their dependency needs
- their fear and distrust of lecturers and the university
- their desire to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed academically
- their desire to know what to do with their knowledge
- their desire to connect and form relationships with other students
- their desire to get to know the lecturers.

The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme -
A Context for Intervention

The programme can also be perceived as an intervention to attempt to

• **empower and enrich students** personally on a cognitive, motivational, and emotional level, and on an interpersonal and community level.
• **address problems** such as lack of comprehension of the study material, ineffective study techniques, passivity in the learning process, and poor academic performance in the answering of assignment and examination questions.
• take the distance out of distance education by letting students **work in a highly interactive way** with fellow-students and presenters/facilitators.
• **enhance personal growth** and foster **interpersonal relationships** as students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds work together in small groups.
• focus on **personal choices and responsibility**.
• **encourage community involvement** in joining and working for voluntary organisations in their area of interest.
Conclusion

A resourceful context was generated which seemed to facilitate the dissemination of information, a sense of community, as well as narrative. However, Wood (1993) warns that listening to the stories of others does not mean that we can lay claim to understanding others completely. It is possible to respect the views or experiences of others, but we should be wary of speaking for others as we are ‘outside’ of their world. The value in listening to the stories of others is to accommodate multiple voices and to remember that no single voice can possibly be representative of all. Diverse ‘voices’ or realities appeared to enrich the realities of students. In dialoguing about an issue, it seems that new ideas were co-evolved, new possibilities generated, and new connections made.

This seemed to be facilitated by the introduction of “news of difference” into the system to which the observer responds, but only if it fits within the relationship context (Bateson, 1972, p.20), and is coherent with the narrative of individuals. The introduction of information, which can be construed as an intervention, needed to be different from the information that was already present. Through a process of dialoguing about the subject, it seemed that a context was facilitated that allowed for the movement from ‘thin’ description to ‘thick’ description. It seemed that the students’ inner monologue became involved with the positive voices of the presenters, and appeared to evolve into an internal dialogue which seemed to affect the way that individuals interacted and dialogued with others. Students seemed to move from the anonymity of silence to the healing of affirmation through dialogue. The focus therefore, tended to be on enhancing and harnessing resources that students contributed to the created context, rather than focussing on students’ deficits. Instead of being merely the passive recipients of help, it seems that students were placed in the position of active participants in the process. A narrative that contained this idea seemed to facilitate the creation of new personal stories which appeared to create new identities. Nonetheless, the possibility always seemed to exist that some students would ‘drop out’ of the programme. However, it seemed that rather than viewing them as ‘dropouts’, they were regarded as having a story that did not appear to fit with the larger community narrative (Rappaport, 1993).
CHAPTER 4

EMPOWERMENT VERSUS ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL RESOURCES

Introduction

The term *empowerment* was used in the title of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP). However, the terms *enhancement of students’ personal resources* were selected for the title of the thesis. In this chapter the meanings of empowerment, the paradox of empowerment, the meanings of self-empowerment/psychological empowerment, and the implications for this study, will be discussed. Finally, the rationale for giving preference to the terms *enhancement of students’ personal resources* in the title of this thesis over the terms *self-empowerment and enrichment* will be provided.

Defining Empowerment

In what follows, the wide range of meanings associated with the term *empowerment* will be explored, and the relevance of the different perspectives for this study will be highlighted.

No consensus seems to exist on the meaning of the concept, *empowerment* (McWhirter, 1991). It is a nebulous term because it tends to take on “a different form in different people and contexts” (Rappaport, 1984, p.3). It also “differs across levels of analysis” (Zimmerman, 1990, p.169), such as the individual, organisational, and community levels, and “can have different intensities that can change over time” (Zimmerman, 1990, p.170). In the literature on empowerment in the human services, empowerment has been described as a theory and practice, a goal, a process, and as a form of intervention (Gutiérrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995; McWhirter, 1991). It seems that the term *empowerment* is easier to define in terms of its absence. Non-empowerment refers to perceived or actual “powerlessness”, “learned helplessness”, “alienation”, and “loss of a sense of control over one’s life” (Rappaport, 1984, p.3).
According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary, empowerment is defined as “authorize, license (a person to do); give power to, make able (person to do)” (cited in Jack, 1995, p.11). Jack (1995, p.11) believes that this definition has two distinct meanings: Enablement and empowerment. Enablement refers to

a process whereby someone uses their power to enable someone else to
do something; what that something is - its nature, goals and extent- is
controlled by the enabler. Thus the process of enablement is
circumscribed by the power of the enabler and does not involve giving
power over that process to the enabled (Jack, 1995, p.11).

Empowerment, on the other hand, according to Adams (cited in Jack, 1995, p.11), refers to “the process by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards maximising the quality of their lives”.

The interactional narrative process that occurred between presenters/facilitators and students in the SSEEP could be seen to include aspects of both definitions.

With reference to empowerment’s meaning in terms of enablement, it would be true to say that the presenters/facilitators used their ‘power’ within the university system to initiate and guide the SSEEP. Initially, the presenters/facilitators supported students in their acquisition of skills. Therefore, despite the apparent dominance of the presenters/facilitators over the students, it seemed that students were still able to benefit from the network of power relations (Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). However, once the students had learnt the requisite skills, the presenters/facilitators slowly withdrew their support. This implied a change in the relationship between presenters/facilitators and students towards more student independence. According to Mehan (cited in Au, 1998, p.299), this highlights the “social, intersubjective nature” of knowledge construction, which is consistent with the social constructivist approach. Therefore,
enablement does not seem to capture accurately the shift that occurred in the relationship between presenters/facilitators and students in the SSEEP.

The latter definition of empowerment seems to highlight some aspects of what occurred in the SSEEP. It stresses students’ achievement of mastery, the attainment of unique goals, and the improvement in the quality of their lives. This definition also seems to fit with critical theory’s idea of power being ‘taken’ and the goals of the ‘possessor’ determining the way power is used (Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). However, in contrast to the inclusion of all levels in the definition, the presenters/facilitators focussed on the individual level only, although it was their hope that it would have ripple effects into other relational contexts as well.

Adaptation Definition Versus Structural Change Definition

Initially empowerment was described “as a process of helping people adapt to the existing social structure” (Yeich & Levine, 1992, p.1895). It involved a focus on the people as the source of blame and the locus of change was the people themselves. In terms of this perspective, the influence of an oppressive social structure is not taken into account. In the structural change definition, however, the focus of change is the structural forces that cause social problems and the aim is social change.

Helping people simply to adapt to an existing social structure which may have been oppressive (for example, during the apartheid era in South Africa) as in the adaptation definition, would constitute perpetuating the problem, whereas social structural change on its own (as seems the case in South Africa at present where the structures of apartheid have been dismantled) without personal change, will not necessarily benefit people who will need to readjust and recreate new ways of thinking and being in a ‘different’ world. However, the ideas portrayed in these definitions do not appear to fit the ideas and philosophy of the SSEEP. They are probably more relevant in political contexts and in community empowerment as encountered in the field of Community Psychology (Rissel, 1994).
Empowerment is contextualised within social work, community psychology, and health care fields, as “a means to address the problems of powerless populations and to mediate the role powerlessness plays in creating and perpetuating social problems” (Gutiérrez, 1995, p.229). Critical theory, which seems coherent with this view, considers empowerment to be a process “to counter existing power relations that result in the domination of subordinate groups by more powerful ones” (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998, p.468). According to Rissel (1994, p.41), community empowerment “includes a raised level of psychological empowerment amongst its members, a political action component in which members have actively participated, and the achievement of some redistribution of resources or decisions making favorable to the community or group in question”. White and Potgieter (1996, p.83), in similar vein, maintain that psychological interventions should be accompanied by “clear political intervention or actual community empowerment” if psychology is to be relevant in the ‘new’ South Africa.

Within the dynamic context of their lives, people have goals, hopes, fears, values, attitudes and beliefs. However, often the ‘reality’ of their lives, such as scant opportunities for growth or change, the creation of a sense of dependence rather than autonomy, and unfair practices, may affect their psychological well-being and the well-being of their communities. Empowerment seems to provide a link to resources and a path to reclaim a sense of well-being. Empowerment thus seems to require attention to deficits, awareness of such deficits, the mobilisation or development of resources, and the levels of equity and openness to change in society (Swift & Levin, 1987).

Gutiérrez et al. (1995, p.535) suggest the following working definition of empowerment practice:

- Empowerment is a *theory and practice* that deals with issues of power, powerlessness, and oppression and how they contribute to individual, family, or community problems and affect helping relationships.
The **goal** of empowerment is to increase personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, or communities can take action to improve their situations.

Empowerment is a **process** that can take place on the individual, interpersonal, and community levels of intervention. It consists of the following subprocesses: development of group consciousness, reduction of self-blame, assumption of personal responsibility for change, and enhancement of self-efficacy.

Empowerment occurs through **intervention methods** that include basing the helping relationship on collaboration, trust, and shared power; utilizing small groups; accepting the client’s definition of the problem; identifying and building upon the client’s strengths; raising the client’s consciousness of issues of class and power; actively involving the client in the change process; teaching specific skills; using mutual-aid, self-help, or support groups; experiencing a sense of personal power within the helping relationship; and mobilizing resources or advocating for clients.

The goal is an increase in the actual power of the client or community so that action can be taken and change effected. The ultimate goal is the empowerment of a group or community.

Yeich and Levine (1992, p.1895) describe empowerment “as a process of mobilizing individuals and groups for purposes of creating social structural change to benefit oppressed people”. They propose a participatory conceptualisation of empowerment which incorporates both psychological and sociological dimensions which interact, and includes individual (“self-concept”, “self-efficacy”, “locus of control”, “motivation to control one’s environment”, and “critical awareness”), group (“development of group cohesion and attainment of resources for social action”) and societal-level components (mobilising a great number of people into social action, “the changing consciousness of the public about a social issue, changes in social structure to benefit oppressed people, or revolution”) (Yeich & Levine, 1992, p.1900).
McWhirter (1991, p.224) defines empowerment within a counselling context as the process by which people, organizations, or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others, and (d) support the empowerment of others in their community.

This definition is fairly similar to that of the Cornell Empowerment Group (cited in Rappaport, 1995, p.802), which defines empowerment as "an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources".

According to Rappaport (1984), empowerment should be viewed as a process by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives. Empowerment seems to imply the existence of many competencies or resources that can be further developed given the appropriate niches and opportunities. It also seems to imply that new competencies can be learned in the process of living. The content of the empowerment process may vary according to the people, settings, and strategies, and even the end products may be different. Some may experience a sense, or a perception of control, while others may experience actual control. It seems important to listen to the ideas and solutions of both professionals as well as those of ordinary people who appear to be living their lives successfully in the process of empowerment.

Zimmerman (1990, p.170) also refers to empowerment as embodying "an interaction between individuals and environments that is culturally and contextually defined". It seems that it is important to include environmental and organisational factors, and social, cultural and political contexts in our understanding.

In a study of Gutiérrez (1995), she investigates how a psychological process can contribute to political empowerment. Gutiérrez (1995, p.229) defines empowerment as
"the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, and communities can take action to improve their situation". It seems that in order "[f]or individuals to engage in social action, they must first develop a sense of critical consciousness" (Gutiérrez, 1995, p.229). The development of a critical consciousness involves three processes: group identification, group consciousness, and self and collective efficacy.

Kieffer (1984) proposed a view of empowerment as a long-term process of adult learning and development. He sees it as a political as well as a psychosocial conception. His study traced the transformation of the individual lives of political activists through a number of sequential phases which focussed on the development or emergence of competencies and mastery, or what he called participatory competence, despite conditions of powerlessness, but within a supportive environment. He refers to three intersecting dimensions: the development of a sense of self-competence, critical awareness of the social and political systems, and the "cultivation of individual and collective resources for social and political action" (Kieffer, 1984, p.31). Like Gutiérrez (1995) and Zimmerman (1990), Kieffer (1984) also conceptualised empowerment as an interactive and subjective relationship between individuals and their environments. An individual demand is nurtured by the effects of collective effort. The focus in this study was on conflict and the growth as a result thereof, and the necessity for individuals to participate in their own empowerment. Both cognitive change and behavioural change were included.

To sum up, social oppressive institutions seem to create and perpetuate feelings of powerlessness in the community and family systems, which lead to poor functioning in these systems as they are unable to protect individuals from the negative effects of the oppressive institutions. The basic assumption underlying empowerment in the social sciences and social profession therefore seems to be the redistribution of power in individuals, families and organisations in oppressed communities (Cornell Empowerment Group, cited in Rappaport, 1995; Gutiérrez, 1995; Gutiérrez et al.,1995; Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998; McWhirter, 1991; Yeich & Levine, 1992). The goal, or aim, is to facilitate mastery (Gutiérrez et al.,1995; Kieffer, 1984; McWhirter, 1991; Ozer & Bandura, 1990; Rappaport, 1984, 1987; Riger, 1993; Yeich & Levine, 1992) and social
change in order to overcome poverty, the unequal distribution of resources, and social problems (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). In addition empowerment is viewed as a participatory and collaborative process involving interaction between individuals and their environments (Cornell Empowerment Group, cited in Rappaport, 1995; Gutiérrez, 1995; Kieffer, 1984; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 1990), political and psychosocial components (Kieffer, 1984), or psychological and social or sociological aspects, (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Yeich & Levine, 1992). Therefore, the term empowerment appears to include more than individuals (Rappaport, 1987). It seems to include the relationship between a person and his or her outside world. It is not only an individual construct but is also organisational, political, sociological, economic and spiritual. Rappaport (1987) makes it clear that it is not just macrosocial versus microsocial change, or person-centred versus situation-centred change, that he regards as important in empowerment. Rather he stresses the radiating impact of the intervention. According to Felner and his colleagues (cited in Rappaport, 1987, p.128), interventions are strategies for prevention and are collaborative, “facilitating resources to free self-corrective capacities, delivered in a context that avoids the one down position of many helper-helpee relationships, and sensitive to the culture and traditions of the settings and individuals”. The definitions of empowerment seem to highlight the importance of context in defining the term (Rappaport, 1984; Riger, 1993). A strengths-based perspective seems to underlie empowerment practice (Gutiérrez et al., 1995; Kieffer, 1984; McWhirter, 1991; Rappaport, 1984; Swift & Levin, 1987). Gutiérrez (1995) and McWhirter (1991) refer to empowerment as a process of self-awareness, and Cornell Empowerment Group (cited in Rappaport, 1995), Gutiérrez (1995), Gutiérrez et al. (1995), Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998), Kieffer (1984), McWhirter (1991), Swift and Levin (1987), and Yeich and Levine (1992), to critical awareness of the political and social environment.

These definitions of empowerment, thus have the aim of social change, whereas other definitions of empowerment have the goal of psychological well-being and focus on “control or mastery to enhance such a feeling” (Thompson & Spacapan, cited in Van der Westhuysen, 1996, p.3).
However, Riger (1993) challenges the notion that empowerment is always the answer. According to Riger (1993, p.285), empowerment theory rests on the assumptions of “conflict rather than cooperation among groups and individuals, control rather than communion”. The empowered person (or group) is seen as having achieved “separation, individuation, and individual mastery” (Riger, 1993, p.285) rather than dependency (a word carrying a negative connotation), which could also imply a more positive meaning in the sense of connectedness. The former view of the empowered person reflects the dominant discourse which values instrumental (doing) behaviour and defines success in a western world. The nondominant discourse refers to the communal/expressive (feeling) realm, which is associated with connectedness or relatedness. These two discourses are often separated along gender lines, although these behaviours can be manifested by either sex. Riger (1993) suggests that both concepts are important to the well-being of people and communities. Thus Riger (1993, p.288) believes that empowerment and control might not be the appropriate goal in all community situations and that those who are “not in a position of autonomy and choice must focus on connection and communal goals to survive”. This is what seemed to occur amongst disadvantaged communities in South Africa during the apartheid era. Stack (cited in Riger, 1993, p.289), explains the strong sense of community in people who suffer together which may be threatened by “[f]inding one’s voice, controlling one’s resources, [and] becoming empowered”. An aim therefore would be to maintain connection as a resource and yet at the same time to avoid perpetuating powerlessness in the disadvantaged. This goal seems particularly pertinent to South Africa at present.

The definitions of empowerment discussed in this section highlight the need to address the problems of the powerless and appear to be aimed at social and political change. During the apartheid era it would have been apt to describe the disenfranchised peoples of South Africa as lacking empowerment. It is also acknowledged that despite the dismantling of the formal structures of apartheid, many of the vestiges of the past still remain. Nonetheless, the personal resources that students contributed became the focus of the SSEEP rather than ‘seeing’ students who attended the SSEEP in terms of ‘advantage’ and ‘disadvantage’. Therefore, this ‘deficit’ aspect of empowerment seemed antithetical to the focus on strengths, which paradoxically underlies empowerment theory and practice, and which was part of the philosophy informing the SSEEP.
Nonetheless many of the processes and intervention methods proposed by Gutiérrez et al. (1995), are similar to the processes that occurred in the SSEEP:

- The relationship between presenters/facilitators and students was based on collaboration, trust, and shared power;
- The presenters/facilitators identified and enhanced the strengths that students contributed;
- Students worked in a highly interactive way in small groups;
- Students were given a 'voice'. They 'named' their own problems within their communities, rather than have them named for them by another group, and proposed solutions;
- Through the dialogical process, students became aware of their own uniqueness and worth as human beings and the choices that they could make;
- Students became aware of their responsibility to be actively involved in the change process;
- Students developed more realistic self-efficacy beliefs during the programme;
- They were taught specific skills to help them cope academically, and they were given opportunities to develop interpersonal and communication skills during the SSEEP;
- They were encouraged to form study support groups;
- They seemed to experience a sense of personal power within the helping relationship, that is, in the relationship that existed between presenters/facilitators and students, and in the relationship between students.

However, the focus on consciousness-raising and mobilising resources or advocating on behalf of students, did not seem to occur in the SSEEP.

The context of the SSEEP was the academic context at a tertiary level. The individual level was the level targeted in the SSEEP as will become clearer later on in the discussion. Rappaport (1987) asks though whether empowerment at one level of analysis is able to affect other levels. It appears that there is a discrepancy between empowerment theory and practice (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). According to Gutiérrez et al. (1995, p.535), "[a]lthough it is described as a means to integrate individual and social
transformation, methods for achieving this integration are rarely presented”. In the SSEEP, it was hoped that changes on the individual level of students, which took place in a narrative context and where connection with others was regarded as a resource, would have ripple effects in other relational contexts as well, such as their families, friends, and communities. The idea of an interactional effect seems to be supported by Gutiérrez (1995), Kieffer (1984), Rappaport (1987), Yeich and Levine (1992), and Zimmerman (1990).

The Paradox of Empowerment

In view of the foregoing discussion, empowerment seems to have as goals, “separation, individuation, and individual mastery” (Riger, 1993, p.285), or increased personal, interpersonal, or political power so that action can be taken to improve the situation (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). Empowerment of the individual seems to have the ultimate goal of social or political change.

Empowerment appears to require people, or groups, to take the initiative to do something. These people or groups may not necessarily be linked personally to the individuals, groups or communities that they want to ‘empower’. They are often from the ‘outside’ and are usually more privileged than those they want to help. Usually their aim is to facilitate a collaborative and equitable relationship, and paradoxically, it seems that “strong leadership is essential to the successful establishment of an egalitarian decision-making body”(Gruber & Trickett, 1987, p368).

A top-down process is suggested in the idea of someone who has ‘power’, giving power to the ‘powerless’. However, this idea too presents a paradox because the whole notion of empowerment centres around making people more independent and in control of their own lives, and therefore less dependent on others to do things for them. Riger (1993) cautions that empowerment needs to be culturally sensitive and that the aforementioned aims, reflect values that are more consistent with a Western worldview. In their study, Gruber and Trickett (1987, p370) refer to the “fundamental paradox in the idea of people empowering others because the very institutional structure that puts one group in a position to empower others also works to undermine the act of empowerment”.

93
Foucault (cited in Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998) contests the idea that an isolated agent can mobilise resources to produce particular outcomes. “Instead, he conceptualizes power as a network of relations and discourses which capture advantaged and disadvantaged alike in its web” (Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998, p.458). This idea is in contrast to Gruber and Trickett’s (1987) belief in the conflicting nature of power. Foucault’s idea is similar to Bateson’s belief “that the myth of power always corrupts” (cited in Keeney, 1984, p.30). Bateson contends that it is the idea that control is necessary and possible that is problematical, as he believes that individuals are not able to ‘control’ others.

Gruber and Trickett (1987) also referred to the problem that may emerge when an initial supportive relationship results in the ‘leaders’ being reluctant to relinquish their role, or the ‘followers’ becoming used to their role. In this way, even though the original intention to create greater equality may have been well-meaning, it may end up creating a hierarchy. However, in the SSEEP, the idea of ‘scaffolding’ is consistent with the way that the presenters/facilitators supported students until they learnt the requisite skills, after which the presenters’/facilitators’ support was slowly withdrawn (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). This implied a change in the relationship between presenters/facilitators and students towards more student independence so that all parties could share in the responsibility.

Rissel (1994) agrees that the empowerment process seems to indicate some form of enablement. However, help givers should not ‘take over’ the activity. Their role is facilitative rather than directive and control of the effort should be in the hands of the recipients of empowerment practices.

Yeich and Levine (1992, p.1907) also maintain that “[a]llowing participants to control the empowerment intervention may be the purest method of studying empowerment”, as the idea of a researcher designing an intervention seems contradictory to the aims of empowerment. It “seems to be a process that one must do for oneself” (Yeich & Levine, 1992, p.1907).
In the SSEEP, the presenters/facilitators and students were part of the broader institutional structure of Unisa. Although greater equality was established between presenters/facilitators and students in the SSEEP context, in terms of the university system, all participants were not equal. Students lacked equal power with the presenters/facilitators due to unequal access to information, participatory skills, and power dynamics. However, these effects were ameliorated when the presenters/facilitators portrayed “themselves as fallible human beings with specialized expertise”, while viewing students “as experts on themselves and their environment” (McWhirter, 1991, p.225), and also in defining the nature of their relationship as interactional and equitable.

Self-Empowerment/Psychological Empowerment

Self-empowerment was the term used in the title of the programme. However, a search of the literature proved fruitless in this regard. Nevertheless, there were myriad references to psychological empowerment. This term seemed to reflect similarities with the philosophy of the SSEEP as well as the students’ definitions of the term self-empowerment, which will be reported shortly, and it was therefore felt that it would be a satisfactory substitute.

But what did the initiators of the SSEEP have in mind when they selected the term self-empowerment? It seems that their focus was on the active and participatory role that students would need to take in the SSEEP. They wanted their students to develop realistic self-efficacy beliefs, an internal locus of control and personal responsibility; autonomy and independence; interactional, communication and academic competencies; and personal growth; so that they could become competent students and lead meaningful lives in their communities. Their desire was for students to emerge the richer for having attended the SSEEP. At the conclusion of the SSEEP, students were asked to define the term in accordance with their expectation, and experiences during the week. This seemed to be important for the presenters/facilitators so that they could assess whether their ideas were congruent with the ideas/expectations, perceptions and experiences of the students. The aims of the presenters/facilitators seemed congruent with students’ interpretations of the term self-empowerment, as can be seen by the following examples:
Self-empowerment is to gain knowledge and share ideas and develop skills as to how to deal with problems.

Self-empowerment is the realisation that we are all special and can contribute to society. Self-empowerment is to learn to be positive and live in a way that is truly meaningful. To me it also means to take control of your life.

I would define self-empowerment as the opportunity to make the best of the life I have been given, not to waste or excuse the things I say or think or do, or the things I will omit to do. So that at the end of life I will feel I have lived a life, one day at a time, overcoming challenges and making a difference to the people (family, friends, children) I will meet.

Self-empowerment is having faith, courage, conviction and motivation, in your own capabilities and abilities to go out there and do what you really want to do.

Self-empowerment is when people are taught how to use tools or skills that will allow them to live and function independently.

Self-empowerment would be the freedom to make my own decisions about my life, make my own opinions, conclusions.

Self-empowerment is a programme where one get the chance to discover his or her abilities.

Self-empowerment is the ability an individual acquires to enable themselves to develop and enhance their personality and improve their life skills to better function in society and to enrich themselves and hence their environment and community.

Self-empowerment is taking control over one's self. Becoming more aware of your potential and confidence in what you can do.

Self-empowerment is the acknowledgement of one's own strengths and tendencies and the opportunity and ability to use these talents for the improvement of one's situation. This has a cyclic affect and leads to greater and greater improvement for oneself and ultimately others.

Self-empowerment is when students are clarified on the course itself and they are also given the chance to explain how they see things.

Self-empowerment means making oneself powerful, strong, confident, and feeling worthy or valuable. This can be accomplished by active participation of an individual in a social group like this one, sharing ideas among ourselves.

Self-empowerment is the accessing of one's true potential through the stimulation of creative ideas and enrichment in an atmosphere of caring and trust.

Self-empowerment is involvement of the participant and guidance to feel confident to be able to do on his own.
In sum, these definitions of self-empowerment provided by students seemed to refer to the process, the goals, and the interventions of empowerment that occurred on a personal, psychological level but which may have positive effects in other relational contexts as well. They seemed to focus mainly on the following:

- Gaining different perspectives and/or knowledge that will assist them to develop, gain mastery, and live independently.
- Becoming better persons which will have beneficial effects on their behaviour.
- Finding meaning in life and making the best of life no matter what the circumstances.
- Feeling capable and positive about doing things, experiencing improved self-esteem and confidence.
- Being in control of one’s life.
- Knowing oneself, and becoming aware of one’s potential and one’s strengths, and realising and overcoming shortcomings.
- Interacting and learning from one another as part of the process.
- Requiring the active participation of people.
- Experiencing academic, social and spiritual upliftment.
- Being aware of choices.
- Experiencing the SSEEP as empowerment.
- Experiencing an atmosphere of caring and trust.
- Desiring to help others.

According to Ozer and Bandura (1990), empowerment is closely related to self-efficacy beliefs. They believe that the effect of equipping people with the necessary knowledge, skills and self-efficacy beliefs will help people to gain mastery over their lives and to change aspects of their lives if necessary. This definition does not address changes in the larger contexts, and led McWhirter (1991) to argue that efficacy can be regarded only as a component of empowerment, but cannot be equated with it. However, this definition of empowerment provided by Ozer and Bandura (1990) seems more consistent with psychological empowerment than community empowerment which is what McWhirter (1991) seems to be referring to.
Some authors refer specifically to the intrapersonal (beliefs in one's capacity to influence social and political systems, self-efficacy, motivation to exert control, and perceived competence), interactional (transactions between persons and environments that will help people to master social and political systems), and behavioural components (specific actions one takes to exercise influence on the social and political environment through participation in community organisations and activities) of psychological empowerment (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992).

Psychological empowerment can also refer to meaningfulness, influence, and self-efficacy (Corsun & Enz, 1999). Kraimer, Seibert, and Liden (1999) put it slightly differently and construe it as meaningfulness, competence, self-determination (or independence) and impact (or sense of power at work).

Rissel (1994, p.41) defines psychological empowerment “as a feeling of greater control over their own lives which individuals experience following active membership in groups or organizations, and may occur without participation in collective political action”.

Zimmerman (1990) differentiates between individually oriented conceptions of empowerment and psychological empowerment. He suggests that individuated oriented conceptions of empowerment need to be distinguished from psychological empowerment. Although they both refer to the individual level of analysis, the former disregards context, and seems to treat empowerment as a personality variable, whereas psychological empowerment takes ecological and cultural influences into account. Psychological empowerment also includes the idea of person-environment fit, and seems to include, “but is not limited to, collective action, skill development, and cultural awareness; and incorporates intrapsychic variables such as motivation to control, locus of control, and self-efficacy” (Zimmerman, 1990, p.174). It seems that the goal is to understand how the individual and what goes on in his or her head interacts with his or her context, to inhibit or enhance his or her mastery and control over the factors that influence his or her life. He sums up psychological empowerment by stating that it “is a contextual construct that requires an ecological analysis of individual knowledge, decision-making processes, and person-environment fit”(Zimmerman, 1990, p.175). He
cites the example of an empowered person who lacks real power in the political sense, but who nonetheless can make choices in different situations.

In the study of Gutiérrez et al. (1995), human service workers conceptualised the concept of empowerment by focussing on its individual and psychological aspects of change. They did not seem to mention the interpersonal or political elements of empowerment. They seemed to define it mainly as a goal (a desired outcome of practice) or as a process of working. This is similar to the way that students defined it. Gutiérrez et al. (1995) highlighted the following outcomes and processes:

- **Control**: This includes “control over one’s life”, and involves “feelings of control” and “the concrete means” to achieve it (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.537). Control can be achieved through the encouragement of others to find one’s strengths and recognise one’s weaknesses. It also involves the creation of opportunities to develop strengths and resources.

- **Confidence**: This means “having the confidence to take risks” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.537). It can be achieved through the structuring of an environment and by providing opportunities. People need to believe that they have choices, integrity and strengths. Confidence seems to be the opposite of feeling a victim.

- **Power**: This entails “gaining power”, or “recognizing the power one has in a given situation”, or developing power “to influence one’s situation”, or power to change one’s life in the direction you want it to go (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.537). It involves “developing tools” or skills to make changes - providing opportunities, channels and structures to do so (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.537). It also means recognising the power within individuals and providing the means to release and develop that power.

- **Choices**: It involves awareness of and access to choices. It entails listening, “providing information about options” and “the means to exercise choices”. It is “consumer-driven” as opposed to choices being made for individuals (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.538).

- **Autonomy**: Although interdependence and support were mentioned, there was also a desire for independence or autonomy. This could involve helping the person to use services/information “to become self-directed and motivated”. It
seems to refer to “self-help ... or involving a sense of independence on the part of the individual” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p.538).

The definition of Zimmerman et al. (1992) does not seem to fit with the philosophy of the SSEEP with its emphasis on influencing or mastering the social and political environment. However, the definitions of Corsun and Enz (1999), Gutiérrez et al. (1995), Kraimer, et al. (1999), and Zimmerman (1990), appear to be more congruent with it. The following descriptions (Gutiérrez et al., 1995) of what was done in the programme clearly highlights the congruence between the aforementioned definitions and the philosophy in the programme:

- **Educational**: Students were encouraged to develop a sense of critical awareness (for example, that abuse is not part of what women could expect in life), and also self-awareness, so that they could develop skills that would enable them to function more effectively in academic, personal, family and community contexts. This involved the presenters/facilitators building on what students brought into the conversation. Students were given opportunities for both formal (such as learning to write concise answers to academic questions) and informal training (such as role playing, leadership practices, and interpersonal communication).

- **Participatory**: This involved the need for the participation of both participants and presenters/facilitators. Both engaged in dialogue and action. The presenters/facilitators allowed students a ‘voice’ and affirmed their contributions. It involved a humble approach from the presenters/facilitators who used appropriate levels of self-disclosure, identified with the participants, accepted their own limits, and were willing to risk. It also involved being a role model.

- **Strength based**: The presenters/facilitators focussed on strengths rather than problems. Strengths could be stories, or connection to others, which seemed to bring healing (for example, the way in which a female student had coped with abuse). Student’s contributions became a resource for others, including the presenters/facilitators.
Rationale for Choosing the Term Enhancing Above the Term Self-Empowerment

The term, *self-empowerment*, appears in the title of the programme, and yet does not appear in the title of this dissertation, which is *Enhancing students’ personal resources through narrative*.

The way that *self-empowerment* is used in the title of the programme, suggests psychological empowerment. The outcomes and processes highlighted by Gutiérrez et al. (1995), seem coherent with the outcomes and processes that occurred in the SSEEP. Individuals, in interaction with the presenters/facilitators and other students were active participants in the process. They became aware of the choices that they had, and took the reins of their lives and steered them in the direction they wanted to go. It suggests the facilitative role of the presenters/facilitators. The SSEEP provided the context for this to occur.

The presenters/facilitators or help givers needed to be both positive and proactive. They respected the students’ choices, cultures, and perceptions of the problems. They promoted self-esteem, helped the individual student experience immediate success, promoted the use of natural support networks, conveyed a sense of co-operation and partnership, promoted effective behaviour, and helped the students see themselves as active and responsible in problem-solving (McWhirter, 1991), and focussed on strengths. This seemed to occur through the narrative.

However, despite the aforementioned, the term, *empowerment*, was decided against in the title, firstly, because of the emphasis on social change in many of the definitions of empowerment. This emphasis was inconsistent with the aims of the SSEEP, although it was hoped that personal change would impact on other systems, such as the family and community.

Secondly, the term *empowerment* seems to have lost favour because of its assumptions of conflict and power, which imply a certain way of ‘seeing’ and relating, and its historical embeddedness in a discourse of dominance. This is a particularly sensitive issue in South Africa which was characterised by divisiveness during the apartheid years.
The term *empowerment*’s historical embeddedness in a discourse of dominance referred to the discourse of the ‘Whites’ in South Africa which did not allow the nondominant ‘voice’ to be heard. The presenters/facilitators of the SSEEP belonged to the so-called ‘White’ group. Therefore, it was particularly important for them to stop looking and acting in divisive ways.

A divisive way of ‘seeing’ did not seem to fit the aims of the SSEEP nor the researcher’s lens. Many of the definitions of empowerment seemed to imply that certain sectors of oppressed students did not have power and were powerless. This reflects a focus on deficits and not resources. It is the researcher’s belief that seeing some students as powerless victims is divisive and perpetuates the problem, blocking the view of students as people having infinite worth and resources that can be affirmed and built upon.

This ‘deficit’ view seems to have profound implications for the aims of community empowerment. Even with the best intentions in the world to empower communities, such as the community of learners, it seems that one succeeds only in entrenching divisiveness, and ‘seeing’ people in divisive ways. The way in which the presenters/facilitators wanted to use this term thus seemed to be out of synchronisation with its current usage and meanings in the South African context.

The researcher wanted to use a term that would be synonymous with enabling or permitting students to utilise their health, strengths, resources, “possibilities”, “visions”, “competencies”, “values” and “hopes” (Saleeby, 1996, p.297) in order to become competent citizens. The terms *enhancement of personal resources*, used in the title of this dissertation, also refer to building upon or intensifying people’s resources, that they bring into the created context. These ideas are shared with the ideas put forward by Gutiérrez et al. (1995), Kieffer (1984), McWhirter (1991), Rappaport (1984), and Swift and Levin (1987).

The strengths perspective is an attempt to balance the emphasis in this world on what is wrong. The idea of ‘seeing’ a problem implies a belief in the idea and in the necessity to ‘fix’ it, which gives rise to the myth of power (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). The strengths perspective thus demands a “re-vision” on the part of the researcher and her co-
presenters and frees them to listen to the stories of their students (Saleeby, 1996, p.297).

According to Benard, the strengths perspective aims to

reconnect people to the health in themselves and then direct them in ways
to bring forth the health of others in their community. The result is a
change in people and communities which builds up from within rather

This latter perspective reflects the aims of this study.

Therefore, because the word *empowerment* could have been misunderstood, it was
decided not to use it in the title of the dissertation. In this context, therefore, the use of
the terms *enhancing students' personal resources* is regarded as more appropriate than
the terms *self-empowerment* and *self-enrichment* originally used to describe the SSEEP.
CHAPTER 5

ENHANCING STUDENTS' PERSONAL RESOURCES THROUGH NARRATIVE

Introduction

The narrative approach to therapy and groups will be used in order to understand the processes that occurred in the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP). The underlying assumption was that students' personal resources could be enhanced through the meaning that develops between people through conversation as they interact with one another in a warm and encouraging atmosphere.

In this chapter, narrative will be contextualised within postmodernism and social constructionism. This will be followed by a discussion on constructing and reconstructing stories, the narrative approach in general, and the narrative approach to therapy and groups.

Locating Narrative Within Postmodernism and Social Constructionism

Postmodernism

The modern era was based on the assumption of the existence of universal truths and language as faithful and unbiased (Fuks, 1998). This philosophy ascribes to a view of the world as understandable, controllable and predictable. This means that we 'know' what to do to effect change in a certain direction. From this perspective, there could only be one 'truth' or account on which to rely and to which some people had access. However, when different people claimed to possess this 'truth', it became clear that there could not be just one single 'truth' but that many possible interpretations were possible.

Postmodernism, therefore, rejects the notion of a universal and objective knowledge (Lynch, 1997). Knowledge, or what we believe, is instead seen as "an expression of the
language, values and beliefs of the particular communities and contexts” in which we exist (Lynch 1997, p.353).

Thus, the message of postmodernism seems to be that we should be wary of any account that claims to offer the sole explanation or interpretation, as many alternative accounts, descriptions, or meanings, may be possible (Doan, 1997). For example, during the apartheid era in South Africa, the ‘apartheid’ story legitimised the oppression of the Black population. This ‘truth’, however, was questioned more and more vociferously by certain sectors of the population. This example also illustrates that, from the postmodern perspective, all stories do not have equal validity as some stories are disrespectful of certain sectors of the population.

In the SSEEP, the presenters/facilitators were required to live with the uncertainty of being unable to predict change in a certain direction. They remained open to the processes that occurred throughout the duration of the programme, as well as to the multiple accounts, descriptions, explanations and meanings that emerged as a result of the interaction between presenters/facilitators and students. In addition, the ideas and interpretations in this study do not claim to be the only way of ‘seeing’ - they are but one view - as many different interpretations are possible.

Constructivism, Social Constructionism and Narrative

Some researchers use constructivism as an umbrella term for both constructivism and social constructionism (McLeod, 1996). However, it is deemed necessary to differentiate between them as there are important underlying differences.

Constructivism refers to the process by which reality is created by the observer. What is observed is given meaning by the observer and it is in this way that we can say that reality is created (Jonassen, 1991; Von Foerster, 1981; Von Glasersfeld, 1988; Watzlawick, 1984).

In constructivism, any one person’s interpretation is as ‘true’ as any other person’s interpretation, as long as it works within a particular context (Dickerson & Zimmerman,
1996; Doan, 1997). This implies not only that no single ‘truth’ or interpretation exists, but that all stories or interpretations that work are equally valid (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Doan, 1997). The constructivist view thus tends to be consistent with postmodernism with regards to the belief in the existence of many possible ‘truths’, but contrasts with postmodernism regarding the belief that interpretations have equal validity.

The constructivist view excluded the effects of a dominant social reality that influences the creation of meaning (Held, 1990). It needed to be expanded to include the idea that the way in which a person perceives or makes sense of his or her world, is informed by his or her interaction with the social and cultural context (Dean & Rhodes, 1998).

Social constructionism is thus

the claim and viewpoint that the content of our consciousness, and the mode of relating we have to others, is taught by our culture and society: all the metaphysical qualities we take for granted are learned from others around us (Owen, 1992, p.386).

Berger and Luckman (cited in Speed, 1991, p.400) contend that “we socially construct reality by our use of shared and agreed meanings communicated via language; that is, that our beliefs about the world are social inventions”. For example, in the context of the Western world, there is a belief that success is measured by one’s material possessions, such as the car one drives, where one lives, how one dresses, and so on. This belief does not exist in an objective sense but is socially constructed and adhered to as if it was the ‘truth’.

A social constructionist perspective, as opposed to a constructivist perspective, “locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social, community context”(Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.80). According to Anderson and Goolishian (cited in Hart, 1995, p.184), “[w]e live with each other in a world of conversational narrative, and we understand ourselves and each other through changing stories and self descriptions”.
A social constructionist perspective is especially interested in the normative narratives, or Grand Narratives, which are formed by and in turn influence people, and against which people measure themselves. "Grand Narratives are supported by the weight of numbers, tradition, and firmly entrenched power structures" (Doan, 1997, p.130). White and Epston (cited in Speed, 1991, p.400), concur "that the particular meanings we impose on behaviour are dictated and organised by whatever 'dominating analogies or interpretive frameworks' are currently available".

Social constructionism challenges these narratives positing that they form the context for the development of problems (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). People's personal stories are frequently subjugated and denied in favour of the dominant belief system which tends to pathologise those who do not meet its expectations. As a consequence, people begin to think about themselves and their relationships in ways that are consistent with problem-saturated stories. According to Coale (1994), clients will usually discuss the dominant discourses of their lives with therapists. However, she advises therapists to also listen to the nondominant stories that clients tell them, as they may contain possibilities which could facilitate change. Problematic realities associated with these discourses can be 'deconstructed' and new realities can be 'reconstructed' or rather co-constructed or co-created by therapist and client so that meaning is transformed (Coale, 1994). Owen (1992) maintains that social constructionism views relationships between people as either conforming to, or lacking a fit with, the idealised roles or ways of relating to others. Social constructionism, therefore, focuses on knowledge as power, believing that "cultural specifications" exert a real influence on people's lives (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.80) and takes a stand on the subjugating effect of discourses.

Social constructionism concurs with postmodernism in asserting that all stories are not equally valid, and that in fact some stories "are not respectful of difference, gender, ethnicity, race, or religion" (Doan, 1997, p.130). It is also in agreement with postmodernism in cautioning against singular accounts, whose power tends to further silence and marginalise those whose stories fail to fit. It prefers "stories that are based on a person's lived experience" rather than on "expert knowledge" (Doan, 1997, p.130) as, according to Adams-Westcott (cited in Doan, 1997, p.130), they "allow for the experience of personal agency".
Social constructionist thinking seems to be coherent with constitutionalist thinking. To be “constituted” means that people behave according to their beliefs rather than according to their fixed and unchangeable “structures, personalities, or foundations” (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.81), which is more in line with essentialist/foundationalist thinking. Constitutionalist thinking means that alternative meanings are possible, and people can construct or ‘constitute’ themselves in other ways, which might be more beneficial.

According to Parry and Doan (cited in Doan, 1997, p.130), “narrative therapy is to postmodernism what psychoanalysis was to modernism”. “[N]arrative subverts the notion of a ‘true self’ with the suggestion that people are communities of selves, and that each person contains a multitude of voices with varying points of view” (Doan, 1997, p.130). Multiple selves, meanings and contexts underlie postmodernism, social constructionism, and narrative (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). They share the belief of being cautious of singular, totalising accounts. Stories about what is “right” are often culture and “gender and class-specific” (White, 1995, p.16) and do not seem to accommodate diversity, multiverses, or alternative knowledges.

The basic assumptions underlying postmodernism, social constructionism, and narrative, were clearly adhered to in the SSEEP as students were not required to conform or to measure themselves against a single norm, but were encouraged to appreciate their diversity. If they found their way of being problematical, they were encouraged to explore other possibilities and to perform alternative meanings. This could even mean challenging institutions in our society that stand in the way. However, bearing in mind the academic context of the SSEEP, the challenge to the presenters/facilitators was to assist students to master the second-year Psychology course and the skills required to pass, as well as to bring forth stories that had been silenced, or did not fit with the dominant narratives which would have a bearing on their lives more generally.

Postmodernism, social constructionism and narrative are “interested in accounts that honor and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual and how these accounts can be respected within a particular system” (Doan, 1997, p.131). In addition, they are interested in helping individuals whose stories have gone wrong or no longer
work, and families whose “stories are in collision” (Doan, 1997, p.131). They also recognise the links between stories (Parry, cited in Doan, 1997), and that one story cannot go ahead at the expense of others without affecting relationships negatively. Their aim is to deconstruct stories that dominate others. When these are examined, alternative choices become available (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). They encourage individuals to tell their own stories, while at the same time acknowledging the social nature of human life. Narrative practitioners externalise the problem and do not locate it within the person. This approach is congruent with social constructionism which aims at helping people escape the domination of “oppressive domains of knowledge” (Doan, 1997, p.131). Thus practitioners of the narrative approach “can be viewed as being ‘subversive’ in relation to the Grand Narratives of our culture” (Doan, 1997, p.131). The sociopolitical context that is addressed challenges the political status quo ((Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). If we return to the example, referred to previously, of the narrative of success within the context of the Western world as measured by one’s material possessions, the presenters/facilitators of the SSEEP would challenge the narrative by including ideas from multi-voices, such as being a good mother/father, participating in one’s community life, and so on.

Constructing and Re-Constructing Stories

According to White (1995, p.13), “human beings are interpreting beings”. They actively interpret their experiences in the process of living and co-construct reality through language.

Thus, language itself creates realities. However, because language is subjective, if the meanings that people attach to language is too idiosyncratic, it will become apparent in the way that others respond to their communication, and they will need to adapt it accordingly (Von Glasersfeld, 1988). This idea was particularly salient in the context of the SSEEP in which cross-cultural encounters occur, and where language can sometimes be problematic. For many of the students who attended the SSEEP, English was not their mother-tongue. Hence, it became quite a challenge for the presenters/facilitators to learn to express themselves simply so as to avoid confusion, and to try and understand the ‘voices’ and worlds of their students via words used in ways which were
not always familiar to the presenters/facilitators and students whose mother-tongue was English.

Reality is constructed through social discourse - through language - and is agreed upon through conversation (Real, 1990). A conversation is best understood as a paradigm for describing interactions between autonomous systems whether between human or nonhuman systems, or between living or nonliving systems (Griffith, Griffith & Slovik, 1990). In conversation, participants engage in dialogue that enables each one to offer his or her perspective and, at the same time, it creates the opportunity to hear the perspective of the other. According to Dell (cited in Real, 1990, p.263), the term “conversation’ means ‘to turn with”, and as the conversation “turns”, shifts in frames can lead to new descriptions.

Of importance, therefore, is language, and the stories people tell about themselves (Doherty, 1991). Stories are socially constructed through language (Coale, 1994). In fact, problems are also stories that people have come to believe about themselves (Hoffman, 1990). Stories thus constitute a “frame of intelligibility” which provides a context for experience and “makes the attribution of meaning possible” (White, 1995, p.13). According to Florio-Ruane (1997, p.155), narrative “is imposed on the bits and pieces of experience to create a coherent sense of meaning spanning past, present, and future”. According to Lentricchia and McLaughlin (cited in Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.155),

[l]iterary critics call the narrative devices we use to give order and meaning to experience ‘tropes.’ From the Greek word meaning ‘to twist,’ a trope is a figurative use of language that turns experience in a particular way and for particular effect.

According to Emihovich, and Lakoff and Johnson (cited in Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.155), tropes as social constructions “eventually come to shape experience”. McLaren (cited in Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.156) says that “we actively construct and are constructed by the discourses we embody and the metaphors we enact”.

110
Polkinghorne (cited in Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.156), suggests that “narratives arise out of tension or conflict in experience” and that “[s]tories are attempts to cope with events that are hard to reconcile with one another”. For example, in South Africa at present, the previously disenfranchised groups are now enfranchised. However, the narrative of disadvantage continues to exert its effects on the identities of many individuals. In addition, many of the previously advantaged groups feel threatened by the new language of democracy and a perception of a pervasive sense of loss. For many educationists, a narrative still exists about the problem of cultural diversity and, more especially, disadvantaged Black students, instead of “nurturing the knowledge-transforming possibilities of people’s contact with one another” (Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.158).

Polkinghorne (cited in Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.158) refers to the activity of revising or telling new stories as “re-employment”. It seems that it is only when we are prepared to move into the uncertain zone between past and present that new stories can emerge. According to Florio-Ruane (1997), creating a new education story that includes differences as productive resources will help to reform institutions and build new communities. She says:

If our stories of self are to help us reform institutions or build new communities, we need to be willing to reinvent them, repeatedly and in the company of others, embracing rather than defending ourselves from contact. We must replace outworn renditions of ‘who we are’ that, in Toni Morrison’s words, are ‘unreceptive to interrogation, cannot form or tolerate new ideas, shape other thoughts, tell another story, fill baffling silences’. Instead, in our scholarship and our teaching, we must risk telling new stories in and by many voices. This is an act of hope (Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.160).

In the context of the SSEEP, the presenters/facilitators and students were in the “process of making meaning in contact with others”, which Florio-Ruane (1997, p.155) defines as culture. They seemed to take cognisance of one another and “adapted their styles of participation, bridging differences in expectation and prior knowledge in order to jointly solve learning problems” (Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.155). According to Eisenhart
(cited in Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.158), this is an example of “a transforming ‘story of self’”, which is “about people making culture together, reshaping, in their moment-to-moment encounters, their educational histories and futures”. In terms of White and Epston’s ideas (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996), students were able to enter alternative stories to the ones that subjugated them, to take them over, and to make them more their own.

According to Baillie and Corrie (1996), individuals construct reality through narrative, practical action and the changes of consciousness. This seems to imply a multimode approach consisting of social constructionism, critical realism, and the humanist tradition, that captures the different facets of individuals’ experiences. In terms of social constructionism, “human reality is a discursive construction that does not entail material-causal processes” (Baillie & Corrie, 1996, p.296), whereas critical realism, although acknowledging the role of language in the construction of reality, “argues that material-causal processes are implicated in other modes of construction which are independent of language use and the realities (discourses) it creates” (Baillie & Corrie, 1996, p.296). In other words, it acknowledges the context or the “practical order” (Baillie & Corrie, 1996, p.296), which can be enabling or constraining, and will differ from individual to individual. The humanist tradition ascribes to the view that individuals “construct their reality out of the potentials provided by consciousness and the shifts in consciousness that are possible” (Baillie & Corrie, 1996, p.296). It seems that human consciousness is involved in personal transformation. It “allows us to reflect upon experience and provides us with the opportunity to draw lessons as we see fit” (Baillie & Corrie, 1996, p.307) and is “both the site and the vehicle through which experience, in both senses described above [narrative and practical action], is constructed in the multiple drafting process” (Baillie & Corrie, 1996, p.307).

Therefore, meanings are not neutral but exert an influence on the lives of people. The story or self-narrative “determines which aspects of our lived experience get expressed” and “determines the shape of the expression of our lived experience” (White, 1995, p.13). People tend to live by the stories they tell. These stories seem to “shape [their] lives”, “constitute [their] lives”, and “embrace” their lives (White, 1995, p.14).
Narratives thus have the power to heal and destroy. Therefore, the content of narratives is important. According to Rappaport and Simkins (1991, p.38) ‘[t]he power of these stories lies in their repetition, internalization and enactment.” Fortunately however, we do not live our lives by a single story but by multi-stories.

A General Discussion on Narrative

According to Cobb (1993, p.250), narratives are material in the sense that they blur traditional distinctions between discourse and action - to tell a story is to act upon the world. That is why participation in narrative processes is so important - the shape and the composition of the social/material world is at stake.

It seems that ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are used interchangeably (Dean, 1998; Rappaport, 1993; Sarbin, 1986) to refer to

the threading together of a set of events or experiences in a temporal sequence in order to make sense of them. In most narratives there is a set of characters or protagonists and a plot or through line that carries the reader or listener along. The story may be told to make a point, teach a lesson, or provide a moral exemplar. Sometimes the telling is for the sole purpose of imparting meaning. Often, in the process of telling stories to other people we create meaning for ourselves (Dean, 1998, p.24).

And, it would seem, impact on the meaning-making of others.

Sarbin (1986, p.3) states that a story is a symbolized account of actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension. The story has a beginning, a middle, and an ending”.

It is “held together by recognizable patterns of events called plots.
Central to the plot structure are human predicaments and attempted resolutions.

From these definitions it is apparent that narratives, therefore, have certain structural features and they serve various functions. Structural features "include event sequences arranged in context over time" (Rappaport, 1993, p.249).

Stories have multiple functions. An event can be storied in multiple ways and will thus have diverse effects depending on the context of the storyteller. Stories facilitate the understanding of human experience from the point of view of a person in a social context (Rappaport, 1993). They function to "order experience, give coherence and meaning to events and provide a sense of history and of the future" (Rappaport, 1993, p. 240). They explain people to themselves and to others. In addition, they also create identities and influence how people manage their lives (Dean, 1998). A narrative approach also focuses on strengths and 'success' stories to replace problem-saturated stories which seems to release growth and change. The sharing of stories seems particularly helpful in creating new and 'healing' stories. Narratives are thus dynamic rather than stable, and include context which is part of their meaning.

Although the concepts narratives and stories can be viewed as interchangeable terms, Rappaport (1993) suggests that narrative can be used when speaking of a community level of analysis, and stories, when one speaks of an individual level. Stories or personal narratives help us to understand "people in context and the ways in which they learn and think" (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991, p.36). Rappaport (1993, p.247) defines the community narrative as "a story repeatedly told among members of a setting. It can be told directly, as in face-to-face contact, or indirectly by means of written material, rituals, implicit expectations, shared events, and nonverbal behaviors".

In this study, the community narrative can be regarded as the narrative of the presenters, representing the academic world, the narrative of the students, representing the student world, and both informed by the narrative of the South African community. It appears that narratives are changed by the personal life stories of their members, and vice versa. The narrative that occurred in the SSEEP can be regarded as "a specific example of the
processes that can be shown to occur in the lives of people more generally” (Rappaport, 1993, p.240). The idea is that “the community narrative and the personal life story are embedded in a mutual influence process” (Rappaport, 1993, p.247). It should also be borne in mind that people belong to different settings and that these multiple settings also construct and transform people’s personal stories.

Allowing people to tell their stories which are affected by and in turn affect collective stories, is a powerful resource. According to Maton and Salem (cited in Rappaport, 1995, p.799), this occurs in a context which provides a “strengths-based belief system focused beyond the self”, a role structure that provides access to opportunities, “shared leadership”, and “a peer-based support system that creates a sense of community”.

According to Rappaport (1995, p.805), “narratives are understood as resources.” When these are acknowledged and included, “practice... is then woven with the indigenous expression of community approaches where the word ‘community’ means that citizens are equal and collaborative partners” (Kelly, 1990, p.785).

According to Rappaport (1993), the narrative viewpoint is appealing for several reasons: Firstly, everyone seems to be able to tell a personal story; secondly, it seems that telling stories is persuasive in their effects on people; thirdly, stories reside within a context that is part of their meaning, they can be examined, they are “acts of communication and self-definition” (Rappaport, 1993, p.253) and are dynamic; in addition, stories are “continuously constructed, and the process of storytelling is an active one from the viewpoint of both the teller and the listener” (Rappaport, 1993, p.253); and finally, the “processes mirror themselves at different levels of analysis” (Rappaport, 1993, p.253).

**Narrative Approaches to Therapy**

A number of narrative assumptions and approaches underlying therapeutic practice will now be discussed. These underlying beliefs, or premises, also informed the thinking and practices that occurred in the SSEEP. This approach seemed particularly relevant given that many students entered the SSEEP with subjugating stories that they lived their lives by. Students were able to move from the anonymity of silence to the healing of
affirmation through narrative - though not to the same extent for all students. Nonetheless, a belief which also informed this process was that a person could not but be changed by the encounter.

According to Doan (1997, p.132), the following are narrative assumptions and the therapeutic practices they inform:

1. People live their lives by the stories they tell themselves or allow others to tell them. Stories are constructed of events as well as the application of meaning to events. The therapist is interested in liberating the client’s voice and perceptions and in understanding how individuals were recruited into their current stories and meanings.

2. The stories that people tell themselves are not representations of the world; they are the world. The map is the territory. It is the client’s voice, not the therapist’s, that informs and constructs his or her world. Therapy seeks to liberate alternate voices from the client rather than from the therapist.

3. The narratives we tell ourselves are not neutral in their effects. Neither are their effects imagined. Stories have formative and creative effects, and some stories are more useful than others. All accounts are not created equal. Therapists challenge and critique stories, but not from a knowing stance. Rather, curiosity guides the therapist in a collaborative exploration of story lines, authors, and meanings. Together they search for the story that would match the preferred intentions of the client.

4. Most clients are unwittingly cooperating with a singular account, one that leaves little optionality or choice. They are being lived by a story rather than being the author of multiple accounts. Therapists seek to provide space for alternate accounts from clients. Therapy is a comparison of at least two stories (problem story versus preferred story). Choices create options.

5. Stories are negotiated between people and the institutions of their
Most accounts are the result of an interaction between individuals and their families and their cultures, that is, stories are socially constructed and informed. The therapist actively explores the familial and cultural history/herstory of clients. Authors other than the client are identified and held up for inspection. Past events may not be changeable, but it is possible to alter the meanings attached to events. (For example, “I’m bad” versus “Bad Things Were Done to Me.”)

It is useful to speak of problems as problems rather than of people as problems. This reframes the socially constructed story concerning labeling and locating problems inside of persons. Therapists engage in externalizing dialogues with clients rather than internalizing ones. People are far more than the problems that visit them on occasion. Problems are objectified rather than people. The therapy allows the client to analyze the problem separate from his or her identity.

Lynch (1997, p.354) believes that the “therapeutic process is one in which the therapist seeks the (re)formation of the client’s self-narratives, according to the macronarratives, beliefs and vision of the good life of a particular community of therapeutic belief”. He ascribes to the view that “personal identity is socially constructed” and does not “emerge from some private, inner awareness or knowledge”(Lynch, 1997, p.354). He maintains that narrative is a “key linguistic form in the construction of our identity” (Lynch, 1997, p.355). Narratives enable individuals to order their experiences within a temporal framework “which renders them intelligible” and “reflects (or arguably creates) our sense of ourselves as intentional agents moving through space and time” (Lynch, 1997, p.355). In this way, individuals are able to transform impoverishing stories or narratives into ones that are more positive.

Anderson and Goolishian’s (cited in Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996, pp.177-178) narrative position in therapy is based on the following premises:
1. Human systems are language-generating and, simultaneously, meaning-generating systems. The therapeutic system, [or in this case the facilitator/student system], is such a linguistic system.

2. Meaning and understanding are socially constructed, and we do not arrive at, or have, meaning and understanding until we take communicative action. A therapeutic system [or in this case, the facilitator/student system] is a system for which the communication has a relevance specific to its dialogical exchange.

3. Any system in therapy is one that has dialogically coalesced around some 'problem'. The therapeutic system is a problem-organizing, problem-dis-solving system. [In the SSEEP, the system formed around the dialogue between facilitators and students.]

4. Therapy [or the processes that occurred in the SSEEP] is a linguistic event that takes place in a therapeutic conversation, that is, in a mutual search and exploration through dialogue in which new meanings are continually evolving toward the 'dis-solving' of problems, and thus, the dissolving of the therapy system [or the facilitator/student system].

5. The role of the therapist [or presenters] is that of a conversational artist - an architect of the dialogical process - whose expertise is in the arena of creating a space for and facilitating a dialogical conversation. The therapist [or presenters] is a participant-observer and a participant-facilitator of the therapeutic conversation.

6. The therapist [or presenter] exercises this therapeutic art through the use of conversational questions, that is, asking questions from a position of 'not-knowing' rather than asking questions that are informed by method and that demand specific answers.

7. Problems we deal with in therapy [or the SSEEP] are actions that express our human narratives in such a way that they diminish our sense of agency and personal liberation. In this sense, problems
exist in language and problems are unique to the narrative context from which they derive their meaning.

8. Change in therapy [or the SSEEP] is the dialogical creation of new narrative, and therefore the opening of opportunity for new agency. We live in and through the narrative identities that we develop in conversation with one another. The skill of the therapist [or presenters] is the expertise to participate in this process.

The therapeutic model of Anderson and Goolishian (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 286), has been called "therapeutic conversation", "collaborative language systems", or "narrative therapy." According to Anderson and Goolishian (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.287), "therapy is understood as a process of caring, empathic conversations within which to evolve new meanings with clients." This approach seems to be coherent with the approach of the presenters/facilitators in the SSEEP who established an egalitarian relationship with students based on mutual respect and trust.

White, whose narrative approach is widely recognised, placed less significance on solving problems and emphasised rather "the meaning of the problem for the persons' beliefs about themselves" (Hart, 1995, p.183). This seemed particularly important in working with students whose educational, economic, and previous political disadvantage, seemed to have affected their "notions of personhood" (Hart, 1995, p.183), or identity. In listening to their stories, and particularly the unique outcomes, personal agency appeared to be enhanced and students seemed to perform new meaning.

Bruner (cited in White, 1992; 1995) refers to stories as landscapes of action, and landscapes of consciousness, or meaning, and he includes the idea of historical and future developments in the landscape of action. In therapy, a recursive process occurs between the two landscapes, and White uses questions to facilitate this 'zig-zagging' process.

White and Epston (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996) believe that externalising conversations help the person to separate from the problem. Externalisation refers to a
“response to the internalization of the problem/normative category that constitutes the client’s experience of her[or him]self” (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.283). According to White and Epston (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.284), questions that focus on “unique outcomes”, or alternative knowledges, could help students to re-author their lives by drawing their attention to instances when their behaviour revealed their personal agency in coping with problems and which was able to contradict the “problem-saturated descriptions” of academic failure, or abuse for example. This reflects the resource model which underlies White’s approach in his focus on enhancing, or building upon, a person’s strengths and resources. According to Durrant and Kowalski, (cited in Hart, 1995, p.183), this is in direct contrast to the deficit models which “aim to ‘fix’ people or families with pathologies”.

According to White (1992, p.121),

"deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called ‘truths’ that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons’ lives. Many of the methods of deconstruction render strange these familiar and everyday taken-for-granted realities and practices by objectifying them. In this sense, the methods of deconstruction are methods that ‘exoticize the domestic’.

He cautions against the misunderstanding of narrative as “a form of representationalism” (White, 1995, p.14), that is, “a description of life rather than about the structure of life itself” or “perspectival notion - that a specific story of life presents us with just one of many equally valid perspectives on life” and that a person can adopt a different but equally valid perspective instead (White, 1995, p.14). These ideas fit better with constructivist or foundationalist thought. “[O]ne story is [not] as good as another” (White, 1995, p.14). The relative worth of stories can be evaluated by an underlying value system, which, however, does not have “an allegiance to established norms or so-called ‘universal’” (White, 1995, p.14).
He believes that therapists should take their responsibility seriously. He says:

If we acknowledge that it is the stories that have been negotiated about our lives that make up or shape or constitute our lives, and if in therapy we collaborate with persons in the further negotiation or renegotiation of the stories of persons’ lives, then we really are in a position of having to face and to accept, more than ever, a responsibility for the real effects of our interactions on the lives of others (White, 1995, p.15).

White, therefore, believes that issues of power should be addressed, as by not taking a position on them “one is allowing them to continue and inadvertently condoning them” (Hart, 1995, p.184). However, narrative “does not address the fundamental issues of power, social structure and its influence on how and by whom those narratives are constructed and validated” (Hart, 1995, p.184). Certain stories of particularly students from disadvantaged backgrounds, were silenced in the past. In the SSEEP, a context was created that facilitated the telling of stories which could resurrect past knowledges. This enabled “the person to come to new realisations about themselves and their relationships” (Hart, 1995, p.184).

However, although White refers to the way that stories constitute people’s lives, his ideas do not constitute “determinacy” (White, 1992, p.125). Instead, he advocates “indeterminacy within determinacy” (White, 1992, p.125) as stories are full of “gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions” (White, 1992, p.125). According to Bruner (cited in White, 1992, p.125), individuals are thus provoked to be active in “meaning-making”.

It seems at first glance, that one difference between the narrative approach and the approach in the SSEEP is the “not knowing” stance of the therapist in the narrative approach. In the SSEEP, the presenters/facilitators recognised their strengths or expertise inasmuch as they acknowledged the strengths or expertise that students contribute to the narrative. However, on closer inspection, this does not seem to contradict the “not knowing” stance referred to above and seems to be coherent with the idea of mutual respect and the resource model. The presenters/facilitators did not regard themselves as expert in all spheres of life, but did acknowledge their expertise in some
areas. According to Anderson (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.287), "the therapist's and the client's expertise are engaged to dissolve the problems".

In addition, the presenters/facilitators did not go into the depth of questioning proposed in this approach. Rather, a space was created for the telling of stories that could evolve from "internalizing conversations" (that is, private, subjugating stories dictated by the practices of modern power) to a limited form of "externalizing conversations" (White, 1995, p.22) which "exoticize the domestic" (White, 1992, p.126) and unmask the "practices of power" (White, 1992, p.140). The focus tended to be more on unique outcomes or exceptions that could lead to new stories.

A further difference is that not all students who attended the SSEEP experienced problems. Therefore growth and problem dis-solving were aims depending on the stories of students.

A Narrative Approach to Groups

A narrative approach in groups can be used "to promote healing, provide support or education, and improve self-understanding and interpersonal efficacy" (Dean, 1998, p.23). This seems to capture the ethos of the SSEEP. It seems that group members and leaders often provide a sympathetic audience to the telling of stories, which the presenters/facilitators as well as the students in the SSEEP did. The group leader's role, or the role of the presenters/facilitators in the SSEEP, was to facilitate a domain for discourse in which multiple accounts could emerge but where the story of the presenters/facilitators was not privileged in any way. Through their contributions, different individuals were able to enter the story-telling process and participate in the creation of meaning through an interactive process. "[M]eaning develops between people through conversation" (Dean, 1998, p.27). It seems that in groups, change is facilitated because many people can participate in the "intersubjective expansion of meaning" (Dean, 1998, p.27). This seemed to occur in the SSEEP.

Important aspects of working with narrative in groups are the following:
• Narratives need to be elicited in a context of encouragement. Group leaders can begin with stories which often seem to set the stage for the telling of stories by others. These stories need to be acknowledged. Storytellers need to be respected and should not be interrupted.

• Understanding the meaning of stories is important in the narrative approach. This can be elicited from multiple perspectives - the storyteller's, the group's, the leader's. The effect of the way that the story is “performed” (Dean, 1998, p.29) is also important, as is the influence of the cultural context the awareness of which can help individuals move out of subjugating stories.

• Strategies for using stories to promote growth and change:
  “Listening, validating and bearing witness” (Dean, 1998, p.31);
  “Exchanging and expanding stories”(Dean, 1998, p.32);
  “Reacting, questioning and exploring”(Dean, 1998, p.32);
  “Externalizing problems and creating preferred accounts”(Dean, 1998, p.33);
  “Changing ‘blaming’ stories by challenging assumptions” (Dean, 1998, p.33);
  The group leaders’ role as collaborative and their use of questions to expand meaning (Dean, 1998, p34).

The nature of the group will influence the type of stories that are told. These ideas seemed to underlie the processes that occurred in the SSEEP.

Conclusion

From the narrative perspective therefore, people exist in and are influenced by multiple contexts and meaning systems. A cultural meaning system influences the group meaning system, and vice versa. The group meaning system in turn also influences and is influenced by the personal meaning system.

People can choose what should guide them in which contexts. The problem comes in when the dominant discourse, or meaning system, overrides the personal 'voice' or meaning system.
Change is viewed as having to do with a different and more preferred meaning influencing the client, and so new directions are supported only with close scrutiny as to whether these developments fit in a meaning context (with the client’s personal values or preferred ways of being) that the client embraces (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, pp.86-87).

The emphasis is on individuals “beginning to perform an alternate meaning, a new story” (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996, p.87).
CHAPTER 6

THE RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

In this chapter, the rationale for selecting an interpretive, qualitative approach will be discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of the narrative research approach. The processes involved in moving from field experience to field text, and then from field text to research text will then be outlined.

Rationale for Selecting an Interpretive, Qualitative Approach

Defining the norm or normality in terms of the “principle of reality” (Fuks, 1998, p.244), as if it had an objective, external existence, and language as faithful and unbiased, epitomises modernism. This view ascribes to a view of the world as understandable, controllable and predictable.

Consistent with this approach is the belief that research must be objective in order to arrive at the truth, in other words, the research must be free of observer bias. From this perspective, researchers use data that can be measured, and they therefore reduce what they are researching to units devoid of the subjects' larger contexts in order to understand reality. With the postmodernist shift “from notions of rationality and objective truth to notions of significance and meaning” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.90), a different research approach from the traditional experimental methods was required.

A qualitative research approach, consistent with the “interpretive turn” in social science epistemology” (Rabinow & Sullivan, cited in Kelly, 1999b, p.398), therefore seems the more appropriate starting point for inquiry of the study of human experience from within the context of human experience (Kelly, 1999b; Searight & Young, 1994). This is based on the belief that experience can only be understood within “the social, linguistic, and historical features which give it shape” (Kelly, 1999b, p.398). There is, therefore, much
to be learned from people’s subjective interpretations, or accounts, that are “conceptually articulated in language” (Fuks, 1998, p.245).

Callahan and Elliott (1996, p.91) are of the opinion that people’s subjective accounts are “the ‘data’ we should examine”. In qualitative research, the “shift has been away from the universal and general towards the local and the particular” (Kelly, 1999b, p.415) because of suspicion in the claim of having discovered the ‘truth’. Thus contextual research, which can be equated with qualitative methodology, is concerned with making sense of people’s experiences “from within the context and perspective of human experience” (Kelly, 1999b p.398). Although the search for universal principles is not the aim in this approach, it is nonetheless recognised that people’s subjective accounts can be located in cultural norms and practices (Callahan & Elliott, 1996).

Ricoeur therefore “suggests that understanding of a situation needs to be developed both from the perspective of being in the context (empathy), and from the perspective of distanciation, using interpretation” (cited in Kelly, 1999b, pp.400-401). In other words, a description of the way that the world is understood by the experiencing subject, and the interpretation of the subjective understanding from the outside needs to be provided. Ricoeur proposed therefore, that a both/and approach should be pursued, rather than an either/or approach.

In this study, the term interpretive research will be used to include more empathic, “‘insider’ or ‘first-person’ perspectives”, and context, as well as more “distanced, sceptical understanding”, or “‘outsider’ or ‘third-person’ perspectives” (Kelly, 1999b, p.399). The former involves the study of text which is believed to reflect people’s subjective experience. When researchers study texts, they “absorb or get inside the viewpoint it presents as a whole, and then develop a deep understanding of how its parts relate to the meaning of the whole” (Neuman, 1994, p.61). According to Ricoeur (cited in Kelly, 1999b), the latter involves stepping outside the context of experience and is more consistent with social constructionist ideas. Distanciation enables the researcher to make use of a range of resources to add to his or her understanding, such as “an understanding of history, theory, society, language, politics, and so on, in understanding experience” (Kelly, 1999b, p.401). In this study, interpretive research therefore refers to
the practice of both empathy and distanciation. Kelly (1999b, p.399) says: “The combined efforts of these two orientations, like two hands working in unison and yet apart, take shape in the form of a critical, dialogical and creative interpretive practice”.

The aim in this study therefore, is to include both the particular (the context) and the general, in making sense of experience, and therefore to find a middle ground, which, according to Clandinin and Connelly (1994), brings us to narrative.

The Narrative Research Approach

According to Polkinghorne (cited in Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.92), narrative is the “human activity of ‘making meaning’” of experiences. It is coherent with “the study of everyday understandings and real world behaviour” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.92). According to Carr (cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.415),

when persons note something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, they do so not by the mere recording of experience over time, but in storied form. Story is, therefore, neither raw sensation nor cultural form; it is both and neither. In effect, stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history.

It is people who lead storied lives and recount stories of their lives, and it is narrative researchers who “describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.416).

The narrative research method “presumes a particular orientation toward knowledge” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.94). According to Polkinghorne (cited in Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.94), it is not truth or certainty that is the goal, but rather “verisimilitude”, which means the “appearance of being true or real” (The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1984, p.839). It “provides a way of exploring meaning within its natural and ever-changing context” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.94). Part of the study of narrative is
to keep a sense of “the experiential whole” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.415). In other words to keep a sense of the interconnectedness of parts.

The narrative approach is the specific epistemology that guided the researcher giving her a specific lens for looking at the world. It is consistent with a qualitative interpretive approach. Qualitative research, and in particular the narrative research approach in which interpretation is used in its broadest sense to provide both an empathic, subjective account as well as a distanciated perspective, seemed particularly suited to making meaning of experiences in the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP). In Part I of this research, the researcher, as one of the presenters/facilitators of the SSEEP and therefore a participant in the process, also made sense of her experiences, informed by the ‘voices’ of the co-presenters and students, which she will report in narrative form. In Part II of this research, stories will be constructed around memories which were ‘stored’ in photographs and memory ‘boxes’. In Part III, the discovery of meaning that participation in the programme had for students in the different domains of their lives, as well as the meaning that the interviews held for students, will also be reported in narrative form.

Traditional research methods seemed too restrictive to capture the complexity inherent in experiences, which therefore seemed better served by a free-narrative approach (Callahan & Elliott, 1996).

Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

Reliability and validity are conceptualised differently in quantitative and qualitative research designs. In quantitative research designs, reliability refers to the reliability of the measuring instrument while validity refer to measuring what it intends to measure. In qualitative research “reliability refers to the trustworthiness of observations or data”, whereas “validity refers to the trustworthiness of interpretations or conclusions” (Stiles, 1993, p.601). Stiles (1993, pp.602-607) mentions the following strategies with regard to reliability:
1. "Disclosure of orientation" which refers to the researcher's specific orientation including expectations for the study, preconceptions, values or theoretical allegiance. In this study, the researcher's orientation was explicated in the philosophy underlying the SSEEP, and the narrative approach.

2. "Explication of social and cultural context" which refers to the investigation's context. In this study, this refers to the SSEEP, informed by the diversity of cultures represented by the presenters/facilitators and students.

3. "Description of internal processes of investigation" refers to the investigator's internal processes or the impact of the research on the researcher. In this study, these are indicated in the reflections and self-reflections.

4. "Engagement with the material" which refers to the researcher's relationship with the participants in the study as well as with the material. In this study, the researcher was involved with students in a context characterised by warmth and trust. She tried to gain an understanding of the world from their perspective as well as from an outsider-perspective. Because of her direct experience, she was also engaged with the material.

5. "Iteration: Cycling between interpretation and observation" which refers to the "dialogue" between theories or interpretations and the participants or text. In this study, the researcher dialogues with the text, which included field notes, artefacts, audiotapes and transcripts. Her interpretations and observations should be influenced reciprocally in the process.

6. "Grounding of interpretations" which refers to the linking of interpretations to the content and context, for example, themes are linked with examples from the field notes, artefacts, or interview text.

7. Asking questions which help participants to ground experiences in a context and that help them to tell stories.
According to Stiles (1993, pp.608-613), validity involves the following strategies:

1. "Triangulation" which refers to using multiple perspectives against which to check one's own position (Kelly, 1999c). It refers to information from multiple data sources (the researcher herself, her co-presenters/facilitators, students, artefacts) multiple data collection (field notes, artefacts, interviews) and analysis methods (hermeneutics, narrative analysis), multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and/or multiple investigators (the three presenters/facilitators and students) (Kelly, 1999c; Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle, 1990; Stiles, 1993).

2. "Coherence" which refers to the quality of fit of the interpretation.

3. "Uncovering; self-evidence" which refers to making sense of our experiences and which Potter and Wetherell (cited in Stiles, 1993), call "fruitfulness."

4. "Testimonial validity" refers to the validity obtained from the participants themselves.

5. "Catalytic validity" which refers to the degree to which the research process makes sense to the participants and leads to their growth or change.

6. "Reflexive validity" refers to the way in which the researcher's way of thinking is changed by the data as she engages in the hermeneutic dance.

Qualities of a Satisfactory Narrative Account

In the narrative research approach, it is important not only to focus on reliability and validity as conceptualised in qualitative research, but also to attend to the specific qualities of a satisfactory narrative account. The researcher's narrative account will need to include an understanding of the subjective experience, as well as an interpretation thereof. A narrative is concerned about establishing "the truth value of the account in terms of the qualities of the account itself, rather than through matching the account to an external source of reference" (Kelly, 1999c, p.433). A satisfactory narrative account would include the following:
• The principle of congruence, which consists of:

  *Internal consistency* which refers to the internal consistency, or coherence, of the account. In other words one part of the account should not contradict another part. In addition, it should be logically argued.

  *Coherence* which refers to the way that events are linked to each other and "the experiences contained therein are given a context in terms of their place in the overall story" (Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

• The principle of plenitude, which refers to comprehensiveness. This alludes to the "degree to which the explanation is complete and incorporates the totality of the individual's or group's life, history, psychodynamics, social context, and so on" (Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

• Persuasiveness, which refers to a persuasive (Riessman, 1993) and "compelling" presentation, that according to Gadamer, has "a binding quality that imposes itself on the reader in an immediate way" (cited in Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

• Correspondence, which refers to validity obtained from participants in the study (Riessman, 1993).

• Pragmatic use, which refers to its usefulness among the community of scientists (Riessman, 1993). This can be accomplished by detailing the research process and making raw material available.

• Pragmatic proof refers to the research having achieved what it set out to accomplish (Kelly, 1999c). This can also be referred to as catalytic validity.

• A balance between "generality and contextual detail" (Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

According to Kelly (1999c, p.435), "[i]t is the meaningful linking of parts into a network of meaning, and ultimately into a landscape of meaningful action, that gives interpretation status". This is the aim in this study.
From Field of Experience to Field of Text

Thinking about a research project in narrative terms allows the researcher “to conceptualize the inquiry experience as a storied one on several levels”, namely that people live, tell, relive and retell their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.418). Stories are therefore modified and affect how they are retold and relived. It should be remembered that the researcher and participants come into the research process already engaged in these processes. Thus, it should be borne in mind that each person belongs to a larger context of stories.

A research inquiry thus involves an interaction between the “experiences of participants in a field and researchers’ experience as they come into that field” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.418). The inquiry is guided by the intentions of the researcher, or to put it another way, the focus of the research. The encounter should lead to the living and telling of a new story. Retelling stories that facilitate growth and change is the main focus of researchers following the narrative research approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

The researcher is also required to tell the story of the research project. In personal experience methods it is important to acknowledge the importance of the researcher’s own experience, as the way in which the researcher tells the story of her experience, will be similar to the way she recounts participants’ experiences. This should therefore be one of the starting points (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

In this study, the researcher’s intentionality was three-fold. In the first place, she wanted to elucidate the processes that were involved in the SSEEP. Secondly, she wanted to tell stories around the meaningful memories associated with artefacts that she collected. Thirdly, she wanted to discover the meaning that participation in the programme had for students in the different domains of their lives, such as the personal and the interpersonal, as well as what the interview meant to them. The research focus would help her to adhere to the why of this study. The SSEEP formed the domain for dialogue, which refers to the context of the study. The way in which the researcher tells the stories that represent each chapter of this thesis, as well as the story of her experience as a
participant/facilitator in the SSEEP in elucidating the themes, will also reflect on the researcher.

In a research project, the researcher is required to move from the field of experience to field texts. Of importance is the relationship between the researcher and participants which shapes “[w]hat is told, as well as the meaning of what is told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.419). Field texts, which are usually called data, can be field notes, photographs and so on. “They are texts created by participants and researchers to represent aspects of field experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.419).

Methods for moving from field experience to field text cited by Clandinin and Connelly (1994, pp.419-422) are the following: “Oral History”; “Annals and Chronicles”; “Family Stories”; “Photographs, Memory Boxes, Other Personal/Family Artifacts”; “Research Interviews”; “Journals”; “Autobiographical Writing”; “Letters”; “Conversations”; “Field Notes and Other Stories From the Field”. Those that apply to this research will now be discussed in more detail.

**Field Notes**

Field notes “may be written by researchers or by participants, and they may be written in more or less detail with more or less interpretive content” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422). The nature of the relationship between researcher and participant shapes “the construction of the records” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422). The researcher writes the notes as an active participant in the process. “[A]ll field texts are constructed representations of our experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422).

Field notes were made throughout the duration of the SSEEP. The field notes were based on the personal perceptions and interpretations of each of the three presenters/facilitators of the SSEEP, and on their intersubjective meanings, which emanated from an informal ‘debriefing’ session usually at the conclusion of each day. The three presenters/facilitators were also in interaction with their students and therefore the co-created, or intersubjective meanings, were also included in their perceptions.
These field notes will be re-written in narrative form and will consist of a description of themes relating to the processes that occurred during the SSEEP. The interpretations of the researcher, who was also a presenter/facilitator of the programme, will also be included.

The three presenters/facilitators of the SSEEP are lecturers in the Department of Psychology at Unisa. They each brought their own strengths into the context, performed different roles in the SSEEP, and therefore made their own unique contribution. The student community who attended the SSEEP also reflected diversity. This diversity existed in terms of the different ethnic, gender, and age groups; different life and personal experiences; different language proficiency; and diverse academic functioning levels. A participatory and reciprocal relationship existed between presenters/facilitators and students which led to conversation and the co-creation of ideas.

Photographs and Memory Boxes

People often collect and save a variety of materials that serve to remind them of a memory around which they construct stories. Photographs may be collected and are reminders of people, events and places that are meaningful in our lives. Memory ‘boxes’ contain memorable items. In some way, all of these materials trigger memories and are therefore rich sources and repositories of memories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

In this study, photographs, thank you cards, letters, and written comments from students attending the SSEEP formed part of the treasured mementoes. Stories, in the form of themes, will be written around these items.

Research Interviews as Oral Conversations

Research interviews, which were more like oral conversations, were turned into field texts through transcription. In conversations, there is a reciprocal and egalitarian relationship among participants, that is between the researcher and the student participants in this study. The conversational format is usually marked by flexibility which allows participants “to establish the form and topics” that are important to the
inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422). Listening is part of conversation and the way that the listener, or researcher, responds may lead to the sharing of deeper levels of experience. However, it is important that this is done in a relationship characterised by “mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422).

By asking participants to tell their stories, they usually experience “a sense of control over how they will be perceived by others” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.95). It is therefore not a threatening experience but rather like a conversation. They do not feel that they are being “tested” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.95). Rather they seem to experience it as “an interesting and creative mode of self-expression” (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.95).

Normally researchers do not listen to their subjects - they are like bad conversationalists. They tell subjects how to frame their responses, and even choose their words for them. They interrupt by limiting what can be communicated, and they ignore all but what they find relevant to their specific goals. Perhaps worse, after providing contexts and limiting content, researchers confidently assume they know what subjects meant to say (Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.95).

Interviews as oral conversations, therefore, require researchers to be good listeners and conversationalists (Callahan & Elliott, 1996).

The interview in this study was unstructured, and was more consistent with a conversation between researcher and participant. Although participants were invited to tell their stories of the meanings that they derived from attending the SSEEP, and their experiences of the interview itself, this did not mean that they told their whole story but they recounted only those parts that were relevant to the research focus. Thus part of the work between participants and researcher involved “life-story elaboration, adjustment or repair” (Howard, 1991, p.194). In the process “two life stories come together and each life trajectory is altered by the meeting” (Howard, 1991, p.196). New
stories tend to emerge as a result of the conversation. The story thus becomes a way of finding meaning in our lives when we see ourselves as actors "within the context of the story" (Howard, 1991, p.196).

The following question was relevant to the research aim and was used to initiate the discussion:

*What did the programme mean to you within your personal life, your family context, and community context?*

The following question was asked at the conclusion of the interview:

*What did this interview mean to you?*

Personal data, such as name, address, telephone number, age, sex, mother tongue, centre where programme was attended, marital status, community involvement, and so on, was obtained from a personal data form (See Appendix H.) which participants completed at the beginning of the interview.

**Sampling**

It was impractical for the researcher to have a conversational interview with all the students who attended the SSEEP (approximately 800-1000 students each year). Therefore *sampling* became a necessity. Many types of sampling are possible although researchers usually deliberately select small samples which fit the research aims. Research participants are most often selected because they are able to provide "rich descriptions of the experiences" that are being studied, that is, they have personal experience of the subject. They should "be able to articulate their experiences and be willing to give complete and sensitive accounts" (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991, p.269). However, the mother tongue of many students who are registered at Unisa, is not English. Therefore, the researcher decided that narratives that were seen to be representative of the student population, would be accepted even if some were 'thinner' than others. Qualitative researchers prefer to look intensively at a few cases where individual differences and context are highlighted.
In this study, maximum variation sampling (Kelly, 1999a) was used. In seeking to discover the broadest range of rich description on the subject, participants that reflected the aforementioned student diversity were recruited.

Students who captured the attention of the presenters, were approached when the programme ended and were asked if they would be prepared to be interviewed by the researcher. Without exception, students were willing to be interviewed and in fact seemed to construe it as a great honour that they had been invited to participate in the research. The researcher obtained the written consent of participants to tape record sessions and to use the information solely for the purposes of research.

The researcher interviewed fifteen students approximately four months after they had attended the SSEEP in 1999. Twelve of these students attended the programme in Pretoria, and three attended the Pietersburg programme. Three of the Pretoria students were Black males, and nine were females, five of whom were Black, one who was Indian, and the remaining three were White. Two of the Pietersburg students were Black females and one was a Black male. Each interview was about an hour long in duration. However, some interviews were longer and others were shorter than an hour. This depended on the student's contributions.

A number of those who were interviewed were excluded from the study because they did not write the examination at the end of the year. From the interviews that remained, four interviews were selected for analysis. These interviews tended to be representative of the student population that attended the SSEEP.

A Note on Ethics

Because a reciprocal relationship exists between researcher and participants, it is important to remember that the potential exists “to shape their lived, told, relived, and retold stories as well as our own” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.422; White, 1995). The researcher initiates the relationship and is usually the one with certain research intentions. Therefore it is expected that the researcher bears the responsibility toward participants which she did in this study. The researcher's responsibility does not end
there, as ethical issues are also involved when research texts are written from field texts. The researcher needs to be sensitive and responsible in the way that he or she tells the stories of participants. The researcher will endeavour to do this.

From Field Texts to Research Texts

The main aim of reconstructing field texts into research texts is “to discover and construct meaning in those texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.423). In the same way that “the researcher’s relationship to participants shaped the field text, the researcher’s relationship to the inquiry and to the participants shapes the research text” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.423). A narrative account unifies the threads of a story (Kelly, 1999b).

However, in order to move from field texts to research texts or narratives, analysis has to take place. This will now be discussed as it relates to the three parts of this research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process whereby order, structure, and meaning is imposed on the mass of data that is collected in a qualitative research study. It is described as “a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.111).

An interpretive approach was selected. One of the main aims of interpretation is to discover themes (experience-near), or discourses (experience-distant), which refer to regular patterns in the data (Kelly, 1999b). Pattern finding is associated with repetition and refers to what is characteristic across situations (Kelly, 1999b). Identifying a theme across time also involves establishing links between two temporally distinct events (Kelly, 1999b).

A theme or discourse can exist within and across situations (Kelly, 1999b). Kelly (1999b, p.413) says:
In deriving themes, we intuitively tend to look for generality and, in so doing, we necessarily overlook certain contextual differences in the things we are comparing. In doing this, we can bind together events in such a way as to override their uniqueness. By being careful to let both movements of the hermeneutic circle (particular to general and general to particular) have an influence, we are most likely to arrive at an interpretation that accounts both for contexts and across contexts.

However, the interpretive framework may be pre-formulated. This means filling out the details of the theme or discourse from the contextual material one has gathered. Or it may mean discovering the themes that can be extracted from the context itself in the form of a subjective or intersubjective understanding of a phenomenon.

The Three-Part Nature of the Research and Analysis Process

There are three distinct parts to this research process:

In **Part I**, field notes, which were made throughout the duration of the SSEEP in 1999, will be used as the basis to extract themes relating to the processes that occurred during the SSEEP.

In **Part II**, stories, in the form of themes, will be written around photographs, thank you cards, letters, and written comments received from students attending the SSEEP.

In **Part III**, individual interviews in the form of conversations between the researcher and a number of students who attended the 1999 programme, will be used to discover the meaning that participation in the programme had for students in the different domains of their lives, such as the personal and the interpersonal, as well as what the interviews meant to them.

The qualitative interpretive approach in this study comprised two specific methods, hermeneutics and narrative analysis.
Hermeneutics was selected as the method of data analysis for Parts I and II of this study.

Hermeneutics is coherent with an interpretive approach. Crabtree and Miller (1992), refer to Shiva’s circle. Shiva is the androgynous Hindu Lord of the Dance and of Death. They explain: “A constructivist inquirer enters an interpretive circle and must be faithful to the performance or subject, must be both apart from and part of the dance, and must always be rooted in context” (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p.10).

The aim of hermeneutics is “to discover meaning and to achieve understanding” (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991, p.266) or to make sense of “that which is not yet understood” (Addison, 1992, p.110).

It is based on the following assumptions (Addison, 1992):

- People give meaning to what happens in their lives which is important if others are to understand their behaviour.
- Meaning can be expressed in different ways, not only verbally.
- The meaning giving process is informed by the “immediate context, social structures, personal histories, shared practices, and language” (Addison, 1992, p.112).
- The meaning of human action is not a fixed entity. It is constantly being negotiated, and changes or evolves over time, in different contexts and for different individuals.
- The process of interpretation enables a person to make sense of his or her world. However, these ideas are informed by the interpreter’s values and therefore the notion of “truth” or correspondence to an objective reality, are not important issues in this approach which does not adhere to the belief in an objective reality.

This method does not have a set of prescribed techniques (Addison, 1992). The following approach has been adapted from Addison (1992), Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), and Wilson and Hutchinson (1991), and involves the following practices:
Step 1: Familiarisation and Immersion: In this stage the researcher is working with texts rather than with the lived experience. In Part I of this study, the researcher reads the entire set of field notes to get a feeling for the whole. In Part II of this study, the researcher familiarises herself with, and immerses herself in, the artefacts (photographs, thank you cards, letters, and written comments received from students attending the SSEEP) in her possession. The researcher needs to immerse herself in the world created by the text so that she can make sense of that world.

Steps 2 and 3: Thematising and Coding: Step 2 requires the researcher to infer themes that underlie the research material of Parts I and II. However, because of the way that the researcher wrote some of her field notes already in the form of themes which she inferred from her perception and interpretation of her experiences in the SSEEP, this activity of generating themes occurred simultaneously with coding (Step 3) whereby similar instances were grouped together under the same theme.

Step 4: Elaboration: In this stage the researcher explores the generated themes more closely. This enables the researcher to gain a fresh view and deeper meaning than was possible from the original coding system, and might entail changes in the coding system. Dialoguing occurs between what the researcher reads and the contexts in which the participants found themselves; between the researcher, her supervisor and other colleagues; between the researcher and the account itself, her own values, assumptions, interpretations and understandings.

The researcher maintains a constantly questioning attitude, looking for misunderstandings, incomplete understandings, deeper meanings, alternative meanings, and changes over time, as she “moves back and forth between individual elements of the text and the whole text in many cycles, called the 'hermeneutic spiral'” (Tesch, 1990, p.68). According to Addison (1992, p.113), “analyzing is a circular progression between parts and whole, foreground and background, understanding and interpretation, and researcher and narrative account".

141
Step 5: Interpretation and Checking: This refers to the final account or narrative that relates to the research question or phenomenon studied. It is also good practice for the researcher to reflect on her role in the whole process.

Three interpretive and presentation strategies are the following:

- **Paradigm cases**, which reflect the whole. They depict participants in their contexts.
- **Exemplars** are similar to paradigm cases “except that they are shorter stories...that capture similar meanings in objectively different situations or contexts” (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991, p.272).
- **Thematic analysis** which involves identifying the common themes from the data and using excerpts from the data to substantiate those themes.

Thematic analysis was the presentation strategy adopted in Part I of this study, whereas exemplars were used in Part II. In sum, the researcher as interpreter immerses herself in the world of meaning of a word, text, or visual image, unpacks its many meanings, and freely associates on what it stands for. ‘Immersion’ is at the empathic, experience-near, end of the interpretive continuum, ‘unpacking’ is the beginning of looking at the material from the outside, although still within the context of what participants have recounted to the researcher, and ‘associating’ is at the experience-distant end (Kelly, 1999b).

**Part III: Participants' Accounts of Their Experiences of the SSEEP**

The third part of this research was to explore the meanings that students attached to their experience of attending the SSEEP and the interview experience itself. Narrative analysis was selected as the method to investigate the participants' stories. Narrative analysis “takes as its object of investigation the story itself” (Riessman, 1993, p.1). The question that is asked is “why was the story told that way?” (Riessman, 1993, p.2). Narratives are used as linguistic tools that serve to order experiences, construct reality, and creatively make sense of the world. They are embedded within wider social discourses. By focussing on “how [a person] talks about [his or her] experiences and [his or her] self, on how sociocultural assumptions guide [the] narrative, the processes through which the personal mirrors the political are clarified” (Lempert, 1994, p.413).
personal narrative refers to a past time and is “talk organized around consequential
events” (Riessman, 1993, p.3).

The following steps are involved in analysing texts:

**Step 1: Telling:** This stage involves interviewing participants. Interviews are
conversations in which the listener and narrator develop meaning together.

**Step 2: Transcribing the taped interviews into a rough transcription, followed by
a retranscription:** Once the taped interviews have been transcribed in a written format,
the researcher listens to the tape recordings and reads through the rough transcriptions
carefully to check for accuracy. The next level of analysis becomes a textual as well as
an analytic issue to determine those narrative segments, or selected portions, for
retranscription that best relate to the research questions and intentions. This is referred
to as the ‘unpacking’ of structure that is essential to the emerging meanings. Once the
boundaries of a narrative, or story, segment are chosen, the next step for the researcher
is to parse the narrative into numbered lines in the retranscription. Labov (cited in
Riessman, 1993, p.59) proposes that each clause in the ‘story’ has various functions:
“to provide an abstract for what follows (A), orient the listener (O), carry the
complicating action (CA), evaluate its meaning (E), and resolve the action (R)”. In each
narrative segment, the aforementioned symbols (located in brackets) will be noted at the
end of each function. Labov and Waletzky (cited in Mishler, 1986, p.79) define a
narrative clause as “a clause that cannot be moved or relocated to any other point in the
account without a change in its ‘semantic interpretation’”. However, as temporality of
clauses is not always found in respondents who hail from an African context where
speech patterns may differ from mother-tongue English speakers, this has not been
strictly adhered to.

**Step 3: Analysing:** There is overlap between steps 2 and 3. In this study, analysis will
comprise a structural, thematic coherence and interpersonal function component, all of
which, according to Halliday (cited in Mishler, 1986, p.77), are usually present “in any
stretch of talk” and are interdependent. These three approaches share a general
perspective, which is to "focus on the meanings and functions of different features and modes of speech" (Mishler, 1986, p.76).

The *structural component* refers to the reduction of the narrative segment, or retranscription into lines, most often referred to as a core narrative, although this was only done minimally in this study due to the focussed nature of the conversations and in order to incorporate the reciprocal actions of teller and listener as the tellers made sense of their experiences together with the listener. In this way, the sequential organisation that the respondent chose in collaboration with the listener, to capture his or her experience, is preserved, as is the listener's need to interpret it by the way that she chose to respond.

The focus of this approach, according to Labov and Waletzky (cited in Mishler, 1986, p.77), is on "'units of linguistic expression'" which "are connected to one another, principally through a relation of temporal order". Elements of Labov's framework, that is, abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, and evaluation were used to construct the text.

A second-stage reduction determined if there was a more abstract structure of "Moves" that would help in understanding the core narrative. Goffman (quoted in Mishler, 1986, p.84) defines a move as "an interaction that alters or threatens to alter the relative social positions of the interactants". Goffman's idea is combined with "a consideration of the ways that requests and responses to requests may function to confirm or threaten social status" (Mishler, 1986, p.84).

The *thematic analysis* is based in part on the Agar-Hobbs model (1982). It is an analysis "of the various episodes in the story and the ways they are connected" and how "the story expresses general cultural values" while "at the same time represents the respondent's claim for a particular personal identity" (Mishler, 1986, p.104). According to Agar and Hobbs (1982, p.7) "[i]t serves as a pointer from the specific piece of text to more general properties of the speaker's world".
The *interpersonal function analysis* (Paget, 1983) refers to the relationship between interviewer and respondent within the interview context. The presence of the interviewer, her mode of questioning and responding influence the story's production within the cultural and research context within which the interview takes place.

Narratives are situated not only in particular interactions, but also in social, cultural and institutional discourses, which must be taken into account when interpreting them and unravelling the multiple meanings.

Riessman (1993, p.60) says that “[c]lose and repeated listenings, coupled with methodic transcribing, often leads to insights that in turn shape how we choose to represent an interview narrative in our text”. In this study, the structural analysis which portrays the interdependence of the aforementioned functions, is presented first. This is followed by general, or metalevel, discussions on the abstract structure of moves, thematic coherence, reflections on the relationship between respondent and interviewer, and concluding comments.

**Situated and General Narratives**

Research accounts tend to be either more situated or more general depending upon where the researcher is operating from. This applies to the research accounts generated by both the hermeneutic and the narrative analyses in this study. A more situated account is associated with phenomenology, and the degree to which it is situated depends upon the “extent to which the account is given in terms of the contextual details which surround the events of interest” (Kelly, 1999b, p.415).

A situated account reconstructs what has been said or observed from the perspective of the first-person account, but written in the third-person. It provides “readers with enough contextual detail to allow them to imagine the situation as it was experienced within the parameters of the relevant theme” (Kelly, 1999b, p.416). Quotations can be used but should not be overused or substituted for thematic analysis.
A general account, on the other hand, "takes place as a distinctive interpretive process that involves examination of the commonalities and differences between the separate cases in the form of situated accounts and writing up of the processes involved without recourse to specific contexts" (Kelly, 1999b, 416).

In this study, the meanings of the researcher, as participant/facilitator, in terms of themes relating to the processes that occurred in the SSEEP, her stories, in the form of themes, written around photographs, thank you cards, letters, and written comments received from students attending the SSEEP, as well as the researcher’s narrative of the participants’ stories, will be described in a situated account, whereas a more metalevel discussion of commonalities and discrepancies will be provided in a general account.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a critical role in writing the research text. It is important for the therapist/presenter/researcher to remember that “there are always feelings and lived experience not fully encompassed by the dominant story”. The researcher’s approach will tend to highlight only those aspects of her story or the participants’ stories, that are coherent with her orientation. The researcher’s account will also tend to highlight only certain aspects of her approach and exclude others. Hart (1995) therefore suggests that therapists, or in this case the researcher, should also accommodate different approaches so as to prevent their approaches from becoming dominant narratives, or “politics of truth” (Bakker & Snyders, 1999, p.136), which would be contradictory to the narrative approach. For example in the SSEEP, the three presenters’ different ‘voices’, as well as the diverse ‘voices’ of the students, added richness and created “news of difference” (Bateson, 1972, p.20; Hart, 1995, p.186).

Who the researcher is informs all levels of the research, and the signature that she puts on her work “comes out of the stories [she lives and tells]” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.423). It becomes a challenge for the researcher to express her own ‘voice’ while at the same time attempting to express the ‘voices’ of the other two presenters/facilitators, and her participants, in a research text that “will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience’s voices” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.423). What also needs to be
considered is the voice that is heard and the one that is not - this seems to apply to both participants and researchers. The signature thus creates the researcher’s identity as author (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). It is also important that the signature should be neither too dominant nor too flimsy. If it is too flimsy, it runs the risk of deception and may give the impression that the “text speaks from the point of view of the participant” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.424) or “other texts and other theories, rather than the writer” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.424). In sum therefore, a person’s experiences are retrieved and reconstructed into a personal, historical account that links experiences to a social world. It is thus important to make clear whose voice is represented in the final product and how open the text is to other readings (Riessman, 1993).

External conditions which influence the writing of the research text, refer to the research question, theoretical preference of the researcher, the researcher’s personal biography (Riessman, 1993), “available forms for expression of the research text [narrative form], and the audience and the researcher’s imagined relations to the audience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.423). The purpose of the inquiry or research is not only for the personal growth of participants and the researcher, but also for the research community and the larger field.

Personal experience methods involve a research relationship between researcher and participants and between researcher and audience, and it is through the research texts that “the possibility for individual and social change” seems to exist (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p.425).

Conclusion

The ideas that emanate from the study can have tremendous implications for education. Articulating the processes that contribute to enhancement, or that hinder growth, will contribute to the understanding and practice of those who work with diversity in groups. The stories, in the form of themes, around the artefacts, will describe the people, events, and situations that contributed to the meaning that students, as well as the researcher and her co-presenters, derived from their experiences. These will further highlight what is regarded as enhancing, and will hopefully spur other educators to become involved in
a meaningful way with their students. Also, understanding the meanings that students derived from their experience of attending the SSEEP, will help educators to understand the global implications of such a programme. Understanding the meanings that students derived from the interview, will help educators to understand the meaning for students of personal attention and contact. In addition, there should be a benefit to both the researcher and the students in that their stories should reflect growth and transformation as a consequence of the encounter. The aim of narratives therefore is to elucidate the growth-promoting processes that lead to transformation on different levels. Mirowsky (1998, p.1), states: “We can produce knowledge that professionals use to control the outcomes of others, or we can produce knowledge that people use to control their own outcomes”.
RESULTS - PART 1

PATTERNS AND THEMES

In chapters 7, 8, and 9, various patterns and themes will be discussed. These patterns and themes were identified from field notes made during the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP) presented to students in Cape Town, East London, Durban, Pietersburg, and Pretoria in 1999. The field notes contain the 'voices' of all three presenters/facilitators in interaction with the students who attended the SSEEP. However, the narrative voice is that of the researcher, who was also one of the presenters/facilitators.

The processes and themes of connection, facilitating group process, and unlocking students' capacity to master the course, will be elucidated and the internal and external conditions influencing these processes will be woven into the discussion. These processes and themes are arbitrarily determined, and are not mutually exclusive but interconnected.
CHAPTER 7

CONNECTION

Introduction

Connection, or a sense of relationship between people, enables conversation to take place which facilitates the development of meaning between people (Dean, 1998). This is consistent with the philosophy and practice in the SSEEP.

Connection seems to be one of the main themes that the researcher identified in the SSEEP. She also distinguished a number of subthemes that could be subsumed under this main theme.

Interconnectedness Among Presenters/Facilitators

The presenters/facilitators practised connectedness, and commitment to each other and the programme, which they modelled to the students. Their friendship developed over the years that they were involved in the programme. They interacted with one another and shared ideas in conversation with one another throughout the programme. They believed that interdependence among the presenters/facilitators, sharing a common aim, team work, and synergy contributed to the programme's success. They felt that they were 'best' when they supported each other, which they experienced as empowering. Their support was mainly emotional and in terms of social companionship, especially when they were away from home. Friends are usually regarded as the more appropriate sources of emotional support (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1990a). They complemented one another in terms of their academic/professional attributes as well as their personal attributes which contributed to their professional, as well as their personal and social relationships.

Relationships characterised by closeness and reciprocity appear to have advantages over casual, less reciprocal relationships. Kelley et al. (1983, p.38) define close relationships as having “strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable
period of time”. A close friend is more likely to be sensitive to his or her friend’s needs, to respond, and is more motivated to provide appropriate support even at great cost in terms of time and effort (Vaux, 1988).

The presenters/facilitators worked together harmoniously in a well-choreographed manner. They were united in their passionate desire to help students recognise and unlock their own personal strengths, and to support and guide students to become competent and caring in their families and communities.

Interconnectedness among the presenters/facilitators seemed to facilitate connection between the presenters/facilitators and students, and amongst students. According to Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (cited in Amundson, 1993), people’s perception that they ‘matter’ to others and that others are concerned about them, and appreciate them, has positive effects. This seems to meet people’s basic need for connection and gives their life meaning.

**Resources of the Presenters/Facilitators**

The three presenters/facilitators contributed to the creation of a context to facilitate connection between themselves and the students. They each brought their own unique resources into the created context: The most senior member believed that her resources were her many years of experience in the academic field and as a psychotherapist, her ability to see and appreciate both sides of the ‘picture’, as well as her gentle firmness; the second member felt that her resources were in being an inspirational leader, a good role model, and an experienced psychotherapist; the third member perceived her resources to be her ability to elicit participation from students, to encourage students, to make links, and her experience as a counsellor. The resources that the presenters/facilitators contributed differed from one another and yet complemented one another. A resource that they all shared was in being, what Anderson and Goolishian (cited in Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996, p.177) refer to as, a “conversational artist” that is, someone who is able to create a space for conversation. It seems that people with such heightened interpersonal skills tend to possess a sense of self-efficacy, or mastery, leading to adaptive behaviour under stress, low levels of anxiety, a positive self-image, positive
expectations of interactions with others, and a positive view of how others will adjust (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1990a). The presenters/facilitators also shared a sense of humour which seemed to bind them together and supported them through discouraging times.

Connection was initiated with stories from the presenters'/facilitators' personal experiences, which often seemed to set the stage for the telling of stories by others (Dean, 1998). Such personal stories contained disclosures which were appropriate and did not leave the presenter/facilitator too vulnerable, and were sincere. Students commented as follows:

The presentation of lectures/sessions was done very professionally, but also in a way that we could learn more about the lecturers as persons.

I loved that you shared your personal stories - our Profs are people!! By your owning your humanness, so could we!

You were all very professional. You were an inspiration in that you are perfectly 'normal' people trying to make a positive impact on your community from where you are.

Initiating Conversations - Getting the Ball Rolling

The presenter/facilitator, whose role it was to welcome the students to the SSEEP, played an important role in facilitating connection between the presenters/facilitators and students, and amongst students. This introduction generally evolved out of a conversation between the presenters/facilitators on the day preceding the commencement of the SSEEP, and therefore also reflected the 'voices' of the other two presenters/facilitators. Thus multiple perspectives were included in this initial welcome, which set the stage for connection. This initial connection appeared to set the tone for the way that the remaining two presenters/facilitators initiated contact with the students and in the way that they linked into what the first presenter/facilitator said. Multiple voices and perspectives are very important in addressing diversity. Different ways of
saying something, or being, appeals to different people and it therefore maximises the chances of reaching and connecting with as many people as possible (Wood, 1993).

This initial connection also seemed important in order to facilitate the group process. Once students realised that they would be working in a more interactional way in groups, that their relationship with the presenters/facilitators was more egalitarian than hierarchical, and where the more active role that students would be required to play would be emphasised, the group process was facilitated. Students seemed to embrace a new way of doing things in connecting well with the other students in their groups and in feeling more comfortable in their 'new' relationship with the presenters/facilitators. One student introduced herself to the larger group as follows, which seemed to capture the spirit of belonging:

I am the group leader representing my group.

**Presenters' Facilitators' Narrative Informs Students' Narrative**

What the presenters/facilitators said was important because it tended to inform the students' narrative which in turn, informed the presenters'/facilitators' narrative, and set the tone for the ensuing process. For example, in the presenter's/facilitator's introduction in Cape Town, she discussed how opportunity to connect can occur in any context. She encouraged students to be in 'conversation' with whatever is in the context and to make it personally meaningful. In other words, each person could relate in a way that was congruent with him or her, and derive something from the situation that 'spoke' to him or her. She went on further to say that it is up to each person to make choices in that moment which can either lead to connection and empowerment or to maintaining one's isolation and uninvolvment. She emphasised that it is nonetheless that person's right to do so, which is in itself empowering. She also went on to say that the way in which people become involved with one another or with what is happening, also tends to be coherent with the persons involved. The idea of connection being equated with empowerment thus became a *dominant discourse* in the presenter's/facilitator's welcome address, which informed the students' narrative, and was reflected in the name that one of the groups in the Cape Town regional centre gave to their
group, which was 'Doors'. They chose this name because it seemed to capture the idea of going 'in and out'. A door gives people the opportunity to walk in or to remain on the outside, and seems to involve risk and challenge to walk through the door. These ideas are similar to the Existentialist approach which refers to ontological anxiety (that is, anxiety regarding stepping into the unknown although acknowledging the possibilities for growth) and ontological guilt (that is, guilt about remaining safe but forsaking the possibility for growth) (Maddi, 1996). This narrative seemed to challenge students, many of whom rose to the challenge while others chose not to.

The Nature of Groups and Their Effect on Connection

'Successful' connection also appeared to depend on the nature of the groups. Most groups in the different centres seemed open to the interactional format.

However, in Pietersburg, the presenters/facilitators did not seem to connect as satisfactorily with students as they had in all the other centres. And the harder the presenters/facilitators tried to make this connection, the more the students seemed to shrink from it. The students seemed to maintain a passive and dependent role which tended to prevent connection but placed the full responsibility to establish it on the presenters/facilitators. Perhaps one of the other hindering factors was that this group seemed to be embedded in an authoritarian culture. Therefore, within this context, it was probably inappropriate for them to relate to the presenters/facilitators on a more equitable footing and to engage in an interpersonal encounter. It was also possible that the authoritarianism inherent in schools which reflected the apartheid system (Mason, 1999; Suransky-Dekker, 1997), also contributed negatively to their hesitancy to participate. In addition, they probably regarded the presenters/facilitators as being the possessors of the 'truth' (Freire & Faundez, 1989) and therefore felt unequal to participate on a more equal footing with the presenters/facilitators. The presenters/facilitators realised that their approach needed to change as it was not working.

Connection with this group was facilitated by providing clear and practical messages, and seemed to occur on a more basic and concrete level. It was important to persevere in attempts to connect, while at the same time remaining sensitive in order to 'read' the
context and become aware of what was not working. It appeared essential for the presenters/facilitators to be flexible in their approach so that they could adjust to the processes and connect differently to the way that did not seem to work. It did not seem to help when the presenters/facilitators persevered with 'more of the same', that is, by talking even more, trying even harder, and they needed to change to become more relevant. By the end of the programme, there was a high level of interaction and connection. This was possibly due to the establishment of trust between the presenters/facilitators and students, who had also adjusted to the more interactional approach of the programme.

The presenters/facilitators also found that the more disadvantaged students in the different centres, were initially hesitant to participate, and the presenters/facilitators were required to persevere in their attempts to elicit participation. When students rose to the challenge and risked themselves by participating, the presenters/facilitators praised them, which tended to encourage further participation.

Facilitating Change in Terms of Renegotiating Personal Boundaries

A theme related to the previous one refers to the way that students were required to renegotiate their personal boundaries in order to facilitate connection. This refers more to internal conditions of students than the external conditions referred to in the discussion of the previous theme.

Although at many of the venues, chairs were organised in circles to facilitate group interaction, many students still seemed to prefer sitting in rows, one behind the other. It seemed that the latter organisation met students' need to maintain their personal boundaries and separateness from one another, as well as from the presenters/facilitators. This also seemed linked to students preference for a more hierarchical relationship between themselves and the presenters/facilitators, where the roles of the presenters/facilitators and students tended to be more familiar (Freire & Faundez, 1989).

However, the presenters/facilitators wanted students to experience for themselves the benefits of interpersonal contact and the sharing and co-evolving of ideas. They wanted
to take the distance out of distance education. In addition, they hoped to facilitate movement from an unequal hierarchical relationship between the presenters/facilitators and students to a more equitable one. Furthermore, they wanted students to become more open to others, to the course, and in fact, in their whole personal orientation, as this would foster personal growth.

Facilitating students to work in groups required students to renegotiate their personal boundaries - to 'let' others into their personal space. The presenters/facilitators seemed to model making their personal boundaries more open in their personal introduction which defined their relationship with the students as an interpersonal encounter. This seemed to enable students to 'define' themselves differently. What follows are some comments from students regarding the interaction:

I got to know other students like myself and am not feeling so alone [as a distance education student].

I got to love my studying here at Unisa......I also developed more confidence in myself and I realised that it is actually nice to stand in front of the audience and share your ideas. I also enjoyed working in a group.

Working in groups was also facilitated by building in structure, in terms of non-threatening exercises. This seemed to make students feel safe and opened the way to move forward in the direction of more open communication and the sharing of ideas.

Nonetheless, the presenters/facilitators still wrestled with this shift on the second day, which they often experienced as discouraging. However, they persevered and by the end of the day it seemed that their effort had been worth it as a shift occurred in the opening up of students' personal boundaries. They conversed more easily than previously, recounting personal stories that could be related to the personality theories that formed the basis of the discussions on the second day. These stories tended to be what White and Epston (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.284) refer to as "unique outcomes", and gave the presenters/facilitators the opportunity to draw students' attention to instances when their behaviour revealed their personal agency in coping with problems and which
contradicted the "problem-saturated descriptions" of academic, or relationship failure, for example. This reflects the focus on resources, which is the underlying philosophy of the programme and White's narrative approach (1992, 1995), and is in direct contrast to the deficit models which, according to Durrant and Kowalski (cited in Hart, 1995, p.183), "aim to 'fix' people or families with pathologies".

By the third day, the presenter/facilitator involved in the explanation of the themes of human development seemed to reap the benefits of the students' shift, in terms of their personal boundaries, to an openness and willingness to share more fully in the discussions. Some of the students' stories were of a very personal nature. Previously silenced 'voices' told of abuse at the hands of authoritarian parents and husbands, and of sexual abuse as children, for example. The presenters/facilitators and students listened and bore witness. 'Blaming' stories that placed the responsibility of failure on the storytellers, were challenged and students seemed to move from subjugating stories to healing stories (Dean, 1998). Through their contributions, different individuals were able to enter the story-telling process and participate in the creation of meaning through an interactive process. It seems that "meaning develops between people through conversation" (Dean, 1998, p.27) and that in groups, change is facilitated because many people can participate in the "intersubjective expansion of meaning" (Dean, 1998, p.27).

In sum, it seemed that when students felt more secure they were able to renegotiate their personal boundaries and participate more fully in the discussions.

However, not all students were equally prepared to participate in the conversations. Some students preferred to work independently and maintain personal distance from other students, and therefore tended to maintain strong personal boundaries. Although they remained in their groups, they tended to be uninvolved. The presenters/facilitators did not try to force participation and respected their willingness to nonetheless remain part of the group albeit on the fringes. Therefore, although students were organised physically into groups, the level of connection was idiosyncratic to the student concerned. Some students seemed to form relationships that continued after the programme had ended, whereas others maintained their separateness and uninvolvment despite being seated in a group.
With other students, it was the experience of the presenters/facilitators that although there was connection between students in the group on a social level, when the presenters/facilitators worked in a personal way with the groups and tried to facilitate participation by asking students questions that were connected to the course, some students simply ignored the presenters/facilitators, and did not even attempt to try and answer the questions. The presenters/facilitators experienced these encounters as quite frustrating. However, they accepted that certain people felt more comfortable maintaining a more ‘spectator’ role.

Therefore, it seems that a both/and approach was achieved which seemed to suit most of the students.

Multi-Cultural Connection

Although in 1996 there appeared to be much euphoria as a result of the election, and the idea of South Africans being a rainbow nation, by 1999 much of this euphoria seemed to have evaporated. The transition from students’ willingness to cross cultural boundaries to students’ tendency to polarisation in terms of their cultural groups, became apparent. The presenters/facilitators initially encouraged cross-cultural groups and students appeared to be willing to be part of multicultural groups and to intermingle positively. However, by 1999, students tended to polarise themselves and to group themselves in ways that they seemed to feel most at home in. These tended to be mainly homogenous groups characterised by students who belonged to the same cultural or gender groups as themselves. For example, many White students preferred to join all-White groups, and many Black students opted for all-Black groups. The presenters/facilitators realised that the initiative of a student to join a group of students who were different from themselves, was best left to the students themselves.

Black students who joined groups comprising mostly White students, seemed to be accepted as equals, and participated fully in the group exercises. However, it seemed that when a White student joined a group of Black students, who tended to be more disadvantaged educationally than the White student, the Black students still seemed to want to defer to the White student. However, when the White student took a ‘back seat’
and encouraged participation from the Black students, a more equitable relationship was established, and in fact, students across the cultural divide were seen to be exchanging addresses and telephone numbers. The facilitative role of the White student also had the added advantage of uplifting the interaction amongst the students, and seemed to empower the Black students, exerting a positive and enhancing effect on the group. However, this was not always the case.

In one instance in Pretoria, a White student joined a predominantly Black group unwillingly. She had arrived late and the only available seat was in an all-Black group. However, her presence tended to hinder rather than facilitate the group process. The Black students seemed aware of her unwillingness to be in their group and her covert critical attitude. They reacted by remaining silent. When this student failed to return after the lunchbreak, it seemed to free the students to come into their own, and they participated in a meaningful way.

In the first of the two programmes in Pretoria, there was an all-male Black group who named their group ‘Bafana Bafana’. However, not all the Black males joined this group. Other men joined predominantly female groups.

One of the lessons that the presenters/facilitators learnt was that when a group contained at least one member who tended to be more fluent socially and academically, it appeared to raise the level of sharing. This seemed to benefit all parties who tended to be enriched by diverse inputs. However, the choice to join such a group needed to be in the hands of the advantaged student, otherwise he or she tended to drop out, and/or it was destructive to the other students. For some advantaged students, it seemed preferable if there were at least two of them to form a subgroup within a predominantly disadvantaged group, which facilitated ‘private interaction’ enhancing their personal growth. However when a group contained students who were all very similar to one another, it seemed that too much ‘sameness’ did not stimulate growth. This seemed to occur in all-White groups as well as all-Black groups, although not to the same degree.
What follows are some comments from students regarding multi-cultural connection:

I was very touched by the input from the Black community and felt for once that there is hope for our country.

I have made friends cross-culturally and am looking forward to further interaction.

It was an absolute delight to meet and mix with people of all backgrounds and cultures. I feel so blessed at having being afforded such a wonderful opportunity. Thank you!!

I also feel enriched in having met fellow students from very different backgrounds than my own, and getting some insights into their communities.

**Theme of Tolerance versus Intolerance**

Linking on from the previous theme is the theme of tolerance versus intolerance. Students who attended the programme seemed representative of the diversity in the ‘new’ South Africa, and were generally tolerant of one another. This tolerance was graphically displayed in the first of the two programmes presented in Pretoria.

One of the Black female students arrived at the programme with a little boy of about a year old. He was a lively little fellow and the presenters/facilitators felt quite apprehensive about his presence initially, but decided not to comment unless called on to do so. Surprisingly, there was not one complaint! The students in the group rallied round the mother and ‘helped’ to keep the baby occupied when he was awake. He soon settled into the rhythm of the programme and seemed to sleep most of the time. In fact, his presence seemed to be accepted by most of the students who became quite fond of him. In the sessions on Developmental Psychology, the presenter/facilitator was able to refer to the fact that the students had a real live baby to observe when discussing infancy and the growth of attachment.
However, on other occasions, students became quite intolerant of one another especially across the racial divide. For example, when the group spokespersons introduced their groups and stated their group objectives, they were requested not to repeat the objectives that had already been mentioned. However, some Black students did not always adhere to this request, which seemed to annoy many of the White students. Also, in the group exercises, some Black students seemed to battle to get started with the exercises which tended to exasperate those who found this task much easier or who would have preferred to do it independently of the group.

In discussing this intolerance with the presenters’/facilitators’ colleagues, a plausible explanation seemed to be that intolerance between the races seems to exist in the area of task related activities that do not seem to get accomplished as quickly as anticipated. However, tolerance on a personal level appears to be present.

In Durban, there was also an incident that brought to the fore polarities between certain groups that the presenters/facilitators were not aware of at the time. The intolerance seemed to come to the fore due to external conditions. However, the presenters/facilitators sensed the tension between these groups of students, and highlighted the need for respect for one another and tolerance for difference which seemed to diffuse the tensions. Despite the problems of the week, the presenters/facilitators noticed that by the conclusion of the programme, there was good multi-cultural integration. Tolerance appeared to have won the day!

**Theme of Distrust**

Students’ distrust and suspicion of the presenters/facilitators/lecturers, as well as rumours about the course itself and the examination, always seemed to rear their head in the various centres. This was experienced as particularly discouraging by the presenters/facilitators, especially if it was unanticipated, and if they believed that they had established a trusting and respectful relationship with students.

In 1997, a forum was provided where students could voice their distrust. After the explanation of Kelly’s theory on the second day, they were given the opportunity to
discuss the rumours about the course that seemed to prevail. For example, many
students believed that only a small percentage of second-year students were ‘passed’ so
as to limit the number of students doing Psychology III. They also believed that if they
failed the end of year examination and were given the opportunity to write a
supplementary examination, it would be a futile exercise as their mark would simply
remain the same. These and other rumours were discussed, and in conversation,
alternative ideas were co-evolved. However, after careful reflection, the
presenters/facilitators decided to abandon this session as they felt that it was eliciting
negative rather than healing stories. In addition, the way in which Kelly’s theory was
explained, changed and a session on rumour did not appear to fit the context.

However, in retrospect, the presenters/facilitators wondered whether not providing a
domain for the ‘voicing’ of rumours was a wise decision as it appeared that the
emergence of rumours were inevitable. In Pretoria, after a particularly meaningful day,
one of the Black male students wanted to know whether the presenters/facilitators were
going to use the information provided by the Skills Assessment Questionnaire (See
Appendix E.) to decide who would fail and who would pass. This student believed that
if the presenters/facilitators concluded that a student did not seem to possess certain
skills, the presenters/facilitators would fail the student. Given the past apartheid history
of injustice, distrust from Black students of White lecturers should not have been
entirely unexpected. However, it still seemed to upset the presenters/facilitators who had
believed that a trustful relationship had been established. One of the presenters’/
facilitators’ Black colleagues explained to the presenters/facilitators that many of the
Black students still felt very suspicious of White educationalists because of the apartheid
educational system. This lecturer did not believe that it was aimed personally at the
presenters/facilitators, but was rather a reflection on past injustices. Nonetheless, despite
this understanding, on the final day of the programme, the presenters/facilitators
referred to it as a hurtful issue, and attempted to dispel the distrust by asking students to
collect their completed questionnaires. Students could retain them if they so wished but
if they wanted to resubmit them they were asked to remove any information which could
possibly identify them. Surprisingly, not one student retained his or her questionnaire.
Another example of distrust occurred in the initial session in Durban, when the group spokespersons presented their groups’ objectives to the student body. One of the group spokespersons discussed rumours about the exams. He tended to be quite aggressive in his accusations. The rumours he referred to were the following: Firstly, that markers tended to be rigid in their marking by sticking too close to the memorandum and not allowing for small mistakes. Secondly, that examination scripts were marked by people with no knowledge of Psychology. Thirdly, that the presenters/facilitators highlighted aspects in the programme that did not appear in the examination. And finally, that the examination and the assignments were unrelated in the sense that the questions in the assignments were not identical to the ones in the examination, which meant that students who studied only the assignments failed. The unsettling part for the presenters/facilitators was that this spokesperson received quite a bit of applause.

The presenters/facilitators reflected on how to deal with distrust. Firstly, they believed that it was important to allow the person to be heard, to listen to this student’s comments. Secondly, they felt that personal boundaries of responsibility should be made clear to all students. Students should be aware of what their role entailed, which is to work hard, and what the role of the presenters/facilitators included. The presenters/facilitators role was facilitatory, and also included their responsibility to provide students with information and to help students to take personal responsibility to succeed. It seemed to the presenters/facilitators that some students who failed did not accept any personal responsibility for failing but rather apportioned full blame to external sources such as lecturers/presenters/facilitators. This problem seemed to be rooted in the larger South African society, where a ‘culture of entitlement’ seemed to exist. A culture of entitlement refers to the feeling that it is people’s right to have their demands met without having to put any effort into it themselves. This however, defeats the purpose of empowerment. Thirdly, the presenters/facilitators believed that it was important not to over react and try to please one critical person, as they seemed to do in Pretoria. This did not mean that this person should not be heard, but the criticism should be seen in perspective and over-hasty decisions should be avoided. And finally, it appeared to be important not to assume the ‘victim’ role when the presenters/facilitators became the target of a students’ anger and frustration at failing repeatedly. The
presenters/facilitators needed to model empowerment in order to assist students to become independent learners.

On reflection, the presenters/facilitators realised that distrust was also part of their experience. Rumours of retrenchment and moves toward affirmative action, also made White lecturers at Unisa feel distrustful of the system. This was a humble realisation for the presenters/facilitators who could now empathise with the frustration of students who repeatedly failed and felt at the mercy of the system.

However, sometimes distrust was easier to handle especially when it was clad in humour as when students in the second Pretoria programme called the presenters/facilitators, their ‘tormentors’. This was also dealt with by the presenters/facilitators in a lighter and more humorous way by referring to their label in contexts where it could be rebuked and the notions disconfirmed.

In the East London programme, the presenter/facilitator in her welcome introduction, voiced the ‘expected distrust’ in a humorous way and in a sense, pre-empted the issue. It was not referred to by students but the presenters/facilitators were left wondering if this was the best way to deal with it, as it seemed to silence students, but made it easier for the presenters/facilitators.

It seems that there are no pat answers when trying to deal with distrust. However, it needs to be dealt with in a way that is satisfactory for both parties.

**Gaining Grassroots Experience**

One of the benefits of interacting and communicating with students in the SSEEP, seemed to be the information that was generated about where students, as well as the presenters/facilitators/lecturers, were ‘at’. A lesson learnt was that it seems very important for lecturers to stay in touch with their students so that they are able to meet their needs. The grassroots or firsthand experience of lecturers cannot be substituted for a second-hand account. It seems that lecturers who are not involved with their students, often harbour certain expectations that are not always realistic. Connection is able to
provide valuable information to ensure a better fit between the expectations of both students and lecturers. The knowledge that the presenters/facilitators/lecturers gained from their experiences at the SSEEP informed their approach in conceptualising and writing new modules for the revised Psychology course.

**Conclusion**

Students, like any individual, need to believe that there are people who value them and care about them enough to render support if they need it. This is referred to as a “sense of support” (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1990b). It is this perception of being loved that is protective, not in the sense of protecting individuals from harm, but in the sense of fostering a belief in their sense of connectedness to others and the belief that the resources they may require to achieve their goals are available within themselves, or through a combination of their own efforts and that of others. This belief is strengthened when others are willing to provide support which enhances their belief that there must be something commendable or worthwhile about themselves to warrant such a positive response from others.

Despite some of the constraining effects referred to which negatively affected connection, the ensuing relationship helped create a warm and empathic atmosphere, which facilitated the sharing of stories. A context of encouragement tended to foster narrative. The presenters/facilitators experienced that when the connection, or interaction, between them and the students was strong and meaningful, they seemed to empower one another. Therefore it seemed that individuals become empowered in the interaction. The following comments from some of the students sums it up well:

Socially, I was a self-centred, selfish person but this programme has taught me the power of sharing. I really enjoyed sharing my experiences with my fellow students and my lecturers. And they also taught me how rewarding it is to have a loving and sharing relationship. So I was really empowered and enriched.
As a retired lecturer, I thoroughly enjoyed the excellent interaction and the well-planned presentations of the lecturers. The communication with the very large group was excellent and students were encouraged to express their real viewpoints and concerns... Students, even those with obvious lack of confidence, were treated sympathetically. It was a most rewarding experience. I found the interaction with the (much younger) fellow students from various cultural backgrounds very enlightening.

I have gained more information about my course, myself, my lecturers, and I have also made new friends and shared ideas and also gained new ideas.
CHAPTER 8

FACILITATING GROUP PROCESS

Introduction

The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP) provided a context in which the group processes could occur. The group process was facilitated by the following:

Strong Convictions of the Presenters/Facilitators

In order to facilitate the group process, the presenters/facilitators needed to believe in the importance of what they were doing and its value to students. The facilitators’/presenters’ convictions seemed to influence the experiences of students probably because the presenters’/facilitators’ attitude was ‘picked’ up by students.

The presenters/facilitators, firstly, cherished an underlying belief in the worthiness of students whom they perceived as having personal resources that could be enhanced. Secondly, they recognised the importance of the practical applications of what students were learning to real life situations, and the relevance thereof to real life and in their communities. This seemed to help students to personalise the information that may have previously been ‘out there’ and as such, unrelated to them. Furthermore, students were also encouraged to do their ‘bit’ in rebuilding the country by becoming involved in their communities which was stimulated by the community session. In addition, the importance of other sessions, such as the session on the Monitoring Study Method and memory strategies, were acknowledged, as they seemed to serve the needs of most students when they elicited and confirmed ideas of competent students, and provided a valuable source of information for students who battled. The following were some of the comments from students in this regard:

I learnt how to use the different ways to remember information.
I've been given a clearer understanding of how to study, prepare for the exam, and how to improve and practise memory techniques.

I was empowered in that I learnt how to approach my studies, and [use] methods of studying.

The study methods that were not working for me were changed.

I am now equipped with study skills. I know how to memorise the work.

The students' enthusiastic participation in these sessions in turn influenced the presenters/facilitators who continually made links in subsequent session to the MSM and memory strategies, thus strengthening their influence. The presenters/facilitators were also convinced of the importance of the session on simulating the examination situation where students could practise exam writing, which seemed to empower them. Facilitators in the SSEEP were interested not only in the academic development of their students but also in personal growth which would bring life-enhancing contributions to other contexts as well, such as the students' personal, family and community contexts.

**Introducing Different Perspectives**

Students who study at a distance teaching institution such as Unisa, often seem quite starved of input from different sources on academic and other issues. In this programme, students were introduced to multiple perspectives - from the three presenters/facilitators, the course material, and the voices of students. This assisted them to extend their thinking and to give them a sounding board for their ideas.

It seems also that a variety of resources is better able to meet the different needs of individual students (Macdonald & Mason, 1998; Meyer & Newton, 1992). Thus multiple perspectives, rather than a single dominating 'voice', added richness to students' experiences. They were introduced to the idea that there was not just one way of doing things but that many different ways of doing things could be accommodated, such as different answers to the same question could be correct, different ways of
coping with similar problems could be equally effective, and so on. Thus different strengths could be appreciated and enhanced. This tended to have a positive influence on students as they came to value the resources that they contributed.

Structure and Flexibility

In order to facilitate the group process, the presenters/facilitators found that it was as important for them to have a well-structured programme, as it was for them to be flexible and ‘dance’ in tune with the process. This required the presenters/facilitators to be sensitive to the group processes.

Matching the mood of the students ensured a good fit with where students were ‘at’. In the programme presented in Cape Town, the group was experienced as far more serious than the first Pretoria group, which seemed more receptive to the fun element of the initial exercises in naming the group and giving reasons for the particular name chosen. This highlighted the necessity to meet each group where it is ‘at’, and not where the presenters/facilitators would like it to be.

Although the explanation of the course content formed part of the structure of the programme, the way in which the material was explained depended upon the audience. For example, in the Cape Town group, where the students seemed to function on a higher academic level, the explanations tended to be more sophisticated in order to be more coherent with the audience. In Pretoria and Durban for example, the explanations attempted to accommodate the students’ diverse levels of functioning by offering explanations of the same aspect of the course on different levels of complexity. In East London and Pietersburg, the explanations were simplified and were more structured to meet the needs of the more academically disadvantaged student. Therefore, the way the presenters/facilitators told a story depended on the audience. The aim always, was coherence between the explanation and the audience. Having to provide students with simplified explanations challenged the presenters/facilitators to clarify their thinking. One student commented as follows on the structured nature of the programme:

I found the eye contact of lecturers very good (not note bound).
Sessions were well organised and lecturers set a good example of being exactly on time.

The presenters/facilitators also found it important to structure the exercises well. Students appeared to respond well to the structure, but tended to deliver sloppy work when structure seemed absent, possibly because the unstructured style seemed to imply 'non-importance'. Structure also tended to provide clear guidelines on how to formulate an answer.

**Accommodating Diversity and Homogeneity**

The group processes were also facilitated by accommodating and appreciating both diversity and homogeneity. In one sense academic diversity seemed to stimulate and challenge the presenters/facilitators, and yet in another, it was difficult trying to accommodate too wide a range of diversity.

For example, in Cape Town, the students who attended the programme were mainly White or Coloured. They tended to function on quite a high academic level and the discussions were challenging to both presenters/facilitators as well as students. However, the students tended to function more independently and seemed to battle to reach consensus on a group name, for example, or to formulate an intersubjective answer to an exercise. Therefore, their more independent style seemed out of synchronisation with the interactional style of the SSEEP initially. Nonetheless, they enjoyed the socialisation aspect of the programme and the sharing of ideas that were experience- rather than work-related.

The programmes held in East London and Pietersburg tended to comprise mainly Black students. One or two White students attended the programme in East London. These groups tended to function on a much lower academic level than the groups in the larger cities such as Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria. This was possibly also due to a lower level of English proficiency and a lack of learning resources. The presenters/facilitators were thus required to work at a much slower pace and to keep their explanations as simple as possible. The students in these groups also battled to work together on a
group exercise. However, it was not because of their preference for working independently as the Cape Town students did. It seemed that it was because there was no one in the group to initiate the group process. In other words, there was too much 'sameness' in this group as they all seemed to occupy a similar ecological niche. The presenters/facilitators were thus required to become more involved in these groups and to facilitate the group process by working in a personal way with each group. The presenters/facilitators would ask questions to get the discussion going and then lead the students towards answering the questions that they were required to answer in the exercise. Their strengths tended to be revealed when they were required to talk about their experiences.

The groups in Pretoria and Durban were far more heterogenous in their racial composition as well as their level of academic functioning. In Pretoria, there were White, Black and a few Indian and Coloured students. They tended to function mostly on quite a high academic level. In Durban, there were mainly White, Black and Indian students and they tended to be quite a young group, possibly reflecting the high level of unemployment in the province. There seemed to be greater diversity in the level of academic functioning in this group. The presenters/facilitators attempted to accommodate this diversity by spending more time with the groups that seemed to battle, and encouraging more discussion and debate amongst the groups that seemed to function on a higher academic level. In this way academic diversity seemed to be accommodated.

It was also found that in less academically advantaged groups even if there was only one academically advantaged student, this person seemed to lift the level of the discussion and the group functioned more effectively. This student seemed to introduce 'difference' which appeared to stimulate the group. Although students might have differed academically, they nonetheless shared similarities, such as being female, mothers, married, and so on.

This indicates that one should not only focus on diversity as there are usually many more areas of similarity than difference. Different levels of academic diversity were highlighted merely to inform the reader of some of the difficulties that the presenters/facilitators faced when presenting the programme.
It was important to accord equal status to all groups no matter what their composition or level of functioning. According to Pai (cited in Knott, 1991), the intrinsic worth of all people as dignified human beings needs to be respected. This the presenters/facilitators did. They accepted that people are not all the same and that people from different cultures, or even the same culture, may deal differently with the same things. This also enabled the presenters/facilitators as educators to appreciate the strengths of each culture. This was in effect empowering and unlocked students’ capacity, as well as earned the respect of students.

**Facilitating Groups of Differing Sizes**

Group size appeared to be an external condition that facilitated or hindered the group process. In the larger groups, the presenters/facilitators tended to maintain eye contact with and thus talk mainly to the groups situated closest to the presenters/facilitators in the front of the room. In order to maintain the group process and to foster a sense of inclusiveness, the presenters/facilitators would either use a microphone that permitted them to move freely between the groups, or they would work in a personal way with the groups that were located at the back of the room during the exercises. The aim was always to try and engage as many students as possible in order to maximise their chances of deriving some benefit from participation in the programme.

Groups that were very large (larger than 250 students) seemed to hinder the process. For example, in Pretoria in 1998 when 450 students attended the programme, the presenter/facilitator who gave the initial welcome address, seemed to battle to connect with students. The sheer numbers tended to interfere with the momentum that was usually created at the beginning of the programme. Everything seemed to take much longer. For example, when each group representative introduced their group to the body of students and stated their group objectives, the introductions seemed to go on and on. Nonetheless, despite the chaos that seemed to characterise this programme especially in the early sessions of the first day, the atmosphere of warmth that was generated, appeared to overshadow the chaos. One student commented:
I was moved by the way that the programme was handled. The first day I felt warmth being around our course lecturers and other students.

The presenters/facilitators believed that it was important for each group representative to get a chance to speak, to be given a ‘voice’, no matter how large the group, especially those students who had been silenced in the past. This seemed to be borne out by the following comments from two students who attended the Pietersburg programme:

I was highly empowered and enriched by this programme to such an extent that I did have a chance to stand in front of my fellow students to speak. That was very tremendous because it makes me to believe in myself to speak in front of other people... Naturally I am a shy person, but each and every day, I try the level of my best to believe in myself.

We were given the chance to express our views.

If confronted with large groups in the future, presenters/facilitators would need to add something to the chaos in order to balance the system - to introduce structure, set clear limits, and keep administrative requirements, such as registration, down to a minimum.

Presenters/Facilitators as Role models

When the presenters/facilitators practised certain positive behaviours, they became role models to the students. The social cognitive learning theorist, Bandura (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997), believes that observers (in this case students) can be influenced by models (in this case the presenters/facilitators) who appear to have a high status in their eyes and with whom they can identify. This can lead to the observers imitating the behaviour of the model.

This idea is shared by Fingeret (cited in Knott, 1991) who found that within an oral culture, people learn to do something specific by observing experienced adults. This
appears to be particularly relevant to the way that many students’ learning experiences were enhanced and therefore seems particularly relevant to the South African context.

The presenters/facilitators modelled respect for each other as well as for their students. For example when a student’s tone was curt when speaking to the presenters/facilitators, the presenters/facilitators would give the student the opportunity to have his or her ‘say’, and would always try and respond politely and courteously. They realised that students’ tactlessness probably stemmed more from a lack of social skills in dealing with their frustrations, than from vindictiveness. The presenters/facilitators therefore also modelled tolerance by accepting that not all students possess equal social graces. This did not mean that the presenters/facilitators had to accept the ‘victim’ role, but they needed to ‘read’ between the lines before responding. The presenters/facilitators therefore needed to model empowerment rather than victimisation. This led to a change in the way that some students spoke to other students and to the presenters/facilitators.

In addition, in dealing with academically disadvantaged groups, the presenters/facilitators were required to model getting to the point in their communication. This was important as these students tend to skirt around issues, rather than focussing on what was important, which tended to hinder their academic performance. This led to an improvement in the way that students focussed on the salient features in the community session, and in the examination session.

The presenters/facilitators also modelled subject competence. Students seemed to appreciate that the presenters/facilitators were not note bound, and that they knew their subject well. They demonstrated the ability to capture the essence of the material and to provide a simplified version.

The presenters/facilitators also modelled a work ethic. They always started the sessions promptly which communicated to students that they were serious about the material they were discussing. The message to students was that they could not afford to waste time and needed to get to ‘grips’ with the course. Students soon realised that if they
wanted to benefit from the programme, they needed to arrive on time, which they
started doing after the first day.

Dealing with the Unanticipated

Another theme that is related to the aforementioned, is the theme of dealing with things
that are unanticipated but that have the potential to turn nasty.

In a programme presented in Cape Town in the early years (1996), the presenters/
facilitators were confronted with a situation which did not turn out the way that they
would have liked it to turn out. They had voiced their concern to the group that the
process in the programme seemed stagnant, and asked students to comment on it. One
of the students remarked that the presenters/facilitators should look at themselves as
they are the ones responsible for what happens in the programme. This evoked a
response from many students who defended the presenters/facilitators but responded
negatively to this student. This student had unwittingly provided the perturbation needed
to move the process forward, but unfortunately sacrificed herself in the process. Despite
efforts to highlight her courage to voice her opinion and bring momentum back into the
process, the presenters/facilitators failed in their efforts to achieve this and the student
did not return on the subsequent days of the programme. Although this incident seemed
to add something different to the situation and facilitated movement in a positive
direction, the presenters/facilitators were left wondering whether it had been worth it to
'lose' a student in this way.

In the programme presented in Johannesburg, also in 1996, while one of the presenters/
facilitators was in the middle of explaining one of the theories to the students on the
second day, three members from the Students Representative Council entered the room,
and asked the presenters/facilitators if they could speak to the students. The
spokesperson insisted that students should attend the Student Representative Council
meeting later in the morning. Students, who were mainly Black, responded angrily
towards the spokesperson. He, in turn, retaliated with a warning that he would have
them all thrown out the building if they did not comply with his request and attend the
meeting. One of the presenters/facilitators intervened at this point, explaining that we all
belong to the Unisa community of learners, and that the presenters/facilitators would give students a break to attend the meeting, before proceeding. The presenter/facilitator thus demonstrated tolerance and respect for the differing viewpoints. However, some students (both Black and White) were afraid that this encounter would escalate into violence and made a decision not to attend the rest of the programme that day. This fear of violence seemed to reflect a very realistic fear of the emerging violent way of dealing with problems in South Africa, and the consequences thereof. However, the bulk of the students opted to remain because they felt that it was also their right to attend the programme. This also seemed to reflect people’s awareness of their rights in the ‘new’ South Africa, and their desire not to revert to the ‘apartheid’ days where they were denied rights and were subject to an authoritarian culture which prescribed to them what to do. It seemed that trying to accommodate both the needs of the students as well as the request from the Student Representative Council, did much to avoid a potentially volatile situation.

Encouraging Through Positive Reinforcement

The group process was also facilitated by positively reinforcing desirable behaviours. For example, when students who seemed to lack confidence and were rather hesitant to participate, offered to tell their stories, the presenter/facilitator would praise them for being prepared to step into the uncertain zone. It seemed that when they risked themselves in this way, learning took place and their personal resources could be enhanced. Students found this experience empowering which tended to encourage others to do the same and therefore had a snowballing effect. Subjugating stories were replaced by healing stories when students were prepared to participate. The healing stories that were told by others even seemed to uplift those who did not participate, and gave them a different perspective on life.

The presenters/facilitators also used ordinary experiences that occurred in the SSEEP to reinforce desirable behaviours. For example, in the Pretoria group, the researcher as presenter/facilitator experienced a coughing spasm, and every time that she tried to talk, she started coughing. The students responded very sympathetically to her. This experience enabled the researcher as presenter/facilitator to reinforce their caring
behaviour and used the example to illustrate how learning takes place according to the Social Cognitive Learning Theory.

An Outcomes-Based Narrative

The group process was also facilitated and informed by the dominant outcomes-based narrative with its emphasis on 'doing', or possessing the skills to do something with one's knowledge or degree. An outcomes-based approach refers to the development of skills that enable learners to do something with their knowledge (Mason, 1999).

The presenters/facilitators became aware of how their approach reflected this discourse. Instead of beginning every session with informational input, where it was practical to do so, the presenter/facilitator started with the students' experiences and then linked them to theory. This then informed the subsequent discussions.

The narrative of students was also informed by the outcomes-based narrative. Students wanted to be able to 'do' something with their knowledge. They did not just want knowledge for knowledge sake.

The presenters'/facilitators' narrative also emphasised 'a community of volunteers' in the community session. The underlying idea was that if everyone did something for others in their communities, this would help to uplift the citizens in South Africa and make it a better place. In addition, the experience that students would gain from being involved in their communities would also be to their benefit should they decide to make a career in the helping profession. Comments from some of the students follows:

The community session was very challenging, and I am convinced of the effect that we as caring individuals can have on the community.

I realised that to be truly self-empowered one also needs to be able to empower and give back to the community.
Technical and Logistical Support from Unisa

Technical and logistical support from the university at the different centres, seemed an important ingredient in the functioning and ‘success’ of the programme. This included ensuring adequate seating arrangements, a sound system that functioned properly, an overhead projector, and other services and facilities in working order. One of the presenters/facilitators always assumed the responsibility of ensuring the smooth functioning of the programme.

However, sometimes unexpected events led to chaos. For example, in the second Pretoria programme, there was disorganisation due to unforeseen circumstances. The venue was changed, it was too small to accommodate the number of students, and seating arrangements were not taken care of. In such circumstances, the presenters/facilitators found that it was best to apologise to students, and then to deal with it themselves as efficiently as possible. Although the start to this programme was disorganised and annoying to many students, the interaction between students, and between students and the presenters/facilitators, was rich and fruitful. It seemed that even though circumstances were not ideal, the ‘problem’ served to unite the students to facilitate connection and a spirit of goodwill.

Conclusion

The processes and themes that were discussed in this chapter will hopefully be able to assist other lecturers or facilitators in their endeavours. However, the way in which they are applied will need to fit with the context and will therefore be unique to each context.
CHAPTER 9

UNLOCKING STUDENTS' CAPACITY

Introduction

Certain aspects of the course were aimed at unlocking students' capacity to master the course. The patterns and themes that were identified will now be discussed.

Providing Knowledge About How to Use the Study Material

Generally, lecturers take it for granted that students know how to use the study material. On registering for a course at Unisa, students receive a study package consisting mainly of study guides and tutorial letters. The prescribed textbook is usually purchased by students themselves. The study guide is like an 'instructor' that guides students through the prescribed book. The tutorial letters usually contain the assignments, answers to the assignments, more detailed explanations, and information on the examination. It therefore came as quite a shock to the presenters/facilitators of the programme to realise that many students, especially the academically disadvantaged students, did not know how to use their study guides.

Also, it seemed that many students were unable to afford to purchase the prescribed textbook and they therefore studied only the study guide, which in many courses contains insufficient information to enable students to pass the course. Poverty thus appeared to be a constraining condition to academic success. These students consequently found it very difficult to prepare without a text, which could be considered a contributing factor to the failure rate.

The presenters/facilitators, therefore, were required to explain how the study guide works and that it is not a substitute for the prescribed textbook. They encouraged the economically disadvantaged students to form study groups and to share the cost of purchasing one prescribed textbook among them that they could all use, which was not an altogether satisfactory way of overcoming this problem. Another solution was to
obtain a second-hand prescribed textbook. However, because the prescribed textbooks were new books for both courses, it would be up to the students themselves to learn the sections that were added to the new book and which were not included in the ‘old’ textbook.

**Contextualising Exercises and Course Material**

In the earlier programmes, students were required to complete questionnaires regarding their approach to their studies (Student-at-a-Desk-Test), locus of control, self-efficacy perceptions, general orientation to life (Purpose in Life Test), perceptions of their resources, and personal details. (See Appendix.) Some of these questionnaires were completed and submitted before attendance of the programme and others only at the beginning of the programme. However, this approach tended to decontextualise the questionnaires. It was believed that more valuable information could be obtained by making exercises part of the context of the programme. This was implemented and appeared to be more meaningful to the students. For example, after an explanation of Rogers’ theory on the second day of the programme in 1998, students completed a questionnaire (See Appendix I.). They were required to think about certain aspects of the theory in terms of their own lives. This seemed to help them to reflect on their own lives in terms of the theory, and to reach a refined and improved self-knowledge. It also seemed to help them to think about the theory and to move beyond the text of the theory.

Providing a context for the course material was also imperative. For example, the memory strategies were explained in the context of the course content of both the Personology course as well as the Developmental Psychology course. The importance of context became apparent when, in one of the centres, memory strategies were explained to students in a general context and not in one specific to Psychology. They did not seem to make much sense to the team of presenters/facilitators nor to the students, and consequently seemed to be of little value to students.
Committing Ideas to Paper

It seemed to the presenters/facilitators that many of the academically disadvantaged students found it difficult to commit their ideas to paper. It appeared that they did not know how to get started or how to structure their ideas. This seemed to be because they did not know what they were expected to do. Therefore, it was up to the presenters/facilitators to provide them with a basic structure which helped them accomplish this. Students also appeared more competent when they used the language that the Personology and Developmental Psychology courses provided in their answers to questions and in order to talk about behaviour in everyday situations.

The problem of committing ideas to paper and answering questions also seemed related to this group's tendency to address less important and peripheral issues when answering a question, instead of getting to the point and discussing the salient features. This tendency also seemed related to their inability to distinguish important from unimportant or less important facts. It appeared also that they tended to think in a fragmented way and that a discourse of separateness, which could be linked to the effects of apartheid, permeated all aspects of their lives. However, they evidenced an ability to integrate information, to distinguish the important from the less important and peripheral issues, and to address the question directly, when discussing something that was part of their experiential world. In the community session, when they discussed the problems in their communities and possible solutions to the problems, they demonstrated these abilities, which were resources to build upon.

Providing Thick Description

During the sessions when the students were required to present an answer to an exercise which they collaboratively worked out in their groups, it became clear to the presenters/facilitators that they would need to provide clear guidelines to enable students to move from thin to thick description in their answers. The presenters/facilitators explained that questions contained clues. Therefore, students should keep asking themselves questions about the 'facts' given in the question and the words contained in the question itself. The answers to these questions, which they should keep
asking themselves, would help them to provide rich explanations. This seemed to equip students with knowledge about how to answer questions and appeared to bolster their confidence.

However, it also became apparent that students were in fact quite capable of providing 'thick' description as was evident in the stories that they told about their personal experiences and in their ideas about the problems in their communities and the solutions to these problems. It seemed that they lacked confidence to answer questions of an academic nature but were quite confident in answering questions related to their personal experiences. When it was pointed out to them how well they articulated their ideas and expressed themselves in their stories relating to their personal experience, their confidence seemed to grow as became evident in the way that many of them answered the 'mock' exam question in the following session. It appeared that they had failed to see that many of the questions were similar to their personal experiences. When they realised that the course content was not just something 'out there', but was in fact part of their experiential world, the course seemed to come alive for them and many students were able to provide answers with sufficient detail to the exam question in the exam session.

Many students commented on the fact that they now had clearer ideas regarding what was expected of them. Some students commented as follows:

[The programme] helped me to analyse questions and what I am expected to write.

The programme was so fruitful to me because I now know what to expect and [how to answer] both paragraph and multiple [choice] questions.

Keeping it Simple versus Labouring the Point

The presenters/facilitators found it very important to keep their instructions and explanations simple and to the point. It seemed that on occasions they tried too hard to
explain something well by labouring the point. This tended to leave students confused. It became quite a learning experience and art for the presenters/facilitators to achieve this aim. It required the presenters/facilitators to refine their thinking. This meant that their understanding had to be very clear in order to do this. And so inasmuch as it was a learning experience for students, it was also a learning experience for the presenters/facilitators.

The one very important lesson that the presenters/facilitators learnt was that when they were explaining a complex concept or process to the more academically disadvantaged students, it was unhelpful to link it to a metaphor as it seemed to confuse them even more. It seemed that it was better to explain the concept or process first in a 'language' that they could easily understand. Only once they had a clear grasp of the explanation did it become possible to liken it to something else familiar to them. The application of concepts or processes to real life situations, needed to fit with their world of experience. Therefore, it was important to use examples that were appropriate to their world of experience. For example, amongst the Black students, it seemed to make more sense to them to use soccer examples, rather than tennis, or rugby examples which seem to fit better with the experiences of Whites.

**Shift from an External to an Internal Locus of Control**

As already mentioned, at the beginning of every programme, the one presenter/facilitator gave an introductory talk to the student body which was usually extrinsically motivational or inspirational in nature. However, this talk evolved over the years into a presentation that focussed more specifically on a brief overview of the programme, which informed students what to expect, and contextualised the programme. Extrinsic motivation did not seem to fit with the ethos of the programme. However, when students felt in control of the knowledge base of the course, perceived its relevance to their everyday lives, applied it to everyday situations and behaviour, and experienced their own feelings of enthusiasm generated by their connectedness to one another in the programme, they became intrinsically motivated which seems to be the more effective form of motivation.
Encouraging realistic self-efficacy perceptions became a major goal. Results from the questionnaires that were administered in previous years, indicated that students, especially the more academically disadvantaged ones, tended to have unrealistically high self-efficacy beliefs regarding their academic abilities (Moore, 1997). It was apparent also from the answers to the exercises that these students had a naive confidence about what they thought that they knew when in fact their answers did not meet minimum academic requirements. It seemed that unrealistically high self-efficacy perceptions regarding their academic abilities stemmed from their isolation from other students and thus a lack of a realistic basis of comparison against which to measure themselves. Students from the same ecological niche tended to compare themselves with one another rather than with the broader community of learners to which they belong and with whom they have to compete. However, results from the post-tests indicated a reduction in their unrealistically high self-efficacy beliefs towards a more realistic level by the end of the programme, which would help them to become aware of the areas of their studies that required more attention.

The presenters/facilitators, therefore, tried to make a point of modelling realistic self-efficacy by using themselves as examples to illustrate a point. For example, in the explanation of Bandura’s theory, the presenter/facilitator cited Mark Fish, who is a well-known South African and international soccer player, whom boys interested in soccer would probably like to emulate. She explained that if she were to demonstrate a particular soccer manoeuvre it was unlikely that anyone would be interested in imitating her as she lacked the status of Mark Fish, it was unlikely that soccer players would identify with her, and she lacked the skills of a talented soccer player. The 'mock' exam also helped students realise that their perceptions of their academic abilities were somewhat inflated in comparison with what was expected of them. Nonetheless, once they realised what was expected of them, they seemed to rise to the challenge.
One student wrote the following:

I [can] now gage my abilities against my fellow [students].
Now I know why I failed last year and the lecturers have helped me to
realise where I went wrong and how I can improve.

Co-Evolving Ideas

During the programme the presenters/facilitators emphasised the benefits of co-evolving ideas. They explained how they as presenters/facilitators shared ideas with one another. One person would start with an idea which was built upon or extended by the ideas of others. For example, the way that the sessions on the Monitoring Study Method, the developmental themes, community and examination, changed as a result of the conversations between the three presenters/facilitators. Students were encouraged to do this in the discussions in their groups or in the plenary sessions. Thus they experienced for themselves how ideas can develop and lead to new and improved understandings.

In co-evolving ideas, the 'voices' of students and the presenters/facilitators mutually influenced one another. The inner monologue of participants became involved with the 'voices' of others, and evolved into dialogue with others.

Learning from Personal Experiences

Throughout the programme the presenters/facilitators often told stories about their personal experiences to assist students in their understanding of an important aspect of the course material. Stories that were part of the presenters'/facilitators' experience (such as the researcher's story of her nephew who is a mentally and physically challenged child), tended to make a greater impact on students because of their authenticity. The presenters/facilitators found that stories that seemed to make sense to students needed to 'fit' or be part of the students' experiential world. This was clearly illustrated in the example of the story one of the presenters/facilitators told about a young autistic boy. Students in all the regional centres were very moved by this story except for the students in Pietersburg who seemed quite impervious to this story,
possibly because autism was outside of their field of experience. The presenters/facilitators also found that when stories touched students it seemed to release students’ own personal stories. For example, one of the students in the Pretoria programme, after listening to the presenter’s/facilitator’s story of her nephew, told her story of triumph at being able to rise above the bitterness that she could have harboured after her partner’s death as a result of a hijacking.

Therefore, it seemed that participation in the exercises and understanding from an ‘insider’ perspective benefited students and presenters/facilitators alike. It facilitated the accommodation of diverse perspectives and added to understanding. It also had the advantage of making the course content meaningful as students applied what they were learning to their own experiences.

It was the presenters’/facilitators’ experience that some students particularly in the East London and Pietersburg centres, did not easily volunteer to share the ideas discussed in their group with the larger body of students. It therefore became important for the presenters/facilitators to solicit someone to ‘volunteer’. However, on the final day, in the community session where a spokesperson spoke about a particular problem in their communities and suggested ways of dealing with the problem, students did not experience a problem in sharing with the group. Students’ insights into the problems of violence and abuse in the home, child abuse, substance and alcohol abuse, Aids, learning problems, physical and mental disabilities, marital and communication problems, problems of adolescence including teenage pregnancy, prostitution, depression, problems of old age, and poverty, came from their experiences and their insights were remarkable. It seemed that when the subject was part of their experience, it gave them the confidence to share with others.

However, when the subject seemed more subject-specific in terms of the course, they seemed to lack confidence initially to rely on their own experiences as being able to inform them about the topic.

Participation by students gives them an opportunity to share their stories and have their ‘voices’ heard. Many of these stories had never before been articulated and seemed to be
a very liberating and empowering experience for many students. For example, they shared with one another in their groups how they were disciplined as children and how it affected them. This seemed empowering firstly, because their experience itself was seen as a resource. Their solutions came from them, from their wealth of experiences whether they were good or bad. Secondly, their shared experiences seemed to lead to new understanding and self-growth when they were linked to the theories that they were studying.

Although it was important to accommodate different ‘voices’ and perspectives, it was also important for the presenters/facilitators to challenge ineffective ideas. This is consistent with social constructionist ideas of exposing subjugating discourses. For example, in the Pietersburg group, the students tended to believe that the authoritarian and sometimes cruel upbringing that they had experienced was the ‘right’ way to bring up their children. This dominant narrative was challenged by the presenter/facilitator.

She asked them if they had enjoyed being parented in that way. They had not. She asked them whether they thought that harming the dignity of the child was good for the child. They felt that it was not good. She then referred them to research in this field. It was as if a light had gone on as they embraced a ‘different voice’ to the only one that had seemed to dominate their thinking. She encouraged them to trust their own intuitive voices. This seemed to encourage them and released them to think more independently and critically. One student commented:

We’ve all gone through these experiences, but we’ve never thought about them.

Therefore, building on the experiences of students seemed to be a more effective way of enhancing students’ personal resources.

**The Need to be Part of the Whole Process**

The programme was offered as a process and required time to evolve and allow individuals to grow. Therefore, it seemed important for students to be committed to attend all four days of the programme and to be part of the group process from the
beginning in order to reap the maximum benefit from the programme. Those students who only attended for one day seemed to gain in terms of knowledge of content, but were ‘outsiders’ in terms of the group process, and therefore seemed to leave the programme disappointed.

**Authoritarian Narrative**

An authoritarian narrative seemed to influence students negatively and to inhibit their initiative, independence, and ability to think critically. This seemed to affect both Black and White students but in different ways. Black students initially appeared dependent until they embraced the idea of a more egalitarian relationship that required their participation. White students, on the other hand, had remained insulated as a result of their privileged status as Whites but this also tended to foster dependence on their status and they tended to be unaware of the experiences of those who were subjugated during the apartheid era. Students’ ‘voices’ thus tended to convey a fragmented way of being which seemed to be linked to the effects of apartheid, and seemed to hinder their ability to make links initially.

In addition, the Black students in particular seemed to distrust one another and appeared to be isolated from one another as students, and yet appeared to maintain a solidarity on another level. If students, for example, had to leave early and they were concerned that they would be missing something, the presenters/facilitators suggested that they ask someone in their group to tell them what had happened. However, they believed that the person would not tell them or would in fact purposely mislead them. An interesting anomaly was that although they seemed distrustful of one another, and in this sense were disconnected, on another level they appeared to be group- rather than individual-minded. However, it seems that trust replaced distrust by the end of the programme as many students seemed to form study groups with their fellow students.

Dependence on an authoritarian expert ‘voice’ was illustrated when students were asked to discuss how they were disciplined as children and what effects it had on them, and then in their groups to discuss the most effective way of disciplining a child. Many of the Black students tended to look in the prescribed book instead of relying on their own
'voices' of experience. The authoritarianism inherent in schools during the apartheid years might have contributed to their attitude (Mason, 1999; Suransky-Dekker, 1997). This might possibly have negative implications initially for outcomes-based education at Unisa. However, when students were encouraged and learnt to trust their own 'voices', they realised the wealth of information that their experiences had given them.

The authoritarian narrative was clearly seen in the 'voices' of the group of students in Pietersburg who were the only group that believed that the authoritarian parenting style was the most effective way of rearing a child. All the other groups of students who attended the programmes in the different regional learning centres, came to their own conclusion that the authoritative style, which is generally regarded as the ideal parenting style, was the most effective, and the authoritarian the least effective. The presenter/facilitator challenged the dominant narrative in this group, and introduced an alternative voice. She encouraged them to trust their own intuitive voices. Students' resurrected 'voices' regarding their own personal experiences became resources that were built on or refined.

The authoritarian narrative was still evident in the strict way in which some Black parents indicated that they raised their children. It appears that they are afraid that their children will go astray in their teenage years, which seems to be a problem in their communities according to the stories told during the community session. Poverty appears to be a major factor leading to the exploitation of poor people, rampant crime, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, and so on. It seemed from their stories that many young Blacks are sexually promiscuous. Teenage pregnancy always seemed to be one of the main areas of concern to Black parents as opposed to White parents who attended the programme. It seems that many poor, young Black women want to please 'smart' men with money. They become sexually involved with these men because of the chance to share in the wealth of these 'wealthy' men. It seems that the benefit to the man is that his ego is enhanced because he is a good 'catch' to younger women. However, the reality of an abusive relationship, or an unwanted pregnancy, is often far removed from the dreams of becoming 'rich' and prevents people from realising their potential. New and alternative ways of guiding their children were discussed.
During the sessions, especially the session on parenting styles, and the community session, it became apparent from students' stories, that many of the Black students had been abused as children. Abuse seemed to contribute to their lack of trust in people, especially those whom they perceived as being in authority (initially the presenters/facilitators), their shyness and lack of confidence to interact with others, and their unwillingness to share their ideas. On reflection it seems that experience of abuse might also possibly contribute to the violence in this country, as a violent and abusive way of interacting with those who are perceived to be 'weaker' than oneself, becomes the behavioural norm for some in relational or social contexts. However, preferred ways of being, and stories of survival and hope emerged during the conversations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, many of the themes that hinder or help students unlock their personal capacity were discussed.
SELF-REFLECTIONS - PART 1

I, as researcher identified themes from my field notes as a presenter/facilitator of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme. They reflected my subjective experiences and interpretations as participant in the programme and as researcher, and I included in my story, the 'voices' of the two other presenters/facilitators as well as the students. I therefore feel that it is important to provide some information regarding myself, as well as a self-reflection.

I am a White, married female and I have two sons. I, therefore, hail from the previously advantaged group in South Africa that 'benefited' under apartheid rule. I also resided in an insular world without direct knowledge of the 'world' of the disadvantaged majority, and experience of interacting with them. And yet, being connected to others has always been very important to me in the way that I have lived my life valuing my relationships.

Inasmuch as this programme was instigated for the benefit of students, it also benefited me. I gained from listening to the stories of especially the Black students, and learning about their courage and perseverance in spite of many disadvantages and hindrances. I marvelled at their proactive spirit in working toward a better life for themselves, their families and their communities. I realised with much sadness how I as a White person was incomplete because of the separatist narrative, and how in fact, we were all disadvantaged because of this narrative.

Although I really wanted to understand the world from another viewpoint, I could not escape the separatist narrative which also informed my thinking and writing. It shocked me to see it constantly creeping in, especially in the way that I tended to demonstrate dichotomous thinking. At other times, I believe that I was successful in embracing both sides of the coin in my thinking. Nonetheless, I feel that my contact with students representative of the 'rainbow' nation, has enriched and expanded my thinking. It has challenged many of my perceptions, and I feel very privileged to have been afforded this experience. I feel changed by it. My new attitude is that we are all trying to live our lives in the best way that we can, and we should give one another the space to do so.
RESULTS - PART 2

INTERPRETING PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORY BOXES

In chapter 10 stories will be constructed around memories 'stored' in photographs and 'memory boxes'. Photographs were collected, and letters, cards, and comments were received by the presenters/facilitators during or after the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP) presented to students in the various centres. The narrative voice is that of the researcher, who was also one of the presenters/facilitators. From the stories, processes and themes that emerge will be discussed. These processes and themes are arbitrarily determined, and are not mutually exclusive but interconnected.
CHAPTER 10

STORIES, PROCESSES AND THEMES

Introduction

Firstly, stories will be constructed around eight photographs, a letter received from one of the students, two cards received from students in two of the learning centres, and comments made by students in the various centres. These artefacts were selected as examples from the many photographs, letters, cards, and comments, collected over the years. The comments appear in Appendix J. From the stories, themes will be extracted that relate to the enhancement of students’ personal resources.

Memories Stored in Photographs

Photograph 1: Students Discussing Their Objectives for the SSEEP

On arrival at the SSEEP, students formed themselves into smaller groups of about eight to ten students. In the first session, after introducing themselves to one another in their
groups, students were required to state their objectives, which they first discussed and then wrote down on a large sheet of paper. Thereafter, they were asked to give their group a name and in that way, each group formed a group identity.

Photograph 1 was taken during the first session of the SSEEP in the Durban centre. These students appear to be discussing their objectives for the SSEEP. The groups is a multi-cultural group, consisting of Indians, Blacks, and Whites. One of the Indian women in this group is more traditionally attired compared with the other Indian women. It appears that the young White woman on the left is speaking. The others are showing her respect by listening to her ideas. The young Indian woman on the right (partially obscured) has been assigned the role of scribe and her job is to write the objectives on the large sheet of paper. This group tends to be homogenous in its gender and age composition.

**Photograph 2 - Group work can be fun!**

Photograph 2 was also taken in Durban in the first session. These students, representing the Indian, Black and White population of KwaZulu Natal, appear to be having a lot of
fun. They are laughing. They seem to be standing, and are all participating in writing or drawing with different coloured pens. It is interesting to note that the Indian students appear to be quite young, whereas the White students appears to represent the more mature, older Unisa student. It is hard to tell the age of the Black student in the foreground. Age, however, does not appear to be a deterring factor to their interaction and fun. This group sat near the front of the lecture hall and their poster was very creative, artistic and colourful.

Photograph 3: Lining Up to Introduce Their Groups and Objectives to the Larger Group

In this photograph, students are lined up ready to introduce their groups and the groups’ objectives to the larger group (see top of picture). This seems to indicate that public speaking, which might be a daunting task to some, does not appear to have hindered students’ willingness to participate. It is clear that the students who will be presenting are representative of the student population. On the top side of the picture, on the right hand side, two of the presenters/facilitators are standing, and on the left side of the presenter/facilitator with her hand raised, is the student who is introducing her group. The presenter/facilitator with her hand raised is locating this student’s group who have
their hands raised, and is pointing to them. The poster, stating this group's objectives, is on the large white screen.

Photograph 4: I can use a microphone!

This photograph is a close-up of a student in Pretoria using a microphone to explain the objectives of her group to the larger group of students. Students enjoyed using the microphone, and sometimes it was quite difficult for the presenters/facilitators of the programme to limit the presentations of some students in a tactful way. This student appears to be quite confident in executing this task and in fact, ended up by singing a song, which was greatly appreciated by students and presenters/facilitators alike! Public speaking seemed to be quite a confidence booster and students felt proud of themselves when they had accomplished their task which was always well-applauded by the audience.
Photographs 5 and 6: Posters Stating Students’ Objectives

Photograph 5, headed SIMPLY THE BEST, is the name a group of students selected for themselves in one of the centres, and this poster reflects their objectives. It seems to centre around psychological empowerment or enhancement, increased knowledge of course content, study skills, and the application of their knowledge to their daily lives and for the upliftment of their communities. This poster seems to reflect the need of predominantly Black students to uplift themselves in order that they might uplift and benefit their communities. In order to do this they require study skills, direction about how to approach their studies, and knowledge of their course content.
Photograph 6, headed MIXED NUTS reflects the objectives of one of the other groups. It seems to centre around gaining new perspectives on the subject of Psychology; improved motivation and confidence, stress management, and study skills; interaction and connection with fellow students and lecturers; and how to apply what has been learnt. This poster seems to reflect a focus on the individual needs of students for their own benefit rather than for the benefit of their communities, which was highlighted in the aforementioned poster. These two posters seem to emphasise the differences between the Western and African views, in particular the underlying difference between an individual focus versus a group orientation.

These objectives tend to be representative of the objectives encountered in most centres.
In this photograph, students are seen ‘performing’ new behaviours in sharing ideas with one another in their small groups. This contrasts with the traditional seating arrangements in lecture rooms which hinders rather than facilitates interaction and the sharing of ideas amongst students. It seems quite clear from the photograph that a room with such a vast number of students would be quite overwhelming for the individual student. Therefore, the division of students into groups was less threatening for students and allowed them to feel more in control as they became acquainted with the members of their small group over the four days of the programme. The students in the group in the foreground all appear to be actively participating in the sharing of ideas, and it seems to be fun! Students in other groups also seem to be engaged with one another.
The student in this photograph arrived late at the Pretoria centre for the programme on the first day, but managed to find a place right in the front where she seated herself. She established herself as a proactive and enthusiastic participant. A short time after the programme ended, the student came to see the researcher explaining how the community session had touched her. This student had already contacted a local psychiatric hospital in the province she came from, volunteering her services. They required a letter from Unisa. She asked the researcher if she would please write a letter to the superintendent explaining that Unisa encourages its students to become involved in voluntary work but is unable to supervise them, and that this responsibility would fall on the institution and/or persons involved. Once her examinations were over, she would work for a few months each year in the hospital. The superintendent remained in contact with the researcher and wrote reports on her progress. She was highly regarded, and seemed to make a meaningful difference to the lives of patients in the hospital. The researcher asked her to write something about her life and what the programme had meant to her. Parts of this letter, which appeared in an international poster presentation, appear on the following page. The year after she attended the programme, she arrived unexpectedly for the first session at the programme in Pretoria. The presenters/facilitators asked her to address the audience, which she did highlighting
her positive experience. During her subsequent years of study, she remained in contact with the researcher, and would come and see her at the office. The researcher still sees her on campus, and it appears to be going well for her.

TSHIPIWE'S STORY

My parents named me Tshipiwe, which means gift. I am a poor girl from the former Venda homeland and I had to attend school away from home due to political reasons. During the programme, I realised that the way I see the world and the world sees me, makes me unique. A session on student involvement in the community touched me as if a hunter had struck my heart with an arrow, and as a result I have become a volunteer worker at a hospital for the mentally disturbed. I want to tell you that I am one of the student who received a good mark in Psychology even if I am a black student. Bear in mind that man is an architect of his own destiny.

Memories Stored in Thank You Cards

The presenters/facilitators of the programme were always very touched and were appreciative when they received a thank you card from the students who attended the programme in one of the centres. A card usually implied that one of the students had undertaken the responsibility to buy or draw a card, and involved considerable effort and organisation, especially in the larger centres, to get everyone to sign it. It seemed to provide a wonderful opportunity for students to 'minister' to their lecturers.

Card 1

This card was received by the presenters/facilitators after one of the programmes. The card contained the most beautiful words of gratitude written by Emily Matthews. The card was signed by all the groups which attended at that particular centre. This card reflects the appreciation from the students of the personal input of the presenters/facilitators. It is very personal and indicates the nature of the relationship between them.
and the presenters/facilitators, which was of a high quality. Students ‘performed’ a new role - they had created themselves as active and generous givers. This contrasts sharply with the traditional hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship that usually exists between lecturers and students, where the role of the lecturer is that of the all-knowing, unapproachable teacher, and that of the student is of the passive taker.

When I thought I knew what kindness meant, I had to think again And redefine it in a way I hadn’t until then, For someone unexpectedly brought so much joy to living. They gave a brand-new meaning to the special art of giving.

There’s comfort in your words and smiles — there’s healing in your touch, Your warmth and your encouragement have meant so very much. And, though words are inadequate for all I’d like to say, This brings a heartfelt thank-you for your thoughtful, caring way.
From the "Living Light" group - our sincerest appreciation for your input into our development.

Thank's for every information you have given us.
"Red Kangaroo group"

"Strikers group"

Wannabees

Thank's a million for helping us become the 'BEST CARE TAKERS OF THEM ALL!'

KATLEGO (SUCCESS) GROUP

"WE LOVE YOU, YOU'RE THE BEST" KISS, KISS.

"TEIXI!" What an enriching experience?

The VITAL TREE GROUP

"DEVELOPERS" WE ARE FULLY DEVELOPED TO DEVELOP OUR SOCIETY.

To Our Lecturers
Thank you for helping to make dreams come true.

Lots of Appreciation

The Camel team!
Card 2

This card was made by one of the students and it was signed by each one who attended the programme at that particular centre. This differed from the previous card which was signed by each group and not by each individual. It also reflects the appreciation that personal contact and connection between lecturers and students make. Some of the messages were very personal, whereas others were more general. Here follow a few examples:

- Thank you for all the help, not only in my studies, but also in relating to my family.
- Thank you for coming and the improvement I have achieved.
- Not only have you taught me about Psychology, but have imparted your wisdom and joy of life. Thank you for your dedication.
- Well worth taking a weeks annual leave for.
- Thank you for your time and sharing.
- Thanks a lot for all you have done for us. I was so impressed by your TEAM SPIRIT. Please keep it up.
- Its been an enlightening experience to listen to you wise ladies spiritually and intellectually.
Thank You
Memories Stored in Comments from Students

Comments From Student 1

The ‘true’ meaning of learning became apparent to this Black student as she realised that Psychology was not just a course that one took to complete a degree, but that it taught her about life, seemed to give her life direction, and would help her in her relationships with others. Its effects on her were also therapeutic in terms of her work situation. In addition, in sharing her problems with her group, she also gained information on how to tackle her problem. She also feels that she has developed cognitively and says: “I am a grown-up at heart and in Mind”. The three presenters/facilitators also impressed her with their knowledge. She feels that they were professional, realistic, and down to earth. She ended as follows: “You were like streams that will quench many people’s thirst when drinking from you”. The consequences of this programme for students, therefore, were not merely in the academic domain, but seemed to spill over into other domains of their lives. As was stated previously, presenters/facilitators cannot predict the direction that an intervention, such as this programme, will take. However, it seems that students and presenters/facilitators alike could not but be affected in some way by the encounter.

Comments From Student 2

Student 2, who was also a Black student, highlighted the fun element and stated that the programme was full of excitement. She also mentioned that she gained new knowledge and referred to the lecturers who shared their knowledge with students. It seemed that connection with other students led to the sharing of ideas and problems. It appears that it was the encounter that opened up a new world.

Comments From Student 3

It seems that it was in listening to the ideas of others that this Black student realised how important it was to hear what other people have to say and “not pretend as if you know it all”. It seems that she experienced how good it was to socialise and interact
with people across the gender and racial divide, and with people whose academic levels differ. She believes that she gained self-confidence from the experience.

Comments From Student 4

This student (White) referred to the course content and how it stimulated her to ask questions about herself, and the way she deals with her children. She was also made aware of community involvement. Therefore it seemed to challenge her on a personal level.

Comments From Student 5

An Indian student commented on how different this programme was to other discussion classes that she had attended. She believes that this type of presentation is more valuable than the traditional discussion class format where the lecturer does all of the talking. She felt that student and lecturer participation was therefore a good thing. She found meeting students from far and wide a motivation for students in her area. It also helped her to meet other students, to exchange ideas, telephone numbers and so on, which have made her feel less isolated as a student. She also seemed to gain in terms of course content.

Comments From Student 6

This Black student seemed to have arrived at the programme in a state of confusion, not knowing how to explain the theories. She feels that she can do this now and is also relieved that the load has been made more manageable in the Developmental Psychology Course. It seems that she feels more confident about the examination. She states that she loves Psychology and was also pleased that she got to know others better - Blacks, Whites and Indians. She concluded by saying: “We were really like a family belonging to Unisa”.

209
Comments From Student 7

This student (White) referred specifically to the empathy of the lecturers and that she enjoyed meeting and getting to know them. She also experienced, like Student 1, the 'real' meaning of furthering one's education, and realised “how fascinating and exciting Psychology can be”.

Processes and Themes

The following processes and themes emerged from the stories:

Facilitating a Domain for Discourse

Traditional lecture halls where students sit in rows, one behind the other, hinder rather than facilitate discourse. Therefore, it became imperative to locate venues that could permit students and presenters/facilitators to move around freely. Chairs were arranged in circles of about eight to ten chairs, and students formed small groups on their arrival at the venues. A context or setting for dialogue was thus facilitated by the formation of the students into groups (Photographs 1, 7). Students stayed in these groups for the duration of the programme.

Facilitating Connection in Small Groups

Small groups tend to minimise the distress of large groups which can be experienced as a faceless mass and thus as overwhelming by students, and give students the perception of manageability. In smaller groups, connection is facilitated as students get to know one another by introducing themselves to one another. From the time when they are given their first task, they are given the opportunity to share ideas with one another (Photograph 1), work co-operatively together (Photographs 1 and 2), take chances to gain experience in leadership roles (such as being scribe - Photograph 1, or presenting to the large group - Photographs 3 and 4), participate (Photographs 2, 3, 4, 7, 8) and cross cultural and age boundaries (Photographs 1, 2, 3, 7). Diversity is embraced and
appreciated as students work together and get to know one another across the cultural, gender and age divide.

Facilitating Connection With the Presenters/Facilitators

A more symmetrical and egalitarian relationship characterised the relationship between the presenters/facilitators and the students. This opened the way for students to take on the role of ‘giver’, which is the role traditionally assigned to the teacher. They were able to ‘minister’ to their lecturers, by giving them thank you cards of their appreciation.

Participation

Participation seems to give students confidence and expertise in ‘performing’ different roles and activities, not only in the programme, such as being scribe, group participant, or public speaker (Photographs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7), but in other contexts as well, such as becoming involved in voluntary work (Photograph 8). Participation can be lots of fun as seems apparent in Photographs 2, 3 and 7. It seems important for students to be introduced to the idea that learning can be social and that it can be exciting, and does not always have to be a lonely and serious affair. It seems that information that is associated with positive emotions is better remembered than if no emotion or negative emotion accompanies learning. When students are prepared to risk themselves, as the student did in Photograph 4, and are rewarded, then their self-efficacy improves, which leads to more risk taking behaviours and opportunities to learn.

Benefit to Students

Students seemed to benefit in different ways and to take from the programme what was applicable to them. For example, what ‘spoke’ to Tshipiwe (Photograph 8) was the community session. The way that it touched her spurred her to action, and she initiated contact with a psychiatric hospital and became meaningfully involved. She used her experience to motivate other students. Other students benefited by the sharing of ideas, participating in public speaking, and even by active listening. It seems that some
students gained as individuals for their betterment and growth, whereas others benefited not just for their own enhancement but for the upliftment of their social groups or communities. Students also benefited in terms of their larger contexts, such as their family relationships, work situation, and life itself. They gained new knowledge of how to deal not only with the course content but with real life situations as well. They met others studying the same course that they were studying and the contact and friendships that they forged, made them feel less isolated as students. The contact with other students from different races also made an impact on many students. It also dissolved the confusion that many students arrived with at the programme, regarding the course itself. They seemed to benefit by the friendliness of the presenters/facilitators which seemed to go a long way towards changing their negative perception of Unisa lecturers. Lecturers became real, caring people to them - models whom they could emulate.

Conclusion

Studying and interpreting visual and written texts or discourses has been the theme of Part 2 of this study. The photographs and cards are visual representations that persuade and enculturate the reader. In this study, the impact of ‘seeing’ students work in groups, and reading the thank you cards and comments of students, cannot but persuade the reader of the impact of this programme and the benefit of replacing traditional methods of teaching hierarchically with more egalitarian and participatory methods.
SELF-REFLECTIONS: PART 2

Looking at the photographs, and reading the thank you cards and comments from students, re-awakened in the researcher, the excitement of not only being part of the programme, but also the privilege of being part of the life-changing process in the lives of both students and presenters/facilitators. Nurturing a belief in the beneficial effects of the programme as well as in the resources of students themselves, seem to have been the guiding light of the presenters/facilitators as well as the catalyst for change.
RESULTS - PART 3

PATTERNS AND THEMES

The researcher interviewed fifteen students approximately four months after they had attended the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP) in 1999. These were follow-up interviews to discover what had transpired in the lives of students who had participated in the SSEEP since the conclusion of the programme. A number of those who were interviewed were excluded from the study because they did not write the examination at the end of the year, and of the interviews that remained, four interviews that were regarded as representative of the student population which attended the SSEEP, were selected for analysis.

In chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14, the accounts that are derived from the analyses of these four interview narratives will be discussed. Then in chapter 15, the narrative themes that emerged from the discussions in the aforementioned chapters will form the basis of the discussion.

The narratives in this study illustrate the co-evolution of ideas and meanings between interviewer and respondent. These narratives are but another step in the process of assisting students on the road towards self-discovery and the enhancement of their personal resources as they make sense of their experiences in the programme and in the interview itself. Students articulate their meanings and give these meanings life.

In the following four chapters an analysis of each of the conversations between the researcher and the four respondents, will be provided. The analysis will comprise a structural, thematic, and interpersonal function component.

The structural analysis refers to the ‘unpacking’ of the structure that leads to a discussion of the emerging meanings. In the structural analysis, the researcher will provide interpretation, then extracts from texts on which interpretation is based, followed by further interpretation, and so on. In terms of Labov’s framework (cited in
Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993), each clause in the ‘story’ seems to have various functions and these are indicated with headings in the text as follows: Abstract (the summary of the story), Orientation (which identifies time, place and persons), Complicating Action (the action or narrative), Evaluation (the point or meaning of the narrative for the respondent), Result or Resolution (the result of the action). Orientation and Evaluation may appear at various points in the narrative. At the conclusion of the section on the structural analysis, the researcher will refer to the South African context in which the interview was located, and the researcher’s interpretation of the main structure of the narratives.

A general discussion on the abstract structure of moves, thematic coherence, and reflections on the relationship between respondent and interviewer, will follow the analysis. The discussion of each narrative analysis will be concluded with final comments.
CHAPTER 11

HELEN’S NARRATIVE: FINDING AN ACADEMIC VOICE
READING IN THE DARK

Introduction

The title, Finding an academic voice, is meant to typify the respondent’s narrative as she appears to be battling in the dark with insecurity and finding a voice, whereas the subscript, Reading in the dark, represents the researcher’s struggle with the respondent’s thin narrative.

This account is based on the transcribed interview between the researcher (V) and Helen (H). The retranscription is provided in Appendix K. Line numbers refer to the line numbers allocated in the retranscription.

Personal Information

Helen was a single, 22 year old, Black, female, full-time student at the University of South Africa, at the time of the interview. Her personal information was obtained from a Personal Data Form which she filled in prior to the interview.

Setting

The interview also revealed the setting that she inhabits. She stayed in Witbank, a town in fairly close proximity to Pretoria (line 124), with her family (line 121). It seemed that she came to Unisa in Pretoria every second week to study in the university library with other students, which she found more beneficial than trying to study at home on her own (lines125 -147). She did not work (lines 149-152) and was supported financially by her mother (lines 153-156). Her goal was to qualify as a social worker and to obtain work in that field (lines 157-162).
Structural Analysis of the Data

The Meaning of the Programme for the Student

An analysis of the data indicated that, for Helen, the SSEEP helped her *to understand* the *course content*, as can be seen from the following:

---

### Core Narrative of Story 1

**Abstract**

1V: What things did you learn,
2 what made some sort of an impact,
3 what was the meaning of the course for you?

**Complicating Action**

4H: The programme (O)
5 helped me to learn about my work, specially Personology.

**Evaluation**

6 It gave me a lot of knowledge.

**Result**

7V: So what you are saying is that it helped you a lot with the actual course content?
8H: Yes.

---

The interviewer battled with the ‘thin’ descriptions which the respondent provided. The interviewer wanted more detail and attempted to model this to the respondent by summing up what she had said (line 7). This however, seemed to entrench the interviewer as ‘expert’ and was unhelpful in unlocking the details of her experiences, as is further illustrated in the next core narrative.

---

### Core Narrative of Story 2

**Abstract**

12V: Was there anything else about the programme?

**Complicating Action**

14H: It also helped me to [long pause] participate, to yes.....

15V: So do you think the participation was an important thing?

16H: Yes.

17V: In what way?

**Result**

18H: Because when you are just sitting down and listening sometimes you get nothing,
19 but when you participate you know what is it about.

20V: So you found the participation,
21 like the working in the groups and
22 writing your group objectives and things like that,
you found that helpful?

24H: Yes.

Evaluation

28H: Um. It was very important because now I know a lot of..., a lot about my work
and it helped me.

Participation also contributed to the meaning of the programme for the respondent. The
interviewer used the same word, participation, that the respondent uses, as the
interviewer tried to 'join' with the respondent. The respondent’s expanded answer (lines
18-19) still did not provide the necessary detail, which required the interviewer to ‘read
in the dark’ and rely on her experience in and knowledge of the programme to expand
and explain what the respondent said.

She seemed unable or unwilling to differentiate between the sessions (lines 44-45) and
seemed to find them all helpful despite the interviewer asking which sessions were
particularly meaningful to her (lines 30-43). This inability to differentiate between
important and less important information was also a quality that lecturers tended to find
in disadvantaged students. An interesting change seemed to occur when the interviewer
asked her whether the programme had been meaningful to her in her family context. She
replied:

Extract from the Core Narrative of Story 3

57H: [laughs] Because in, let me say my family,
58    I used that thing I learnt in that programme
59    to tell them what we worked the things out
60    as psychologist [the community session].

Once more the interviewer had to ‘read in the dark’ - to use her experience and
knowledge to make sense of the respondent’s reply. In this excerpt, the respondent
seemed to reinvent her identity as someone who had status in her family by using the
word “psychologist” to explain what ‘work’ she did at the programme and to identify on
a more equal and symmetrical level with the interviewer. The former seems to be
coherent with the following custom prevalent in the Black culture. When a Black person
goes to university, it brings status to the family and community from which the Black
person comes, as well as sacrifice to the family which finances the student, who will then contribute to the family coffers once qualified. It thus implies a responsibility that the student bears not only to herself to pass, but also to those who have put their faith in her in terms of their financial contribution.

The programme also met the respondent’s need for interaction with other students.

The interviewer asked:

---

Core Narrative of Story 4

Abstract
64V: Where did you meet them?
65 Your friends,
66 the ones you came with the other day,
67 to my office,
68 Where did you meet them? The other students?

Complicating Action
69H: At the empowerment programme. (O)
72 We study together.
73V: In the library?
74 Ja. So perhaps then we could say that another thing that the programme did
75 was to help you to meet other people.

Result
81V: So do you feel in a way then that the programme perhaps gave you
82 some more confidence
83 to speak to people
84 and to make friends?
85H: Yes.

This meant that the respondent no longer studied on her own and now had friends who were studying the same subject that she was studying (lines 91-94).

The Meaning of the Interview for the Student

When the interviewer asked her whether the conversation between them in the interview was helpful, she replied:
Core Narrative of Story 5

Complicating Action

186H: Yes, it is very helpful.
187V: What has been helpful?
188H: Because sometimes we shy to talk to other,
189 to the let me say,
190 to the White person.
191 We are very shy.
192V: Why do you think you are very shy?
193H: [Laughs nervously] I don't know.
194 I just shy.
195V: So you find it quite difficult to talk to a White person?
196H: Yes. [Laughs]
197V: And did you find it difficult in the programme,
198 because there were quite a lot of White people?
199H: No, we were in a group,
200 it was not very difficult.
201V: Did you ever come forward and present anything?
202H: No. [Laughs]
203V: OK, so this is quite difficult for you, even now.
204 And do you think it is helping you in any way?

Result

205H: Yes, it is helping me.
206V: In what way?
207 How is it helping you?

Evaluation

208H: Because next time I will be open.

It seems that she found the encounter between herself, a young Black woman, and the interviewer, who is a White person, very helpful. Such social encounters across the racial divide had not been part of her social experiential world until then. She had previously been in social contact with Whites but as part of a group which seemed to make her feel more safe, and not in a 'one on one' relationship as this encounter had been. She felt that in future though, she would be more open to such encounters. A shift therefore seemed to have taken place. She moved from being "shy to talk ...... to the White person", to being able to do so in a group situation, and finally to being more open in a one-on-one situation. However, her progress was relative as her narrative remained very 'thin', and the interviewer was still required to 'draw' conversation from her. This progression seemed to parallel the shift in her perception from the more hierarchical lecturer/student relationship to one that was more equal.
Although she mentioned previously that she found participation helpful (Story 2), it seems that she was referring to participation in a group in which she felt comfortable to communicate and not in terms of presenting to the whole student group in the programme. She did not present to the whole student group as she did not seem to feel comfortable or confident to communicate in front of everyone (lines 201-202).

The vestiges of the past South African apartheid context still seem evident in the isolated nature of the respondent’s existence. This student coming as she did from a more remote rural area, did not seem to have experienced the opportunity of socialising with people from different races, especially Whites, in a more egalitarian relationship. On the occasions that this had occurred she had received support from her ilk.

It seemed that the main structure of the narratives was that of a question - an answer - and a restatement or question. This format, which appeared to have a halting and hesitating quality about it, seemed to allow the respondent to search for and come to an understanding of what the programme meant to her personally and in other contexts, and what the conversation between interviewer and respondent meant to her.

**Analysing the Abstract Structure of Moves**

Analysing the abstract structure of moves helped the researcher to understand the narratives on another level. In the text of *Story 1*, the structure was that of a question ("What was the meaning of the course for you"), an answer (that the programme helped her to understand the course content, especially Personology), and a restatement of what the respondent said. This symmetrical way of communicating seemed to ‘define’ the relationship in more equal terms. *Story 2* seems to mimic the first story. However, in *Story 3*, a change appears to occur. After the interviewer’s question, in her response, Helen appropriates the more equal relationship by identifying with the interviewer in using the term “psychologist”. In *Story 4*, the structure was that of a question (Where did she meet her friends), an answer, and an interpretation that was positively framed and personally affirming (lines 74-75 and lines 81-84). The more equitable relationship seemed to be confirmed and was continued in *Story 5.*
Thematic Coherence

Thematic coherence of the various episodes in the story and the way that they are connected suggest that the stories express the values inherent in the academic culture as well as the value that this student attaches to being an involved student - involved in the programme, with the course content, with other students, and now with the interviewer who is also a lecturer and was also a presenter/facilitator in the programme, even though it was difficult for the respondent. Her values thus represent her identity. The respondent depicts the Black student’s world indicating what a difference this programme made to her in terms of acquiring ‘knowledge’ of the course material, opportunity to participate in the processes in the programme, to meet other students and continue interacting with them after the programme ended, to reinvent her identity as a person who has status in contexts such as her friends and family, and to socialise with Whites. Helen’s narrative also indicates how important it is for the facilitator/lecturer to be aware of the way many of Unisa’s students battle and how hard it is for them to function in an academic context with mainly White lecturers.

Reflections on the Relationship Between Respondent and Interviewer

The respondent was extremely nervous in the interview and although the interviewer tried to put her at ease, she felt that she did not succeed completely. It seemed to the interviewer that the respondent perceived their relationship initially as one typical of the hierarchical and asymmetric relationship between interviewer and respondent. This seemed to be further compounded by the respondent’s view of the interviewer as the ‘all-knowing’ lecturer. This assumption was based on a visit the previous week by Helen and her friends who came to see the interviewer in order for her, as lecturer, to explain aspects of the work that they did not fully comprehend. It seemed that the respondent was initially scared to say something ‘wrong’. In addition, the respondent referred in the interview to her shyness in talking to White people. Her perception of their relationship seemed to impact on the research interview. She replied in brief to the questions and only expanded ever so slightly when prompted. It seemed that she permitted the interviewer to be the ‘expert’ interviewer, which in a sense could be evident of her perception of the hierarchical relationship that she perceived to exist initially, and which
was also part of the larger context in which lecturers and Whites were supposed to be the 'experts' and students and Black people were expected to respect their status. However, it seems that the respondent began to assimilate the more egalitarian nature of her relationship with the interviewer, the facilitative role of the interviewer, and to 'warm' to the encounter and the opportunity that it had afforded her.

**Concluding Comments**

It seems that the respondent found the programme beneficial not only in terms of learning about course content, but also in terms of participating and interacting with other students. The narrative themes of developing an understanding of the course, participation, and connecting with other students, were present in the presenters'/facilitators' narratives in the programme, and seem to bear out the claim of a reciprocal influence between the narratives of presenters/facilitators and students.

However, the way that the respondent chose to communicate is indicative of the nonspecific way that many disadvantaged students communicate in a context that is personally unfamiliar to them. This is also typical of the way that such students express themselves in the examination and it is therefore perhaps not surprising to learn that this student did not pass the Personology examination which requires students to conceptualise and apply their knowledge of theories to everyday examples. In the examination, the marker cannot 'expand' on 'thin' descriptions, as the interviewer could do in the interview. She did however, pass the Developmental Psychology examination which perhaps links more specifically with family life, something closer to her world. This ability was also evident in the interview when she opened up when questions were linked to her family. It seems that the respondent's 'thin' description in this interview is coherent with not only her lack of confidence in the interview context to trust her own views, but is also similar to disadvantaged students' lack of confidence in an academic context to rely on their own experiences and intuition, and instead to remain 'book-bound'. In addition, this seems to be linked to the student's reliance on the interviewer to provide some of the detail by restating what the student had said. It seems that disadvantaged students' lack of ability to express themselves clearly in language requires them to depend on others to fulfil this task.

223
However, the respondent did make progress, although the movement was small. She was willing to risk herself even though she found it very difficult, and this bodes well for her in future experiences. The most important consideration was that her journey had begun.

It will be important for facilitators in future programmes to move away from hierarchical relationships and rather to minimise the distance between facilitators and students, creating relationships that are more equal. In addition, facilitators should not set their sights too high and then give up on those who do not perform to expectation, but should accept whatever shift occurs, even if it is the most gradual of shifts.
CHAPTER 12

SAMUEL'S NARRATIVE:
FINDING MYSELF AMONGST THE PARADOXES OF LIFE
PUZZLING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Introduction

The title, Finding myself amongst the paradoxes of life, is meant to typify the respondent’s narrative, whereas the subscript, Puzzling the pieces together, represents the researcher’s response to the respondent’s narrative.

This account is based on the transcribed interview between the researcher (V) and Samuel (S). The retranscription is to be found in Appendix L. Line numbers refer to line numbers provided in the retranscription.

Personal Information

Samuel was a separated, 32 year old, Black, male, part-time student at the University of South Africa, at the time of the interview. His personal information was obtained from a Personal Data Form which he filled in prior to the interview.

Setting

The interview also revealed the setting that he inhabits. He stayed in Klipgat which is a Black township outside Pretoria (line 297). He worked as a technician and financially supported his parents with whom he lived (line 300). His goal was to become a counsellor (line 74) and to have his own home (lines 304-307).
In the core narrative of Story 1, Samuel describes how meeting other students and interacting with them was meaningful to him. He also refers to the helpfulness of the programme in being given sufficient information to make choices from amongst the personality theories, on how to prepare for the examination, as well as the importance of attitude.

Core Narrative of Story 1

Abstract
6V: Samuel, what parts of the programme were meaningful to you?
Evaluation
7S: In general the whole experience was very good.
Complicating Action of Theme 1
8 especially because when you are a part-time student
9 you don't meet with any person,
10 like myself.
Result of Theme 1
11 So meeting other students somehow motivates one
12 and interacting with other students
13 you come to understand your situation exactly as a student
14 and how other students are going on with their studies,
15 then somehow you get that self-awareness
16 from the experience of other students.
Complicating Action of Theme 2
17 Yes, and it helps a person on how to choose the right personality theories.
Result of Theme 2
18 Somehow you get an idea which theory is good for you
19 and which might be troublesome for you,
Complicating Action of Theme 3
20 and on how to prepare for the examinations,
Result of Theme 3
21 it really helped me a lot.
Complicating Action of Theme 4
22 But on the other hand one might have the feeling
23 that even though it helped one how to choose those personality theories,
24 but if maybe it was held after we have returned all the assignments
25 and we are preparing for the final examination
Evaluation of Theme 4
26 I think it was going to be very helpful.
Result of Theme 4
27 because from that programme, you are motivated

226
and you are taught exactly how to approach the examination. so it might be helpful.

Abstract of Amplification of Theme 1

And so I just to sort of clarify,
you found that mixing with other students
and hearing what they had to say
made quite a big difference in terms of your understanding and so on?

Complicating Action of the Amplification of Theme 1

Ja, but not exactly on that subject content.
But it is eye opening
that you somehow get a knowledge
and understanding of how to approach your studies
and how serious you have to be.
You find out there are people who really take their studies very seriously,
and so when you mix all these things

Result of Amplification of Theme 1

you can decide properly on how to approach them.

Abstract of Further Amplification of Theme 1

And Samuel have you got contact with any of the people
you met after the programme?

Complicating Action of Further Amplification of Theme 1

No, most of them were ladies.
The group I was in there was one guy,
but he did not attend all those sessions,
so I did not make any contact,
but with the ladies
sometimes when you are married
it become very difficult to have such contact,

so I did not establish any contact with any of them.

In lines 8 to 10, Samuel refers to the isolated existence of being a part-time student. This he contrasts with meeting other students, who form a basis of comparison against which to assess himself (lines 11-16). It seems that he was thus able to gain a greater sense of self-awareness - of his place in the bigger 'student picture'.

He also refers to aspects related to the Personology Course (lines 17-19) and examination preparation (line 20). He is open to the alternatives that are available to him and can make his choice of personality theories accordingly.

It seems that he is 'lapping up' the new experiences, and information that he has been given. However, he brings in a negative aspect. He feels that this programme would
have been more beneficial if it was offered closer to the examination (lines 22-29). It seems that he needs the motivation that exposure to external sources gives him (lines 27-29). This segment of the story links with lines 254 to 282 (Appendix L). In this section of the story he reiterates what he has said previously and expands on what he has said. He mentions not only the drawbacks of having the programme early in the year but also mentions the positives. It seems that the interviewer made him feel that she has really listened to what he has said and this seems to free him to focus on the positives as well.

In lines 30 to 32, the interviewer restates what he is saying. The function of restatement seems different from the function that it performed in the narrative between the interviewer and Helen. In this case, the restatement seems to enable the interviewer to make sure that she has understood the respondent correctly. It also enables Samuel to correct her if need be, which in itself is empowering.

The next restatement (lines 34-37) is an interruption by the interviewer who was wanting to clarify her understanding of earlier comments, and requires the respondent to expand on his answer. The respondent explains that the input of other students did not benefit him on a subject content level (line 38), but on an attitude level which gave him information on how to approach his studies and how serious one has to be (lines 39-42). Again he seems to notice the difference between people’s attitudes (line 43), and this enables him to make a choice from the options that are open to him (lines 45-47).

A question from the interviewer regarding whether or not he has made contact with any of the students he met at the programme (lines 48-49) also performs the function of requiring the respondent to expand on what he had said previously regarding his isolation as a student (lines 8-16). He explains that he has not formed a study group since the conclusion of programme, and therefore still studies on his own (lines 58-59). He refers to the fact that the group that he was in, comprised mainly ladies (line 50), and hints at the difficulty he would experience as a married man if he had to make contact with other ladies. He returns to the marital problem theme at a later stage.
The next story also refers to the original question, but focuses more specifically on the personal impact that any one session made on the respondent. This core narrative comprises four stories or themes. The first theme refers to the respondent’s experience in the community session and how it led to him being made aware of counselling as a profession. The next story refers to what made him decide to study further, the following story to his political activities during the apartheid era, and the final story makes associations between these two activities, which the interviewer linked together in terms of the way that she interpreted them.

---

**Core Narrative of Story 2**

**Abstract of Theme 1**

60V: And then I just wanted to know, was there anything else about the programme or the things you did, like some of the exercises and that, did any of them make any personal impact on your life?

**Complicating Action of Theme 1**

65S: Ja, on the last day of the session (O) we had some discussions and I was in the group which was discussing marital problems (O).

**Evaluation**

69 Even though it did not make much impact on my life but I liked it. I found that it is something exciting to sort of counsel.

**Result**

74 I realised that counselling might be a good job. and in fact, I think I can enjoy it.

**Abstract of Theme 2**

79 And what made you decide to study further?

**Complicating Action of Theme 2**

80S: I am a person who likes to study, who likes to read. I was once a student here at Unisa when I left school but for some reasons I failed twice,

**Result**

84 then I could not register again. Thereafter I was confused so I wasted much time not doing anything. Somehow I got involved in political activities in the townships, so later on I got the courage of coming back again and I had problem with them taking me back

**Evaluation**

90 but I am thankful that finally they understood me and they took me back.

**Abstract of Theme 3**

100V: And Samuel you said you became involved politically in your area.
Has that influenced your decision to come and study again, in any way?

[Definite] No.

Complicating Action of Theme 3

At that time I was not doing anything, so the only thing that was meaningful to me was politics, even though before I was somehow politically involved. But after the 90's, I mean from 89, 90 I was not that active in politics, so after I have dropped out [of university] then the only thing that was open to me was politics.

What meaning was the politics in your life? At that period it was not my first time involvement in politics. from let me say about when I was in Std 7, Std 8 (O) I was interested in politics. In fact, if we can remember well in the 80's (O) there was much injustice, ill treated by the then government, so to me it was painful to see all those things and at that period there were no political activities in the townships or around the country, but in general there were no activities which could involve the masses, only a few people.

So I had that desire that I can do something and I got to understand that there is the ANC outside, but knowing that I am the only son, child, at home then I shelved many things that I should not disappoint my family. We were involved until late in the 80’s (O) whereby there were riots everywhere. It went on until the 90’s (O) when political organisations were unbanned, but after those unbannings I was no longer involved that way it kept me about a year or two there after I have dropped here [at Unisa] (O) and I just got into politics again.

Evaluation of Theme 3

but since there was no severe injustice politics were not very meaningful to me. I was just there, but emotionally I was not there.

Abstract of Theme 4

You saw these injustices and you felt that something needed to [be done], That is interesting for me now that you are doing BA (SS), because I mean psychology is also really to help people, differently to what you do it politically.

Complicating Action of Theme 4

Ja, being a psychologist or a social worker you are going to be involved in the community.

In fact both of them are serving the community,
that is how I see it.

Result of Theme 4

So perhaps that is why when you did that session on that last day with the marital problems, that you saw that this is actually something that you could enjoy doing, counselling and helping people in that area

Of course.

It seems that the interviewer’s question (lines 60-64) picked up on the idea that he was starving for, and was responsive to, new experiences and information. The discussion in the community session on the last day on marital problems provoked him and introduced him to new information (lines 65-67). His evaluation in line 68 again hints at the idea of marital problems in his own life and links with lines 54 to 56 where he refers to the difficulty of forming a group with ladies if one is married. He seems to see counselling as an optional vocational choice. It appears that not only were the discussions in themselves stimulating, but they had the added function of introducing him to different ideas (lines 69-75). The interviewer’s restatement (line 76) merely repeats what he said about the idea of counselling.

The interviewer then seems to make a leap to the present (line 78) and another leap (line 79) to why the respondent decided to study further. It seems that she was trying to make sense of the respondent’s life. His answer defines him as a person who likes to study and read (lines 81-82). And yet he provides a contradictory statement in referring to his failure to pass at Unisa after he left school (line 84). He explains the confusion that he felt (lines 85-86). It seems that he was ‘stuck’ after he failed and did not do anything with his life at that time (line 86). This feeling of ‘stuckness’ was also alluded to when he referred to his marital problems (line 68). Thereafter, he became involved in political activities (line 87) which he found meaningful at the time (line 106), but returned to his studies more recently to commence studying for a degree in social work. He then goes back in time to explain that he became interested in politics while he was still at school (lines 119-134) and became involved although not in a way that would disappoint his parents (lines 135-136 and lines 138-143). However, once the reason for getting involved a second time (lines 145-146) disappeared (line 148), he was no longer emotionally involved and politics lost its meaning for him (lines 149-151).
It seems from this narrative segment that his political involvement was a part of his life in parentheses. He sees no link between his political involvement and his decision to study again (lines 99-104). Although it seems that he has not contemplated a link between the meaning he found in becoming involved in politics and studying Psychology (lines 116-117), he is able to offer a link in line 171 where he sees both as "serving the community". It seems that he does what the context requires at a given point. In lines 152 to 182, the interviewer draws the respondent's attention to a common thread which she perceives weaves together his involvement in serving the community initially in a political context, and now, by studying Psychology, in perhaps a counselling context. In this way the interviewer returned to his interest in counselling which was awakened in the community session, that he indicated at the beginning of this narrative segment, and links the elements of the discussion together. However, by entering the story this way, the interviewer makes the final part of this narrative her story, and thus commits the cardinal error of speaking for the respondent. Perhaps his political involvement was a part of his life that was painful in many ways. He might have become disillusioned, ashamed, or unhappy about the role he played. He might have wanted to keep it in the background and perhaps felt uncomfortable about the interviewer making links from her perspective.

The next story is introduced by a question asking Samuel whether the programme has made any difference in his life (lines 183-192).

---

Core Narrative of Story 3

Complicating Action

193S: Ja. I am working in the workshop (O)
194 and the atmosphere there is not good.
195 People shout, they swear, all those things.
196 So here it was different.
197 People were treating one another differently and politely.
198 That atmosphere was very good.

Evaluation

199 In fact I was contrasting it with my workplace,
Complicating Action
200 but that is where I spend most of my time
201 so I was impressed with the atmosphere which was prevailing there
202 and I told myself,
203 that I should be being a right way,
and I should become more like them [the people at the programme] and understand other people and tolerate whatever I can.

Result

After that programme (O) because I was really motivated then I exercised, somehow I was a little bit changed, but as you are in the environment daily somehow it is going to change you again, but with the knowledge that one has you always try to do your best.

The atmosphere that prevailed in the programme provided Samuel with a basis of comparison against which to assess the atmosphere in his work situation. The theme of ill-treatment mentioned earlier in terms of the apartheid years (lines 123-124) again rears its head in the abusive communication that occurs in his workplace (line 195). He is able to appreciate the difference of being treated politely (line197) and where tolerance for difference was exercised (lines 205-206). This spurs him on to want to change his attitude. However, he feels that the external conditions (lines 212-213) were stronger than his attitude change and soon changed him again. However, he evaluates himself as someone who tries his best. This is very similar to defining himself as the son who tries to live up to his parent’s expectations (lines 135-136) in the previous narrative segment, and as the husband who treats his wife politely (lines 219-220).

The Meaning of the Interview for the Student

The following story centres around the meaning that the interview had for the respondent (the student).

Core Narrative of Story 4

Abstract
And Samuel, our conversation how helpful has that been to you

Evaluation
It is a good experience, especially by a lecturer, or psychologist

Result
But just to get to a psychologist
you get an idea of what kind of people they are,
Complicating Action

Sometimes like we, like people from the townships,
our education was not that proper,
our teachers were very rude,
they were very rude and not caring,
so sometimes you think that your lecturers are the same
as your high school teachers,
but when you meet them
Result

you can see that they are more different from our high school teachers.
Evaluation

To me it is a good experience.

Samuel is obviously ‘hungry’ to be treated in a decent way. He has suffered at the hands of an education that was not “proper” (line 242), and teachers that were rude and uncaring (lines 243-244). His repetition of the word, “rude”, gives more weight to his perception. However the contrast between his past experiences and his present experience is very real to him, and he likes what he experienced in the interview. This interview has provided a basis of comparison for him which his previous experiences did not allow.

The following is a story which relates to his personal circumstances. In the middle of this story is a sub-story which explains why he is still staying with his parents (lines 295-309), which relates to an African custom.

Core Narrative of Story 5

Abstract of Theme 1

And Samuel, just to ask you about your wife, what does she do?

Complicating Action of Theme 1

Last year she was a student at Vista (O)
and because of some problems I could not finance her
I paid some of the money
but because of some rulings, I withheld that financing.
In fact we had some problems.

Result of Theme 1

But like now she is not staying with me,
she is staying with my sister-in-law, not exactly the parents. (O)
So we have problems.
Now she is staying at home.
She is working in a tuckshop.
Abstract of Theme 2
So you are staying on your own at the moment?
Where do you stay on your own?
Complicating Action of Theme 2
At Klipgat. (O)
With my parents.
We were staying together at my home.
We got custom if there is only one child in the home,
especially a boy,
he does not have to go out and have his own home,
Evaluation of Theme 2
but that is what I want,
I don’t want to stay with my parents.
I want to be on my own.
Result of Theme 2
When the right time comes
I will have to move out.
Complicating Action of the Amplification of Theme 1
So we were staying together
and later on she complained about many things until she left.
Result of the Amplification of Theme 1
I could not do anything about it.
In fact she did not talk to me,
she took decisions on her own
and she moved out.
Evaluation
That’s hard on you.
So you have had quite a tough life in a way, just listening to you?
And it happened when I just about to write exams, she went. (O)
Well, that is very tough.

Samuel starts rather cautiously with the story of his wife. It is only in line 288 that he refers directly to the problems in their marriage and in line 289, explains that she is no longer living with him. It now becomes clear why he was interested in the group discussion on marital problems in the community session (lines 67-69) and why he made the comment in line 68 ("Even though it did not make much impact on my life"). He continues with the story of his failed marriage in line 310. It seems that a sense of negativity coloured their relationship until finally his wife left. He appears to have been cast aside in her decision to leave (lines 312-315), highlighting the theme of alienation once again. The interviewer responds to the effect it must have had on him, and to his life in general which has been tough (line 316-317). He responds to the interviewer’s empathy by adding more information to indicate its effect on him (line 318).
In the substory, it seems that Samuel, by following the custom of staying with his parents, has alienated himself from what he wants. He wants to have his own home (line 305), he does not want to stay with his parents (line 306), and he wants to be on his own (line 307). However, he sees this as a future event (lines 308-309). In this way he carves his identity as an independent person. This independence however will probably alienate him from his African roots, but will unite him to his inner needs.

The narrative ends with the interviewer commenting on the interesting, tough life that he has led thus far (lines 320-327). However, the interviewer makes associations (lines 326-327) that are not part of his thinking (line 328). She assumes that he must have derived some meaning from his political experiences which motivated him. This seemed to be confirmed by his explanation that he tends to become involved when he perceives problems (lines 329-331). Despite the interviewer making links that were out of synchronisation with his thinking and yet which he also referred to in line 106, 133, and lines 122 to 125, the way that the interviewer affirmed him positively (lines 332-345) seemed to override her error of imposing her interpretation on him. The interviewer did not see that part of his life in parentheses as he did, and tended to see his life in a more integrated way. In this way, she provided an alternative to his compartmentalised way of viewing his life. The interviewer said:

326V: But that [political involvement] must have given you some kind of motivation
327 or some sense of doing something, you know, trying to help, of being useful?
328S: [Pause] I don’t know whether I got the motivation from those experiences,
329 but I know that usually when there are problems many times
330 I can’t just sit back,
331 I will like to do something.

The larger context in which this interview exists, namely the South African context, also seems to have exerted an influence on the interview process. The polite and egalitarian relationship that prevailed in the programme as well as in the interview context was in direct contrast to his previous experiences, especially with authority figures. This student did not have pleasant memories of his high school years and only remembered the rude and uncaring way in which his teachers treated him. His youth belonged to the larger context of the day which was underlined by injustice and ill treatment of Blacks by the apartheid government, and the lost years of those scholars and students who were
politically involved. Although the apartheid era has passed, the residual effects still remain as his working environment testifies.

It seemed that the main structure of the interview narrative was that of a question - an answer - and an expanded answer. This format allowed the respondent to open up gradually which was less threatening to him. He could then come to the real issues. On another level he tells stories within stories that contain layer upon layer of meaning.

Analysing the Abstract Structure of Moves

Analysing the abstract structure of moves helped the researcher to understand the narratives on another level. In Story 1, the structure was that of an initial question ("What parts of the programme were meaningful to you?"), which seemed to give him the opportunity to have his voice heard and to 'hold the floor' by introducing his ideas which he amplified, and by even mentioning an aspect that could be improved, that is the time of year at which the programme is presented. The interviewer repeated what he said and implied acceptance by moving on to other aspects that she asked him to clarify. In this way she reversed the hierarchical role usually ascribed to the interviewer and allowed him to be the 'expert' in telling his story. In Story 2, much the same pattern ensued. The respondent, in interaction with the interviewer, was telling stories that had perhaps never been told and which were revealing the respondent's identity as someone who was sensitive to the suffering of others in an unjust system, and who was prepared to become involved. However, the way in which the interviewer wove the different themes together, establishes her 'power' in the interview, making the story her own instead of allowing the respondent to 'own' his own story. In Story 3, the respondent's story clearly illustrates the difference between his opposing worlds of experience (that is, between his work place and the atmosphere in the programme), and his response functions to re-establish his 'power'. In Story 4, a more egalitarian relationship is re-established and he once again is acknowledged as the 'expert' of his story. In Story 5, a question from the interviewer prompts the sharing of some very personal information regarding his failed marriage. In this story, the interviewer's empathic response prompted the sharing of still more personal information and was not seen as an attempt to usurp his story as was the case in Story 2. In the closing segment (lines 326-331), the
interviewer terminates the interview with a focus on his strengths which he seems to accept in the spirit of an egalitarian relationship.

Thematic Coherence

Thematic coherence of the various episodes in the story and the way they are connected suggest that the stories express the values inherent in the academic culture and more specifically the narrative of the programme presenters, such as the importance of interacting with other students, being able to choose from amongst different personality theories, and knowing how to prepare for the examinations; the importance of attitude towards studies; the political culture of the apartheid era, where Blacks were treated unjustly and inhumanely, which was also evident in the way Samuel was treated by his teachers and which is even present in his work context at this time even though apartheid has been dismantled; as well as the value that this student attaches to the things he values. He values becoming involved with others, (such as other students, and the interviewer as lecturer and one of the presenters of the programme), and with his community. He values the way that these involvements serve as a basis of comparison against which to assess his other relationships, and his life. He is respectful in the way that he converses with the interviewer, even when he is being critical of the time of year at which the programme was presented, and in how he relates to his parents and his wife, and he values being treated politely and respectfully by others. This seems to fit the values of human society in general. He seems to be sensitive to the suffering of others and feels that he needs to be passionate about what he does. He tries his best at all times. All these values are coherent with caring humanity.

He defines himself as a scholar, as someone who likes to study and read. And yet he also defined himself previously as a failure academically. He also sees himself as someone who becomes involved in the community and yet as someone who does not help others with their problems. He defines himself as someone who does not wish to fail the expectations of others, but would like to break free of the customs that seem to alienate him from himself. He sees himself as someone who cares about others and yet experiences failure in his relationship with his wife. He views his marriage as a failure and yet he adheres to marriage etiquette by refraining from contact with other women.
He comes over as a polite and mild-mannered person which contrasts with his political activities which might have been subversive or even experienced negatively by him. Perhaps he finds it difficult to integrate that part of his life into his present identity. It therefore seems that his identity is fraught with paradox.

**Reflections on the Relationship Between Respondent and Interviewer**

Samuel impressed the presenters/facilitators in the programme with his quiet, dignified and respectful manner. This is also how he presented himself in the interview. He seemed to trust the interviewer, and was quite forthright in his answers. His previous experiences with authority figures, such as teachers, and his superiors at work, were coloured by disrespect. Despite these adverse experiences, he was open to being related to in a different way by the interviewer - a more equal and respectful way in which he felt at home and which he dearly desired. The interviewer was touched by his underlying sadness at the harshness of his life.

**Concluding Comments**

It seems that the participant found the programme beneficial not only in terms of participating and interacting with other students, and being introduced to different theories from which he had to make certain choices, but in the way that he was exposed to other ‘realities’, which he enjoyed. He reminded the interviewer of parched ground soaking up the rain.

The themes that seemed most apparent in the narrative were the themes of alienation (as a student studying on his own, in his working environment, in his marriage, in his customs), and failure (as a student previously, in his marriage). It seems that his present life circumstances tended to be out of synchronisation with what he wanted in life.

His communication was ‘thick’ and rich, and in direct contrast to Helen’s, which was ‘thin’. This highlights the importance of accepting whatever narrative is forthcoming. Although the more congenial atmosphere in the interview was unfamiliar to him and out of synchronisation with most of his social experiences, he was able to communicate
openly in this context quite easily probably because it was personally familiar to him in his ‘head’, in what he sought for himself. This student achieved marks in the sixties for both Personology and Developmental Psychology in the examination, which seems congruent with the way that he communicated his ideas in the interview. This student in contrast to Helen, trusted his own views which he was not afraid to articulate in the interview, nor it seems in the examination.

The respondent responded positively to his experiences in the programme and the interview of an alternative ‘reality’ to the negativity which coloured most of his experiences. It seemed that his academic success and his grasp of an alternative ‘reality’ reflected the beginning of him rising from the ashes. Facilitators should therefore be cognisant of their role in a student’s life. They may be the very ones to offer the student the view and experience of a better way of life. However, they should be careful of trying to usurp the respondent’s story. The facilitator can be empathic but should not try to make the story his or her own, as this interviewer unwittingly did at one point in the interview.
CHAPTER 13

MARY-JANE’S NARRATIVE: SOMEONE TO TRUST

Introduction

This account is based on the transcribed interview between the researcher (V) and Mary-Jane (M). The retranscription is to be found in Appendix M. Line numbers refer to the line numbers allocated in the retranscription.

Personal Information

Mary-Jane was a single, 27 year old, Black, female, part-time student at the University of South Africa, at the time of the interview. Her personal information was obtained from a Personal Data Form which she filled in prior to the interview.

Setting

The interview also revealed the setting that she inhabits. She stayed in a rural settlement just outside Pietersburg at the time of the interview. She was a temporary teacher, teaching in a rural township school. She was the sole breadwinner in the family, and supported her four brothers, her mother and herself. However, she had not received a salary even though she had been teaching at the school for a number of months. She painted an alarming picture of the difficulties of teaching in a rural township school. She recounted how children would come to school, only to find that their teachers were absent for the first three or four periods. The children would then go home and when she arrived at the classroom to teach her class, there would be no learners present to teach. She maintained that in some of the townships, there really is just no education, which is very sad for the learners.

She was desperately looking for alternative employment at the time of the interview. She felt that as much as she loved teaching, she believed that a permanent job in teaching would not be forthcoming due to the Education Department’s rationalisation policy. She
had also become disillusioned by her experiences in teaching, doubting whether her dedication would make any difference in a disinterested teaching environment.

Structural Analysis of the Data

The Meaning of the Programme for the Student

An analysis of the data indicated that for Mary-Jane, the SSEEP clarified the personality theories and made the course load more manageable (lines 6-11 and lines 78-86), provided a context in which to make contact with fellow Psychology students and thereafter to form a study group (lines 12-21 and lines 90-98), helped her to learn to live in a more harmonious way with people (lines 22-34), facilitated the relationship between her and the lecturers (lines 35-56), and provided her with information on how to relate to and handle her adolescent brothers (lines 67-77).

Core Narrative of Story 1

Abstract

V: What did this programme mean to you personally?

Evaluation

SM: Okay. The programme really changed the way I felt about Psychology, especially this paper, because at times I was having so many theories, I didn't understand anything concerning them, so after that programme (O) I was very glad, it really made me clear, I knew everything about each theorist and then it give me a chance or opportunity to meet my fellow students we are doing psychology with because at first we didn't know each other, but after that programme, (O) we knew each other, we make friendship and are able to get addresses where we can arrange for, like Saturday study groups so that we can study together, like making assignments together.

Result of Theme 2

We discuss everything before we write our assignment.
Complicating Action of Theme 3
22 and moreover I also learnt about how to live with people
23 because at times somebody will anger you,
24 but you won’t know how to treat that person.
25 Maybe in turn you will be angry,
Result
26 but at least after that programme (O)
27 I realised that it is better to learn to know somebody.
28 If somebody is doing this to you,
29 just relax,
30 find out the reason why.
31 Maybe it is because of the way he was brought up or whatever,
32 or maybe he might be in crisis at his or her family
33 so from that programme I really learnt to understand people,
34 find out more about people before putting judgment.
Complicating Action of Theme 4
35 And I also learnt to know my lecturers.
36 You were all very nice
37 so you made that relationship between us which was not there before
38 because we only knew you through tutorials,
Result of Theme 4
39 so after that programme (O)
40 I knew that if I have problem I can contact one of my lecturers.
Evaluation
41 It was very good, it was very enriching to attend that programme. [laughs]
Complicating Action of Theme 5
60 And was there anything else there that you learnt?
65M: Relationship with other people,
66 like at my place (O)
67 I am having my younger brothers who are in this stage of adolescence,
68 at times they'll make you feel mad,
Result of Theme 5
69 but after that programme (O)
70 I really understood them,
71 I really know how to treat such people.
72V: And have you found it has improved your relationship with your brothers?
73M: Very much, indeed, it improve it very much
74 because I know this one is doing this one because of 1 2 3,
75 and I can handle such a person in this way
76 so it has really improved,
77 it has really helped.

Although the interviewer asked a general question in line 1 about what the programme meant to the respondent, the respondent’s focus on the Personology course rather than the Developmental Psychology course, seems to be in line with the interviewer being one of the lecturers involved in the aforementioned course. By doing this, the
respondent aligned herself with the interviewer with whom it seems she wanted to gain acceptance. It is significant that the respondent did this at the beginning of the interview. Her statement in line 11 that she “knew everything about each theorist”, although perhaps somewhat exaggerated, is rather flattering to the lecturers involved in explaining the theories in the programme, but also testifies to her attentiveness and dedication as a student, which is how she would want the interviewer to think about her. It could also be just a form of speech in English which is not her mother tongue.

The respondent then refers to the opportunity that the programme context afforded her, to meet fellow Psychology students. After the conclusion of the programme, the students that she had contact with formed a group so that they could study and work together on the assignments. The theme of connection was a narrative that was strongly expounded by the presenters/facilitators of the programme, and it is clearly evident in her narrative.

The third theme of living more harmoniously together, seems to be a more general comment on relationships. It seems that she benefited from knowledge of new and alternative ways of how to relate to negative behaviour from others. She feels that before she reacts or passes judgement she needs to find out more information about the person’s circumstances. In this way she is identifying herself as a tolerant person with respect for difference.

In the fourth theme, it seems that she really enjoyed forming a relationship with the presenters/facilitators (as lecturers). It seems that personal contact has made all the difference. In line 40, she hints at her personal need to rely on someone in times of trouble, and she perceives that the presenters/facilitators can meet this need. It is interesting to note that she places her evaluation of the programme as enriching at that point in her narrative. Perhaps this area of need in her is unfulfilled and is a high priority in her life. In lines 48 and 53 (see Appendix M), she mentions that previously she feared lecturers, but the relationships that were forged in the programme, have made all the difference and revealed the humanity of those lecturers. Given the traditional academic hierarchy that still exists in some quarters, lecturers and students are not able to get to know one another as people on an equal footing. However, the egalitarian and
symmetrical atmosphere that existed in the programme facilitated the crossing of these
traditional academic hierarchical barriers.

In the fifth theme, the respondent relates how her relationship with her adolescent
brothers has improved due to her newfound knowledge that she obtained from the
programme. It seems that she really felt frustrated in the relationship but now has a
better understanding of her brothers.

In lines 78 to 86 (see Appendix M), the respondent amplifies how the presenters’/
facilitators’ discussions in the programme made the course load more manageable, and
in lines 90 to 98 (see Appendix M), she describes how the group, that was formed after
the conclusion of the programme, operates - the students in the group discuss a theory
and then decide how they should approach an assignment question.

In the following core narrative, the respondent explains her responsibilities which fall
heavily on her young shoulders.

---

Core Narrative of Story 2

Abstract
103V: Mary-Jane I see you say that you are responsible for four people in your home.
Orientation
105M: They are my younger brothers.
106V: And do you pay for their schooling?
Complicating Action
107M: Yes, my family, né? It is like I am the breadwinner in my family.
108 In fact I am responsible for everybody in my family
109 because I am the only one who is working.
110 I have got a brother who is working,
111 but you know how many times they are irresponsible.
112 He is staying in Johannesburg. (O)
113 He doesn’t help us any how,
114 so my family, my mom is not working,
115 my brothers are still in school
116 and my father died last year
Result
117 so I am the one who is responsible for every thing.
---

It seems that although Mary-Jane’s one brother could have supported the family
financially, the responsibility has fallen on Mary-Jane’s shoulders to support her mother,
and her younger brothers. Not only is the family in dire financial need, but one is left with the feeling that Mary-Jane is also required to provide for their other needs although she herself is also needy. No wonder she found the programme so helpful in providing information on how to cope with human relationships and with her adolescent brothers.

It is interesting to note that the word "responsible" appears twice in her narrative - in lines 108 and 117 - and she uses the word "irresponsible", in line 111. This seems to highlight the weight that responsibility seems to carry in her life. It is therefore not surprising that she is so pleased to have found support for her studies from other students, and to feel supported by the relationship with the presenters/facilitators. It seems also that the programme gave her a greater sense of control with regards to the work load and this also must have therefore benefited her emotional well-being.

She also recounts how she was involved as a Sunday School teacher (lines 138-161) (see Appendix M). She once again uses the word "responsibility" in line 141. And so it seems that she is attracted to those in need, and takes on even more responsibility although she herself is in need. Part of the reason could be that she received acceptance from the children she taught (Standards 3 to 5). She says:

146 They like me too much.
147 I am open and they are free when they are with me.

Although this may sound boastful to a Western ear, it was said with real sincerity.

The following core narrative leads to the telling of a story about her parents' marital relationship.

---

*Core Narrative of Story 3*

**Abstract**

163V: Was there any particular session in the self-empowerment programme that was very meaningful to you, that you enjoyed?
164M: Yes, that session on adult. Divorce.

**Evaluation**

166 I found it interesting,
167 Complicating Action but the reason why I didn't go to it
168 I found it hurting because it touched my life somehow
because like in my family
before my father died
the relationship between my father and my mum was not perfect,
but although they didn't divorce
they were on their way to so
I really wanted to talk about it
but I felt I couldn't because it really touched me.

Result

V: Yes, that was actually quite moving.
M: I remember that.

A lot of people commented on how that touched a lot of people.

She explains to the interviewer that the feedback from the community session on the theme of divorce was really meaningful to her. However, in the community session, she had participated in the group discussing the theme of adolescence and not divorce. It seems that she wanted to join the 'divorce' group but she felt vulnerable (line 168) and it seems that she thought that she might expose her hurt to others. Her safer option, and the option that made her feel more in control and perhaps affirmed as a person, was the 'adolescence' group. She then explains that the relationship between her parents before her father's death had not been good and that they were in fact talking about getting divorced at the time (lines 170-173). She explains that she wanted to talk about it in the programme but felt that she could not (lines 174-175). It is in the narrative that she articulates the things that she has bottled up inside her which hurt her and touched her deeply - things that she had not resolved or come to terms with.

When she referred to her father in the aforementioned narrative, she uses the word "father" which is the more formal way of speaking about one's parents. However, when she refers to her mother, she uses the word "mum" which seems to imply that she had a closer relationship with her than she did with her father.

The Meaning of the Interview for the Student

It seems that this conversation between the respondent and the interviewer has been meaningful because the respondent has been able to talk to someone who will not reject her, laugh at her, or consider her "bad".
Abstract

184V: What has this conversation meant to you?

Evaluation

185M: It meant a lot.

Complicating Action of Theme 1

186 To start with it opened that relationship again
187 like I said after that session
188 our relationship with you, our lecturers, was somehow broadened
189 because before it was strictly you marked our assignments,
190 we post our assignments,
191 that’s it,
192 we are waiting for exam.
193 But after meeting with you
194 we realised okay, they are people like us,
195 they are free, open,
196 so we are free to phone them
197 as you gave us your numbers, if you are having problem feel free to contact us,
198 so that relationship was not there before,
199 so same thing today,
201 I can see you, you are free,
202 you are not like somebody a lecturer,
204 you are open to discuss with me

Result of Theme 1

205 so I feel I’m free if ever I have problem really I can come to you for help

Complicating Action of Theme 2

206 and you are also teaching me it is good to talk about things.
207 If you are having a burning issue, don’t just keep it to yourself,
208 feel free to discuss.
209 Like this question of AIDS, those people are not free,
210 ‘I will fear I will be rejected’, or something like that.
211 Like in my case, question of too much poverty, like in my case we are poor,
212 like I am saying I am the only one who is working
213 so you can see how hard it is,
214 so in my case it is not possible to talk about it,
215 I am not free to discuss it with anybody
216 because it is like people will be laughing at me,
217 or they will see me as a bad one

Result of Theme 2

218 but in your case you are teaching me it is good for one to discuss,
219 not to keep things to yourself.
220 Because one will end up thinking like the way people are
221 this question of not discussing it.

Mary-Jane felt that the relationship between herself and the presenters/facilitators as lecturers, that had started in the programme had been renewed (lines 186 - 188). Prior to the programme, the lecturers had been faceless and without a soul (lines 189 - 192).
However, she felt that the lecturers had communicated their willingness to be contacted if students experienced problems. She applies what she said generally about the presenters/facilitators in the programme to the interviewer whom she sees as someone whom she can trust if she has a problem (lines 199 - 205). It appears that she has experienced it as 'healing' to discuss the things that worry her (lines 206 - 208). However, she implies that it is not always possible or wise to discuss one's problems with people in her 'world'. In this context, she refers to Aids sufferers who fear that they will be rejected if they are open about their problem (lines 209 - 210). Lines 211 to 218 seem to continue with this idea in her case. She is not able to discuss with others how hard it is for her to cope in a situation of extreme poverty. She does not feel free to discuss it with anybody (line 215) because she believes that people will scorn her (line 216) or will judge her (line 217). She uses the word "like" to highlight the problems she was experiencing (lines 210-212).

In lines 222 to 230, the interviewer empathises with her. The interviewer conveys that she understands how hard it is to talk about things that are really close, such as heartaches in one's family, and having to bear sole responsibility for providing for one's family. The interviewer then goes on to affirm the respondent.

231V: But I think you are doing very well.
232 I think one of the good things about you is that you are very open
233 because, you know, I think people can often learn things,
234 or you can expose them to things,
235 but they don't always learn, do they?
236 I mean what you are saying, the good things that you took with the programme,
237 that is also a reflection on you,
238 not just on us.

This empowers the respondent by permitting her to affirm the interviewer.

239M: It is but...
240 The other thing is because you are giving me that opportunity.
241 You know there are people who you can say,
242 this one I can lean on such a person,
243 you are giving that relationship,
244 you are giving that chance,
245 but other people they are not friendly to start with,
246 even if you are having a problem,
you won't feel free like I said, to be open, to be free to say whatever, so I think you are the one who is making it possible.

The interviewer accepts what she has said.

V: Oh well, that is good. Mary-Jane.

This then seem to free the respondent to reply in a positive way about how she is coping despite not receiving a salary as a teacher. She says:

Its very hard
But we are survivors,
I will survive.

The interviewer then responds as follows:

Well that's good. I always think to have that kind of belief ....
I do hope one day, things will be fine.

It seems that she has recognised her strengths and it is these strengths that will see her through the difficult times.

This student hails from one of the more disadvantaged provinces of South Africa, where poverty is prevalent, job opportunities are few, a breakdown in responsibility seems to exist in some of the schools, and a climate of distrust surrounds the sharing of personal matters. It seems that this student found herself in a similar ecological niche to other people in her area where need was great and resources to help others, few. She did not perceive having anyone to support her in times of need, be it emotional or financial, and in fact was over-burdened with 'real' responsibilities for her family. She came to the programme and to the interview in personal need but did not articulate her need overtly. It was important for her to be accepted by the interviewer as she probably saw that in their relationship she could be an equal and not the sole bearer of responsibility. It seems that her emotional needs were met through the egalitarian relationship that was established with the lecturers as presenters/facilitators in the programme, and with the
interviewer in the interview. This was probably a new experience for her to interact with others on an equal footing and not as the only committed one.

The main structure of the interview narrative was that of a question - a ‘rich’ answer from the respondent - and a comment from the interviewer. It seems that by telling her stories, the respondent would not only please the interviewer, but would also benefit personally by discussing issues that she had not been able to discuss with anyone before.

Analyzing the Abstract Structure of Moves

In Story 1, the interviewer posed a question concerning the meaningfulness of the programme to the respondent. The respondent replied that the programme had been very enriching and discussed five meaningful aspects. It seemed that her main aim was to convince the interviewer of the meaningfulness of the programme in her life. It seemed that by doing this in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the respondent experienced it as empowering. Her social status as an equal and an ‘expert’ in terms of her experience were confirmed by the interviewer’s positive response. In Story 2, the interviewer’s question enables the respondent to divulge the nature of her responsibilities. Although it is a story focussing on the heavy burden she carries, it also identifies her as a person with sufficient resources to look after her whole family single-handedly. The interviewer’s reply indicates that she is amazed, but also reveals her concern for the respondent’s heavy burden. They are interacting like caring equals. In Story 3, trust and confidentiality underlie the relationship. The interviewer concurs with what the respondent found meaningful, and then goes on to say that many people were affected by the session on divorce that the respondent mentioned. This again affirms the status of the respondent who is able to appreciate what others also found meaningful. In Story 4, a truly egalitarian relationship exists whereby the respondent and the interviewer take turns in affirming one another. The respondent starts off by remarking on how “free” she feels to come to the interviewer if she experiences a problem, and also how she has been taught to discuss “things”. The interviewer responds to the difficulty of the respondent’s situation and then proceeds to highlight the positive in the respondent. The respondent then focusses on the opportunities provided by the respondent. The interviewer accepts what she has said and the respondent is able to acknowledge that she is a survivor.
Thematic Coherence

Thematic coherence of the various episodes in the story and the way that they are connected suggest that the stories express the values inherent in the academic culture, African cultural prescription of roles and responsibilities in the family, and expectations in close relationships. What was highlighted as important by the lecturers in the programme, and in particular by the interviewer as lecturer, was evident in the interview. The respondent as student wanted to say things that would be acceptable and appreciated by the interviewer representing the academic context. It seems that her initial fear of lecturers had been replaced by a view of lecturers as more approachable. This new view is in contrast to the traditional hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship between lecturers and students that characterised her former view. The respondent presented herself not only as a responsible and committed student, but this theme was also evident in the role that she plays in her family as the sole breadwinner, and her teaching role. That she was a committed student was evidenced in the marks she obtained for the Personology Course (upper fifties) and the Developmental Psychology Course (lower sixties) despite starting a new career which demanded that she fulfil an intensive training course just prior to her examinations. The role in her family is coherent with the African custom whereby the child who has received opportunities in the form of education, should in turn provide opportunities in the form of financial support to younger siblings. It seemed that she even provided them with emotional support. The former support would be expected of her and it is a responsibility that she honours, despite the cost to herself. She was also a committed teacher even though non-responsibility seemed to be the norm of the school in which she taught. Her focus on relational aspects evident in the first episode when she referred to her interaction with other students and the formation of a study group, her interest in how to live harmoniously with others, her relationship with the presenters/facilitators as lecturers, as well as her relationships in the family, was a connecting thread throughout the interview.

The respondent defines herself as a dedicated, committed and involved student, member of her study group, sibling, daughter, and member of society. Her responsibility, especially in her family, was highlighted. She further defines herself as a relational person who is respectful, open and understanding of others. She is sensitive and open to
issues which relate to her, and yet is aware of where she is ‘at’ and knows where her boundaries are so that she does not make herself vulnerable. She is a ‘giver’ rather than a ‘taker’ which also bodes well for her. And as she states, she is a survivor.

Reflections on the Relationship Between Respondent and Interviewer

The respondent travelled about 30 km from a village to a town, situated in the Northern Province, for the interview. The interviewer also had to travel a few hundred kilometres to this town from Pretoria. The interview therefore required sacrifice from the respondent as well as from the interviewer. The respondent seemed genuinely pleased to be participating in the interview which set its tone. The respondent adjusted to the respectful, egalitarian and symmetrical relationship that characterised the interview, even though before the programme, she had feared lecturers. The respondent often mirrored what the interviewer said and they interacted in tune with each other. It seemed that the respondent’s fear of rejection by others (lines 215 - 218) was countered by her experience of acceptance in the interview. The interviewer brought in something new to the respondent’s world and it seemed that she embraced the opportunity to relate in a context not characterised by the neediness of others, where her needs could be accommodated and which offered her the hope of raising her beyond her present context.

Concluding Comments

Considering that the respondent hailed from a disadvantaged rural area of South Africa, and that English was not her mother tongue, she communicated her ideas very well. She experienced many hardships in her life and yet revealed an amazing resilience to cope with life’s pressures. It seemed that she accomplished this by focussing on others, giving of herself to others, being involved in life itself, connected to others, responsible and committed in what she did, flexible and able to adapt, able to practise what she learns, and by giving life to her belief in herself as a survivor. The programme provides students with information. This student used the information to help her not only with the courses themselves, but also to extend her academic support network, to improve her relationships with family members and with others in other contexts, and to self-
reflect. From the interview itself, this student received 'healing' and the motivation to carry on through being affirmed as a person and for once being at the receiving end. It appears that life experience and what she has learnt from it, have given her the edge over other students who are equally disadvantaged.

Like Samuel, she also provided 'thick' description and was also expected to fulfil certain roles in terms of African custom. However, whereas Samuel had reached a stage where he acknowledged the conflict between meeting the expectations of African custom and his own needs, Mary-Jane accepted her responsibilities. Helen, Samuel and Mary-Jane all shared a similar disadvantaged background, but Mary-Jane was more isolated in terms of where she stayed far away from any big city.
CHAPTER 14

CELESTE'S NARRATIVE: ESTABLISHING LEGITIMACY

Introduction

This account is based on the transcribed interview between the researcher (V) and Celeste (C). The retranscription is to be found in Appendix N. Line numbers in the text refer to line numbers allocated in the retranscription.

Personal Information

Celeste was a 37 year old, White, female, single, part-time student at the University of South Africa at the time of the interview. Her personal information was obtained from a Personal Data Form which she filled in prior to the interview.

Setting

Celeste lived on her own in a large city in the Gauteng Province. She was in a relationship at the time of the interview but had no dependents to support. She was employed full-time in a managerial position.

Structural Analysis of the Data

The Meaning of the Programme for the Student

An analysis of the data indicated that, for Celeste, aspects of the SSEEP that were meaningful to her were the presenters/facilitators who spoke with authority based on knowledge of their subject as well as practical experience (lines 19-23), the direction that students were given in terms of which theories to choose which would help them in their third year of study (lines 24-32), the informal nature of the communication (lines 33-39), the division of students into groups (lines 40-44), and the freedom students felt in sharing very personal information or experiences (lines 45-68).
Core Narrative of Story 1

Abstract
11V: So really what I want to find out from you is
what the programme meant to you,

Evaluation
18C: OK. I'm very pleased that I attended it.

Complicating Action of Theme 1
19 I found that the speakers spoke with authority,
20 they know their subjects
21 and they gave me the impression
22 that they have got solid practical experience as well,
23 it was not just theory.

Result of Theme 2
24 The course gave me a lot of direction.

Complicating Action of Theme 2
25 What I appreciated was when it was mentioned
26 that if you consider studying Psychology third year
27 then we recommend these theories because you go deeper,
28 because we have a choice on those.
29 That I appreciated
30 because in your second year
31 obviously you want to build a foundation for the third year.
32 That I found good.

Complicating Action of Theme 3
33 What I also enjoyed about the programme was that it was very informal,
34 the speakers made the audience feel very relaxed,
35 open to communicate and to comment,
36 even though most of them are doctors speaking with students,
37 I felt that the speakers all had the ability to speak at a level
38 where us as students could follow the conversation and follow the subject
39 and don't get lost in the process.

Complicating Action of Theme 4
40 And the fact that we were divided up in groups
41 also helped with interaction,
42 how other people see things,
43 think about things
44 because of their different backgrounds or experiences,

Complicating Action of Theme 5
45 and people in the groups, people felt free,
46 I actually felt, I was a bit shocked about how free they felt
47 to share very personal experiences.
48 but it is very, very personal things
49 that they experienced personally in their home environment
50 or between friends
51 and they just spoke up and shared with the group
52 and people felt free to comment on it and share their views,
53 which I thought was a big accomplishment
54 for the organisers and the presenters of the course
to make people feel they are in an environment where they can talk freely and not be inhibited by the fact that they are only still learning and you don’t know it all and we also got sort of the security that it is confidential. You share it with your little group, but it is confidential. It will stay there.

Result of Theme 5

And if you have that security that someone is not going to go and tell the world about what you experienced and which most often was maybe painful, then ja, you will share it, you won’t share it if you know they are going to advertise it.

The programme gave her information, which was important to her, about the competence of the presenters/facilitators. They “spoke with authority”, knew their subjects well, and what they said was based on experience and was not merely theory. It seems that she recognises and acknowledges the aforementioned as what gives them credibility, which impresses her. It appears that as a manager, she too speaks from a position of power and therefore could only accept presenters/facilitators who occupied a similar niche, and yet, in using the word “speakers”, maintains a distance appropriate for a student. One is left with the impression that this respondent would not tolerate an incompetent “speaker” and would see right through him or her!

In the second theme, she refers to the direction for her future studies in Psychology that she received from the presenters/facilitators regarding the different personality theories from which she had to choose. She appreciated the link that this information gave to her future studies rather than in terms of its helpfulness regarding actual course content. She used the word, “appreciated” in lines 25 and 29, which adds emphasis to how she felt about having this need met. It is apparent that she sees this programme and her studies in Psychology, in terms of a much larger picture regarding her life.

In the third theme, there is themal coherence as she once again acknowledges the expertise of the “speakers” in being able to create an informal conversational atmosphere in which students could communicate, and in which the “speakers” could communicate at a level that students could follow. In this way she acknowledges the
status of the presenters/facilitators and identifies with the students who attended the programme from her position as ‘expert’.

In the fourth theme she found that the groups that the students formed, facilitated interaction and provided information about how students from diverse backgrounds and experiences saw and thought about different things. In this way, she identifies herself as someone who appreciates diversity. She may also have alluded to this because the interviewer in the beginning of their conversation, and also when the interviewer telephoned her to make the appointment for the interview, referred to the fact that the presenters/facilitators had observed that she was the only White person in a predominantly Black group.

In the fifth theme, her evaluation of the level of sharing in the groups referred to her shock at how free students felt to share very personal experiences. Her shock is emphasised by her understatement thereof in line 46, where she says “I was a bit shocked”. In line 47 she refers to students sharing “very personal experiences”, and in line 50, she again refers to them sharing “very, very personal things”. This tends to emphasise the impression it made on her. She also acknowledges how other students felt free to comment and share their views. She refers to this as an accomplishment of the presenters/facilitators of the programme who made the students feel free to talk and to accept the views and comments of others even though they are still learners and are not experts. She also acknowledges the security that students felt that what was said, which was often painful, was confidential. She however, did not feel that she had anything personal to share with the group. Her position contrasts vividly with the openness of others. It seems that she did not experience the same openness that others experienced, and perhaps her lack of trust that it would be kept confidential, silenced her.

Although Celeste was part of the programme and what was said was based on her subjective experience thereof, her metalevel comments tended to be made from a distance, from a position outside of her experience, and therefore maintained her status as an outsider.

258
The second narrative centres around her experience as a White person in a predominantly all-Black group. In reply to a question concerning the fact that she was the only White person in her group, she said:

**Core Narrative of Story 2**

**Complicating Action of Theme 1**

72C: Initially I was the only White person
73 and we were all ladies
74 and then at a later stage
75 another young white English speaking lady joined us.
76V: And did you feel at home in your group?
77C: Yes, I felt very at home in the group
78 but I think why
79 was because I worked for four years in Bophuthatswana with the Tswana people
80 and I enjoyed them as people when I worked there during the period I was there
81 and I think the reason why I also joined the group
82 was because they were the very first group as you entered the door,
83 and I was late for the course
84 and I noticed it is only Blacks in their little group
85 and I just went to them and said,
86 "Can I join this group, please" and they said, "Yes, sure".
87 And they made me feel at home.
88 I didn't know the criteria how the groups were divided
89 because I missed it because I was late,
90 but I just joined in.
91 And I think another reason,
92 besides the reason I was late,
93 another reason why I joined the black group
94 was I do find other cultures fascinating
95 and I always want to learn more about other cultures than my own.
96 I mean I live in my own, you know,
97 it is kind of boring in a sense,
98 we must start exploring other cultures,
99 how they think and how they view ...
100V: And it is often as you say,
101 sometimes I think one sees a lot of similarities in how one views things
102 and other times quite a lot of difference, hey,
103 and that opens your eyes in its own way, you know.

**Complicating of Theme 2**

117C: In the group exercises
118 the first activity was to come up with a name for the group
119 and we had to write down a few things
120 and I think being sensitive towards white domination in this country,
121 not just me but the rest of the girls in my group as well,
122 I think we had to basically, not select a leader,
123 but someone to give some guidance and start the talking.
124 They looked at me

259
and I just looked back at them
and I just thought, "I am not going to do this.
Don't look at me because I'm a White.
I'm not going to do it",
not because I don't want to
but because I feel maybe it is more important for them to experience it
and then if I can say,
the leader of our group was then a black lady who is a teacher,
a very leading role, a natural leading role as well,
Result of Theme 2
but then she took the lead when
everybody noticed this they look at me,
but I just look back at them sort of.
They realised.
I think that is a very empowering thing to do
Amplification of the Complicating Action of Theme 2
I think so because that is what I experience in Bophuthatswana.
Even though it was Bophuthatswana then,
you go there as a South African citizen but you are White
and because of the history of the country
they look at you for leadership.
It is changing
but I think it still is part of it, yes.
I could have said,
"Well I'm the whitey here, let me take control
because they are incompetent".
I could have done that,
but that is not my philosophy in life.
Result
You see you probably taught them a lot
because I think by taking that one down position
it is actually very powerful
because you actually in a way you communicated
that you are siding with them.
Yes, "I'm one of you".

She commences this narrative by stating her position as being the only White person in the group initially. However, she finds areas of similarity when she states that the members of the group "were all ladies" in line 73, and where she identifies with a White lady who joined the group at a later stage, in line 75. She then goes on to explain why she “felt very at home in the group”. It seems that it was because of prior experience in working with Tswana people, whom she enjoyed, for four years in one of the homelands. She also cites expediency as another reason for joining the group. Thus she is indicating that it was not contrived - it happened by chance. She was late for the
course and they were the first group she encountered as she entered the door. She noticed that they were an all-Black group and she went to them and asked them if she could join them. She uses direct speech in line 86 to ask their permission. By doing so, she not only establishes herself as a proactive person with choices, but also acknowledges their majority status as being predominantly Black and yet as equals in terms of their desirability as a group. She has in this way empowered them also to make a choice, which they do in their reply, "Yes, sure". In saying that, they made her "feel at home" (line 87) which establishes their power. She states a third reason for joining the group which was that she enjoys mixing with people who are different from herself (lines 91-99). She identifies herself as someone who feels safe to move beyond her confines, the areas that she knows well and which are "boring in a sense" (line 97).

It seems that her ideas came to her as the conversation evolved and in that way they were given life. Interestingly, because Celeste had arrived late, she had no idea of the criteria which was used to form groups. The interviewer filled her in as follows:

104V: Just as a matter of interest there was no way of organising the groups, we just allowed people to group themselves in a fairly haphazard way and that in its own way was also interesting for us to observe because we did notice some people prefer to stick together whereas others were quite happy, almost sought out people of different cultures, so that was quite interesting. Just generally we found that it is not a good idea to force the issue, to actually allow people to make their own decisions, but we did notice you.

In the above passage, the interviewer acknowledges that the choice of which group to join was in the hands of students themselves. However, the interviewer's narrative suggests that the presenters/facilitators were pleased when people like Celeste, were prepared to cross cultural boundaries and mix with others who were different from themselves. Therefore, Celeste's choice made the presenters/facilitators notice her. The presenters/facilitators had encountered hostility from some White students who were in all-Black groups previously, and were fascinated that she seemed to be so at home in the group. The interviewer's comment was probably experienced positively by Celeste, whose view was now being sought by the interviewer.
In the second theme of this narrative, the respondent refers to her more ‘passive’ role in the group. She is sensitive to White domination, as well as to the perceptions of the “girls” in her group. By using the word, “girls”, she identifies herself as an equal with the group members.

However, it seems that she felt that the Black students believed that she, being a White person, would think that she should be the leader of the group. She resisted being cast in this role and ‘allowed’ one of the Black woman to take on this role. In this sense though, she still ‘controlled’ what was happening and did not allow the students to ‘dictate’ her role. On the flip side though, it would be empowering for a Black person to take on the leadership and facilitative role in the group rather than resort to previous patterns more consistent with the apartheid era.

The respondent used direct speech again in lines 126 to 128 to indicate her thought processes regarding her unwillingness to take on the leadership role just because she is a White person. This provides a contrast with her comment on why she did not want to do it.

In the following segment of the narrative (lines 140-148), she illustrates the similarity between her experience in the programme and her experience in one of the homelands of apartheid South Africa, where the Blacks she encountered looked to her for leadership. She continues in line 148, almost ignoring what the interviewer said regarding the changing scenario. She articulates the prejudice (in direct speech) that many Whites in South Africa still have regarding the competence of Blacks in lines 149 to 150. She contrasts that type of thinking with her philosophy of life which is different. She does not want to be cast as a racist which she is trying not to be. The interviewer then affirms her position in ‘giving up’ her privileged White status and taking a ‘one down’ position. The interviewer believes (line 153), that the respondent provided the group members with a different experience from what they had been accustomed to from Whites. The respondent confirms what the interviewer says (line 158) where she identifies with the group and was just one of them. However, it seems that in effect she remained on the outside and did not seem to ever really become one of them. Therefore, although she revealed an openness to interact with those whose background was different from hers,
she seemed to do so on her own terms. Perhaps such a group was more accepting and less threatening than those with whom she perceived she might have to compete.

The interviewer built on the respondent's strengths in the following excerpt and the respondent appropriated what the interviewer said. The interviewer highlighted areas of similarity rather than difference and indicated that everyone benefits from this way of being (lines 161-169).

159V: Like even when I was listening to you
160 you said you were the only white person initially,
161 but you were all women
162 so I think even having that kind of way of looking
163 that we are all women together
164 and there is not one that is better than another,
165 we are just women together.
166 I think that kind of participatory,
167 that you are all participating together,
168 I think that is very empowering,
169 I think even for yourself.

The respondent then articulated the empowering benefits of participation in the group for all group members including herself (lines 171-181). It seemed that she was respectful and really tried, which were non-verbal communications that would have spoken louder than words, and would have been appreciated by her group.

170C: It was for me
171 and I think it also gave them some confidence
172 because I did notice a few members of the group were quieter
173 and then I would make a remark and ask them directly by the name,
174 I tried to remember the names because we introduced ourselves
175 and at least I could say a few words in Tswana,
176 which they appreciated.
177 A few of them came from that area so it was good,
178 I think because I tried and I greeted them in Tswana every day
179 they accepted me, well it contributed to the acceptance.
180 Not that they rejected me at all.
181 Just "You are one of us".

The interviewer provides the contrast to the previous patterns of relating which belonged to the apartheid era in lines 182 to 187.
And I think perhaps relating to a white person in a different way.
You see what you are saying is how they would normally relate.
The white person takes over
and they just sit back
and I think you perhaps introduced a different way of relating,
that you could all be people together, students together.
I hope I did because I consciously made a decision,
I am not gonna be the role player here.

The respondent indicates that she was not sure of the effect of her attitude and decision on the group members (line 188). In this area she did not have ‘control’ over the way that others responded. However, she was sure of her intentions. The interviewer then affirms the role of the respondent and the more egalitarian status of the students and the presenters/facilitators of the programme.

We actually often watch
and we are always touched really
when people like yourself do that
because you know you often get people
where it is easier just to take over and take control
and also obviously
one also appreciates someone who does encourage them to talk,
because it is true,
some black people are very reticent
and it is often, they just need that little bit of encouragement,
not even an awful lot,
just to open up
so we really also want to express our gratitude,
because I think it is also,
you know this sort of programme
it is not just the presenters who are doing the work.
Everybody is doing it together,
that is what it is all about.

The following core narrative refers to the specific themes of the SSEEP that made an impression on the respondent.

Core Narrative of Story 3

Abstract

And Celeste, just to ask you in terms of your own personal life,
was there anything perhaps in particular that you felt,
gee this is like an eye opener,
or this is changing me in some way,
or this has made me think differently?

Complicating Action of Theme 1

One particular thing that stands out

is the fact that personalities are complex,

that a personality is a combination of various theories.

That is the main message I got.

If you try and analyse a person don't just use one theory.

That is the one thing, because in my job I deal a lot with people

and that is the one thing I thought, this is something I must hold on to.

It is very true. As we always say, theories are like the slices of a cake.

They give you a lens to look at people.

They only tell part of the story

and to take one theory

and think that that is going to explain all of behaviour

then you are in big trouble.

It is not the Alpha and Omega of analysis.

If something seems to really be applicable and relevant,

that is what you use.

And my interpretation is,

or maybe it is just my own thinking of making it easier for myself,

is that each person has a passion in their lives

and if a certain theory's passion was a particular aspect of a personality

then they would concentrate on that

and not necessarily explore the other aspects in such depth

as this one specific one.

Abstract of Theme 2

And then Celeste in terms of say the developmental psychology

was there anything there that particularly jumped out at you?

Evaluation

I found that fascinating too.

Complicating Action of Theme 2

It is most probably because I am in my thirties

and studying a degree for the first time,

I always believe that the human potential must always grow,

you must always enrich yourself,

empower yourself,

learn more,

get to know more

and develop yourself in the things you have a natural feel for

because I think maybe that's your talent or something that God gave you,

your natural feel for science or people or whatever it is,

then develop that in a formal way as well.

Okay, and to be exposed

to the development of a person from infant stage till old age,

I thought that was excellent

because it is also very accurate because you can relate to it.

Being in my thirties I can look back and see,

Result

'Oh yes, I did experience this during that age period', and so on.
I think in a way what you have just said is really your guiding philosophy of life.

Yes.

Seeking out personal growth and not standing still.

I think that is pretty great,

that is even why you chose the group you chose,

you wanted to expand yourself.

Yes

Abstract of Theme 3

Another thing about the developmental psychology we did

that I actually find in my personal life

which I find at least now I can speak with a bit of authority on it,

is children

Complicating Action of Theme 3

because people of my age

most of them have young children

and then they talk about things

and now at least I understand more

and I can relate to it more

and I can even give advice,

but I always say, “You know in Psychology, according to research ....”.

They think that is what the researchers or the authorities say

because they know, my friends and my family know

I do not have children of my own,

so where do you come from with your comments,

so I always base it on, “According to research .....”.

Result

Then it opens people to talk more

and question more

and sometimes come back to me with questions.

So in a wonderful way

it has also given you a bridge into other people’s world of experience

and if you have something like a language to talk about, hey?

Yes, because I was always lost when people of my age would get together,

colleagues, friends, family,

and then children, they talk about children

and then I sit there

and you have your own thinking sometimes,

but you do not know

and when I say this,

am I not going to offend the person or the mother if I say this or that?

But now yes, absolutely it is a bridge which I am glad about.

Abstract of Theme 4

And the community session,

how did you enjoy that?

What group were you part of on the last day?

That was the adult therapy, adult group, not just women, it was adults.

Evaluation

That was also good, I enjoyed that
Complicating Action of Theme 4

and why I would prefer to work with adults is because I find children so vulnerable and I get emotionally too upset about the suffering children go through. I am not psychologically strong enough to cope with that. I will most probably lose my mind.

V: So you need a bit of psychological distance? 

C: Yes, it is a very specialised area. It is and children are just so precious and vulnerable and I’ll rather deal with adults where I can tell them straight in the face, “Pull yourself together”. That is why I joined the adult group. The majority of the people in the group were interested in marriage counselling not just in counselling adults so I had to join.

V: That is unfortunately true.

Abstract of Theme 5

V: And then you said your community involvement, you are starting a project in September, you told me about that.

C: Yes. The reason why I was a bit reluctant to join one of the groups we were told about was because I am not sure with which or what type of environment and people I’ll be dealing with and I don’t want to be scared away from psychology so Dr X is a medical practitioner, she also does trauma therapy and she does psychology. She is a qualified psychologist and I got to know her and she has done this in the UK as well, it was very successful there. She is now living in South Africa in Johannesburg and she is starting this group again. She invited eight people. The group needs only eight people. It is a weekly session every Wednesday from September through to middle of December. We will get together once a week and we will discuss specific topics like marriage counselling and certain things like that and say for instance, depression, she gave a simple agenda of the topics we will discuss and so on. I won’t be doing counselling or assisting in doing counselling, but I will be involved with her group discussions and Dr X is not the only qualified psychologist who will be there. She has someone, a qualified psychologist, with her also part of the group just to assist her as well and then eight members.
And then how did you get selected?
That is quite a great honour.
Ja I thought so.
I was severely victimised at work earlier this year,
which was a very unpleasant experience
and one day it just reached a stage
where I felt that I am gonna lose control over my emotions
so I went to a clinic
and just asked them,
“Just give me something for anxiety”
and then they said to me,
“Well, we will give you something for anxiety,
but take one of Dr X’s business cards.
She is one of our GP’s.
She is just not here at the moment,
so speak with her as well”.
Result
And I made an appointment
and went and spoke with her
and we clicked.
I think if you have a good relationship with your counsellor
then you will be lucky enough to get invited to special groups.

The discussion tended to be distanced, formal and contextualised within the course content, and yet contained some very personal information.

In the first theme, the respondent refers to the complexity of human personalities and that to understand a person one needs to draw on many personality theories (lines 213-217). The interviewer then expands on what the respondent said to clarify the respondent’s understanding (lines 223-239) who joins in the discussion in lines 240 to 246.

Developmental Psychology was the subject of the second theme. She first of all believes that people should be continually developing themselves as she is doing by studying for a degree for the first time (lines 250-261). Secondly, she finds it interesting to look at the development of the person from infancy to old age and to see how her experiences fitted in (lines 262-267). The interviewer at this point highlights the respondent’s philosophy of life in line 270 and links it to why the respondent chose the group she joined.
In the third theme, the respondent goes on to illustrate how the knowledge she gained about children in Developmental Psychology connected her to others of her age most of whom have children (lines 275-305). She uses phrases such as “I understand more”, “I can relate to it more” and “I can even give advice”. As she does not have children herself, she probably felt that she could not legitimately join in their conversations previously and was sensitive to offending people by the things she might say. However, armed with knowledge and understanding gained from the course, she feels she can contribute to the conversation, and she bases what she says on research, which gives what she says credibility, which she did not have previously.

The fourth theme was on the community session. She joined a group dealing with adults (lines 309-331). She then goes on to explain that she would not be able to work with children because it upsets her too much (lines 312-313). In lines 314 to 315, she reveals her Achilles heel for the first time in the conversation, and states that she is not psychologically strong enough to cope with suffering children and would probably lose her mind if she was required to do so. It seems that when her emotions are out of control, she is not able to cope as effectively as when they are under control. She feels more in control dealing with adults with whom she can be stronger. She uses direct speech which effectively illustrates this in line 320 when she says that she can tell adults directly, “Pull yourself together”. She then explains that the theme her group in the community session dealt with was marriage counselling. She states that it was not her real interest as she is not married (lines 322-323), and then proceeds to explain why she does not believe in the institution of marriage (lines 328-330). She does however, have a relationship but one that is based on equality. It seems that it is important for her to feel in control, and not to be swamped in a relationship.

332V: Were you ever involved with anyone Celeste?
333C: Yes, I have a relationship currently as well.
334 but it is a type of relationship I enjoy which gives me freedom
335 and there is not this possessiveness and bossiness, things like that.
336 It is very equal.

In the fifth theme, the respondent describes the project she is to be involved in later in the year. The respondent had indicated this information to the interviewer on the telephone, which she now follows up. Once again the theme of needing to be in control
emerges in lines 349 to 353. The respondent explains that she was reluctant to join one of the organisations needing volunteers which was mentioned at the programme, as she needs to know with whom and with what type of environment she would be dealing with in community work. She then refers to Dr X who is the leader of the project she is to be involved in. She establishes the authenticity of Dr X, whose group she has been invited to join. In line 354, she states that she is a "medical practitioner", in line 355, "she does trauma therapy", "she does psychology", "she is a qualified psychologist" (line 356), "she has done this in the UK as well" (line 357), and "it was very successful there" (line 358). The respondent's role will be to participate in the discussions. This discussion also establishes the authenticity of the respondent as she was specially selected to join the group. The reason she was invited was because of her contact with Dr X. The respondent had experienced victimisation in her workplace earlier in the year (lines 388-391), and she sought help from a clinic and was advised to contact Dr X who helped her cope with it and come through it victoriously. She obviously made an impression on Dr X as she appeared "different from the run of the mill South African" (line 415).

The Meaning of the Interview for the Student

In the following core narrative of story 4, the respondent refers to the meaning of the conversation for her.

Core Narrative of Story 4

What is the meaning of this conversation for you, or what have you learnt?

Complicating Action

Val, first of all I can assure you
that I feel honoured to be part of your research,
whether you are going to use my input or not,
but it also makes me think back of the worth of the few days I attended.
What did it really mean to me
because we live in such a rushed time.
You know, you attend and you go back to work
and you carry on with your life.
You don't sit still and think about, listen,
well I know I was the only whitey in my group,
but certain aspects you don't even think about
unless someone actually questions you
and then you actually realise the full value of that course that you attended.
And talking about the course makes me understand myself

270
how I really experienced it
and also makes me think about things
that I did not think of during the course
but you questioned me about it so.

Result

Because I think it is true that it is in the conversation that things gain
Clarity, you gain clarity,
I think that is maybe how I can sum it up.
You gain clarity of what you experienced.

It seems that inasmuch as she felt honoured to be invited to join Dr X’s group, she feels
honoured to be invited to be part of the interviewer’s research (line 435). It appears that
this conversation has reminded her of the worth of the programme (line 437), which is
often lost in the busyness of one’s life, and the questions asked by the interviewer have
caued her to refocus on the programme. It seems that it is in talking about it that she
has realised its value to herself (lines 447-448) and has also made her think of things
that she did not think of during the course (line 449-450). She believes that she gained
clarity of her experiences at the programme. The conversational narrative between the
interviewer and respondent thus led to the creation of new realities.

The interviewer returned to the respondent’s story of victimisation, which must have
been difficult for her as she could not be in control of what was happening to her. She
asked:

When did that come about, before the programme or after the programme?
The programme was in March, that was before and after.
The course happened in the middle of the victimisation.
So you were almost in quite a hard place at that moment.
Yes I was,
but Dr X, one thing she said
which pulled me through was,
“You are going through a waiting period”
and that waiting period ended
and the fact that she just said,
“Celeste you are going through a waiting period”.
Those few words pulled me through.
I know everything is temporary.
You know things come to an end,
OK, but when you really feel this is starting to affect me in a bad way,
“Celeste you are going through a waiting period”
and then I am on my way again.

That helped me a lot.

The interviewer then remarks as follows:

I think it is actually wonderful.

That also reflects you, that says something about you as a person you know

that one is even prepared to be in a hard place

because you know you are going to get somewhere else, hey?

Everything worked out.

So it was temporary?

It was absolutely temporary

and things worked out in my favour, one hundred percent.

The respondent repeatedly makes use of Dr X's words (lines 467, 470, 475) to highlight their impact on her. The interviewer then affirms her as a person who was able to evolve a new coping narrative. She highlights the respondent's experience as "temporary" in line 487, which the respondent confirms emphatically in lines 488 and 489. The interviewer then positively affirms her strength as follows:

The kind of attitude that you come into the situation with is also important.

You know if you come in and you are open

and you say "This is a new experience. I am going to learn from it",

then that I am sure will be your experience,

but if you come in and you don't want to open yourself up to anyone,

and you want to cut yourself off and be on your own,

then your experience is going to be different,

She has developed an attitude, confirmed in the conversation, that seems to promote growth and enrichment in herself as well as others, despite the distance she creates.

Although the apartheid structures have been dismantled, it seems that the Grand Narrative of how people of different races should relate to one another in the South African context, still exists. The respondent being a White person, experienced the expectations of her predominantly Black group that she should be the leader of the group. However, by refusing to allow the dominant narrative to reign, the previously nondominant voices were given an opportunity to be heard and to 'perform' a different role. The respondent had experience of crossing cultural boundaries in her working environment, and she knew the benefits not only to herself but to others as well, of facilitating a different voice and continuously constructing a new narrative.
It seemed that the main structure of the narratives was that of a question, an informative and rich answer, followed by a comment from the interviewer. In other instances, there was a question, a story or answer, and an explanation from the interviewer, or rather insightful positive reframing which affirmed Celeste as a person. In the first instance, this format seemed to establish the authenticity of the respondent, and in the second instance, the equality between interviewer and respondent discussing issues of mutual interest.

Analyzing the Abstract Structure of Moves

In Story 1, the structure was that of a question, ("Just really what the programme meant to you"), a well-thought out answer that was rich in detail highlighting a number of themes, and a comment from the interviewer. The respondent seemed to 'control' the interview by the nature of her detailed responses which did not need much amplification, and her status as a worthy participant was confirmed. In Story 2, the question centred around the respondent being the only White person in her group initially. The respondent added an explanation which led to a further question, and a rich answer from the respondent about why she joined the group. In citing the second reason for joining the group, the respondent shifts away from the theme of 'control' which is so pervasive in the narrative, and introduces the idea that it happened by chance. The interviewer comments and then joins the respondent in an interaction, establishing an egalitarian relationship between her and the respondent. In Story 3, the egalitarian nature of the relationship is confirmed as the interviewer and respondent discuss aspects of the programme together. The interviewer is confirming the positive aspects that the respondent gained from the programme as well as the 'worthiness' of the respondent. This seems to free her to reveal that she is not always in control especially as far as her emotions are concerned and has a point of vulnerability, but that she has found ways of coping, which re-establishes her 'control'. In the conclusion of this story, she again needs to be in control in talking about the project she is about to embark on. In Story 4, the status quo is maintained as the respondent confirms that as a result of the conversation between her and the interviewer, and the questions that the interviewer asked, meaning has 'revealed' itself to her - different once again from the theme of
‘control’. Ending the interview by leaving the ‘power’ in the respondent’s hands seemed to be empowering.

**Thematic Coherence**

The theme of ‘power’ or ‘being in control’ seemed to link the various stories together. Even the threads of accidental occurrence, or vulnerability, were woven into the power narrative. “Power” is also linked to her status as a White person, and even though she perceives that she is different from many other Whites in appreciating people from different cultures, the ‘power’ to do so is still hers. Another theme that threads its way through the stories, seems to be that of establishing herself as a reliable and worthy participant, an ‘expert’ witness as it were. However, she does not claim to know it all, and felt affirmed even as a student who does not know it all (lines 38-39), and indicated quite openly when she was not sure (lines 88-90, 188-190, 219, 314-315).

She defines herself as someone who is intelligent, authentic and can make a reliable assessment of the programme, for example (lines 19–23). She also comes over as appreciative of the information that was given at the programme as she sees herself as a conscientious student. She enjoys interaction, possesses good interpersonal skills, and was especially appreciative of the level at which the presenters/facilitators communicated with students. She is generous in her praise which she communicates in her well-thought out ideas. She identifies herself as someone who appreciates diversity and who enjoys mixing with people across the racial divide. She seems humble and does not mind taking a one down position. Her vulnerabilities are well contained. It is suggested that she is a private and independent person who does not share personal experiences with just anyone, and seemed shocked that others were quite open in this regard. Even in this interview, she did not offer detailed information on the victimisation, perhaps because she had already worked through it and therefore had no need to raise it. It seems that at times she feels quite isolated as a single person, who dares to be different. She identifies herself as an Afrikaans/English speaking person, and yet her background was Afrikaans. She construes herself as someone who is open to new experiences and likes to extend her horizons, and yet likes to be in ‘control’. She seems continuously involved in developing herself and is proactive.
Reflections on the Relationship Between Respondent and Interviewer

The relationship between the respondent and the interviewer was symmetrical and egalitarian. It seems that the interviewer as a presenter/facilitator of the programme included the respondent as a ‘team’ member in her thinking in terms of the facilitative role that the respondent played in the programme in assisting in the upliftment of some of the disadvantaged students in the group. This inclusive attitude also extended to the interview, which tended to be the most egalitarian of the interviews included in this study. However, the relationship though egalitarian, tended to be more formal and intellectual in nature, and lacked the personal and more informal nature of some of the other interviews included in this study.

Concluding Comments

The presenters/facilitators spoke with authority on their subject and thus demonstrated their competency, which impressed the respondent, who was a manager and therefore probably would have valued and expected competency in such a context. The direction that students were given in terms of which theories to select, the informal nature of the communication, the division of students into groups, and the freedom students felt to share very personal information or experiences, made an impression on her. However, she did not form a group after the programme ceased, or share personal information in the group although she was willing to share things of a personal nature in the interview.

She gave the impression of someone who was very much in control of her life, and the way in which she communicated also conveyed that she was thinking carefully about what she was saying. However, she also reveals instances where things happened ‘accidentally’, for example, when she joined the first group she encountered when she arrived at the programme. She also refers to an area that does not seem to be under her control, which seems to centre around emotional issues, such as suffering in children. She however, copes by avoiding them if she has the choice, or dealing with them in a proactive way as she did when she was victimised at work. She has developed good interpersonal skills and communicates well. The ideas that she conveyed were focussed on the question. She maintained a ‘distance’ in the interview which kept it on a more
formal level which it seems she preferred. However, the interview relationship also tended to be more egalitarian in terms of the way that the interviewer and respondent discussed aspects of the programme almost as colleagues. Although she identifies herself as a very open person, who is different to many others, she comes over as quite a controlled person. It seems that she chooses to be open in certain contexts but not others. She appears to be very proactive, and yet is prepared to take a passive role if the situation warrants it. It is very important for her to be backed by authority of some sort in order to authenticate herself as a person of worth. She comes over as very confident which seems to belie the alienation that she sometimes experiences.

The respondent achieved in the middle sixties for both the Personology as well as the Developmental Psychology. It seems that what the programme meant to her was constructed in the interview as the conversation brought to life the experiences that had been pushed into the recesses of her mind due to the busyness of her life. It seems therefore important for facilitators to create an opportunity for reflection to occur if the worth of a programme is not to be lost.
CHAPTER 15

NARRATIVE THEMES

Introduction

In this chapter, the common threads which link the experiences of the four participants will be the focus. Although each narrative is unique and occurs in a particular context, certain themes are evident in the narratives of the participants, and the commonalities and differences between them will be discussed. It should be noted that these themes are not mutually exclusive but overlap.

Narrative as a Source of Information or Ideas

One of the aims of the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP), was to give students information regarding course content. This was referred to specifically by Helen who found that information on the course content improved her understanding thereof. It seems important therefore for presenters/facilitators to provide information on course content in a new way, rather than remaining book-bound, so that understanding is enhanced.

Samuel found the information narrative useful in the way that it assisted him to make informed choices between specific personality theories, and also to prepare for the examination. Facilitators should also provide students with information on how to prepare for the examination which is congruent with lecturer’s expectations for answering examination questions.

Mary-Jane found that the information narrative clarified the different personality theories for her, and made the course load more manageable.

Like Samuel, Celeste also found the information helpful regarding the different theories from which students were required to make choices. However, she found it helpful to
choose theories which would help her in her third year of study, whereas Samuel selected theories that he could cope with rather than those that would baffle him. It seems important for facilitators to provide students with guidelines in order to assist them to make informed decisions where these are required. In addition, facilitators should explain the significance of a course, or aspects thereof, in relation to subsequent years of study in that course. Celeste also found the information regarding the personality theories and the developmental psychology course helpful. With regards to the former, it seems that it prevented her from thinking simplistically - that one personality theory could explain all of behaviour - and opened her to the necessity of drawing on many personality theories to explain behaviour. With regards to the latter, it seems that it confirmed her philosophy of life which is to seek personal growth and not stand still, to find a link with her experiences, and to connect her to others because of the credibility it gave her. It seems that self-reflection is an important part of studying which should be built into a course.

Information seemed to benefit students on another level as well. In participating in discussions with other students in her group in the SSEEP, Helen found that the information that emanated, enabled her to learn a lot about her work. She also used the information from students in the community session to re-invent her identity as someone with status, which had the purpose of confirming her status in the family, as well as equating herself with the interviewer.

Samuel benefited by information from students regarding the attitude required to approach his studies and how serious one is required to be. He also seemed to benefit generally by the information that he received which formed a basis of comparison against which to assess his position as a scholar, a student, and as an employee. It gave him an alternative to the way he was used to being treated by others. Information also provided an alternative to his compartmentalised way of viewing his life, and exposed him to other ‘realities’. Like Helen, he too gained information from the community session, specifically regarding marital problems, which provided him with information on coping with his personal problems, and the possibility of counselling as a vocational choice.
Mary-Jane also seemed to benefit from information of new and alternative ways of coping with negative behaviour from others. Information also helped her to cope with her adolescent brothers. She also used information to self-reflect. Like the previous two respondents, she too gained from the information that evolved in the community session, particularly on divorce. This session was particularly meaningful to her because her parents had been contemplating divorce just prior to her father’s death, but she had not been able to talk about it at the time of the SSEEP, but found it possible to do so in the interview. Information therefore seems to open up new ‘realities’ or options.

Celeste benefited from information regarding the competence of the presenters/facilitators. They “spoke with authority”, knew their subjects well, and what they said was based on experience and was not merely theory. In her ‘eyes’, this legitimised what they said. This seems to highlight the importance of being role models of competence and responsibility. In addition, information from students from diverse backgrounds and experiences enlightened her on how they saw and thought about different things. Therefore, it seems important to build in diversity. However, unlike the other students interviewed, she did not benefit particularly from the community session.

It seems therefore that information ‘speaks’ to students in personal ways which cannot be predicted. Facilitators should be aware that their narratives as well as students’ narratives may have unanticipated consequences.

Information was also provided to the presenters/facilitators and students by the participants.

Helen provided information about the logistical difficulties of being a distance-education student living out of town, and yet seeking some connection with other students. She also referred to her shyness to have a conversation with a White person, which is a reflection on the damaging, isolationistic and dehumanising effects of apartheid. Nonetheless, even though it was difficult for her, she succeeded in having a conversation with the interviewer.
Samuel also gives readers a view of the world of a Black student, where forced separation kept people in the same ecological niche and denied them exposure to other ‘realities’. He also provided information on being a scholar in the apartheid years and the rude and uncaring way he was treated by teachers, of his political involvement, of the working environment of many Black people even in post-apartheid South Africa, of his personal problems, of African custom and the dilemma this posed for him. He embraced being treated in a different and more affirming way at the SSEEP and by the interviewer. This seems to highlight the importance of being role models of caring and openness.

Mary-Jane also provided information in her conversation with the interviewer regarding the difficulties of teaching in a rural township school in an atmosphere of general disinterest particularly from the teaching staff. She also revealed a personal world of heavy responsibility, poverty, and a need to talk about personal issues which were silenced by a pervading atmosphere of distrust in her community from whom she received little support, and a family who did not seem to possess resources to be supportive. She found the conversation between herself and the interviewer healing. It gave life to their relationship and to her narrative of survival.

Celeste also provided information about her world. It seems that she lived an independent and relatively comfortable lifestyle compared to the other three participants. However, like Helen, Samuel and Mary-Jane, she also seemed to feel alienated as a person in certain contexts, but was connected to others only in a way that allowed her to remain in control. She revealed an openness to make contact with those whose background was different from hers, perhaps because they did not threaten her in any way, and being with them affirmed her as a person.

**Narrative as Connection or Alienation**

The SSEEP provided a domain for dialogue and networking with other students. In the case of Helen and Mary-Jane, contact with other students led to the formation of study groups, and took the isolation out of distance education. The students in the study group that Helen belonged to, studied together in the library at the main campus in
Pretoria. This meant that they could discuss the work together. If they experienced a gap in their understanding, they were in close proximity to the lecturers whom they could contact to clarify aspects of the course that they did not understand. However, because these students probably belonged to the same disadvantaged academic niche, the danger existed that incorrect assumptions about the course content could be perpetuated, rather than dislodged. Nonetheless, the advantages of forging friendships for people’s general well-being may very well outweigh the aforementioned disadvantage in the long run. Mary-Jane also made friends with students and formed a group which met on a Saturday to discuss assignments before writing and submitting them. Therefore, she experienced support within an academic context which was important for her given the heavy family responsibilities that she had to bear. Being in a group of students similar to herself, also made Helen feel safe enough to communicate her ideas. This seems to highlight the importance of allowing students to join a group with people with whom they feel most comfortable.

In the case of Samuel, contact with other students introduced him to new ideas, and provided a basis of comparison. However, he did not form a study group. Although he cited the fact that his group had comprised mainly ladies and it was therefore difficult for him as a married man to form a group with women, it would seem that his troubled marital relationship was the main reason for continuing his isolated existence as a distance student. Celeste acknowledged the expertise of the presenters/facilitators in creating an informal conversational atmosphere in which students could communicate and in which the presenters/facilitators connected to students in communicating at a level with students that they could follow and which did not leave them stranded. She also referred to the groups that students formed and the way that being in groups facilitated interaction. She made specific mention of the level of personal sharing in which students participated. And yet paradoxically, she, like Samuel, did not form a group subsequent to the SSEEP, nor did she make herself vulnerable by sharing personal things with the members of her group. It seems that although she was part of the group and connected with the students in terms of gender, she tended to remain an outsider. She opted to join an all-Black group and yet was not fully part of this group. Although she did not try and dominate the group, and allowed the group members to take
decision-making and leadership roles, she never really gave up her control and become one of them. She therefore tended to remain alienated.

It seems therefore that students start processes with unpredictable future outcomes, but which nonetheless, seem to benefit students in various ways. Facilitators can expect that although many students benefit from the initial contact with others in the SSEEP, they may still choose not to pursue such contact afterwards for various reasons.

In sum, therefore, Helen and Mary-Jane appeared to be more connected than Samuel and Celeste. Samuel experienced alienation in other contexts as well, such as his working environment, marriage, African customs, and with what he wants in life. Celeste also experienced a sense of alienation in that she was single while most of her peers were married, and in her working environment where she had previously experienced victimisation. It seems therefore, that facilitators need to accept that students have different needs for connection which should be respected, and facilitators should also accept where students are ‘at’ - some students seem to have lives that are more in synchronisation with their worlds than others.

The Relationship Between Interviewer and Respondents

The relationship that respondents had with the interviewer was connected to a past as well as a present context. The participants had got to know the interviewer in the SSEEP as she was one of the presenters and once again in the interview context.

It seems that Helen and her friends regarded the interviewer as the ‘all-knowing’ lecturer, and possibly as approachable as well, based on their experiences at the SSEEP. This was borne out by a visit the previous week by Helen and her friends who came to see the interviewer in order for her, as lecturer, to explain aspects of the work that they did not fully grasp. This view of the interviewer as ‘expert’ seemed to persist at the outset of the interview when the interviewer seemed to assume the more active role in her attempt to elicit richer descriptions from Helen. The interviewer tried to join with the respondent by using words similar to the ones that Helen used, but tended to retain
her active role which required the interviewer to fill in the details that were missing from Helen's story. The fact that the interviewer was White and a person of perceived status within an academic domain, and that the respondent was Black and a student, seemed to evoke hierarchical ways of relating to one another initially. However, the relationship seemed to shift to one that was more egalitarian and Helen became more open in the one-on-one conversation with the interviewer. It seems important nonetheless for facilitators to be regarded as expert and competent in their particular field, which builds respect, but then to be willing to make a concerted effort to minimise the distance between facilitator and student, to foster relationships that are more egalitarian, and initiate symmetrical ways of relating to one another, which show reciprocal respect.

Samuel made a favourable impression on the presenters/facilitators in the SSEEP with his polite and respectful manner, which was also evident in the interview. The atmosphere of respect which the presenters/facilitators contributed to in the SSEEP, also moved Samuel. It seemed that he trusted the interviewer initially by sharing some negative comments about the time of year at which the SSEEP was presented. She restated what he said in order to make sure that she had understood him correctly, and thus gave him the right to correct her if necessary. The interviewer’s response seemed to convey her respect, and led him to share even more personal information with her. However, at one point in the interview she unwittingly tried to take over his story, by taking an active role in making her own links. This could have communicated disrespect which might have wrecked the relationship. However, it seems that the interviewer’s underlying respectful attitude towards Samuel as well as her empathy, which affirmed him as a person, was able to negate the effects of the aforementioned blunder. Facilitators should therefore try and foster respectful relationships as the cornerstone of their interaction with students, and be sensitive to where students are ‘at’ which allows students to make their own links and set their own pace.

It seems that the contact with lecturers in the SSEEP made an impression on Mary-Jane and made her feel supported. She had previously feared lecturers who were just names to her in a tutorial letter, and who appeared faceless and uninvolved. In the interview, the first thing that she referred to was the Personology Course, which is the course that
the interviewer was involved in, and it seems that Mary-Jane wanted to gain the interviewer’s acceptance by doing so. It appeared that Mary-Jane needed someone who was not from the same community niche as herself from whom she might experience ridicule or rejection, to whom she could articulate her hurts, and she perceived that the presenters/facilitators could fulfil this need, and in particular the interviewer within the context of the conversation. She placed her trust in the interviewer and articulated her hurts as well as her beliefs in herself. Their relationship seemed to be egalitarian in the way that they interacted as equals, as well as in sharing the load of responsibility, which Mary-Jane usually bore on her own. It seems important for lecturers at a distance institution to foster some form of personal contact with students, especially those who come from disadvantaged and under-resourced environments, and to enter into a relationship with shared responsibility.

Celeste was noticed by the presenters/facilitators because she was the only White person in her group. She maintained a distance with the presenters/facilitators in the SSEEP and this pattern was also continued in the interview. In the interview, she appeared to identify with students and yet the distance that she maintained, in terms of the way that she communicated from the outside as it were, seemed to foster an equality in her relationship with the interviewer. This was continued in the interviewer’s narrative which conveyed that the presenters/facilitators were pleased when people were prepared to cross cultural barriers and mix with those who were different from themselves, and when they discussed the different aspects of the SSEEP like colleagues. The conversation between the interviewer and Celeste clarified the value of her experiences at the SSEEP and led to the co-evolution of new realities. It seems important for facilitators to build in opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences if benefits are to be sustained, and for facilitators/lecturers to respect the unique ways in which students prefer to interact with them and with fellow students.

A Narrative of Responsibilities

A narrative of responsibilities was present to a greater or lesser degree in the stories of the participants.
Helen did not refer to family or financial responsibilities in her story. She lived with her family, was unemployed, and was supported financially by her mother. Therefore, it seems that her responsibilities in these contexts were few and she had little general life experience.

Samuel, on the other hand, was employed and financially supported his parents with whom he lived. It seems that, as a youth, he had also felt a responsibility regarding his parents' expectations of him, as he did not become involved politically in a way that would disappoint his parents. He did however gain a lot of life experience. His narrative also reveals the dilemma he faces in being caught between his responsibility towards the African custom of staying with his parents as he is the only child in the home, and wanting to be independent. If he stays with his parents, he sacrifices his independence. If he chooses independence, he becomes alienated from his African roots.

Mary-Jane's narrative constructs a person overburdened by responsibility and with very little support. She was the sole breadwinner in the family and supported her four brothers who were still at school, her mother who was unemployed, and herself. Her father died in 1998. Her one brother, who stayed in Johannesburg, could have helped because he was employed, but he did not do so and she described him as "irresponsible". Mary-Jane, like Samuel, also bore the responsibility of the African cultural prescription of roles and responsibilities in the family. She had received an education probably at great sacrifice to her family. It would therefore have been expected that she should contribute and bear some responsibility towards her family once she gained employment. At the time of the interview, she was a temporary teacher in a rural school, but had not received a salary even though she had been teaching at the school for a number of months. This seems to be a problem experienced by many temporary teachers in the South African educational system. She indicated that she was a responsible teacher, but was a lone voice in the midst of basic disinterest at her school. She was desperately seeking alternative employment at the time of the interview - poverty was very real to Mary-Jane and her family. Some time after the interview, she telephoned the interviewer to tell her that she had found employment. It seems that not only was the family in dire financial need, but one is left with the feeling that Mary-Jane was also required to provide for their emotional needs as well. One of her other responsibilities was Sunday
School teaching. It therefore seems that she was attracted to those in need, and took on even more responsibility even though she too was in need. It appears that she gains a sense of self-worth by being accepted by others. Although she was overburdened by responsibilities and received very little support from others, she gained a lot of life experience. The support she received increased after she had attended the SSEEP. She then was able to receive support from other students in her study group, and felt supported in the interview. However the narrative does not only construct her a person with heavy responsibilities but also as a person with resources and a responsible and conscientious student.

Like Samuel and Mary-Jane, Celeste was also employed. Unlike them however, she did not have any dependents to support, and lived a more independent lifestyle gaining a lot of life experience. The communal lifestyle seems to be more typical of African culture, whereas the latter typifies Western society. She was employed as a manager and therefore must have carried heavy responsibilities in her work environment. In the interview, she constructed herself as a responsible and credible respondent and student.

Although responsibilities may weigh heavily on some students, living life in a committed way exposes people to different life experiences which seem to equip them to cope with life in a more successful and resourceful way. These students' examination marks seem to bear this out. Samuel, Mary-Jane and Celeste passed the second year of Psychology, whereas Helen who has the least responsibilities and life experience, passed only one of the two second-year Psychology courses. If it is possible, facilitators should build life experiences into the course to assist students to develop responsibility and commitment towards their academic as well as social worlds, especially among those who are very young and are perhaps lacking in this area.

**Communication**

The students demonstrated different levels of communication skills in English. Both Helen's and Mary-Jane's mother tongue was Northern Sotho, Samuel's was Setswana, and Celeste's was Afrikaans.
Whereas Helen's story produced only 'thin' descriptions, providing very minimal information, Samuel's, Mary-Jane's and Celeste's stories provided rich, 'thick' descriptions.

It seems that Helen's 'thin' descriptions may be related to her lack of confidence in her own opinions or intuitions, and her reluctance to say something which might offend the interviewer or cast the respondent in a bad light. In addition, she also lacked life experience on which she could draw, and perhaps if the interview had been structured around one of her courses which provides a language that she could have used to discuss things, she might have fared better than she did in the informal atmosphere of the interview. Also English was not her mother tongue and she might have communicated more easily in her mother tongue. The interviewer was required to fill in the details and perhaps in this way, assisted Helen to voice what she was trying to say, but in another way, the interviewer played the more active role in constructing Helen's story which might not be considered ideal. However, by the interviewer helping Helen in this way, Helen's learning experience in the interview might have been aided by the support from the interviewer. This latter idea would be in line with social constructivist ideas and in particular with the idea of 'scaffolding', or assisted learning. She seemed to come to an understanding of what the SSEEP meant to her personally and in other contexts, and what the conversation that she had with the interviewer meant to her, through the narrative, which adds weight to this idea.

It seems that Samuel's love of reading and studying, his reflections on his life, his life experiences and perhaps the confidence that he has developed as a responsible person, have given him a language to talk about his experiences. He has confidence to express his own views, even ones critical of the SSEEP. In this respect, he is quite different from Helen. It seemed to the researcher that he had articulated many ideas in his 'head', many of which had probably not been expressed previously, and was given the opportunity to voice them in the interview. Considering that English was not his mother tongue, he communicated his ideas very well.

It seems that Mary-Jane needed to make sense of her life experiences in conversation with someone whom she could trust. She did not seem to be able to do so with her
mother, nor with people in her community whom she thought might reject or judge her, but she felt comfortable to do so with the interviewer. Her main problems that she needed to articulate centred around the poverty that they faced and had to deal with as a family, her heavy responsibilities, and her distress at the problems that her parents experienced in their marriage before the death of her father. Although English was not her mother tongue and she lived in a more remote part of South Africa, she communicated her ideas very well. She was a warm person, and the interviewer was drawn to her as a person, which also seemed to facilitate communication.

Celeste, although from an Afrikaans-speaking background originally, communicated extremely well in English, probably because of her many years experience in the commercial world and her stint in one of the homelands. She acknowledged the informal conversational atmosphere in the SSEEP which facilitated communication amongst students, and the way in which the ‘speakers’ communicated so that students could follow easily. She also communicated respect to the Black people in her group which is something that they seemed to appreciate. She often communicated her ideas in direct speech which gave emphasis to them and which also made the interviewer cognisant of her thought processes. Her level of communication seemed to be facilitated by her good interpersonal skills, she was able to articulate her ideas clearly which seem to have been well-thought out and were focussed on the question. Like Mary-Jane she would also not share her personal experiences with just anyone, but also like Mary-Jane, she does so in the interview, possibly because she acknowledged the credibility of the interviewer.

From the aforementioned discussion, it seems that facilitators should be willing to assist students, especially those whose backgrounds tend to be disadvantaged. The support that facilitators give may actually help, rather than hinder, students to acquire the requisite skills. It seems also that many students are scared of lecturers, and facilitators need to develop an awareness of their non-verbal communication which should convey respect. Sometimes it might be necessary for facilitators to provide a ‘language’ to assist students to communicate their ideas. Educating people in their mother tongue might also be considered. However, although it would be ideal, it may not be practical, and therefore facilitators should encourage students with a low proficiency in English to take a language course which might improve
their language competency. This highlights the necessity for access or bridging courses which, however, should be contextually relevant. Students seem able to communicate their ideas on topics where they can draw on their personal experiences. Facilitators should therefore utilise personal experience in the learning experience of students. It would also be ideal for facilitators to provide a context in which students, especially those who are disadvantaged or have suffered in some way, can emerge from silence and invisibility, and voice what has perhaps been buried inside them for many years. In addition, facilitators should communicate in a way that students can follow easily. Using complex terms and experiences that are alien to them will hinder rather than help.

Narrative of Participation

Participation informed many of the participants’ stories. It seems that students participated at different levels. Helen referred to participation, by which she meant participating in the discussions in their groups in the SSEEP, as contributing to her understanding of the work. Helen did not present or talk in front of the whole student group, but felt comfortable enough to participate in the group discussions. She also participated in the interview, although rather hesitantly at first. The most important thing was that she did participate which helped her get over her shyness of speaking to White people.

Samuel, like Helen, also enjoyed participating in the discussions in their groups at the SSEEP. The value of being involved motivated him, provided him with information which gave him a basis of comparison against which to assess himself, and gave him self-awareness. This was different to Helen who benefited mainly by gaining a better understanding of her work. He also enjoyed participating in the interview with the interviewer who treated him and interacted with him in a way that was quite different from the rude and uncaring treatment he had received from his teachers and his employers. It seems that he found it a good experience to be exposed to an alternative ‘reality’ that was different from the one he was used to. He also participated and was involved in his community as was evidenced by his political involvement when he was a
youth. He said: “But I know that usually when there are problems many times I can’t just sit back. I will like to do something”.

Mary-Jane also participated in the processes in the SSEEP and in the study group which students in the area formed later. It seems that she often participated in her ‘head’, for example, when listening to how to cope with negative behaviour from others, her adolescent siblings, and divorce in the community sessions, although she herself did not participate in all the discussions. She also enjoyed conversing with the interviewer in the interview.

Celeste also participated in the SSEEP but in a way that was politically sensitive and formal. She was proactive in joining an all-Black group but asked the permission of group members first. Although she participated in the group discussion, her role tended to be more facilitative, and she encouraged all members to participate. She appeared to cope in a proactive way with her problems, for example her victimisation at work. She had also agreed to participate in a project to be led by a well-known medical practitioner and psychologist. In the interview, she participated in a more formal way, and yet felt sufficiently comfortable to share personal information. Her mode of participation was therefore slightly different from the other three participants.

It seems that all the participants enjoyed participating in their groups in the SSEEP and gained from it in a personal way. They also seemed to benefit from the interview in a way that was unique to each one of them. If possible, facilitators should encourage students to participate because it seems to lead to the construction of new ‘realities’ for each participant. However, the direction these new ‘realities’ takes cannot be controlled or predicted. Facilitators should perceive the concept of participation broadly, to include not only active participation but also participants’ active engagement with information in their ‘head’.

Constructing an Identity

The identity of participants was constructed through the narrative in the interviews. By using the word “psychologist”, Helen reinvented her identity as someone who has status
in her family and identified with the interviewer as an equal. She also created her identity as an involved student and a connected person.

Samuel, creates his identity as a scholar, as someone who likes to study and read, and yet as a failure in the academic domain in earlier years. He seems to try his best and is willing to ‘perform’ new behaviours and yet does not always succeed because of the negative effects of the larger system. He identifies himself as a son who endeavours to live up to his parents’ expectations, as well as those of his African culture, and a husband who treats his wife politely. However, the former alienates him from his preferred identity of himself as an independent person, and the latter contradicts his failed marriage. His story of himself as a political activist revealed his sensitivity to the suffering of others in an unjust system, and as someone who was prepared to become involved, and yet he sees himself as someone who does not help others with their problems. His political involvement also seems to contradict the identity he creates of himself as a polite and mild-mannered person. It seems that his identity is replete with incongruities, but that his involvement on many levels will allow him eventually to construct his true identity.

Mary-Jane carves for herself an identity as a dedicated, committed and involved student, member of her study group, sibling, daughter and member of society. Although she identifies herself as someone who carries a lot of responsibility, her narrative also identifies her as a person with resources to cope as breadwinner in her family. Her narrative constructs her as a relational person who is respectful, open and understanding of others. In her story, she tells how she has become a tolerant person who will not simply react to negative behaviour from others but will respect that people’s personal circumstances might influence their behaviour negatively. She is also constructed as sensitive and open to issues which relate to her, and yet is aware of her boundaries of vulnerability which she respects. She is a survivor and is a ‘giver’ rather than a ‘taker’.

Celeste’s story defines her as someone who appreciates diversity in people, and in this context feels safe to move beyond her borders into unchartered territory. She construes herself as open, as someone who dares to be different and yet as someone who likes to be in control. She establishes herself as a reliable respondent, an ‘expert’ witness whose
assessment can be regarded as legitimate. Her narrative reflects her as intelligent, authentic, conscientious as a student, possessing good interpersonal skills, as someone who has high self-efficacy beliefs, and who is generous in her praise. Her vulnerabilities are well contained. Her story reflects a private and independent person who at times feels quite isolated as a single person. She is continuously involved in developing herself as a person.

Participants’ identities were constructed in the conversation between the participants and the interviewer. In making sense of their experiences, storytellers create stories that reflect their agency in the story and are positively transforming of previously held beliefs. Facilitators should therefore create opportunities or domains for the telling of personal stories. It is in the telling of stories that personal transformation becomes possible.

Change

Change is the dialogical creation of new narrative, and therefore the opening of opportunity for new agency.

The hesitating quality of the dialogical encounter between Helen and the interviewer seemed to facilitate a shift from an unequal and asymmetrical relationship to one that was more egalitarian. Change seemed to have taken place in the evolution of a new narrative towards the end of the interview where it is her agency that moves her from being shy to talk to a White person, to talking quite openly to the interviewer about her shyness, in a one-on-one situation. This new narrative was ‘performed’ and will probably guide her behaviour in future encounters.

Samuel also created a new narrative in the way he viewed himself as a result of his participation in the SSEEP and in the interview. From being ‘stuck’ in terms of his failed marital relationship, his life at home with his parents, his employment, and his life as a student, he seemed to see himself in a different light where he was given alternative ideas to help him move beyond his ‘stuckness’. He also created a new narrative in the self talk in which he wanted to change his attitude towards his colleagues in the
workshop where he was employed. Towards the end of the interview, his narrative of experiencing better treatment from people opposes the dominant narrative of rude and uncaring treatment articulated earlier. He was able to 'perform' a new narrative in an academic domain where he achieved quite good marks in the examination. In fact, his marks were as good as Celeste's, who came over as the 'more superior' of the four participants.

In similar vein to Samuel, Mary-Jane's narrative constructed a person who benefited from the information she received in her world, which had been closed off up until then from external input. She also constructed a narrative of coping despite heavy responsibilities. She created a view of the lecturers as people who care and who can support her if need be. She articulated a new narrative centred on the benefits of discussing things which bother her, compared to the silence that existed previously. Also, it seems that she sees that she has been given a chance by the interviewer, which leads her to say: "Its very hard, but we are survivors. I will survive". In this way she creates a narrative of personal agency.

Celeste created a narrative of herself relating to Black people in ways that were different to the previous patterns that were more consistent with the dominant narrative of the apartheid era. Her narrative seemed to facilitate change in both others and herself. She initially saw herself as the one who needed to 'help' and 'empower' others, but the way that the group members shared personal stories more easily than her, made an impression on her, and she was thus also empowered by them to share her stories with the interviewer. A new narrative emerged as a result of the interview and the questions that the interviewer asked, as the value of the SSEEP became apparent to her. She created a narrative of someone who was in control and who coped, but also of herself as vulnerable, which somehow made her more real.

It seems that being in groups in the SSEEP facilitated participation amongst students and contributed to the expansion of meaning. In the SSEEP, as well as in the interview, participants felt that their stories were being listened to. They externalised stories that had perhaps remained unarticulated within, exchanged stories and expanded their stories through the questions of the interviewer or other students, creating preferred accounts.
Participants seemed to feel validated as persons when others bore witness to their testimonies. This needs to be built into future programmes and courses.

The South African Context

Although the apartheid structures have been dismantled in South Africa, the vestiges of the past still seem to be evident in the isolated and in a sense, protected nature of Helen’s existence. She came from a township in a more remote rural area which was nonetheless quite close to Pretoria, and had not benefited from exposure to other experiences until she started coming to Unisa every second week to study. In addition, she had not developed much responsibility in domains other than perhaps her academic and home commitments. She did not work and her mother provided for her financially. It seems from the interview therefore that a new world of experience is opening up to her which will nonetheless be constrained by her rural and disadvantaged home environment.

Samuel gives the reader a peep into the shadowy world of the ‘struggle’ during apartheid South Africa when discussing the political scene of that era. The poor treatment he received in the schools of apartheid South Africa, his political involvement which seem like lost years to him, and the ill treatment he receives in his place of employment, have all exerted a negative effect on him. However, they have not been able to extinguish the candle of hope in him of a preferred way of being. The negative effect of apartheid South Africa seemed to have been more ‘real’ to him than to Helen, possibly because he tried to fight the system, thus personalising the political conflict in his life, and yet stimulating in him the willingness to be involved in issues that seemed important to him.

Mary-Jane’s context was one of poverty, lack of commitment from others in her ‘world’, few opportunities, and distrust of the community. Poverty was not only experienced by her in terms of financial deficit and insecurity, but also in terms of a lack of emotional support or nurturing experiences. She experienced a general lack of commitment in her place of employment, which was at a school in a rural township school. There were scant opportunities for alternative employment. She also distrusted
people in her community and therefore did not share her problems with anyone, except with the interviewer whom she felt she could trust. Hopelessness seems an apt word to describe her community. However, despite such conditions of hopelessness and abject poverty, she seems to have articulated a counter narrative of survival, hope and a preferred way of being.

Celeste’s context was one of plenty, which is in contrast to the contexts of the aforementioned participants. She was employed in a managerial position, and her situation and training exposed her to more positive experiences than the previously disadvantaged group. She also had the benefit of better schooling and opportunities. However, she was not prepared to accept the dominant apartheid narrative regarding how a White person should interact with Black people, and instead she chose to interact with them in a polite manner. She also countered the dominant narrative regarding the incompetence of Blacks by allowing their competence to emerge. She was prepared to challenge the dominant narrative, even on marriage and, like Samuel, also tended to experience a certain amount of alienation.

A person’s context is important as the above accounts testify. Programmes and courses that are developed should take the diversity of contexts and experiences into account.

Issues of Control

A feeling of being in control of one’s life or story, is a theme that seemed to pervade the stories of the participants.

In the early stages of the interview with Helen, it seemed that she behaved in a way appropriate to her perception of the existence of a hierarchical relationship between interviewer, as lecturer, and herself, as respondent/student. However, the more egalitarian narrative established their relationship as more symmetrical, which allowed Helen to create a narrative of personal agency by identifying with the interviewer as a “psychologist” in ‘doing’ the same work, as someone who had confidence to make friends, in freeing her to articulate her shyness for Whites, her ability to cope in the
SSEEP, and in changing her perception of Whites which could benefit future encounters. Therefore, it seems that by the end of the interview, power was redistributed, which seems to have been beneficial for Helen.

The interview also seemed to empower Samuel by freeing him to tell his stories and to be the ‘expert’ witness of his own experiences. However, the interviewer unwittingly challenged his position by usurping his story in weaving different threads of his story into something that seemed to make sense to her, but which he rejected. By allowing him to reject her story, Samuel was able to reclaim his power and re-take ownership of his story. His personal agency was reinforced by his account of proactive attempts to change his attitude in his work situation. Thereafter he seemed to feel more in control in the stories that he recounted.

Although Mary-Jane suffered many hardships in her life, she seemed to feel in control in the way that she either chose, or felt obligated, to deal with it. The former gave her the ‘power’ of choice, whereas the latter gave her ‘power’ in being certain of what was expected of her. She managed to provide financially for her family, and the new information that she acquired at the SSEEP, helped her to cope emotionally with the family as well. She also ‘used’ the information that she received in the SSEEP to give her a greater sense of control with regards to the work load, which must have also benefited her emotional well-being. In addition she needed to feel that she could contain her vulnerabilities as she did by choosing to join the group discussing adolescent problems rather than the one discussing divorce, in which her interest lay, but which would have made her more vulnerable. In the interview, an egalitarian relationship existed between interviewer and respondent, and the status of the respondent was confirmed in the narrative.

The theme of control was a dominant narrative throughout the interview with Celeste. It seemed that she regarded herself as open to experiences and yet she needed to feel in control of what happened in her life. Her control was established right from the outset of the interview, when she defined herself as a legitimate witness in commenting on the SSEEP. Although her relationship with the interviewer was symmetrical, she tended to maintain a distance in the relationship which also seemed to give her a sense of control.
She acknowledged the status of the presenters/facilitators as she too occupied a similar niche in her work situation. This theme of control was continued when she articulated her shock at the students' level of sharing at the SSEEP, and her choice not to share her vulnerabilities in that context. She also chose to join an all-Black group but was quick to point out that it was not contrived. She chose not to take control in the group and instead to allow one of the other group members to take on a leadership role, thus freeing them to take control. Nonetheless, she encouraged the students, especially the quieter ones, to participate. She acknowledged that she did not have control over how students in her group would respond to her. She chose not to form a group once the SSEEP had ended which continued her isolation, but ensured her independence, as a distance-education student. She also chose to remain single as she did not want to be dominated in a relationship. She did not seem to experience a sense of personal control when her emotions were out of control and therefore chose either to exclude situations where this could arise, or deal with them proactively if she encountered them, such as her victimisation at work. She decided not to join a voluntary organisation, but instead to join a group that would be personally enriching for her, which is congruent with her philosophy of life. The interview ended by leaving 'control' in her hands which seemed to be empowering.

It seems important to allow participants/students to feel in control, and control should not be challenged by the interviewer trying to take over someone else's story.

Personal Problems

Three of the four students interviewed experienced problems of a personal nature. Samuel experienced marital problems and explained that his wife no longer lived with him. She seemed dissatisfied in their marriage and left just before his examinations the previous year without discussing it with Samuel. Mary-Jane's personal problems seemed to revolve around her inability to discuss her problems with others. In Celeste's case, she had experienced victimisation at work. Most people have issues which are also brought into the learning context. The programme should allow those who wish to do so, but should not force them, to voice these problems, and in so doing, to perhaps
find new perspectives in dealing with those problems. This seems to be particularly relevant in a programme for Psychology students.

Focus on Strengths

In the core narrative of Helen’s fourth story, the interviewer focussed on the confidence that the respondent had gained from attending the SSEEP “to speak to people and to make friends”. This seemed to be personally affirming for Helen.

The interviewer affirms Samuel’s desire to become involved when he sees problems. She refers to it as “a strength” that he “must hold onto like a precious gift”. She believes that he tried to do what he could do, given the political context. She also reframes his own experience of marital problems by pointing out that it has given him “an understanding of people in the same situation”, with which he concurs. The interviewer concludes by saying that “it is really only by becoming involved that one really develops as a person”.

In the case of Mary-Jane, the interviewer remarks that it was not easy for Mary-Jane to talk about things such as the problems that her parents were experiencing before her father’s death, and the poverty in the family. However, the interviewer affirms Mary-Jane by saying that she thinks that she is doing very well. She is open and willing to learn. She believes that the good things that Mary-Jane took with her from the SSEEP reflects positively on her, not just on the presenters/facilitators of the SSEEP. This seems to free Mary-Jane to affirm the interviewer as supportive, and as someone whom she believes gave her the opportunity of a relationship and made it possible. The interviewer accepts the affirmation which seems to allow Mary-Jane to recognise her strengths even though she is in dire financial straits as a result of not receiving a salary as a teacher. She says: “Its very hard, but we are survivors. I will survive”. Despite her hardships, Mary-Jane reveals an amazing resilience to cope with life’s pressures.

The interviewer’s comment to Celeste that the presenters/facilitators has noticed her in the SSEEP because she had willingly joined a cross-cultural group, was probably experienced positively by Celeste. The interviewer affirms Celeste’s willingness to relinquish her White status in the group and to take a ‘one down’ position. The
interviewer believes that this provided Black students with a way of relating across the racial divide that was different from customary patterns which still seem to exist in some contexts despite the dismantling of apartheid. She indicates that it is not just the presenters/facilitators who are doing the work of enhancing students' personal resources, but that everyone, including students are involved as well. The interviewer built further on Celeste’s strengths when she highlighted areas of similarity (that the students in her group were all women) rather than difference. She also remarked on how Celeste coped with her victimisation by seeking support initially and thereafter evolving a coping narrative. Celeste’s open attitude seemed to influence her experience which the interviewer affirmed.

The way that the interview reported on the analyses of the interviews also focussed on the participants’ strengths. A focus on strengths is consistent with the underlying philosophy of the SSEEP as well as the narrative approach in therapy, and should be the basis of future programmes.

Conclusion

A number of general themes that seem to span the narratives of the four participants were identified and discussed. However, it is possible that different observers may identify different themes. It is therefore important to be open to the patterns that emerge, and the particular way that these patterns are interwoven within the context of the story of the particular person, should always be borne in mind.
In reflecting on the analyses of the narratives of the four participants, and the chapter on the narrative themes, it seems that while the researcher connected with the participants on an individual level, she still tended to identify most strongly with Celeste, who, like the researcher, was also a White person. However, the person whom she was most drawn to was Mary-Jane who tended to be the most relational of the respondents and, in that respect, the most similar to the researcher. With regards to the researcher’s interview with Samuel, his underlying sadness was what touched the researcher the most, and it was therefore a joy to her that he achieved such good results in the examination. The researcher experienced Helen’s ‘thin’ narrative as the most frustrating, but she felt rewarded that the respondent could eventually articulate the stumbling block, which was her fear of speaking to White people.

The researcher believed that she gained knowledge about herself and the ‘worlds’ of the respondents, from the interviews with the four respondents. It was quite a shock to her to realise the negative perception that many disadvantaged students have of their lecturers at Unisa. It was also rather a sobering and uncomfortable experience to be exposed to the world of ‘disadvantage’ and to realise how damaging the effects of apartheid were, and regrettably, still are. The researcher realised that although she can connect with people across the racial divide on a personal level, she still tends to identify with Whites. She felt most humbled at the trust that these respondents placed in her, and hopes that she is able to give their stories the justice they deserve.

It seems necessary therefore, for all facilitators to have an honest look at themselves and be aware of where they are ‘at’ and how they are interacting with their students.
CONCLUSION

The setting of this study was the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme (SSEEP), which formed part of learner support at the University of South Africa, and, in particular involved personal contact between lecturers and students. The 'new' South Africa, where the vestiges of the past still exert an influence on people despite the dismantling of apartheid structures, formed the backdrop to this study.

The aim of the SSEEP was not simply to disseminate knowledge, though of course this formed a major part of the programme. Its overriding aim was to create a domain for dialogue that facilitated connection with others and created spaces for the telling and sharing of stories. Thus it became possible for students' personal stories, as resources, to emerge from silence and invisibility. When this occurred, valuable resources could be enhanced. It was also hoped that personal growth would bring life-enhancing contributions to other contexts as well, such as the students' personal, family and community contexts, though this outcome could not be predicted. Therefore, the SSEEP can also be regarded as a resource.

It is believed that this task was adequately executed as students seemed to benefit in ways that surpassed the hopes of the facilitators.

In the following chapter, suggestions for facilitators, based on the outcomes of this study, will be provided. In Chapter 17, the study will be evaluated in terms of its strengths and limitations, and recommendations for future research will be proposed.
ENHANCING STUDENTS' PERSONAL RESOURCES: 
A GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS

Introduction

The main contribution of this study is in the domain of applied psychology - the suggestions are action oriented and based on experience. Much of what will be discussed in this chapter, will therefore be applicable to facilitators working with groups in an educational context. Firstly, facilitators will need to create a domain for dialogue, and this aspect will be discussed. Secondly, the resources of facilitators will be referred to. Thirdly, the role of the facilitator in facilitating group process will be addressed. Fourthly, the facilitators' role in providing students with a framework for learning, will be explained. And finally, the conditions that facilitators working in South Africa should be aware of, will be discussed.

Creating a Domain For Dialogue

Personal Involvement of Academics in Programmes

The emphasis on a collaborative process between lecturer and student as part of the tuition function in open and distance education (Unisa Tuition Policy, 1999), and on learner support, in particular face-to-face contact strategies (Draft Report on Integrated Learner Support, 1997), seem to support the idea of creating domains for face to face contact and dialogue. Geidt (1996, p.19) believes that this type of interaction “is pedagogically essential” for students who were disadvantaged under the apartheid system, the effects of which still exist in South Africa at the present time. The year, 2000 has been named “Student Support Year” at Unisa (Unisa Bulletin, 2000, p.3). The current principal of Unisa, Professor Antony Melck has encouraged departments to support the Department of Student Support, which could involve encouraging students to register for tutorial programmes, or arranging weekend ‘schools’ for students (Unisa Bulletin, 2000). Programmes, such as the SSEEP, fit into the latter suggestion from the
principal. Such programmes can be designed by departments to fit the particular needs of their students. The great advantage of a team of academics designing and becoming personally involved in such programmes themselves is that it gives them grassroots experience of where the students are ‘at’, and where they themselves are ‘at’. This reflects the experience of the facilitators involved in the SSEEP. Contact between lecturers involved in such programmes and students, will ensure a better fit between the expectations of both lecturers and students. This newly acquired knowledge could be used to inform the conceptualisation and writing of study material to better meet students’ needs, to design programmes for the Internet, and for future planning, as facilitators of the SSEEP did.

Technical and Logistical Support

In order to run a programme successfully, technical and logistical, organisational support is an essential ingredient. This responsibility would include arranging suitable venues, ensuring adequate seating arrangements, a sound system that functions properly, an overhead projector, and other services in working order. It seems that one member of the facilitating team needs to assume responsibility for ensuring the smooth running of the programme, which was the case in the SSEEP. However, in the event of disorganisation, facilitators should take steps to deal as efficiently as possible with the problem so that the process is not stifled. In the SSEEP, Unisa, on the whole, provided effective technical and logistical support, especially in the regional centres. However, at times on the main campus this support was lacking which tended to result in chaos initially, and had to be dealt with promptly and efficiently by the facilitators.

Inclusive invitation

Many students at Unisa, especially Black students, were disadvantaged educationally by the apartheid education system, and academic support programmes are therefore sometimes needed to assist students to overcome the problems of educational inequality (Richardson, Orkin & Pavlich, 1996). However, educators should be careful not to perpetuate divisiveness by problematising these students by regarding them as lacking in some way, which reflects the deficit view (Albee, 1980). Therefore, programmes such as
the SSEEP should be differentiated from access or bridging courses to address special
learner needs, and should be aimed at all students as it seems that all students could
probably benefit by attending these programmes. This idea is based on the premise that
all individuals have resources which could be used in their own healing and growth, as
well as that of others (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991; Saleeby, 1996). Life is made up of
individuals’ experiences and these experiences contribute towards the development of
people’s resources which can be enhanced in the sharing of ideas and experiences in
programmes, such as the SSEEP.

The Need for Students to be Part of the Whole Process

If a programme is presented, facilitators should encourage students to be part of the
whole process. It takes time to become connected to others and to form meaningful
relationships, to develop confidence to communicate one’s ideas, and so on. In the
SSEEP, the facilitators found that students who attended one or two days only, seemed
to benefit in terms of course content but not in terms of the group processes.

Facilitating Connection in Small Groups

Traditional lecture halls where students sit in rows, one behind the other, hinder rather
than facilitate discourse. Therefore, facilitators should try and hold programmes in
venues that do not have fixed seating so that chairs may be arranged to suit the group,
and to allow students and presenters/facilitators to move around freely. In the SSEEP
for example, chairs were arranged in circles of about eight to ten chairs, and students
formed small groups on their arrival at the venues.

However, the facilitators in the SSEEP found that many students still seemed to feel
safer sitting in rows one behind the other which meets their needs to maintain their
personal boundaries and separateness from one another as well as from the facilitators.

Facilitators should therefore, encourage students to experience the benefits of
interpersonal contact; the sharing and co-evolution of ideas; being more open to others,
to the course, and in their whole personal orientation. This requires students to
renegotiate their personal boundaries which is facilitated by working in groups; the personal introductions of the facilitators, which define their relationship with the students as an interpersonal encounter, building in structure in terms of non-threatening exercises; and by the facilitators persevering in encouraging students to participate and risk themselves. It seems that working in groups prepares students for teamwork which is at the "heart of most jobs" in the working world (Szul, 1995, p.25).

It seems important for facilitators to allow students to join a group with people with whom they feel most comfortable. Facilitators can then expect students to benefit and start processes which may have unpredictable outcomes, but which nonetheless seem to benefit students in various ways.

The small group and the circle seating arrangement provides a context or setting for dialogue. Students very often feel quite overwhelmed by large groups, and forming students into smaller groups tends to promote a sense of manageability. In the SSEEP, students stayed in these groups for the duration of the programme. This was done to facilitate connection and to take some of the ‘distance’ out of distance education.

In their groups, students should be given the opportunity to share ideas with one another, work co-operatively together, take chances to gain experience in leadership roles, participate in the group processes, and cross cultural and age boundaries. Learning seems to be a social process that takes place through social interaction (Johnson, cited in Szul, 1995; Knights, 1993; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). Participation has the added benefit of introducing students to both diversity and commonality, which can be embraced and appreciated as students work together and get to know one another across the cultural, gender and age divide. The benefits of diversity are referred to by Pai (cited in Knott, 1991) and Vaux (1990).

However, in the SSEEP, facilitators found that not all students were prepared to participate in the conversations in the groups and facilitators are advised not to try and force students to renegotiate their personal boundaries and to participate. Some students prefer to work independently and to maintain personal distance from other students. This seems to refer to individualism, which according to Hofstede (cited in
Stadler, 1995, p.319), is seen in persons who are “emotionally independent of groups or organizations”, who have freedom of choice, take personal responsibility, and are autonomous, and self-sufficient. Their achievement goals tend to be more individualistic (Niles, 1998). This description tends to characterise mainly Western cultures, and is in opposition to collectivism, which refers to shared goals that benefit the group, and tends to be found in African cultures. In the SSEEP, it seemed that independent students were happy to remain in their groups but tended to stay uninvolved, and this was respected. It also appears that some students prefer to maintain a spectator role rather than a participatory role. In a paradoxical way, it seems that working in group which promotes learning communal skills and collaborative dialogue is a counter-cultural form of the dominant western narrative of individualism, competition, and enterprise in academic contexts.

According to Imel and Tisdell (1996), however, although learning in groups has been promoted as it is believed it enhances learning in adult groups, groups can also hamper the learning process. Facilitators need to be alert to this.

**Participation**

Facilitators should encourage students to participate. In the SSEEP, participation seemed to give students confidence and expertise in ‘performing’ different roles and activities, not only in the programme, such as being scribe, group participant, or public speaker, but in other contexts as well, such as becoming involved in voluntary work. Participation can be lots of fun. It seems important for students to be introduced to the idea that learning can be exciting, and does not always have to be a serious affair. It seems that information that is associated with positive emotions is better remembered than if no emotion or negative emotion accompanies learning.

It appears that most participants enjoyed participating in their groups in the SSEEP and gained from it in a personal way. Students also seemed to benefit from the interviews in a way that was unique to each one of them. Therefore, both the SSEEP and the interviews can be regarded as resources which seemed to benefit students.
If possible, facilitators should encourage students to participate in academic activities in some way because it seems to lead to the construction of new realities for each participant. However, the direction these new ‘realities’ takes cannot be controlled or predicted, which seems to be supported by Fuks (1998). Facilitators should perceive the concept of participation broadly, to include not only active participation but also participants’ active engagement with information in their ‘head’, in other words their active participation in an internal dialogue, which seems to have beneficial effects.

Multi-Cultural Connection

It is suggested that facilitators should not try and force multi-cultural connection. In the SSEEP, it seemed that the choice to join groups was best left in the hands of the students themselves. If students felt that they were ‘forced’ to be part of a group, it seemed to exert a negative effect on all group members.

In the SSEEP, it seemed that when a White student voluntarily joined a group of Black students who were educationally more disadvantaged than the White student, the Black students tended to resort to patterns associated with the past in deferring to the White student. Thompson and Neville (1999, p.193) refer to this as maintaining “the fiction of White superiority and the inferiority of people of color”. However, when the White student took a ‘back seat’ and encouraged participation from the Black students, a more equitable relationship was established which was beneficial to all. Thus it gave students the opportunity to reject the stereotypes that others try to pin on them (Knights, 1993). Dishon and O’Leary (cited in Szul, 1995) identified encouraging the participation of other members in the group, as one of a variety of interpersonal skills in cooperative learning groups. Facilitators can encourage empowering patterns but outcomes are unpredictable.

One of the lessons that the presenters/facilitators in the SSEEP learnt was that when a group contained at least one member who tended to be more fluent socially and academically, it appeared to raise the level of sharing. This seemed to benefit all parties who tended to be enriched by diverse inputs. However, the choice to join such a group needed to be in the hands of the advantaged student, otherwise he or she tended to drop
out, and/or it was destructive to the other students. For some advantaged students, it seemed preferable if there were at least two of them to form a subgroup within a predominantly disadvantaged group, which facilitated 'private interaction' enhancing their personal growth. However when a group contained students who were all very similar to one another, it seemed that too much 'sameness' did not stimulate growth. This seemed to occur in mainly advantaged groups as well as mainly disadvantaged groups, although not to the same degree.

Theme of Tolerance versus Intolerance

Respect for and tolerance of difference should be encouraged by facilitators. Tolerance on a personal level seemed to exist in multi-cultural groups in the SSEEP. However, on occasions, students became quite intolerant of one another. This seemed to occur between the races in the area of task-related activities that did not seem to get accomplished as quickly as anticipated. On other occasions, external factors, such as political issues in the larger community, caused intolerance. Facilitators in such instances should highlight the need for respect for one another and tolerance for difference which seemed to diffuse tensions in the SSEEP. This idea of respect seems to be supported by Pai (cited in Knott, 1991).

Resources of the Facilitator

Facilitation implies taking action. The facilitators in the SSEEP contributed a variety of skills and leadership styles, discovered novel ways of using their expertise, and added to and listened to the voices of students.

Interconnectedness and Complementarity Amongst Presenters/Facilitators

One of the focuses of an outcomes-based approach, which has transformed education in South Africa as it enters the new millennium, is the course team. Anyone contemplating presenting a programme should consider using a team approach as it seems to bring not only a richness of ideas from multiple sources, but involves support, shared responsibility, different styles which seem to meet the needs of a wider range of
students, increased opportunities for different team members to connect with students, and seems to prevent boredom amongst students. The beneficial effects of diversity are referred to by Wood (1993). Team members should therefore be encouraged to contribute their own personal resources to the created context, be committed to each other and the programme, share a common aim, and work together (Szul, 1995).

Interconnectedness among the presenters/facilitators also seemed to promote connection between presenters/facilitators and students in the SSEEP. Facilitators need to be what Anderson & Goolishian (cited in Chiari & Nuzzo, 1996, p.177) refer to as “conversational artists”, that is individuals who are able to create a space for conversation, and have sharpened interpersonal skills. They need “to develop capacities for dialogue, questioning, and listening, along with the necessary sensitivity to others and memory for their words” (Knights, 1993, p.185). The way that the programme is introduced plays an important role in setting the stage for facilitating the group process. First contact seems to be important (Mitten, 1995). In the SSEEP, the facilitators were prepared to share personal stories of their experiences with students, without making themselves too vulnerable, or being inappropriate, which often seemed to set the stage for the telling of stories by others (Dean, 1998). Facilitators should therefore be encouraged to share personal stories if they are appropriate to their particular subject domain. They can also use stories of their personal experience to assist students in their understanding of an important aspect of the course material if appropriate. It seems that stories make an impact when they are authentic, if they resonate with the students’ experiential world, and if they touch a chord in students’ lives.

Facilitators also shared a sense of humour. According to Fry (quoted in Gelkopf & Kreitler, 1996, p.241), “[i]ndividuals who laugh together become more integrated as a psychologic unit, resulting in strengthened group cohesiveness”. This seemed to be the experience of the facilitators in the SSEEP.

**Facilitators as Role models**

When facilitators practise certain positive behaviours or values, which may be new or unknown to students, they become role models. The learning of more effective
behaviour can therefore be facilitated by the observation of role models (Fingeret, cited in Knott, 1991; Meyer et al., 1997). Facilitators, though, often mistakenly believe that they should not share their values, expectations or experiences with their audience. Naturally, this does not mean that they should force their personal values on to others, but should always respect difference in, for example, cultural and religious values. However, the value of sharing their values, expectations or experiences, has since been recognised as introducing new possibilities which one can work towards (Sporakowski, 1992). Thus facilitators have an ideal opportunity and a captive audience to demonstrate desirable behaviours which they would like their audience to learn. In the SSEEP, the presenters/facilitators modelled subject competence and responsibility, caring and openness, respect for one another as well as their students, tolerance, empowerment rather than victimisation, getting to the point rather than waffling, and a work ethic as opposed to a slack and undisciplined approach.

**The Role of the Facilitator in Facilitating Group Process**

**Facilitators' Convictions**

It seems important for facilitators to believe that what they are doing is of value to participants, who seem able to 'pick' up the attitudes and beliefs of facilitators. In the SSEEP, the facilitators' strong convictions in what they were doing seemed to initiate a mutually beneficial influence to both facilitators and participants. Important convictions of facilitators that seemed to benefit students were their belief that students are worthwhile people; the importance of sessions that seem to serve the needs of most students when they can elicit and confirm ideas of competent students, and provide a valuable source of information for students who battle; the practical application of what they are learning to real life situations; the relevance thereof in real life and in their communities, as well as the importance of simulating the examination situation where students can practise exam writing. Facilitators in the SSEEP were interested not only in the academic development of their students but also in personal growth which would bring life-enhancing contributions to other contexts as well, such as the students' personal, family and community contexts. It seems that high-confidence educators have a broader orientation than low-confidence educators (Brookhart, Loadman, & Miller, 1994).
The Outcome-Based Narrative

What facilitators say is important because it tends to inform the students’ narrative which has a reciprocal influence on the facilitators’ narrative, and sets the tone for the ensuing process. In the SSEEP, the dominant outcomes-based narrative which emphasises ‘doing’, or developing skills to do something with one’s knowledge (Mason, 1999), informed the facilitators’ narrative and their approach.

Instead of beginning a session with informational input from the facilitator, facilitators can rather start with participants’ experiences and then link them to theory or course content, and then later on to a new experience to test theory (Weedon, 1997), as they did in the SSEEP. Facilitators can also encourage students to use their theoretical knowledge, linked to experiences, to become involved in their communities which would not only give them practical experience but would also uplift their communities.

According to Mirowsky (1998, p.1), “[w]e can produce knowledge that professionals use to control the outcomes of others, or we can produce knowledge that people use to control their own outcomes.”

Encouraging the Telling of Stories and a Focus on Strengths

A focus on creating a space for the recounting of stories, and a focus on strengths, should be built into programmes and courses.

It is in the telling of stories that people make sense of their experiences. Facilitators should therefore create opportunities or domains for the telling of personal stories, as it is in their telling that transformation becomes possible. Facilitators should also be careful not to usurp students’ stories. The telling of one’s story and the ownership thereof seem to empower the narrator.

The opening up of students’ personal boundaries can lead to the telling of stories. Narratives or stories should be elicited in a context of encouragement. However, what facilitators say needs to fit personally with the participant’s narrative and meaning system. In listening to stories of participants, and particularly unique outcomes,
facilitators have the opportunity to draw students' attention to instances when their behaviour revealed their personal agency in coping with problems and which contradicted what White and Epston (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p284) refer to as "problem-saturated descriptions", of academic or relationship failure for example. 'Blaming' stories can be challenged and healing stories can replace subjugating stories (Dean, 1998). According to White (cited in Hart, 1995), in sharing stories, different 'voices' are able to enter the story-telling process and participate in the creation of meaning through an interactive process, which facilitates change as students are encouraged to 'perform' new meaning.

In the SSEEP, students' stories were listened to and validated, stories were exchanged and expanded, questions were asked and meanings explored, problems were externalised and preferred accounts created, and blaming stories were challenged, which often led to narrators embracing a different voice to the one that had dominated their thinking for many years (Dean, 1998).

It seems important for facilitators to focus on stories of strengths, or resources, that participants have developed as a result of their experiences in life. The focus is therefore on how they do best what it is they are doing, rather than with what they are doing (Becvar & Becvar, 1996).

In the present South Africa, it seems especially pertinent to create opportunities for students to tell their stories, especially stories that have been silenced due to oppression. New meanings are continually evolving through dialogue, and this leads to the emergence of transforming stories. According to Benard (cited in Saleeby, 1996, p.301), the aim is to "reconnect people to the health in themselves" which could have an enhancing effect in their communities as well.

Facilitators also need to recognise the strengths in themselves, as well as acknowledging that they are not expert in all spheres of life. According to Anderson (cited in Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p.287), the aim is for the expertise of both facilitators and students to be "engaged to dissolve the problems" and for growth to occur. Facilitators can initiate the telling of stories by telling their own personal stories, which seem to set the stage for the
telling of stories by others. If they are not prepared to share stories, they cannot expect others to do so.

Encouraging Through Positive Reinforcement

Facilitators should encourage participation from students, which should be rewarded. It seems that this is especially important for those students who have less experience working in a group than others (Szul, 1995). Positive reinforcement often seems to encourage further participation from students, not only from those who risked themselves initially. Vicarious reward therefore, also seems to influence students positively. In the SSEEP, subjugating stories were transformed into healing stories when students participated by sharing their stories, which was positively reinforced by the facilitators. The healing stories that were told by others also seemed to uplift those who did not participate actively and gave them a different perspective on life. When students are prepared to risk themselves and are rewarded, then their self-efficacy improves, which leads to more risk taking behaviours and opportunities to learn. This idea is coherent with the social cognitive learning approach (Meyer et al., 1997).

Everyday behaviours, such as respectfulness, caring, politeness, and so on, can also be positively reinforced by facilitators. This tends to have a positive effect on the group process and on relationships.

Structure and Flexibility

It seems important for facilitators to devise a well-structured programme while at the same time remaining open to the processes in the programme without trying to force them into a direction which suits them. Flexibility requires sensitivity on the part of the facilitators and they therefore need to meet each group where it is 'at' and not where they would like it to be. The importance of trying to achieve a balance between structure and flexibility is referred to by Hecht and Becker (1997) and Knights (1993).

It is proposed that facilitators should structure exercises well as students appear to respond positively to structure, but tend to deliver sloppy work when this is absent.
Structure also seems to provide clear guidelines of what is expected of students. Material needs to be explained in a way that is coherent with the audience and facilitators need to adapt their explanations accordingly. Facilitators also need to be aware of when they are doing something which is not working. For example, in the SSEEP, in the Pietersburg centre, the facilitators battled to connect with students initially. However, it was only when the facilitators changed their approach and provided clear and practical messages which paved the way for connection on a more basic and concrete level, that more effective connection became possible. Facilitators therefore, need to persevere in their attempts to meet students where they are ‘at’ and to change what they are doing if it is not working.

**Embracing Homogeneity and Diversity**

Facilitators often seem to embrace homogeneity and shy away from diversity because of a perception that diversity brings difficulties. However, it seems that diversity brings richness, in terms of the contributions from different ethnic, gender, or age groups; and different life and personal experiences. According to Pai (cited in Knott, 1991) and Wood (1993), rather than an either/or approach, both homogeneity and diversity need to be accommodated and appreciated. Pai (cited in Knott, 1991) advocates that the intrinsic worth of all human beings needs to be respected. Facilitators need to accept that not all people are the same and that people from different cultures, or even the same culture, may deal differently with the same things. Thus, facilitators can appreciate the strengths of each culture.

Unfortunately, what often seems to transpire when students, especially those from a ‘disadvantaged’ culture, enter a university, for example, which reflects a particular ‘dominant’ Western, academic culture, they are expected to conform to the dominant discourse and in a way ‘give up’ their culture.

In the SSEEP, both commonality (of being students together and humans), as well as diversity (in terms of differences among students) were taken into account in the programme. In the SSEEP, it seemed that a higher level of academic functioning went hand in hand with a more independent way of functioning. In such cases, facilitators can
meet students’ need for independence in work-related contexts, but can encourage connection in experience-related domains. In groups that tend to be more homogenous in terms of lower level academic functioning, and where there does not seem to be anyone to initiate the group process, the facilitators may be required to be more involved. In groups that are more heterogenous in their level of academic functioning, facilitators may be required to spend more time with groups that seem to battle and to encourage more discussion and debate amongst groups that seem to function on a higher academic level. Facilitators can encourage willing academically advanced students to embrace a more facilitatory and encouraging role in disadvantaged groups so that the groups can function more effectively. Nonetheless, facilitators should accord equal status to all groups no matter what their level of functioning.

Although Lawrence (1997) discusses the benefits of including a multicultural curriculum in education, in order to foster an understanding of the diversity of human culture, in this programme it seemed to occur in an informal manner, through the sharing of ideas. In the SSEEP, different perspectives, from a team of facilitators, the course material, and the voices of participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences, seemed to enlighten participants, extend their thinking, and gave them a sounding board for their ideas. It appears that a variety of resources is better able to meet the different needs of individual students (Macdonald & Mason, 1998; Meyer & Newton, 1992). Thus multiple perspectives, rather than a single dominating ‘voice’, adds richness to students’ experiences. Participants can be introduced to the idea that there are many different pathways to the same end. In the SSEEP, it was illustrated that different answers to the same question could be correct, and different ways of coping with similar problems could be equally effective. Different strengths could also be appreciated and enhanced. These findings could be helpful to those working with similar diversity.

Coping With The Unexpected

Facilitators should be prepared to cope with the unexpected, such as a participant becoming a scapegoat or getting caught in political crossfire, as happened in the SSEEP in 1996. Facilitators are advised in such instances to minimise the potential for conflict by not taking sides and rather trying to accommodate both sides. However, facilitators
also need to respect the fears of some of the participants when violence is threatened, and their decision to exit from the programme prematurely. Facilitators in such instances cannot promise or ensure the safety of participants.

**Facilitating Groups of Differing Sizes**

Group size appears to be an external condition that can facilitate or hinder the group process. In the SSEEP, facilitators were at times required to deal with large groups of between 150 and 400 students. Hogan and Kwiatkowski (1998) warn about the negative emotional consequences of working in large groups for both lecturers and students. In the SSEEP, in order to maintain the group process and to foster a sense of inclusiveness in large groups, facilitators added something to the chaos in order to balance the system. ‘Technical’ solutions included structuring the programme well, setting clear limits, keeping administrative requirements, such as registration, down to a minimum, using a microphone that permitted facilitators to move freely between the groups, and dividing the students into smaller groups. These technical solutions tend to emphasise ‘control’ strategies (Hogan & Kwiatkowski, 1998). Technical solutions that focus on independence (Hogan & Kwiatkowski, 1998) included encouraging interaction among students in their smaller groups in order to give them a feeling of belonging, and working in a personal way with the groups that were located at the back of the room during the exercises. The aim was always to try and engage as many students as possible in order to create a sense of inclusiveness.

**Benefits to Students**

The benefits to students of attending or participating in programmes seem idiosyncratic and cannot be predicted or forced. In the SSEEP, students seemed to benefit in different ways and to take from the programme what was applicable to them. For example, what ‘spoke’ to one student was the community session, which spurred her to action. Other students, on the other hand, seemed to benefit by the sharing of ideas, participating in public speaking, and even active listening. It seems that some students gained as individuals for their personal betterment and growth, whereas the benefit to others was not just their own enhancement but also for the upliftment of their social groups or
communities (Niles, 1998). Students also benefited in terms of their larger contexts, such as their family relationships, work situation, and life itself. They gained new knowledge of how to deal not only with the course content but with real life situations as well. They met others studying the same course that they were studying, and the contact and friendships that they forged, made them feel less isolated as students. The contact with other students from different races also made an impact on many students. It tended to dissolve the confusion that many students arrived with at the programme, regarding the course itself. In addition, they seemed to benefit by the friendliness of the presenters/facilitators which seemed to go a long way towards changing their negative perception of Unisa lecturers.

Facilitator’s Role in Providing Students With a Framework for Learning

It seems necessary for facilitators to provide students with a framework for learning that is consistent with academic requirements, and which should nonetheless include a realistic perception of where students are ‘at’. This seems similar to the idea of ‘scaffolding’ in which “the more knowledgeable person”, in this case the facilitator, “assumes the responsibility of offering the learner support to facilitate learning” (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p.508), and as the learner acquires the requisite skills, the supportive scaffolding is slowly removed, and responsibility is shared. These latter ideas are coherent with those of Bruner (cited in Weedon, 1997), Resnick, and Volet (cited in Archer & Scevak, 1998).

Providing Knowledge About How to Use the Study Material

It cannot be taken for granted that students know how to use study material. It seems that many students, especially the academically disadvantaged students, do not know how to use something as basic as their study guides. Also, poverty appears to be a constraining factor to academic success as many students do not possess textbooks and try to pass by learning only their study guides, which in some courses, contain insufficient information for students to be successful in their endeavours. In the SSEEP, facilitators were required to explain to students how to use the study material for their courses. Economically disadvantaged students in the SSEEP, were encouraged to find
alternative ways of obtaining a prescribed book, such as sharing the cost of a book with other students with whom they were encouraged to form a study group, purchasing second-hand books if possible, but if new editions were prescribed, it became the responsibility of students to include in their studies the sections that were not included in the 'old' textbook.

Contextualising Exercises and Course Material

Facilitators should contextualise exercises and course material in order to make them meaningful to students. According to Dewey and Bruner (cited in Cordova & Lepper, 1996), the decontextualisation of instruction was identified as an explanation for a decline in intrinsic motivation. In the SSEEP, exercises and course material were contextualised. However, on one occasion, an explanation was given in a general, rather than a specific context, which did not seem to make much sense to participants.

Committing Ideas to Paper

It seems from the experience of facilitators in the SSEEP that many students battled to convert their ideas into written text. It is suggested that facilitators provide students with a basic structure to help them get started in committing their ideas to paper, and in structuring their ideas. A basic structure serves the added function of informing students about what is expected of them. Facilitators can also highlight the fact that the 'language' of the course, that is the terms and concepts, can help them to answer questions and to apply what they have learnt in everyday situations. Facilitators should also encourage students to focus their ideas when they answer questions, and to discuss salient features. Students need to be encouraged to distinguish between the important and the peripheral issues, and to integrate information rather than think in a fragmented way.

Personal Experience

In the SSEEP, it seemed that when students were required to discuss something that was part of their experiential world, they evidenced an ability to integrate information,
to distinguish the important from the less important and peripheral issues, and to address questions directly. Therefore, personal experience which can be viewed as a resource, should be built into courses or programmes to assist students to do this in formal academic work. Thomas and Oldfather (1997) and Weedon (1997) refer to the importance of building experience into the learning context. It seems that facilitating such a context would assist students to become competent learners in the broadest sense.

**Developing Responsibility**

A lack of exposure to different life experiences seems to have denied some students, especially the younger students, the chance of developing responsibility. Facilitators should build life experiences into courses to assist students to develop responsibility and commitment towards their academic as well as their social worlds.

**Facilitating Communication**

Sometimes students from disadvantaged backgrounds battle to communicate their ideas on subjects that are not familiar to them because they do not seem to possess a ‘language’ with which to do this. It therefore might be necessary for facilitators to provide a familiar subject that will give students a ‘language’ and will assist them to communicate their ideas. Students seem able to communicate their ideas on topics where they can draw on their personal experiences. Facilitators should therefore utilise personal experience in the learning experience of students. Educating students in their mother tongue might also be considered. However, although mother-tongue education would be ideal, it may not be practical and would probably also deny students the experience of learning to communicate in a universal language with the larger academic world to which they potentially belong. Therefore, facilitators should encourage students with a low proficiency in English to take an access or bridging course that is contextually relevant to the courses they are studying, to improve their language competency and their verbal comprehension. It would also be ideal for facilitators to provide a context in which students, especially those who are disadvantaged or have suffered in some way, can emerge from silence and invisibility, and voice what has...
perhaps been buried inside them for many years. In addition, facilitators should communicate in a way that students can follow easily. Using complex terms and experiences that are alien to them will only hinder rather than help their learning experience.

Providing Rich Description

It seems that many students who fail their examinations in these courses provide 'thin' rather than 'thick' answers. Students should therefore be assisted to provide 'thick', rich descriptions. Facilitators can explain to students that questions contain clues, and students should use these clues (the facts given in the question, or the words contained therein) to ask themselves questions which will help them to provide descriptions that are richer and 'thicker'. Once again, it became apparent in the SSEEP that when students told stories about their personal experiences and their ideas about the problems in their communities and the solutions to these problems, they provided rich descriptions. Facilitators should therefore try and link course content to the students' experiential world then the course content will not be just something 'out there', but in fact will form part of their experiential world, which will make it come alive for them and they will be able to rely on their own experience in being able to inform them on the subject. Thomas and Oldfather (1997, p.117) refer to the importance of building in "real-world learning experiences" so that students will be encouraged "to see learning as having a relevance beyond themselves".

Keeping Instructions Simple

Facilitators should try and keep their instructions simple and to the point. In the SSEEP, the facilitators sometimes erred on the side of trying too hard to explain something clearly, which only served to confuse students. Keeping instructions simple means that facilitators need to be very clear about what they want to say. In addition, in order to explain a complex concept or process to the more academically disadvantaged student, the concept or process should first be explained in a 'language' that they can understand, before linking it to something else. In the SSEEP, the facilitators found it unhelpful to link it to a metaphor, for example. Also, the application of concepts or
processes to real life situation need to fit the students’ worlds of experience, otherwise the application will be lost on them.

Shift from an External to an Internal Locus of Control

It seems that an internal locus of control is required for academic success within an academic context. Therefore, facilitators should be wary of trying to motivate students extrinsically which seems to contradict this goal. It appears that when students feel in control of the knowledge base of the course, perceive its relevance in their everyday lives, apply it to everyday situations and behaviour, and experience their own feelings of enthusiasm generated by their connectedness to one another in the programme, they become intrinsically motivated. According to Oldfather and Dahl (cited in Thomas & Oldfather, 1997), intrinsic motivation therefore seems to refer to the idea of being intensely involved in learning, curious, and engaged in a search for understanding, which is experienced as a deeply personal and a continuous process. The role of the facilitator, therefore, is not as change agent, but as facilitator of the aforementioned.

Realistic Self-Efficacy Perceptions

Encouraging realistic self-efficacy perceptions needs to be a major goal of facilitators. Results from questionnaires administered in previous years to second-year Psychology students who attended the SSEEP, indicated that students, especially the more academically disadvantaged ones, tended to have unrealistically high self-efficacy beliefs regarding their academic abilities (Moore, 1997). However, by the end of the programme, results from post-tests indicated that students had moved towards a more realistic level. It seemed that this shift occurred because their experiences in the programme provided them with a realistic base of comparison against which to assess themselves. Facilitators can also model a realistic self-efficacy by using themselves as examples to illustrate their lack of self-efficacy in certain areas of their lives, and their self-efficacy in other areas. In addition, the ‘mock’ exam can also help students to realise that their perceptions of their abilities may be somewhat inflated in comparison with what is expected of them. When students know what is expected of them, they become aware of the areas of their studies that require more attention, which they can focus on.
This will probably increase their intrinsic motivation when they start to experience competence, or perceive that they are gaining in competence, in relation to doing an activity (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997).

Sharing Information or Ideas

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one of the aims of programmes such as the SSEEP, is to give students information regarding course content. However, facilitators should try and provide information on course content in a new way, rather than remaining book-bound, so that understanding is enhanced. Facilitators should also provide students with information on how to prepare for the examination which is congruent with lecturer’s expectations for answering examination questions. It also seems important for facilitators to provide students with guidelines when they have to make certain choices in courses, in order to assist them to make informed decisions. In addition, facilitators should explain the significance of a course, or aspects thereof, and how they relate to subsequent years of study in that course. The information narrative clarifies different aspects of a course and can therefore make the course load more manageable. Information about the course also seems to lead to self-reflection which is an important part of studying that lecturers/facilitators should build into a programme or course.

Facilitators should be aware that information seems to benefit students on another level as well. For example, in the SSEEP, it allowed students to re-invent their identities. It also appeared to provide students with an idea of the attitude required to approach their studies and how serious they were required to be. In addition, it also provided a basis of comparison against which a student could assess his or her scholarship. Information also provided an alternative to a compartmentalised way of viewing life, and exposed a person to other ‘realities’. This seems very important to students impoverished by a lack of exposure to other ‘realities’ due to the apartheid legacy. Ideas on coping with personal problems, family relationships, or alternative ways of coping with negative behaviour from others, was also gained from sharing ideas. It seemed to open up new ‘realities’ and options.
It appears therefore that information ‘speaks’ to students in personal ways which cannot be predicted. Facilitators should be aware that their narratives as well as students’ narratives may have unanticipated consequences.

The Role of the Relationship Between Facilitators and Students for Learning

It seems important for facilitators to be regarded as expert and competent in their particular field, as that builds respect from students. But then facilitators should also be willing to make a concerted effort to minimise the distance between themselves and students on an interactional level, to foster relationships that are more egalitarian, and initiate symmetrical ways of relating to one another, which show reciprocal respect. It appears that “[s]upportive, nonauthoritarian relationships” between facilitators and students support intrinsic motivation (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997, p.117). It therefore seems important for lecturers at a distance education institution to foster some form of personal contact with students, especially those who come from disadvantaged and under-resourced environments and to enter into a relationship with shared responsibility. Facilitators should establish healthy relationship with their students to enable them to grow both intra- and interpersonally (Mitten, 1995). Sherif (cited in Mitten, 1995) found that the leader of a group tended to establish the group norm around which a group coalesced. Therefore, if facilitators want a group to form around positive norms, they need to be central when the group forms, in modelling desired behaviours (Mitten, 1995). However, some students indicate a preference for a more hierarchical relationship between themselves and the facilitators where the roles of the facilitators and students tend to be more familiar (Freire & Faundez, 1989). In order for students to develop personally, facilitators therefore, need to persevere in establishing a more egalitarian relationship between themselves and students.

It is apparent that many students are scared of lecturers at Unisa, and facilitators need to develop an awareness of their non-verbal and verbal communication. Facilitators may hail from a different ecological niche to their students and therefore may provide the difference needed to initiate change. They may, for example, be the only source of support available to students who belong to a context where everybody seems needy. Facilitators should therefore try and foster respectful relationships as the cornerstone of
their interaction with students and be sensitive to where students are ‘at’ - to allow students to make their own links and to set their own pace. Facilitators should build in opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences if benefits are to be sustained and for facilitators/lecturers to respect the unique way in which students prefer to interact with them and with fellow students.

In the SSEEP, the group process was facilitated by the nature of this relationship, the interactional nature of working in groups, and the more active role that students were required to play. According to Bakhtin (cited in Thomas & Oldfather, 1997), the role of discourse is important and supports the belief that all learning is dialogical. This relationship also opened the way for students to share the role of ‘giver’, which was the role traditionally assigned to the teacher.

Conditions of which Facilitators should be Cognisant

Personal Problems

It appears that a number of students in higher education experience personal problems which may relate to poor academic performance (Easton & Van Laar, 1995). It seems that lecturers might, at times, be required to deal with problems of a personal nature that students discuss with them. However, not many lecturers have received the necessary training to do so (Easton & Van Laar, 1995). Many students at Unisa experience problems of a personal nature. A space or domain was created for students in the SSEEP to voice their stories which often centred around problems. These stories usually illustrated some aspect of the course and therefore were relevant in the context of the SSEEP. In sharing their stories, students seemed to find new perspectives in dealing with their problems. However, students should not be coerced to share things of a personal nature. Although the sharing of personal problem might therefore, not seem out of place to Psychology lecturers, facilitators/lecturers from other disciplines who believe that it is part of their work to assist distressed students, could also be encouraged to do this within their particular contexts. However, according to Easton and Van Laar (1995), this could be highly stressful for lecturers who feel dissatisfied with the help they can offer. It is proposed that lecturers should be supported by receiving training in basic
counselling to equip them with skills to cope when confronted with students’ problems. Nonetheless, facilitators/lecturers should remember that it is not their job necessarily to solve problems - it may rather be in students’ voicing their problems, or externalising them, that solutions become clear to the students themselves, or it may be in the sharing of ideas from many sources, that new and transforming ideas may be co-evolved and adopted. Nonetheless, hesitancy from facilitators from other disciplines is understandable but not insurmountable.

Authoritarian Narrative

Facilitators should take note of the authoritarian narrative in South Africa that still seems to influence students negatively and to inhibit their initiative, independence, and ability to think critically. According to Thompson and Neville (1999, p.216), racism “affects the psychological development and functioning of all racial groups”.

Facilitators should be aware that for many students, it may seem inappropriate for them to relate to the facilitators on a more equitable footing and to engage in an interpersonal encounter. This may be due to the authoritarianism inherent in schools which reflected the apartheid system (Mason, 1999; Suransky-Dekker, 1997), contributing negatively to their hesitancy to participate. Or their perception of facilitators as being the possessors of the ‘truth’ (Freire & Faundez, 1989) might make them feel unequal to participate on a more equal footing with the facilitators.

Although facilitators may encourage the telling of personal stories, many students still depend on an authoritarian ‘voice’, such as the textbook, instead of relying on their own ‘voices’ of experience. These students seem to lack confidence to trust their own intuitive voices and will need to feel safe before they will be willing to risk themselves in this way. According to Thomas and Oldfather (1997, p.111), these students lack “epistemological empowerment” which refers to students’ ability “to make sense of things from their own critical standpoints, although understanding that there are multiple viewpoints or constructions on many issues”. Lacking epistemological empowerment means that students “believe that the ability to know or make sense lies outside their minds” (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997, p.111). In addition, they believe that knowledge
consists of “independent facts transmitted through external authorities”, and they are less “likely to experience learning as connected to their lives” (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997, p.111). In the SSEEP, the dominant authoritarian narrative seemed prominent in many students’ narratives which tended to convey their fragmented way of being which appeared to be linked to the effects of apartheid, and seemed to hinder their ability to make links.

The authoritarian narrative was still evident in the over-strict way in which some Black parents who attended the SSEEP indicated that they raised their children. They seemed afraid that their children would go astray in their teenage years. This fear appeared to be related to the poverty that engulfs them and the lure of criminal activities to overcome poverty. This idea seems to be supported by May and Norton (1997). This narrative needed to be challenged and other possibilities introduced so that their very ‘solutions’ would not perpetuate the problem.

Abuse also seemed to be an experience of many Blacks, especially women and children. This seems to be confirmed by May and Norton (1997). It appeared to contribute to their lack of trust in people, especially those whom they perceived to be in authority (initially the facilitators); their shyness and lack of confidence to interact with others; and their unwillingness to share their ideas. The silenced ‘voices’ of abuse therefore needs to be given a context in which they can be heard.

These are ‘realities’ which facilitators should respect as are the patterns that students developed to cope. Facilitators may be required to challenge dominating and subjugating narratives and introduce an alternative voice. Once students learn to trust their own intuitive voices, their resurrected voices regarding their own personal experiences become resources that can be built on or refined.

The South African Context

Although the apartheid structures have been dismantled in South Africa, the vestiges of the past still seem to be evident in many of the students’ narratives. This seems to be borne out by the findings of Möller (1998) who found that rising expectations have not
been met since the first democratic elections, and Brook (1997) who refers to the inequities that still continue to exist in many areas, such as living conditions, health and welfare, employment, and education, despite improvements in these areas. In their study, Duckitt and Mphuthing (1998) also found that a substantial gap still existed between the socioeconomic circumstances of Blacks and the position that they believed that they were now rightfully entitled to after the first democratic election which gave them majority status. There are still, therefore, vast inequalities between Whites and Blacks in South Africa (Hirschowitz & Orkin, 1997; Möller, 1998). Disadvantaged home environments; isolation and a lack of exposure to experiences; ill treatment by those in authority such as in schools and in the work place; the lost years of those involved in the ‘struggle’; poverty which appears to be a major factor leading to exploitation, rampant crime, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse and so on; lack of commitment from those who people their world; few opportunities; and distrust in the community; seem to characterise the world of Black people in South Africa. Klasen (1997) refers to poverty, and the associated multiple deprivations, that resulted from the apartheid policy and affected mainly Blacks and women, especially those located in economically marginal areas of the country. Learning is very difficult for the poor (Suransky-Dekker, 1997). This contrasts to a context of plenty, positive experiences, and the benefits of better schooling and opportunities, of most White South Africans.

Facilitators also need to be aware of the damaging, isolationistic and dehumanising effects of apartheid where forced separation kept people in the same ecological niche and denied them exposure to other ‘realities’. Stories were told about what it was like being a scholar in the apartheid years, of a student’s political involvement, of the working environment of many Black people even in post-apartheid South Africa, of students’ personal problems, of African custom and the dilemma this sometimes poses for students. Stories were also told regarding the difficulties of teaching in a rural township school in an atmosphere of general disinterest particularly from the teaching staff. It also revealed a world of heavy responsibility, poverty, and a need to talk about personal issues which were silenced by a pervading atmosphere of distrust in some rural communities from which little support was received, and families who did not seem to possess resources to be supportive.
Programmes therefore should take the diversity of contexts and experiences into account. They should encourage the articulation of narratives of survival, hope and a preferred way of being, amongst those that are disadvantaged. This focus on resources rather than on weaknesses was also referred to as beneficial by Kagee and Price (1995).

**Theme of Distrust**

Students still seemed to distrust the lecturers, especially White lecturers, even if the lecturers believed that they had established a trusting and respectful relationship with students. Given the past history of injustice, distrust from Black students of White lecturers is not entirely unexpected. Nonetheless, it was experienced as particularly discouraging by the presenters/facilitators especially if it was unanticipated. Initially, the facilitators provided a domain for the ‘voicing’ of rumours. They abandoned this idea as they felt that it elicited negative rather than healing stories. Nonetheless, distrust needs to be dealt with if it rears its head.

The following suggestions are based on the way that the facilitators dealt with this problem in the SSEEP: Firstly, facilitators should allow students to have their say. Szul (1995) believes that minority opinions should be listened to and examined. Secondly, facilitators should make personal boundaries of responsibility clear to all students. Students need to be made aware of what their role entails, which, at university, is to work hard, and that the role of facilitators is facilitatory, and also includes their responsibility to provide students with information and to help students to take personal responsibility to succeed. It seemed that distrust came mainly from students who failed but did not accept any personal responsibility for failing, instead apportioning full blame to external sources such as lecturers/presenters/facilitators. This problem seemed to be rooted in the larger South African society, where a ‘culture of entitlement’ appears to have taken root. A culture of entitlement refers to the feeling that it is people’s right to have their demands met without having to put any effort into it themselves. This however, seems to defeat the purpose of empowerment. Thirdly, facilitators learnt that they should not over react and try to please one critical person. This did not mean that this person should not be heard, but the criticism needed to be seen in perspective and over-hasty decisions avoided. And finally, it appeared to be important not to assume the
'victim' role when facilitators became the target of students' anger and frustration at failing repeatedly. Facilitators need to model empowerment in order to assist students to become independent learners.

In the SSEEP, it was also found that distrust was usually easier to handle especially when it was clad in humour as when students in the second Pretoria programme called the presenters/facilitators, their 'tormentors'. This allowed facilitators to deal with it in a lighter and more humorous way by referring to their label in contexts where it could be rebuked and the notions disconfirmed. It seems that humour can reduce tension and aggression (Gelkopf & Kreitler, 1996).

'Expected distrust' can also be 'voiced' by facilitators at the outset of a programme in a humorous way and in a sense, pre-empt the issue. This seems to silence students, but makes it easier for facilitators.

It seems that there are no pat answers when trying to deal with distrust. However, it needs to be dealt with in a way that is satisfactory for both parties.

Distrust also seems to exist among students, especially among disadvantaged students. Because of this feeling of distrust, facilitators should avoid asking them to rely on one another for information and should try and provide it through a channel that they trust.

**Conclusion**

From this discussion, it seems that there is a reciprocal influence process between facilitators and students, within a created domain for dialogue, which exists within the larger South African context. It is in this dialogical domain that the potential is present to enhance students' personal resources which can benefit students within their personal, relational and community contexts. The ideas that emanate from the study can have tremendous implications for facilitators in educational contexts.
CHAPTER 17

STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

In this chapter, the strengths and limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research, will be discussed.

Strengths of This Study

This research was a form of action with the researcher herself involved in facilitating group processes, in addition to being researcher. The practical use of the knowledge gained refers to what Lyotard, (cited in Mason, 1999, p.141) coined as “the ‘performativity’ of knowledge”, which can lead to further action and the creation of new social realities. ‘Performativity’ of knowledge is the endeavour of research in the present time (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

This study was rooted in the narrative approach, which according to Polkinghorne (cited in Callahan & Elliott, 1996, p.92), is the “human activity of ‘making meaning’ of experiences”, and is based on the premise that people lead storied lives and recount stories of their lives. Stories constitute a “frame of intelligibility” which provides a context for experience and “makes the attribution of meaning possible” (White, 1995, p.13). Descriptions of human experience from within the context of the experiencing subjects (Kelly, 1999b; Searight & Young, 1994), as well as interpretations thereof from the outside (Ricoeur, cited in Kelly, 1999b), were provided. This approach is consistent with qualitative, interpretive, contextual research. It provides an alternative approach to approaches that claim to be objective, use data that can be measured, and exclude the context of people’s lives so that the ‘truth’ can be established.

In the preceding chapters, the researcher has told her story of the research project. In the telling of the research ‘story’, the researcher was able to make sense of her
experiences in the SSEEP. The research ‘story’ includes her stories elucidating the processes of the SSEEP, stories told around meaningful memories, and stories about the meaning that participation in the SSEEP had for students in different domains of their lives. The aim of this study was to describe the processes and themes that would assist facilitators, working with groups in an educational context, to enhance students’ resources. These findings were based on experiences, including those of the researcher, her co-facilitators and the students who attended the SSEEP, and, although the voice is the researcher’s, it nonetheless includes multiple voices from the co-facilitators, colleagues, students, and the world in which she is embedded.

This study provided a view on enhancing students’ personal resources. It makes no claim to providing the way of knowing. The notion of “truth” implied by the latter statement, reflects a somewhat dogmatic view which precludes “reinterpretation or dispute” (Owen, 1992, p.388). In keeping with postmodernism, in which this study is located, it seems that we should be wary of any account that claims to offer the sole explanation or interpretation, as many alternative accounts, descriptions, or meanings, may be possible (Doan, 1997).

Facilitators in the SSEEP appeared to achieve a balance between their professional identity as lecturers where they functioned as ‘experts’ within the programme framework and their facilitatory role within a psychological framework, where they formed relationships with students based on mutual respect, the sharing of ideas, and shared responsibility. According to Griffith and Griffith (cited in Roberts, 1998, p.24) “[c]onversational participants shape and reshape each other as they speak, respond and enact their stories”, which seems to capture the essence of the relationship between facilitators and students in the SSEEP. In this way, students were introduced to a ‘different’ way of interacting with figures who were paradoxically both ‘authority’ figures as well as partners.

In this study, participants are viewed as “volitional and generative agents who are socially formed and embedded and who act on the reality they perceive in ways that further their individual or group [activities]” (Strong, 1997, p.275). This differs drastically from a positivist-empirical tradition where the manipulation of subjects is
often involved. The former view reflects a different way of viewing, and therefore interacting with research participants, which is far more respectful and empowering.

In this research, the researcher as facilitator of the SSEEP formed a close and respectful relationship with students who attended the SSEEP and with those with whom she interacted in the interview context. From the aforementioned it is clear that qualitative research cannot be value free, that is, the researcher cannot assume an uninvolved and objective stance; the researcher is subjectively involved with her participants.

In the SSEEP, power relations were acknowledged in a way that seemed to benefit everyone. This meant that facilitators in this study avoided perceiving students as having problems or deficits that they needed to 'fix', which seems to imply the idea that control is possible. The view was held that facilitators/lecturers/researchers do not have the 'power' to effect change. This idea is coherent with the ideas of Foucault (cited in Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Facilitators/lecturers/researchers were instead regarded as products of their social and historical position in a particular intellectual framework (Foucault, cited in Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). In fact, both facilitators/researchers and students were regarded as historically and socially produced by the system of power, and their identities were not limited to the aforementioned roles, as they were perceived as having multiple identities (Foucault, cited in Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). The presenters/ facilitators/researchers and students were viewed as part of the same system, and even though the presenters/facilitators/ researchers might appear to have dominance over the students because of their social and historical position in an academic framework, the students still seemed to benefit. Therefore, power was conceptualised “as a network of relations and discourses which capture advantaged and disadvantaged alike in its web” (Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998, p.458).

The approach of the facilitators was preventative in the way that information was disseminated and discussed which had the potential to improve students' personal and family relationships. It was also healing in the sense that a domain was created for the voicing of previously silenced stories, for them to be listened to, affirmed, and
transformed. The facilitators focussed on the strengths that students, as well as themselves, contributed to the process. This did not mean however, that ‘realities’ such as past inequalities were ignored. The purpose was to bring forth stories of strength from invisibility. Retelling stories that facilitate growth and change is the main focus of research following the narrative approach.

For many educationists, a narrative still exists about the problems of cultural diversity and, more especially, disadvantaged Black students, instead of “nurturing the knowledge-transforming possibilities of people’s contact with one another” (Florio-Ruane, 1997, p.158). According to Florio-Ruane (1997), creating a new education story that includes differences as productive resources will help to reform institutions and build new communities. Facilitators in the SSEEP were prepared to risk telling new stories and to accommodate many voices. According to Florio-Ruane (1997), this is an act of hope.

This study, rooted as it was in social constructionism, challenged dominant, subjugating and blaming narratives (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). This implies that all stories did not have equal validity as some stories were disrespectful of certain sectors of the population. Other possible ways of constructing meaning around experience became possible so that students could start living by these meanings rather than by those that subjugated them (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). However, the co-construction of new meanings should not be seen as an end in itself. The aim is that the co-construction process begun in the SSEEP or interviews, will lead to a pattern of openness to change meanings that no longer fit to the “new world experienced since its construction” (Marcia & Strayer, 1996, p.349).

This study enabled the researcher, as one of the facilitators and a lecturer, to reflect on the processes in the SSEEP. It seems that reflective practice enables facilitators/educators to reflect upon their experiences and to learn from them (Baillie & Corrie, 1996), and more specifically, to recognise how they work with group process and develop facilitative skills (Knights, 1993). This information could benefit not only the researcher herself, but also others who intend developing their facilitative capacities.
In order to be effective psychologists in the new South Africa, the facilitators in the SSEEP, as psychologists, moved beyond the customary and exclusive one-on-one service to individuals, to include the community of learners who attended the programme in the various centres. The aim of the facilitators was to address the needs on many levels of not only the students who attended the programme, but it was also hoped that the benefits would extend to the students’ families and communities. This approach seems to be in line with the redefinition of the psychologist’s role proposed by Hickson and Kriegler (1991) as a result of the disenchantment with the role of psychologists in apartheid South Africa.

The community level was also included in the SSEEP when students were asked to discuss the problems that existed in their communities and suggested how these problems could be dealt with. It seems important for people in communities to ‘name’ their own problems and solutions, rather than have them named for them by another group (Gutiérrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995; Saleeby, 1996; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994). Effective transformation in communities and community empowerment appears to be facilitated when individuals who participate in the change process become transformed (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994). It seemed that students embraced the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 1996) by focussing on strengths that could be harnessed in their proposed solutions to the problems in their communities. Therefore, there was a move away from one-way giving from the facilitators to encouraging students to make themselves available to one another and to their communities.

Reliability and validity, as conceptualised in terms of a qualitative research context, were achieved in this study.

Reliability in this study was achieved in the following ways:

- “Disclosure of orientation” which refers to the researcher’s specific orientation including expectations for the study, preconceptions, values or theoretical allegiance (Stiles, 1993, p.602) The researcher’s orientation was explicated in the philosophy underlying the SSEEP and in particular the narrative approach.
- “Explication of social and cultural context” which refers to the investigation’s
context (Stiles, 1993, p.603). In this study, this refers to the SSEEP, informed by the diversity of cultures represented by the presenters/facilitators and students.

- "Description of internal processes of investigation" refers to the investigator's internal processes, or the impact of the research on the researcher (Stiles, 1993, p.603). In this study, these were indicated in the reflections and self-reflections.

- "Engagement with the material" which refers to the researcher's relationship with the participants in the study, as well as with the material (Stiles, 1993, p.604). In this study, the researcher was involved with students in a context characterised by warmth and trust. She tried to gain an understanding of the world from their perspective as well as from an outsider-perspective. Because of her direct experience, she was also intimately engaged with the material.

- "Iteration: Cycling between interpretation and observation" which refers to the "dialogue" between theories or interpretations and the participants or text (Stiles, 1993, p.605). In this study, the researcher dialogued with the text, which included field notes, artefacts, audiotapes and transcripts. Her interpretations and observations were influenced reciprocally in the process.

- "Grounding of interpretations" which refers to the linking of interpretations to the content and context (Stiles, 1993, pp.605-606). For example, themes were linked with examples from the field notes, artefacts, or interview text.

- Asking questions which help participants to ground experiences in a context and that help them to tell stories (Stiles, 1993). The researcher asked questions in the interviews which elicited the telling of stories.

Validity was achieved in the following way:

- Firstly, triangulation, which refers to using multiple perspectives against which to check one's own position (Kelly, 1999c), was achieved through multiple data sources (the researcher herself; her co-presenters/ facilitators, students, artefacts), multiple data collection methods (field notes, artefacts, interviews) multiple methods of analysis (hermeneutics, narrative analysis), and/or multiple investigators (the three presenters/ facilitators and students) (Kelly, 1999c; Moon et al., 1990; Stiles, 1993).
Secondly, coherence, which refers to the quality of fit of the interpretation (Stiles, 1993), was achieved. This study was coherent with the belief that people make sense of their experiences by constructing and telling stories, which reaffirm their life stories and modify the way that they live by their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). The methodologies of hermeneutics and narrative analysis are logically consistent with the narrative approach.

Thirdly, this study succeeded in enriching and extending the understanding of the readers of the research in how facilitators can enhance students' personal resources through narrative, and it also facilitated the researcher's understanding of the processes of which she had been part. This refers to the "uncovering of self-evidence" (Stiles, 1993, p.610).

Testimonial validity, or correspondence, refers to the validity obtained from participants in the study (Stiles, 1993). Students evaluations of the SSEEP at the conclusion of the programme seemed to support the value of the programme as promulgated by the researcher. In addition, three of the students whom the researcher interviewed, recognised their stories in the account which the researcher provided as a result of the narrative analysis of their interviews. The researcher was unable to trace the fourth participant (Helen) despite making several attempts to do so.

Catalytic validity (Stiles, 1993) was achieved through the encounter between students and researcher. New meanings were co-created and new understandings were reached which also served to add to the meaning systems of both students and researcher.

Reflexive validity (Stiles, 1993) was also achieved as the researcher moved between being in the context, which involves empathy, and a distanced perspective using interpretation, in making sense of experience. Her understandings were extended and enriched with each encounter with the texts.

In the narrative research approach, it is important not only to focus on reliability and validity as conceptualised in qualitative research, but also to attend to the specific qualities of a satisfactory narrative account.
The principle of congruence, was met which refers to the *internal consistency*, or coherence, of the account. One part of an account did not contradict another part, and the accounts were logically argued. *Coherence* was also obtained in the way in which events were linked to each other and “experiences contained therein [were] given a context in terms of their place in the overall story” (Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

The principle of plenitude, was met, which refers to comprehensiveness, or the extensiveness of the accounts.

It seems that the accounts met the requirement of persuasiveness, which refers to a persuasive (Riessman, 1993) and “compelling” presentation, that according to Gadamer, has “a binding quality that imposes itself on the reader in an immediate way” (cited in Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

The information presented in the accounts have pragmatic use, which refers to their usefulness among the community of scientists (Riessman, 1993). This was accomplished by detailing the research process and making raw material, such as the interview transcripts and artefacts, available. ‘Raw’ field notes in a ‘personal shorthand’ were not provided due to the fact that they probably would be incomprehensible to anyone other than the researcher.

This research achieved what it set out to accomplish, which refers to its pragmatic proof (Kelly, 1999c).

There was also a balance in the narrative accounts between “generality and contextual detail” (Kelly, 1999c, p.434).

**Limitations of this Study**

It seems that researchers tend to be *cognitively limited* in the way that the mind tends to select data that confirm the meanings that have been identified and in the way that these initial impressions seem to endure (Moon et al., 1990). Diverse interpretations or meanings have been articulated by the researcher in this study, but they are not the only interpretations or meanings that could have been made. Some interpretations or meanings have not been articulated by this researcher and other interpretations or meanings could well be articulated by other readers.
The researcher is a White female researcher and her *world differs* from that of many of the research participants. She still seemed to be caught in the same separatist discourses which characterised the apartheid era, and which still seems to exist in present-day South Africa. Nonetheless, despite not sharing in the same world as many of her participants, it was still possible to do ‘good’ research about others’ lives (Merrick, 1999). The researcher, therefore, does not pretend to be different from what she is - she acknowledges her standpoint and takes responsibility for it, which she did in her self-reflections at the conclusion of each section of the results.

A further limitation is that *personal data which are elicited during the interviews are often of a very personal nature* and this raises important ethical issues (Moon et al., 1990). Therefore pseudonyms were used and details were changed to protect the anonymity of participants.

*Facilitating large groups* can be problematic according to Hogan and Kwiatkowski (1998). It seems that students tend to perform less well in larger groups, they find difficulty in finding a voice as a result of their feelings of isolation and alienation, they experience a large group as intimidating and inhibiting, certain skills such as the ability to think, argue and reason, and to develop themselves socially, are not present, and there is the possibility of subgroups forming which have the potential to be disruptive (Hogan & Kwiatkowski, 1998). For facilitators, problems such as facing a hostile group of people, fearing challenge by students, and being unsuited to the task of teaching large groups might lead to problems (Hogan & Kwiatkowski, 1998). However, the facilitators in the SSEEP attempted to overcome some of the problems of large groups. The SSEEP was a programme of four days and not a series of classes over an extended period of time. Secondly, the students who attended the programme were mainly adults and were keen to learn and participate. Thirdly, being in small groups seemed to help address some of the problems referred to by Hogan and Kwiatkowski (1998). Small groups made students feel in control and reduced a sense of alienation. Skills were able to develop in these small groups. In the SSEEP, students were given a voice and seemed to be willing to share information, even information of a personal nature. The facilitators coped with distrust from some students, but they were never conceived of as a disruptive group. The facilitators found support in one another and were competent in
their fields. They enjoyed their task as facilitators and they therefore, did not experience problems themselves in teaching large groups. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that this might be a limitation as not all students benefit from being in a large group, nor do all facilitators.

A programme such as the SSEEP had *the potential to become an emotional dumping ground for people’s personal problems and frustrations*. In the SSEEP, the course content often provided a relevant context that evoked the sharing of personal problems. The facilitators, however, focussed on the strengths that students developed as a result of their experiences, rather than on the problems per se, and linked their personal experiences to theory, or course content, as being illustrative thereof. Both Knights and Foley (cited in Imel & Tisdell, 1996. pp.18-19) warn facilitators that “[b]y being overly supportive and assuming the role of caretaker, facilitators fail to challenge learners to take responsibility for their own learning”. However, it seems that the facilitators in the SSEEP succeeded in attaining a balance between being supportive in an interpersonal context, and challenging students to assume responsibility in the learning context.

Although disconfirming and subjugating narratives were challenged, a narrative approach “does not address the fundamental issues of power, social structure and its influence on how and by whom those narratives are constructed and validated” (Hart, 1995, p.184). The individual level was the level targeted in this study. In this study, a context was facilitated which encouraged the telling of stories which could resurrect past knowledges. The strengths perspective of this study aimed at reconnecting individuals to the healthy parts of themselves first before directing their energies to others who people their world. This idea is coherent with Benard’s ideas (cited in Saleebey, 1996).

An additional limitation of this study is that *changes in meaning do not necessarily lead to changes in people’s lives* (Russel & Lucariello, 1992). However, they might very well open people up to the possibilities that do exist. Nonetheless, the belief is held that people tend to live by the stories that they tell (White, 1995).
Recommendations for Future Research

As mentioned previously, instead of merely challenging subjugating narratives, there needs to be intervention in the wider sociocultural and sociopolitical realm regarding aspects of society that perpetuate oppressive narratives (Rigazio-DiGilio, Ivey & Locke, 1997). There seems to be a need for shared responsibility between professionals and members of society to mobilise resources in these areas. It is suggested that facilitators/educators collaborate with community psychologists in this regard, or gain knowledge about how to intervene in the larger systems. It is therefore proposed that future programmes include interventions in wider realms, which could prove to be quite a challenge.

As the ‘new’ South Africa gains its own identity, different processes and themes from those referred to in this study, might emerge as more important for the facilitation of groups in a context that is different to the one that formed the backdrop of this study. This is an area that could be addressed by future research.

Future research should investigate whether facilitators from a different gender or cultural group to the researcher in this study, would highlight different processes and themes from the ones mentioned in this study.

It would also be interesting to discover whether approaches that differ from the narrative approach, would focus attention on different facilitation themes and processes.

The SSEEP was devised as a programme for second-year Psychology students and it resonated well with the course content. The challenge will be for facilitators in other disciplines to develop programmes that will be contextually relevant to their courses using the recommendations gained from this research.

In addition, it will also be important to determine whether the processes and themes elucidated in this study will apply to contexts other than educational, or to populations that differ from the student population used in this study.
General Conclusion

Present day South Africa is a ‘different’ world from the previous era as a result of the dismantling of the apartheid structures, which necessitates the recreation of new ways of thinking and being. The Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment Programme seemed to help the students who attended, as well as the facilitators, to recreate themselves in new ways. They could not but be changed by the encounter. The promotion of healing, the provision of support or education, and improvement of self-understanding and interpersonal efficacy (Dean, 1998) were goals that seemed to have been achieved. Students were able to ‘perform’ new meaning. Suggestions for facilitators were provided which could be valuable to those working with groups in an educational context in South Africa. Finally, the study was assessed in terms of its strengths and limitations, and recommendations for further research were proposed.

To conclude, we return to the story of The Wizard of Oz with which this study began. After their encounter with the Wizard, Dorothy’s three friends have their wishes met by the Wizard. The Scarecrow says: “I feel wise indeed. When I get used to my brains I shall know everything” (Baum, 1984, p.121). The Tin Woodman receives a kind heart, and the Lion is required to drink the contents of a green bottle, after which he feels “[f]ull of courage” (Baum, 1984, p.123). The Scarecrow, the Lion, and the Tin Woodman, ‘perform’ new meaning in accordance with their new perceptions.
REFERENCE LIST


Geidt, J. (Feb 1996). Distance education into group areas won’t go? *Open Learning, 11*(1), 12-21.


347


Lawrence, V.J. (1997). Multiculturalism, diversity, cultural pluralism ... “Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” *Journal of Black Studies, 27*(3), 318-333.


APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO THE STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

PSYCHOLOGY II

STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME: PSY211-8 AND PSY212-9
NB: COMPULSORY REGISTRATION FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Psychology

COURSE CODE: PSY200-4
TUTORIAL LETTER: 302/1999
Dear Student,

This tutorial letter contains important information regarding the Student Self-Empowerment and Enrichment programme as well as a registration form and questionnaire which is compulsory for all Psychology II students.

STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

All second-year psychology students are invited to attend a Student Self-Empowerment and enrichment programme at our various centres on the dates indicated in the provisional programme.

This programme replaces the group visits. If you decide to accept our invitation to attend, it is imperative that you attend the entire four-day programme. The programme is offered in English only. It is free of charge but you must organise your own transport, accommodation and meals as these are not included in the programme.

During the course of this programme you will experience personal growth and enrichment by:
- sharpening your cognitive skills. The programme is designed to help you master the course content by teaching you proper study methods and the effective use of memory.
- broadening your views on human functioning, and gaining an understanding of psychological maturity and well-being. The course contents of both Personology and Developmental Psychology will be covered in an exciting and interesting way with exercises designed to highlight the applicability of the course content to everyday life.
- applying your knowledge in service to others. This programme will introduce you to the idea of community involvement.

Throughout this programme you will work in small groups. This will enable you to take the distance out of distance teaching and will give you the opportunity to interact with other students and with lecturers.

MATERIALS: Those of you who will be attending, should please bring textbooks and guides for PSY211-8 and PSY212-9, notebooks and pens.
PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cape Town:</strong> Unisa Regional Centre, 15 Jean Simonis Avenue, PAROW</td>
<td>Monday - Thursday 1 - 4 March 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pretoria:</strong> Examination Hall, 2nd Floor, Theo van Wijk Building, MUCKLENEUK MAIN CAMPUS</td>
<td>Monday - Thursday 8 - 11 March 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Durban:</strong> Unisa Regional Centre, 230 Stanger Street</td>
<td>Tuesday - Friday 23 - 26 March 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pretoria:</strong> Examination Hall, 2nd Floor, Theo van Wijk Building, MUCKLENEUK MAIN CAMPUS</td>
<td>Monday - Thursday 29 March - 1 April 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East London:</strong> Library</td>
<td>Tuesday - Friday 6-9 April 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pietersburg:</strong> Unisa Regional Centre, c/o Bodenstein &amp; Landros Mare Streets</td>
<td>Monday - Thursday 12 - 15 April 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENT SELF-EMPowerMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAMME</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration.</td>
<td>8:00 - 8:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction; Creating community; Tea break; Monitoring study method; Lunch break; Practise the monitoring study method; Memory strategies; Practise the memory strategies</td>
<td>8:30 - 15:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personology; Discussion of the different theories and practical exercises</td>
<td>8:30 - 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB: Preparation for Personology: Please read through Freud's theory, the social cognitive learning approach, and Rogers' theory, chapters 3, 11, and 15 in MMV.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thorough overview of the Developmental Psychology course will be given.</td>
<td>8:30 - 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving your community; Writing the exam; Programme evaluation; Farewells!</td>
<td>8:30 - 13:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don't forget to bring your textbooks and guides for PSY211-8 and PSY212-9, notebooks and pens.
Comments from students

Here are some comments from students who attended the programme previously:

1. I gained far more than a better knowledge and understanding of the course content. I felt, for the first time, that I am actually part of a university, I am not the only one in the world studying alone in the evenings.

Regarding the input on the development of cognitive skills and strategies, one student wrote:

2. Since I have used [this] study method my approach to my studies has changed. I am more eager to study, knowing that I am now able to remember and apply that which I have studied. This has given me hope for the future and taken away my fear for the exam. I am more positive and confident that I will do well in both papers.

3. This week was the most wonderful week, since I started my studies a year ago. It's taught me how to use my time effectively, how to try out new learning strategies, but the input of the lecturers was surely the one thought that will remain with me for some time. Especially the fact they were so down to earth and approachable really gave me the confidence that my exam paper will be in good hands.

4. I've become "colour-blind". On the first day I was surprised that as a "white" student, I was in the minority and jumped to incorrect conclusions, ie the standard may drop, degrees are given away. But I was so WRONG! I've seen such talent coming from all races. I feel so humbled.

5. Last week I was feeling depressed, demotivated and listless. I am repeating this course Personality Theories as I have been unsuccessful last year. Now I feel good about myself again. I have a new vision and feel very motivated. From the bottom of my HEART THANK YOU!

6. A greater awareness of my personal responsibility towards myself/society dawned on me.

You will find the registration form and the questionnaire on the last two pages of this tutorial letter.

Your registration forms for the programme must reach the Department by 15 February 1999. A minimum of 50 students is required for the programme to be presented at a particular venue. The registration numbers will be assessed on the 15 February and you will then receive a tutorial letter (303/1999) informing you about the final arrangements.

If you have not received this tutorial letter confirming that the programme will be presented at the venues and on the dates specified, please contact the Department at (012)429-8251 to confirm.

PROF CORA MOORE
DR TERIA SHANTALL
MS VAL RAPMUND
ALL PSYCHOLOGY II STUDENTS: QUESTIONNAIRE AND STUDENT SELF-EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME REGISTRATION FORM

Detach and send this page before 15 February 1999 (or as soon as you receive this letter) in an envelope to:
SSEEP, Prof Cora Moore; Department of Psychology; UNISA; PO Box 392; PRETORIA 0003

Where indicated mark the box of your choice with a tick: ☒

1. SURNAME AND INITIALS

2. STUDENT NUMBER

3. POSTAL ADDRESS

4. TELEPHONE NUMBERS
   WORK ( )
   HOME ( )

5. AGE

6. SEX:
   1. MALE
   2. FEMALE

7. WHAT IS YOUR MOTHER TONGUE?
   1 ☐ ENGLISH
   2 ☐ ISIZULU
   3 ☐ SESOTHO SA LEBOWA
   4 ☐ ISIXHOSA
   5 ☐ SETSWANA
   6 ☐ AFRIKAANS
   7 ☐ SESOTHO
   8 ☐ XITSONGA
   9 ☐ TSHIVENDA
   10 ☐ ISISWATI
   11 ☐ ISINDEBELE
   12 ☐ OTHER, INDICATE ........................................................................

8. WHAT IS YOUR MARITAL STATUS?
   1 ☐ SINGLE
   2 ☐ LIVING TOGETHER
   3 ☐ MARRIED
   4 ☐ DIVORCED
   5 ☐ WIDOW/WIDOWER
   6 ☐ OTHER, INDICATE ........................................................................

9. NUMBER OF JUVENILE DEPENDANTS THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

10. NUMBER OF ADULT & ELDERLY DEPENDANTS THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

11. ARE YOU STUDYING UNISA SUBJECTS THROUGH A COLLEGE OR CAMPUS? IF YES, WHICH ONE?

12. SELECT THE ONE OPTION OF YOUR CHOICE:
   1. I SHALL ATTEND THE STUDENT EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME AND COMMIT MYSELF TO THE ATTENDANCE OF THE ENTIRE OR A GREATER PART OF THE PROGRAMME
   2. I WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND THE PROGRAMME BUT AM UNABLE TO DO SO
   3. I DO NOT WISH TO ATTEND THE PROGRAMME DUE TO THE FOLLOWING REASON(S):

13. IF YOU CHOSE 1, INDICATE WHICH VENUE YOU WILL ATTEND BY MEANS OF A CROSS IN THE CORRESPONDING BLOCK:

   1. Cape Town
      1 - 4 March 1999
   2. Pretoria
      8 - 11 March 1999
   3. Durban
      23 - 26 March 1999
   4. Pretoria
      29 March - 1 April 1999
   5. East London
      6 - 9 April 1999
   6. Pietersburg
      12 - 15 April 1999

14. IF YOU CHOSE 2 or 3, I AM UNABLE TO ATTEND THE PROGRAMME DUE TO THE FOLLOWING ONE OR MORE REASONS:

   1. WORK COMMITMENTS
   2. FAMILY COMMITMENTS
   3. FINANCIAL REASONS
   4. NOT INTERESTED/NECESSARY
   5. NO ACCOMMODATION
   6. NO CONVENIENT CENTRE
   7. TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES
   8. DATE CLASHES WITH OTHER PAPERS
   9. OTHER REASONS (DESCRIBE)

362
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. ARE YOU REGISTERED FOR PERSONOLOGY (PSY211-8)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. ARE YOU REGISTERED FOR DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY (PSY212-9)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. HOW MANY OTHER PAPERS ARE YOU REGISTERED FOR THIS YEAR?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. EMPLOYMENT STATUS?</td>
<td>1. FULL-TIME</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. WHAT WERE YOUR MATRIC RESULTS?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. BEFORE THIS YEAR, WHEN WERE YOU LAST ENROLLED AT UNIVERSITY?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. WAS THIS AT UNISA?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. DID YOU EVER FAIL PSYCHOLOGY 1?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. WAS THIS AT UNISA?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. DID YOU EVER FAIL UNISA'S PERSONOLOGY (PSY211-8)?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. DID YOU EVER FAIL UNISA'S DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. IF YES, WHAT WERE THE MAIN REASONS FOR FAILING PSY211-8 OR PSY212-9?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. IS PSYCHOLOGY YOUR MAJOR SUBJECT?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. DO YOU PLAN TO BECOME A PSYCHOLOGIST?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. ARE YOU PART OF AN INFORMAL STUDY GROUP?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. IS THIS INFORMAL STUDY GROUP HELPFUL TO YOUR STUDIES?</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. DO YOU HAVE EASY ACCESS TO A TELEPHONE</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. DO YOU HAVE ELECTRICITY AT THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE CURRENTLY STUDYING</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. DO YOU HAVE RUNNING TAP WATER AT THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE CURRENTLY STAYING</td>
<td>1. YES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I HAVE ACCESS TO EXCELLENT MAIL SERVICES</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I HAVE PROBLEMS OBTAINING PRESCRIBED MATERIALS</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I WILL EASILY GET A JOB WITH MY DEGREE</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I SUFFER FROM POOR HEALTH</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I HAVE A TOO HIGH OCCUPATIONAL WORKLOAD, eg NOT STUDIES, BUT WORKLOAD</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I HAVE PROBLEMS FINANCING MY STUDIES</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. MY COMMUNITY IS SOCIAL OR POLITICALLY UNSTABLE</td>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU DIDN'T RECEIVE YOUR STUDY MATERIALS (OR IF THEY GET LOST)?

43. AT WHAT TIME IN THE YEAR WOULD YOU DO THIS? (EG. JUST BEFORE THE EXAM?)

Thank you for completing and returning the questionnaire. Best wishes for 1999!
You will be registered for the programme (if you so indicate) as soon as we receive this form.
## RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE AND STUDENT-AT-A-DESK-TEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME AND SURNAME</th>
<th>STUDENT NUMBER</th>
<th>DEGREE/DIPLOMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POSTAL ADDRESS</td>
<td>POSTAL CODE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELEPHONE NUMBERS</td>
<td>WORK HOME FAX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-MAIL ADDRESS</td>
<td>OTHER CONTACT TEL.NO.</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>SEX MALE / FEMALE</td>
<td>HOME LANGUAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATRITAL STATUS</td>
<td>NR OF JUVENILE DEPENDANTS</td>
<td>NR OF ADULT &amp; ELDERLY DEPENDANTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ANSWER ONLY ONE OF EITHER BLOCK 1 OR 2 OR 3:**

1. **I SHALL ATTEND THE STUDENT EMPOWERMENT AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME AND COMMIT MYSELF TO THE ATTENDANCE OF THE ENTIRE OR A GREATER PART OF THE PROGRAMME**

   - YES/
   - NO

   > IF YES, INDICATE WHICH VENUE YOU WILL ATTEND BY MEANS OF A CROSS IN THE MATCHING BLOCK:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cape Town</th>
<th>Port Elizabeth</th>
<th>Pretoria</th>
<th>Pietersburg 30</th>
<th>Durban</th>
<th>Midrand campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. **I WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND THE PROGRAMME BUT AM UNABLE TO DO SO**

   - YES/
   - NO

   > IF YES, I AM UNABLE TO ATTEND THE PROGRAMME DUE TO THE FOLLOWING ONE OR MORE REASONS:

   - WORK COMMITMENTS
   - FAMILY COMMITMENTS
   - FINANCIAL REASONS
   - TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES

   OTHER REASONS (DESCRIBE)

3. **I DO NOT WISH TO ATTEND THE PROGRAMME DUE TO THE FOLLOWING REASON(S):**

   NOT INTERESTED
   DO NOT FEEL IT IS NECESSARY FOR ME
   OTHER REASONS (DESCRIBE):

**FOR WHAT OTHER COURSES ARE YOU REGISTERED THIS YEAR (eg PSY211-8, PSY212-9, ECS201-6)?**

**DO YOU SUFFER FROM ANY PHYSICAL DISABILITIES OR HANDICAPS?**

IF YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE THEM

**EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

FULL TIME / PART-TIME / UNEMPLOYED

ARE YOU A FULL-TIME STUDENT?

YES / NO

**MATRIC RESULTS:** (eg ENGLISH, SG)

HG/SG HG/SG HG/SG HG/SG

HG/SG HG/SG HG/SG HG/SG

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT WAS THE QUALITY OF YOUR SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION?

VERY GOOD / GOOD / AVERAGE / POOR / VERY POOR

WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS?

IN WHAT YEAR WERE YOU LAST ENROLLED AT A UNIVERSITY?

19........

WAS THIS AT UNISA?

YES/ NO

**DID YOU EVER FAIL PSYCHOLOGY 1?**

YES / NO

> IF YES, WHAT YEAR(S), AT WHICH UNIVERSITY(IES)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>IF YES, WHAT YEAR(S), AT WHICH UNIVERSITY(IES)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; IF YES, WHAT WERE THE MAIN REASONS FOR FAILING PSYCHOLOGY 1?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DID YOU EVER FAIL A PSYCHOLOGY 2 PAPER?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; IF YES, WHAT WERE THE MAIN REASONS FOR FAILING THE PSYCHOLOGY 2 PAPER?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE YOU WRITTEN THE UNISA EXAM FOR PERSONOLOGY PSY211-8 BEFORE?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; OCT/Jan 19...........&gt; WHAT MARK DID YOU RECEIVE FOR YOUR LAST EXAM?</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVE YOU WRITTEN THE UNISA EXAM FOR DEVELOPMENTAL PSY212-9 BEFORE?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; OCT/Jan 19...........&gt; WHAT MARK DID YOU RECEIVE FOR YOUR LAST EXAM?</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN VIEW OF YOUR PAST ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE WHAT MARK DO YOU EXPECT TO ACHIEVE IN THE PERSONOLOGY EXAM THIS YEAR?</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN VIEW OF YOUR PAST ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE WHAT MARK DO YOU EXPECT TO ACHIEVE IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY EXAM THIS YEAR?</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS PSYCHOLOGY YOUR MAJOR SUBJECT?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE WITH PSYCHOLOGY HONOURS AFTER OBTAINING YOUR DEGREE?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE EASY ACCESS TO A TELEPHONE</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE ACCESS TO MAIL SERVICES THAT ARE:</td>
<td></td>
<td>HIGHLY RELIABLE / RELIABLE / UNRELIABLE / HIGHLY UNRELIABLE / NO MAIL SERVICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE ELECTRICITY AT THE PLACE WHERE I AM CURRENTLY STAYING</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE RUNNING TAP WATER AT THE PLACE WHERE I AM CURRENTLY STAYING</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE PROBLEMS OBTAINING PRESCRIBED MATERIALS</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE A LOT / AGREE SOMEWHAT / DISAGREE / DISAGREE A LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I SUFFER FROM POOR HEALTH</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE A LOT / AGREE SOMEWHAT / DISAGREE / DISAGREE A LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I SUFFER FROM EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE A LOT / AGREE SOMEWHAT / DISAGREE / DISAGREE A LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE A TOO HIGH OCCUPATIONAL WORKLOAD</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE A LOT / AGREE SOMEWHAT / DISAGREE / DISAGREE A LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I HAVE PROBLEMS FINANCING MY STUDIES</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE A LOT / AGREE SOMEWHAT / DISAGREE / DISAGREE A LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY COMMUNITY IS SOCIALLY OR POLITICALLY UNSTABLE</td>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE A LOT / AGREE SOMEWHAT / DISAGREE / DISAGREE A LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOES ANYONE HELP YOU WITH YOUR STUDIES?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>IF YES, WHAT IS HIS/HER HIGHEST QUALIFICATION?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

READ THE STATEMENT BELOW AND RECORD YOUR THOUGHTS IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.

A STUDENT IS SITTING AT A DESK, LOOKING AT THE PILE OF BOOKS AND PAPERS ON THE TABLE. WHAT, DO YOU IMAGINE THIS STUDENT IS THINKING AND FEELING?

-------------------------------

ARE THERE ANY OTHER FACTORS AT HOME OR AT WORK WHICH MAY HAVE A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON YOUR STUDIES THIS YEAR?
(Describe)  

365
APPENDIX C

LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE
COMPILED BY DR HANNA LEVENSON AND ADAPTED BY DR DM VAN EDE

Each statement is followed by five choices. Draw a circle around the number corresponding to your choice. Mark only one number for each statement. You could, of course, choose any one of the answers. However, you should choose only one answer. If you agree strongly with the statement you should circle number 5. If you disagree strongly you should circle number 1. The numbers 2 and 4 answers indicate less strong agreement, or disagreement respectively. The number 3 answer gives you a middle choice, but do not choose number 3 unless you really cannot decide on any of the other responses.

Please ignore the column numbers. They are used for coding purposes.

STUDENT NUMBER/RESPONDENT NUMBER: (Please leave blank if you are not a Psychology student.)

Please react to the following statements by drawing a circle around the number of your answer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Whether or not I become a leader depends mostly on my ability.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel that what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Whether or not I am involved in a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Often there is no chance of protecting myself from bad luck.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>When I get what I want, it is usually because I am lucky.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Although my abilities might be good, I will not be given leadership responsibility unless I meet the approval of those in positions of power.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>How many friends I have depends on how nice a person I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>My life is mainly controlled by powerful others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Whether or not I am involved in a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>It is not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Getting what I want requires pleasing those people above me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Whether or not I become a leader depends on whether I am lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>If important people were to decide they did not like me, I probably would not have many friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I am usually able to protect my personal interests.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Whether or not I am involved in a car accident depends mostly on the other driver.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>When I get what I want, it is usually because I have worked hard for it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>In order to make my plans work, I make sure that they fit in with the desires of people who have power over me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>My life is determined by my own actions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>It is chiefly a matter of fate whether I have a few friends or many friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>If people above me do not like me, I will not receive any promotion.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>If I am sure that I am right, the opinions of powerful others do not influence me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>My own achievements determine my success.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Fate does not play an important role in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>If I work hard I will make a success of my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I am influenced by what powerful others think of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>To a great extent I am in control of my own life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>My own effort plays a more important role in my successes than circumstances.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

END OF LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE
# SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

Each statement is followed by five choices. Draw a circle around the number corresponding to your choice. Mark only one number for each statement. You could, of course, choose any one of the answers. However, you should choose only one answer. If you feel that the statement strongly describes you, you should circle number 5 (strongly like me). If the statement is strongly unlike you, you should circle number 1 (strongly unlike me). The numbers 2 and 4 answers indicate to a lesser extent that you feel the statement is unlike or like you. The number 3 answer gives you a middle choice, but do not choose number 3 unless you really cannot decide on any of the other responses.

Please ignore the column numbers. They are used for coding purposes.

**STUDENT NUMBER/RESPONDENT NUMBER:** (Please leave blank if you are not a Psychology student.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Col 1-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please react to the following statements by drawing a circle around the number of your answer.
## GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY SUBSCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Unlike Me</th>
<th>Unlike Me</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Like Me</th>
<th>Strongly Like Me</th>
<th>Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One of my problems is that I cannot get down to work when I should.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I give up on things before completing them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I avoid facing difficulties.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Failure just makes me try harder.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I feel insecure about my ability to do things.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I am a self-reliant person - meaning that I am independent and can stand on my own two feet.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I give up easily.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>It is difficult for me to make new friends.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>If I see someone I would like to meet, I go to that person instead of waiting for him or her to come to me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>If I meet someone interesting who is very hard to make friends with, I'll soon stop trying to make friends with that person.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>When I'm trying to become friends with someone who seems uninterested at first, I don't give up very easily.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I do not handle myself well in social gatherings.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I have acquired my friends through my personal abilities at making friends.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GRADE SELF EFFICACY SCALE

What examination marks do you expect to receive at the end of the year? Please indicate on a nine point scale how confident you are of receiving the marks as indicated: If you are absolutely sure you will receive the mark, circle 9; if you are very sure you will receive the mark, circle 8; if you are fairly sure you will receive the mark, circle 7; if you think you could possibly receive the mark, circle 6; if you are undecided, circle 5; if you will possibly not receive the mark, circle 4; if you are fairly sure that you will not receive the mark, circle 3; if you are very sure you will receive the mark, circle 2; if you are absolutely sure you will not receive the mark, circle 1.

PLEASE CIRCLE A NUMBER IN EACH OF THE FOUR ROWS.

EXAMPLE:
- If you are absolutely sure you will not receive 75% or more, circle 1 in the first row.
- If you are fairly sure you will not receive 70% or more, circle 3 in the second row.
- If you are very sure you will receive 60% or more, circle 8 in the third row.
- If you are absolutely sure you will receive 50% or more, circle 9 in the fourth row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolutely sure I will not</th>
<th>Very sure I will not</th>
<th>Fairly sure I will not</th>
<th>I will possibly not</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>I could possibly</th>
<th>Fairly sure I will</th>
<th>Very sure I will</th>
<th>Absolutely sure I will</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My expectations for Personology (PSY211-8) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolutely sure I will not</th>
<th>Very sure I will not</th>
<th>Fairly sure I will not</th>
<th>Will possibly not</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>I could possibly</th>
<th>Fairly sure I will not</th>
<th>Very sure I will not</th>
<th>Absolutely sure I will not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My expectations for Developmental Psychology (PSY212-9) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolutely sure I will not</th>
<th>Very sure I will not</th>
<th>Fairly sure I will not</th>
<th>Will possibly not</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>I could possibly</th>
<th>Fairly sure I will not</th>
<th>Very sure I will not</th>
<th>Absolutely sure I will not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

END OF GRADE SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

372
PURPOSE IN LIFE TEST

Carefully consider each statement. Cross out the number which reflects your feelings the most accurately. The numbers vary from one extreme feeling to the other. Since "3" (neutral) implies not feeling one way or the other, this response must be avoided as far as possible.

EXAMPLE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the moment I am feeling:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally despondent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The closer you place the cross to a statement, the more closely the statement represents your own feelings.

For example:

1. At the moment I am feeling:
   Totally despondent | 2 3 4 5 |
   OR

2. At the moment I am feeling:
   Totally despondent | 1 2 3 4 |

In example 1. you are feeling EXTREMELY despondent and in example 2. you are feeling EXTREMELY optimistic.

If you are feeling REASONABLY despondent, you will place the cross as follows:

1. At the moment I am feeling:
   Totally despondent | 1 3 4 5 |

If you are feeling REASONABLY optimistic you will place the cross as follows:

2. At the moment I am feeling:
   Totally despondent | 1 2 3 5 |

If you feel that you are neither feeling despondent nor optimistic but pretty neutral at the moment, that you place a cross in the middle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the moment I am feeling:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally despondent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But remember, try and avoid the above response as far as possible.

Please ignore the column numbers. They are used for coding purposes.

STUDENT NUMBER/RESPONDENT NUMBER: (Please leave blank if you are not a Psychology student.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col 1-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Card 05 9-10

373
NOW GO AHEAD AND MARK YOUR RESPONSE TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>I am usually:</em></td>
<td>completely bored</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Every day is:</em></td>
<td>exactly the same</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>If I could choose, I would:</em></td>
<td>prefer never to have been born</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>My life is:</em></td>
<td>empty, filled only with despair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>As I view the world in relation to my life, the world:</em></td>
<td>completely confuses me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><em>Concerning man's freedom to make his own choices, I believe man is:</em></td>
<td>completely bound by limitations of heredity and environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><em>I regard my ability to find a meaning, a purpose, or mission in life as:</em></td>
<td>practically none</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><em>My life is:</em></td>
<td>out of my hands and controlled by external factors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><em>Facing my daily tasks is:</em></td>
<td>a painful and boring experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

374
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS REGARDING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

A. Personal- and Interpersonal skills
24. What personal and interpersonal skills do you feel that you have that equip you for life?

25. Which personal and interpersonal skills do you feel would better equip you in:
   a) your present employment?
   b) the employment you seek?
   c) your family?
   d) your community?

B. Personal Influence
26. Do you feel you are in control of your own life? YES NO
   a) If YES, why and how? (Give examples in your answer.)
   b) If NO, why not? (Give examples in your answer.)

27. Do you feel you are able to influence the lives of others? YES NO
   a) If YES, why and how? (Give examples in your answer.)
   b) If NO, why not? (Give examples in your answer.)

28. Do you feel you are able to make a positive contribution in your community? YES NO
   a) If YES, why and how? (Give examples in your answer.)
   b) If NO, why not? (Give examples in your answer.)

C. Self-efficacy in different contexts
29. What do you believe are your best/strongest abilities and personality characteristics?

30. Which of your abilities and personality characteristics do you think you could improve on?

375
# SKILLS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

How would you rate yourself on the following abilities? (Mark with "✓" in the appropriate box).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study skills</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To get started with my work without looking for excuses not to start.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand what I am reading.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To distinguish between more important and less important facts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To concentrate on what I am reading so that I do not have to start all over again.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make notes in my own words.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To test myself, by asking myself questions, to find out whether or not I know the work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand how to answer different kinds of questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To present my ideas clearly and in a logical sequence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To manage my study time effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To break up my work into manageable sections when I prepare for the exam.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work in an organised way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the exam to remember what I have studied.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deal with exam anxiety effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To do what is required of me to the best of my ability.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be realistic about what I can or cannot do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work hard to achieve my goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To persevere and not give up when I come across difficulties.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To face problems and deal with them effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To believe in myself even if others are critical of me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Personal skills (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal skills</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be able to take risks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make a decision and to carry it through.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To accept my shortcomings and to correct my mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take initiative and do things on my own, without being asked.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Interpersonal skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal skills</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To make a positive impression on people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To speak in a way that will make others listen to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To listen to what others have to say.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To allow people to have ideas that are different from my own.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be cooperative and work together well with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ask questions and share ideas or problems with other students/lecturers/tutors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take a leadership role when the situation requires it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Social responsibility skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social responsibility skills</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be sensitive to the wishes and needs of others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to apply what I have learnt in my studies, to my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deal and mix with people who are different to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To care about those in need, and to help them if I can.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take care of my family in a responsible way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What other skills would you like to develop?
APPENDIX F

MAN PARACHUTING FROM AIRCRAFT

APPENDIX G

EXAMPLES OF PARAGRAPHS REGARDING WHAT THE SSEEP MEANT TO STUDENTS

Describe how you experienced this week.

Great! Time saving! Insight!

Thank you!

Every person in this county needs to attend something as motivational as this.

I now feel part of a new community.

I feel that maybe my dreams are not so impossible to achieve and that the stressors I had before are now greatly relieved.

Thank you for your personal input in my life. I appreciate it greatly.
Describe how you experienced this week.

This week has allowed me to grow and believe more in myself than I was before. Meeting new people from different walks of life made me believe that everybody is different and yet we might be so familiar. It really boosted my interest in psychology even more and I hope it stays that way. When I arrived I was so confused on how psychology operates in the real world and how it can help me, but after this week, I must say I understand more than what I knew when I came here. The people I met were wonderful and I hope to stay in contact with a few of them, just in case I need to discuss psychology. I know I can go to the lecturers as well.
Describe how you experienced this week.

The past week has turned out being so much more than I expected. Classes (not Psychology though) I have attended in the past always focussed on only the textbook and guides, practically just reading word for word what I could have read myself. This course however actually gave so much more than just the facts and figures. I feel that I can learn so much from people who are willing to share their own experiences, both fellow students and lecturers. Not only did we receive the background information, but it was also presented in such a way that I, (we) could learn more from it.

I have made some wonderful friends, acquired wonderful knowledge and met perhaps for the first time people who are truly passionate about what they do.

Thank you very much for a most enjoyable and satisfying experience!
Self empowerment is giving a person control over her own circumstances i.e. giving a student the confidence to know that he/she has the ability to pass an exam if he/she studies.

Yes, I was certainly enriched by your programme. Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity.

I came expecting to get a breakdown of the course and I did; however I got a whole lot more as well! I met students doing the same work as me and with whom I will keep in contact and I also met the dynamic lecturers behind the course. Lastly I also discussed things about myself, so I have also enriched my own life.

Thank you very much!

(C)
Describe how you experienced this week.

As a retired lecturer, I thoroughly enjoyed the excellent interaction and the well-planned presentations of the lecturers. The communication with the very large group was excellent and students were encouraged to express their real viewpoints and concerns. The balance between guidance and prescription was well guarded. Students, even those with obvious lack of confidence, were treated sympathetically.

It was a most rewarding experience. I found the interaction with the (much younger) fellow students from various cultural backgrounds very enlightening. Congratulations with the programme - it was an enriching experience!
Describe how you experienced this week.

I enjoyed the contact with the lecturers. Although obviously very capable and intelligent, they communicated and interacted with us on an equitable basis. They are people just like us, but they have motivated me to achieve, showing us by their example, what hard work can do for one.

I enjoyed meeting fellow students and exchanging ideas on fears, future plans even on simple matters like successfully integrating a study programme into one's home life. It was helpful to be able to identify with others in my position.

I was reassured that the course covered work applicable not only to the area in psychology, but to life in general. The work was given a general overview, which gave one a sense of the destination one will reach. Not having studied for years, the guidelines on study techniques and exam format was very helpful.
APPENDIX H

PERSONAL DATA FORM AND CONSENT FORM

PERSONAL DATA

STUDENT NUMBER: 

NAME: .................................................................

ADDRESS: ................................................................................

..........................................................................................

..........................................................................................

..........................................................................................

POSTAL CODE: .................................................................

TELEPHONE NUMBER: ............................................................

AGE: ........... SEX: MALE/FEMALE (tick the correct answer)

MOTHER TONGUE: ..............................................................

CENTRE WHERE PROGRAMME ATTENDED: ....................... 

MARK OBTAINED FOR PERSONOLOGY: ...........% 

MARK OBTAINED FOR DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY: ........% 

MARRIED/SINGLE/DIVORCED/SEPARATED/ WIDOWED/LIVING TOGETHER (tick the correct answer)

NUMBER OF JUVENILE DEPENDENTS THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR: 

NUMBER OF ADULT AND ELDERLY DEPENDENTS THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR: 

OCCUPATION: ........................................................................ 

FULL TIME OR PART-TIME? ..............................................................

ARE YOU A FULL-TIME STUDENT: YES/NO (tick the correct answer)

HAVE YOU EVER FAILED PERSONOLOGY (YES/NO) OR DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY (YES/NO)?

WHAT WERE THE REASONS FOR FAILING? .................................................................

..........................................................................................

..........................................................................................

..........................................................................................

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: .................................................................

385
APPENDIX I

EXERCISE - ROGERS' THEORY

1. Did you feel your parents/significant others accepted you unconditionally? (Mark with an X)
   
   YES [ ] NO [ ]

   If YES, how? ..................................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................................................

2. Did your parents/significant others set conditions for your acceptance by them? (Mark with an X)
   
   YES [ ] NO [ ]

   If YES what were these conditions?
   a) ...................................................................................................................................................
   b) ...................................................................................................................................................
   c) ...................................................................................................................................................

3. Did your parents/significant others provide guidelines which helped you choose a career? (Mark with an X)
   
   YES [ ] NO [ ]

   Explain ...........................................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................................................

4. Did your parents/significant others influence your choice of a marriage partner/boyfriend/girlfriend? (Mark with an X)
   
   YES [ ] NO [ ]

   Explain ...........................................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................................................

5. How did you see yourself 10 years ago (+/- 1988)?
6. How do you see yourself now (1998)?

7. How would you like to see yourself?

8. How do others see you?

9. How would others want you to be?

10. Which culture do you belong to?  

   Would the characteristics of the fully functioning person described by Rogers, apply in your  
   culture?

   Which characteristics would you add and which ones would you take away?

   Give reasons for your answer.
APPENDIX J

MEMORIES STORED IN COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

Student 1

Describe how you experienced this week.

- This was an 'eye-opening week' because I actually discovered that Psychology is not just an additional course to get a degree but more than learning a person, how to change and change other people's lives.

- I also say this week was a therapy to me. It soothed all the pain I have experienced when at work. I also gained from fellow group members and others who are doing the same job, how to tackle my problem.

- I am a grown-up at heart and in mind (I have developed cognitively).

- Very impressed by the three lectures who have the subject matter in their blood. Through them I have changed my view of Psychology as I indicated in Para one. Very Professional; Realistic and Down-to-Earth.

- You were like streams that will quench many people's thirst when drinking from you.
Student 2

Describe how you experienced this week.

It was fun full of excitement and I gained new knowledge. All the guys we met were so nice and open to discussions. Lectures you are full of knowledge and they shared them with us. I felt close to other students and we opened up, talked about our problems. Classes and discussions opened up our knowledge.

Student 3

Describe how you experienced this week.

It was an educational, eye opening week. It made me aware of the importance of listening to other people's ideas, not pretend as if you know it all. I also think that I came to realise how impossible it is to leave in a world of your own, how good it is to socialise interactively with different kind of people in terms of race, sex and academic achievements. It made me gain self confidence.
Student 4

It was very useful to get a good overview of both the courses. Personally I have become a more enriched person because through the process of understanding the different theories and human development, one starts asking questions about yourself and the way you deal with, in my case, my children. It also made me more aware of community involvement.

Student 5

- The workshop was a new experience for me, unlike the past discussion classes we had.
- More workshops of this nature will be essential and beneficial to all of us.
- I have found the workshop extremely interesting, valuable and it has helped me to understand the theories better.
- Student and lecturer participation is a new experience. Well done!

- Students from far and wide (Manzini, Eastern Cape) were present – this is a revolution for students who live in Durban. Meeting others in the group has helped me tremendously - exchanging ideas, telephone numbers, etc. I am now not alone but one with UNISA.
Student 6

I had a wonderful time and lots of questions have been answered for me. At first I was confused about the theories but now I can explain more about these theories accordingly.

I am also relieved about the Developmental Psychology, the lectures has made a light job for us, so I am anticipating a good pass at the end of the year.

One more thing is that I am madly in love with psychology.

I also got to know other people's character not only blacks but also whites, Indians etc. We were really like a family belonging to UNISA.

Student 7

This was an extremely fulfilling week. I was amazed at the competency of our lecturers, and enjoyed meeting and getting to know them. The course was more than just an exam-cramming course and made me realize how fascinating and exciting psychology can be.

Thank you for your time and effort - you were most helpful.

[Signatures]
APPENDIX K

RETRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH HELEN

Story 1
1[V: What things did you learn,
2 what made some sort of an impact,
3 what was the meaning of the course for you? (A)
4H: The programme (O)
5 helped me to learn about my work, specially Personology. (CA)
6 It gave me a lot of knowledge. (E)
7V: So what you are saying is that it helped you a lot with the actual course
8 content?(R)
9H: Yes.]
10V: Yes, and what else, was there anything else about the programme, how it was
11 organised?
12H: It was very fine.

Story 2
12[V: Was there anything else about the programme,
13 because look there were lots of different sessions? (A)
14H: It also helped me to [long pause] participate, to yes....
15V: So do you think the participation was an important thing?
16H: Yes.
17V: In what way?(CA)
18H: Because when you are just sitting down and listening sometimes you get nothing,
19 but when you participate you know what is it about.
20V: So you found the participation,
21 like the working in the groups and
22 writing your group objectives and things like that,
23 you found that helpful?
24H: Yes. (R)
25(V: In what other way did you find it helpful?
26H: [Long Pause] That participation?
27V: [Pause] Yes, the participation, or just anything else.)
28H: Umm. It was very important because now I know a lot of...., a lot about my
29 work and it helped me. (E)]
30V: And were there any sessions that were perhaps particularly meaningful to you
31 that you felt, wow,
32 now I have really learnt a lot,
33 or wow, this is interesting,
34 or this means a lot to me?
35H: What?
36V: Of the sessions,
37 because look we first of all had the objectives
38 then it was on how to learn,
39 then the next day was the personality theories,
40 the next day was the Developmental Psychology
41 and the last day was the community session and the exam session.
Were there any of those sessions that you found were very important or very meaningful to you?

H: All the sessions was very important to me, was very helpful to me.

Story 3

V: Yes, now if you think that in terms of your own life that you have learnt that learning through participation is a good way to learn, hey?

H: Yes right, do you think that this programme, the things that you learnt about your work, could you use it in your life, in your family life, in your home life, your relationship with your friends?

V: Has it in any way been meaningful there? (A)

H: Yes.

V: In what way?

H: [laughs] Because in, let me say my family, I used that thing I learnt in that programme to tell them what we worked the things out as psychologist [in the community session]. (CA)

V: OK and with your friends?

H: These friends that you came here the other day with, are they just,

Story 4

V: [Where did you meet them?]

H: Your friends, the ones you came with the other day, to my office.

V: Where did you meet them? The other students? (A)

H: At the empowerment programme. (O)

V: Oh, so you met them there.

H: And now do you study together, or...?

V: Yes, we study together.

V: In the library?

H: Ja. So perhaps then we could say that another thing that the programme did was to help you to meet other people. (CA)

V: Would that also be another thing? Yes.

H: Or did you know them before you went to the programme?

V: No.

H: Oh, so you only met them afterwards.

H: I was just seeing them, but not talking to them.)

V: So do you feel in a way then that the programme perhaps gave you some more confidence to speak to people and to make friends?

H: Yes.(R)]

V: Were you just studying here all on your own?

H: Yes.
And has it made a difference, to know other students?
Yes, it makes a big difference.
What difference does it make?
Because now last year
I was studying alone in Psychology.
This year it has helped me to get lots of friends,
each doing that Psychology.
Right, so we can say that perhaps a very good aspect of the programme
was that it put you in contact with other students? [Yes]
and that you don't feel now so lonely as a student? [Yes]
And do you discuss the work together, [Yes]
and that is when you phoned me that time
and said can we come to your office?
You had obviously a problem in the work
and you all decided to come here.
So you discuss things
and then when you have got a problem
then you can come and seek some help?
Is that what you do? [Yes]
So do you do a lot of discussing together?
Do you work a lot together?
Yes.
And for the Developmental Psychology as well?
We didn't yet, do Development together.
We are still doing Personology.
OK, so it is mainly because you are working with the Personology now
that you are talking a lot about it
and asking each other questions
and things like that.
Is that what you do?
Yes.
Yes. Now Helen do you stay at home
or are you renting a room or?
I stay at home.
You stay at home
and where is that?
At Mmpumulanga province. Witbank.
And you come in every day from Witbank? [say it the same as her, Vitbank]
No.
No. How often do you come in?
If I did come this week,
next week I won't come.
OK and then do you come every day, or?
Yes.
You come every day,
but just for one week
and then you stay at home the next week?
Yes.
Yes, OK and you find it helpful to come here?
And then what do you do the other weeks, at home?
I also study, but it is not like when I am here.
OK, so you find it much better to be coming here?
Yes.
And then you meet your friends
and you all sit together
and you study.
Is that what you do?
Yes. [Laughs]
Ja, OK and then do you travel home every night to Witbank?
Yes.
Goodness me.
And then do you do any work at home at all?
I mean do you have a job
or a part-time job?
No, no.
Yes. And who is supporting you here at university,
who supports you financially?
Who gives you the money to come to university?
Umm. My mother.
Right, and what do you want to do when you have got your degree?
I want to work. [Laughs]
In what sort of work?
In social work.
Oh, so you are doing social work as well?
Yes.
OK and your other friends that came here,
are they also doing social work?
Two, three of them.
Two of them,
I don’t know what they are doing.
So do you have to go a lot into the community
and do workshops or....?
No I haven't started that yet. [Laughs]
Right, and in terms of community work,
is there any way that you are involved?
I think you said that you are not yet involved in anything?
After that community session,
do you think that there is a need?
do you think that there is an area where you could become involved?
I don't know, but I will try. [Laughs nervously]
No, no, there is nothing that you have to do, you know.
And is there anything else,
Story 5
I mean just even in us talking about the programme
and about the things, and so on?
Has there been anything helpful in our conversation?
When?
Now, the conversation we are having.
Is there anything helpful that has come out? (A)
Yes, it is very helpful. (H)
What has been helpful?
Because sometimes we shy to talk to other,
let me say,
to the White person.
We are very shy.
Why do you think you are very shy?
[Laughs nervously] I don't know.
I just shy.
So you find it quite difficult to talk to a White person?
Yes. [Laughs]
And did you find it difficult in the programme,
because there were quite a lot of White people?
No, we were in a group,
it was not very difficult.
Did you ever come forward and present anything?
No. [Laughs]
OK, so this is quite difficult for you, even now.
And do you think it is helping you in any way? (CA)
Yes, it is helping me.
In what way?
How is it helping you? (R)
Because next time I will be open. (E)
Story I

[V: Samuel, what [has] this programme has meant to you, has it had any personal significance, has it made any impact on your life in any way.

S: Okay

[V: So that is really what I would like to know, what parts of the programme were meaningful to you? (A)

S: In general the whole experience was very good (E) especially because when you are a part-time student you don’t meet with any person, like myself. (CA)

So meeting other students somehow motivates one and interacting with other students you come to understand your situation exactly as a student and how other students are going on with their studies, then somehow you get that self-awareness from the experience of other students (R)

Yes, and it helps a person on how to choose the right personality theories. (CA)

Somehow you get an idea which theory is good for you and which might be troublesome for you (R), and on how to prepare for the examinations (CA), it really helped me a lot (R).

But on the other hand one might have the feeling that even though it helped one how to choose those personality theories, but if maybe it was held after we have returned all the assignments and we are preparing for the final examination (CA)

I think it was going to be very helpful (E) because from that programme, you are motivated and you are taught exactly how to approach the examination so it might be helpful (R).

[V: So you also feel maybe it would be helpful to present it a bit later on as well to also help motivate you through the exams, is that what you say?

S: Yes. That is what I am saying).

V: And so I just to sort of clarify,

you found that mixing with other students and hearing what they had to say made quite a big difference in terms of your understanding and so on? (A)

S: Ja, but not exactly on that subject content.

But it is eye opening that you somehow get a knowledge and understanding of how to approach your studies and how serious you have to be. (E)

You find out there are people who really take their studies very seriously, does a lot
and so when you mix all these things (CA)
(then you can make a decision that ..).
I mean you can decide properly on how to approach them (R).
V: And Samuel have you got contact with any of the people
you met after the programme? (A)
S: No, most of them were ladies.
The group I was in there was one guy,
but he did not attend all those sessions,
so I did not make any contact,
but with the ladies
sometimes when you are married
it become very difficult to have such contact, (CA)
so I did not establish any contact with any of them (R).
V: OK so you are still sort of in a way studying on your own then?
S: Ja, that is exactly what it is.

Story 2
V: [And then I just wanted to know, was there anything else about the programme
or the things you did, like some of the exercises and that,
did any of them make any personal impact on your life,
make you really think about something,
or think I want to be different, or something like that? (A)
S: Ja, on the last day of the session (O)
we had some discussions
and I was in the group which was discussing marital problems (O).
Even though it did not make much impact on my life
but I liked it.
Sometimes you might be fascinated by other things
and take major decisions.
So to me when we were discussing about marital problems
I realised that it is something exciting to sort of counsel.(CA)
I found that counselling might be a good job (R)
and in fact, I think I can enjoy it. (E)
V: So that sort of awakened in you the idea of counselling?
That's good.
I see you are working as you said on repairing electrical appliances.)
And what made you decide to study further? (A)
S: I am a person who likes to study,
who likes to read.
I was once a student here at Unisa when I left school
but for some reasons I failed twice,
then I could not register again.
Thereafter I was confused
so I wasted much time not doing anything.
Somehow I got involved in political activities in the townships,
so later on I got the courage of coming back again
and I had problem with them taking me back
but I am thankful that finally they understood me
and they took me back. (CA)
V: And why are you doing a BA degree?
I've got BA (SS).

Oh, Social Science.

So in other words you see yourself perhaps as someone helping other people.

I don't really help people but that is what I like to do if I get that opportunity, I will use it.)

And Samuel you said you became involved politically in your area. Has that influenced your decision to come and study again, in any way?

[Definite] No. (A) I am a person who likes to study, who likes to read, so politics did not motivate me that I should register again, but) at that time I was not doing anything, so the only thing that was meaningful to me was politics, even though before I was somehow politically involved, but after the 90's, I mean from 89, 90

I was not that active in politics, so after I have dropped out [of university] then the only thing that was open to me was politics.

(You are the first I have spoken to have been involved. In what way were you involved? I am just trying to see what the link up maybe is with your studying psychology. I don't know whether there is any link.)

At that period it was not my first time involvement in politics. From my childhood,

I was interested in politics. In fact, if we can remember well in the 80's there was much injustice, ill treated by the then government, so to me it was painful to see all those things and at that period there were no political activities in the townships or around the country, (but you could find that somewhere there is a bombing, like Sasolburg bombing, like Church Street bombing, they were there,) but in general there were no activities which could involve the masses, only a few people.

So I had that desire that I can do something and I got to understand that there is the ANC outside, but knowing that I am the only son, child, at home then I shelved many things that I should not disappoint my family. (So it went that way.)

We were involved until late in the 80's whereby there were riots everywhere.

It went on until the 90's
when political organisations were unbanned,
but after those unbannings
I was no longer involved that way
(and it went on that way until,)
it kept me about a year or two there after I have dropped here [at Unisa] (O)
and I just got into politics again (CA).
(It went that way,)
but since there was no severe injustice
politics were not very meaningful to me.
I was just there,
but emotionally I was not there. (E)
(So can I ask you,
just to understand for myself,
that you became involved
because in a way you have what we could call a social interest
in that) you saw these injustices
and you felt that something needed to [be done],
(at least a voice that needed to be said.
You see, what I am just trying to say,)
that is interesting for me now that you are doing BA (SS),
because I mean psychology is also really to help people,
differently to what you do it politically. (A)
(Do you see it like that?
Do you see that there could be a link,
or am I just seeing it?)
Ja, being a psychologist or a social worker
you are going to be involved in the community.
(Well, being a political activist,
it's the same, isn't it?
In a way they are.)
In fact both of them are serving the community,
that is how I see it. (CA)
Would you agree with me then on that?
Ja, of course.
You don't have to agree.
Ja, but I see similarities. (E)
Right, so that is interesting for you,)
so perhaps that is why when you did that session on that last day
with the marital problems,
that you saw that this is actually something that you could enjoy doing,
counselling and helping people in that area?
Of course. (R)]

[The other thing, Samuel, that I wanted to ask you,
do you think anything that you learnt in the programme,
you know like some of the sessions in the Personology
or the Cognitive, the first day,
or the Developmental Psychology,
do you think any of those things that you bring them into your home,
did any of the things you learnt make any difference in your home, in how you relate to your wife, or the family, or your children if you have got any? (A)

S: Ja. I am working in the workshop and the atmosphere there is not good. People shout, they swear, all those things. So here it was different. People were treating one another differently and politely. That atmosphere was very good. (CA)

In fact I was contrasting it with my workplace, (E) but that is where I spend most of my time so I was impressed with the atmosphere which was prevailing there and I told myself, that I should be being a right way, and I should become more like them [the people at the programme] and understand other people and tolerate whatever I can. (CA)

And have you been able to do that? With difficulty I suppose.) After that programme (O) because I was really motivated then I exercised, somehow I was a little bit changed, but as you are in the environment daily somehow it is going to change you again, but with the knowledge that one has you always try to do your best. (R)]

Yes. And in terms of your wife, or have you got children, Samuel? No we don’t have children. And with your wife, do you think anything changed in your relationship, or were you able to bring anything that you learnt into that relationship? [Long pause] I always had an idea that I should treat my wife politely, I should not be rude. I don’t know whether this is the result of those programmes, or not, but this is what I had before. So perhaps it confirmed to you that that was the right way, hey?

Story 4

And Samuel, our conversation (what we are talking about now, this conversation) how helpful has that been to you (A) (because we have been perhaps comparing things or ....)

For merely attending an interview) it is a good experience, especially by a lecturer, or psychologist (E) (Sometimes one might not exactly know what a psychologist is, but being interviewed by a psychologist is a good experience.

What has been good about it? Maybe I cannot exactly point something,)
But just to get to a psychologist
you get an idea of what kind of people they are, (R)
(or not only psychologist,
but I mean lecturers.)
Sometimes like we, like people from the townships,
our education was not that proper,
our teachers were very rude,
they were very rude and not caring,
so sometimes you think that your lecturers are the same
as your high school teachers,
but when you meet them (CA)
you can see that they are more different from our high school teachers. (R)
(I don't know the situation now in the schools in the towns.
But that was from your experience.
Ja, they were very rude. So ...)
So this has been a good experience, this interview?)
Ja, to me it is a good experience. (E)
(Samuel is there anything else you would like to say about the programme?
Everything you are saying is exceedingly helpful to me.
We were taught about Developmental Psychology and Personality Theories
but we were taught when we had not read anything
it was early in the year
so when you are taught something and you have not read anything about it,
it is difficult for you sometimes to follow the whole thing.
Everything is new to you.
That's quite tough, hey?
Maybe if it was held after we have gone through some of those personality
theories and Developmental Psychology.
So perhaps you are saying that maybe certain parts of the programme
could be presented at different times,
like the cognitive session, how to study, that might be good in the beginning,
but perhaps the theories
could perhaps be done after the assignments have been finished,
perhaps now July?
Because they were helpful in deciding which theories one can take,
so they [the programme] are still relevant
but some of the parts
like being exactly taught how,
they were relevant at the right time,
but somewhere one could not understand other things
because he has not read,
but you get the idea of how this personality theory is about
so you can decide from all that you have been taught.
They were relevant.
Perhaps it would be nice to have something now as well?
Of course. ) (Links to the first story)

And Samuel, just to ask you about your wife, what does she do? (A)
Last year she was a student at Vista (O)
and because of some problems I could not finance her
I paid some of the money
but because of some rulings, I withheld that financing.
In fact we had some problems. (CA)
But like now she is not staying with me,
she is staying with... my sister-in-law, not exactly the parents. (O)
So we have problems.
Now she is staying at home.
She is working in a tuckshop. (R)
So you are staying on your own at the moment?
Where do you stay on your own? (A)
At Klipgat. (O)
Completely on your own, or with your parents?)
No, with my parents.
We were staying together at my home.
We got custom if there is only one child in the home, especially a boy,
he does not have to go out and have his own home, (CA)
but that is what I want,
I don't want to stay with my parents.
I want to be on my own. (E)
When the right time comes
I will have to move out. (R)
So we were staying together
and later on she complained about many things until she left. (CA)
I could not do anything about it.
In fact she did not talk to me,
she took decisions on her own
and she moved out.
That's hard on you.
So you have had quite a tough life in a way, just listening to you?
And it happened when I just about to write exams, she went. (O)
Well, that is very tough. (R)
So you have had quite an interesting life in a way, but it has also been tough?
(It is not interesting, but it was tough.
I just meant interesting perhaps from the point of view being involved politically,
it must have in some ways been quite interesting.
I don't mean interesting in the broadest sense.
But that must have given you some kind of motivation
or some sense of doing something, you know, trying to help, of being useful?
[Pause] I don't know whether I got the motivation from those experiences,
but I know that usually when there are problems many times
I can't just sit back,
I will like to do something.
That is a strength in you that you must hold onto like a precious gift
because I think you saw there was something wrong
and you tried to do what you could do
because becoming politically involved was really what you could do in those
times and I think again now
you see you yourself have experienced what it is like to have marital problems
and even that gives you an understanding of people in the same situation.
Of course.
And I think again you are trying to improve yourself by studying
in order to perhaps make the life of other people better
and that is pretty good, that is a very good motive,
that is a very good strength in you that you want to become involved.
I think that is something you can really hold onto
because its really only by becoming involved that one really develops as a person.
Okay.
But thank you Samuel.
APPENDIX M

RETRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH MARY-JANE

Story 1

1[V: What did this programme mean to you personally?
2 (were there any things that particularly stuck out for you?) (A)
3 What was different?
4 What made it meaningful to you?) (A)
5M: The programme really changed the way I felt about Psychology, (E)
6 especially this paper,
7 because at times I was having so many theories,
8 I didn’t understand anything concerning them, (CA)
9 so after that programme (O)
10 I was very glad, it really made me clear,
11 I knew everything about each theorist (R)
12 and then it gave me a chance or opportunity
13 to meet my fellow students we are doing psychology with
14 because at first we didn’t know each other,
15 but after that programme, (O)
16 we knew each other, (CA)
17 we make friendship
18 and are able to get addresses where we can arrange for, like Saturday study groups
19 so that we can study together,
20 like making assignments together.
21 We discuss everything before we write our assignment (R)
22 and moreover I also learnt about how to live with people
23 because at times somebody will anger you,
24 but you won’t know how to treat that person.
25 Maybe in turn you will be angry, (CA)
26 but at least after that programme (O)
27 I realised that it is better to learn to know somebody.
28 If somebody is doing this to you,
29 just relax,
30 find out the reason why.
31 Maybe it is because of the way he was brought up or whatever,
32 or maybe he might be in crisis at his or her family
33 so from that programme I really learnt to understand people,
34 find out more about people before putting judgment. (R)
35 And I also learnt to know my lecturers.
36 You were all very nice
37 so you made that relationship between us which was not there before
38 because we only knew you through tutorials, (CA)
39 so after that programme (O)
40 I knew that if I have problem I can contact one of my lecturers. (R)
41 It was very good, it was very enriching to attend that programme. [laughs](E)
42 (V: Well, you have given me a lot of information there.
43 So you found in a way even the contact with the lecturers very important? (A)
44M: Very important, very.
45V: Getting to know us, that we are just ordinary people.

46M: Ordinary people.

47 Not just taking you as our lecturers,
48 we are scared of you before,
49 but you developed that relationship.
50 Whenever I have a problem now
51 I can feel that I am free to contact you,
52 but before we didn't know you.
53 We are afraid, maybe,
54 but after that programme,
55 we are very free,
56 you are too nice for us.
57V: Thank you very much.

58 And then you say it helped you a lot in living with people
59 and in learning how to deal with them. )
60 And was there anything else there that you learnt?
61 (You said like for example,
62 what you said was very good in terms of someone's anger,
63 what is going on in their life?
64 Is there anything else there that you perhaps learnt?)
65M: Yes, like when I say in terms of how to, relationship with other people,
66 like at my place (O)
67 I am having my younger brothers who are in this stage of adolescence,
68 at times they'll make you feel mad, (CA)
69 but after that programme (O)
70 I really understood them,
71 I really know how to treat such people.
72V: And have you found it has improved your relationship with your brothers?
73M: Very much, indeed, it improve it very much
74 because I know this one is doing this one because of 1 2 3,
75 and I can handle such a person in this way
76 so it has really improved,
77 it has really helped. (R)
78V: And then as you said, it also helped you with your studying,
79 otherwise it just looks so much.
80M: It looks so much when I was looking at this big book,
81 I say, wow, am I going to finish this
82 because it is not only Psychology I have registered for.
83 It is two papers.
84 It is so big books
85 but you gave me the overall picture of the whole Personology
86 so when I went out to read on my own it was very simple, very easy.
87V: And I suppose you also understood how useful these theories are?
88M: How useful and how practical.
89 Everything, it relates to everything in life, so it ...
90V: And then Mary-Jane this group that you formed,
91 do you meet every week or
92M: Every Saturday.
93V: That is wonderful.
And this sort of talking about the question and how to answer it?

M: Like what we do, né?, we arrange OK this Saturday we will treat this theory.

Then from there we discuss everything about it and then if there is still time we discuss like question papers, this assignment. We discuss how to treat such a question.

And did you find when you did the exam question on Rogers, did that help you with the assignment question?

M: It did.

V: That’s good and so that helped you a lot.)

Story 2

Mary-Jane I see you say that you are responsible for four people in your home. (A)

Who are those four people?)

They are my younger brothers. (O)

And do you pay for their schooling?

Yes, my family, né? It is like I am the breadwinner in my family.

In fact I am responsible for everybody in my family because I am the only one who is working.

I have got a brother who is working, but you know how many times they are irresponsible.

He is staying in Johannesburg. (O)

He doesn’t help us any how, so my family, my mom is not working,

my brothers are still in school and my father died last year.

so I am the one who is responsible for every thing. (R)

Goodness. And you said you are a school teacher.

We are really holding thumbs that your job lasts. Mary-Jane did you find like anything in the programme, for example that community session, which group were you in?

Adolescents.

Oh, because of your brothers?

Yes. [laughs]

And that also help you a lot?

It helped too much,

because we got different view from different students and it really helped.

And the ideas were really good, weren’t they?

Really good.

And so you joined that adolescent community group and then in a way what you have done you have taken what you learnt into your family to help you with your brothers.

Yes. In practice, practically. [laughs]

Yes, so that is a form of community work as well,

Okay. [laughs]

taking that into your family.

You say you are also a Sunday School teacher as part of your community work.

Which church or what children do you teach?

I am teaching at this Dutch Reformed Church and I am responsible for,
we group them in standards,
so I took from Std 3 to Std 5.

V: So you enjoy doing that?
M: Very much, I enjoy.

They like me too much.

I am open and they are free when they are with me.

That is important for children to feel that you are open
and they can speak to you and tell you their problems and so on.

And Mary-Jane is there any other community work that you are involved in?

No.

And if you find out that one of your children in the Sunday School
is having a problem,
what do you do?

What I do is I'll sit down with such a child
and try to find out what is wrong with the baby
and if there is a way I can help
like maybe contacting parents, maybe advising parents on whatever they can do,
I do it.

So that is actually a really nice entry into helping other families as well, hey?

No.

Right, Mary-Jane and the other question that I really wanted to ask again)

Story 3
was there any particular session in the self-empowerment programme
that was very meaningful to you, that you enjoyed?

Yes, that session on adult. Divorce.
I found it interesting,
but the reason why I didn't go to it
I found it hurting because it touched my life somehow
because like in my family
before my father died
the relationship between my father and my mum was not perfect,
but although they didn't divorce
they were on their way to so
I really wanted to talk about it
but I felt I couldn't because it really touched me.

(Yes. Now was that
in the community session?
Yes.)

Yes, that was actually quite moving.
I remember that.
A lot of people commented on how that touched a lot of people.

It does.
(And Mary-Jane, just in terms of our conversation and what we are talking about
here, you coming here, what has that meant to you, what have you perhaps learnt?)

Story 4
What has this conversation meant to you?
It meant a lot.
To start with it opened that relationship again
like I said after that session
our relationship with you, our lecturers, was somehow broadened
because before it was strictly you marked our assignments,
we post our assignments,
that's it,
we are waiting for exam,
but after meeting with you
we realised okay, they are people like us,
they are free open,
so we are free to phone them
as you gave us your numbers, if you are having problem, feel free to contact us,
so that relationship was not there before,
so same thing today,
(it is the same.)
I can see you, you are free,
you are not like somebody a lecturer,
(I know you are free,)
you are open to discuss with me (CA)
so I feel I'm free if ever I have problem really I can come to you for help. (R)
and you are also teaching me it is good to talk about things.
If you are having a burning issue, don’t just keep it to yourself,
feel free to discuss.
Like this question of AIDS, those people are not free,
I will fear I will be rejected, or something like that.
Like in my case, question of too much poverty, like in my case we are poor,
like I am saying I am the only one who is working
so you can see how hard it is,
so in my case it is not possible to talk about it,
I am not free to discuss it with anybody
because it is like people will be laughing at me,
or they will see me as a bad one, (CA)
but in your case you are teaching me it is good for one to discuss,
not to keep things to yourself.
Because one will end up thinking like the way people are
this question of not discussing it.(R)]
\text{222V: I think that what you are saying is actually a very very important thing.}
\text{223 It is so true,}
\text{224 and I understand, that obviously when one has got problems in your own family,}
\text{225 it is not always easy,}
\text{226M: No its not}
\text{227V: is it to talk about the things, like with your mom or dad,}
\text{228 and even the sole responsibility of providing for everybody.}
\text{229 That can’t be easy, you know.}
\text{230M: Its not.}
\text{231V: But I think you are doing very well.}
\text{232 I think one of the good things about you is that you are very open}
\text{233 because, you know, I think people can often learn things,}
\text{234 or you can expose them to things,}
\text{235 but they don’t always learn, do they?}
\text{236 I mean what you are saying, the good things that you took with the programme,}
\text{237 that is also a reflection on you,
not just on us.

The other thing is because you are giving me that opportunity.
You know there are people who you can say, this one I can lean on such a person,
you are giving that relationship,
you are giving that chance,
but other people they are not friendly to start with,
even if you are having a problem,
you won’t feel free like I said, to be open,
to be free to say whatever,
so I think you are the one who is making it possible.

I must really say a very very big thank you for you to come in.

Was it a problem for you to come in today?

No.

Are you sure? [Mary-Jane laughs]

Well I really do appreciate it
and I want to say a very big thank you to you to help me
and if there is anything else I’ve got your number and I can phone you just to hear,
even how it is going with your job.

And how are you surviving without getting any money at the moment?

It’s very hard.

But we are survivors,

I will survive.

Well that’s good. I always think to have that kind of belief ....

I do hope one day, things will be fine.

Which school are you teaching at?

M........ It is a high school in L........

And what subjects?

I am teaching English, Afrikaans and Guidance.

That’s nice. I think you will do well with your Guidance especially.

I like it so much, after that session I like Psychology more than everything.

That is the subject I like more than all the courses I am doing. [laughs]

Well, Mary-Jane you must work really really hard
and one day perhaps your dream of becoming a psychologist will come true.

I believe I hope so.

Oh well, Mary-Jane thank you very much.)
APPENDIX N

RETRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH CELESTE

IV: Celeste what I wanted to say to you was
that we did the self-empowerment programme
and while the programme was on the go
we just noticed a few people
and decided that we would contact these people afterwards
and ask them if they would do an interview with us just to get more information. So
that is how come, we got hold of you.
Also obviously as I mentioned on the phone
we did notice that you were in a predominantly black group
so that was also quite a new experience maybe.

Story 1

[So really what I want to find out from you is
what the programme meant to you, (A)
(what you learnt from it,
what you enjoyed about it,
what touched you as a person,
what you think could improve,)
just really what the programme meant to you.]

C: Okay. I'm very pleased that I attended it. (E)
I found that the speakers spoke with authority,
they know their subjects
and they gave me the impression
that they have got solid practical experience as well,
it was not just theory. (A)
The course gave me a lot of direction. (R)
What I appreciated was when it was mentioned
that if you consider studying Psychology third year
then we recommend these theories because you go deeper,
because we have a choice on those.
That I appreciated
because in your second year
obviously you want to build a foundation for the third year.
That I found good. (CA)
What I also enjoyed about the programme was that it was very informal,
the speakers made the audience feel very relaxed,
open to communicate and to comment,
even though most of them are doctors speaking with students,
I felt that the speakers all had the ability to speak at a level
where us as students could follow the conversation and follow the subject
and don't get lost in the process. (CA)
And the fact that we were divided up in groups
also helped with interaction,
how other people see things,
think about things
because of their different backgrounds or experiences, (CA)
and people in the groups, people felt free,
I actually felt, I was a bit shocked about how free they felt
to share very personal experiences.
I just thought.
Well I didn’t have anything particular to share in the group,
but it is very, very personal things
that they experienced personally in their home environment
or between friends
and they just spoke up and shared with the group
and people felt free to comment on it and share their views,
which I thought was a big accomplishment
for the organisers and the presenters of the course
to make people feel they are in an environment
where they can talk freely
and not be inhibited by the fact that they are only still learning
and you don’t know it all
and we also got sort of the security that it is confidential.
You share it with your little group, but it is confidential. It will stay there. (CA)
That is actually nice.)
It is and if you have that security
that someone is not going to go and tell the world about what you experienced and
which most often was maybe painful,
then ja, you will share it,
you won’t share it if you know they are going to advertise it. (R)]
Celeste and how did you find,
considering, were you the only white person in your group
or did you have some other?)

Story 2
Initially I was the only white person
and we were all ladies
and then at a later stage
another young white English speaking lady joined us.
And did you feel at home in your group?
Yes, I felt very at home in the group
but I think why
was because I worked for four years in Bophuthatswana with the Tswana people
and I enjoyed them as people when I worked there during the period I was there
and I think the reason why I also joined the group
was because they were the very first group as you entered the door,
and I was late for the course
and I noticed it is only blacks in their little group
and I just went to them and said,
“Can I join this group, please” and they said, “Yes, sure”.
And they made me feel at home.
I didn’t know the criteria how the groups were divided
because I missed it because I was late,
but I just joined in.
And I think another reason,
besides the reason I was late,
another reason why I joined the black group
was I do find other cultures fascinating
and I always want to learn more about other cultures than my own.
I mean I live in my own, you know,
it is kind of boring in a sense,
we must start exploring other cultures,
how they think and how they view ...
And it is often as you say,
sometimes I think one sees a lot of similarities in how one views things
and other times quite a lot of difference, hey,
and that opens your eyes in its own way, you know. (CA)
(Just as a matter of interest there was no way of organising the groups,
we just allowed people to group themselves in a fairly haphazard way
and that in its own way was also interesting for us to observe
because we did notice some people prefer to stick together
whereas others were quite happy,
almost sought out people of different cultures,
so that was quite interesting.
Just generally we found that it is not a good idea to force the issue,
to actually allow people to make their own decisions,
but we did notice you
and wonder how it was going
especially in the group exercises and things like that.
How did you find that?)
In the group exercises
the first activity was to come up with a name for the group
and we had to write down a few things
and I think being sensitive towards white domination in this country,
not just me but the rest of the girls in my group as well,
I think we had to basically, not select a leader,
but someone to give some guidance and start the talking.
They looked at me
and I just looked back at them
and I just thought, “I am not going to do this.
Don’t look at me because I’m a white.
I’m not going to do it”,
not because I don’t want to
but because I feel maybe it is more important for them to experience it
and then if I can say,
the leader of our group was then a black lady who is a teacher,
a very leading role, a natural leading role as well, (CA)
but then she took the lead when
everybody noticed this they look at me,
but I just look back at them sort of.
They realised.
I think that is a very empowering thing to do (R)
(because it is true what you say)
I think so because that is what I experience in Bophuthatswana.
Even though it was Bophuthatswana then,
you go there as a South African citizen but you are white
and because of the history of the country
they look at you for leadership.
(That's right and it is still I would think very much part of ...)
It is changing
but I think it still is part of it, yes.
I could have said,
"Well I'm the whitey here, let me take control
because they are incompetent".
I could have done that,
but that is not my philosophy in life. (CA)
You see you probably taught them a lot
because I think by taking that one down position
it is actually very powerful
because you actually in a way you communicated
that you are siding with them.
Yes, "I'm one of you". (R)
Like even when I was listening to you
you said you were the only white person initially,
but you were all women
so I think even having that kind of way of looking
that we are all women together
and there is not one that is better than another,
we are just women together.
I think that kind of participatory,
that you are all participating together,
I think that is very empowering,
I think even for yourself.
It was for me
and I think it also gave them some confidence
because I did notice a few members of the group were quieter
and then I would make a remark and ask them directly by the name,
I tried to remember the names because we introduced ourselves
and at least I could say a few words in Tswana,
which they appreciated.
A few of them came from that area so it was good,
I think because I tried and I greeted them in Tswana every day
they accepted me, well it contributed to the acceptance.
Not that they rejected me at all.
Just "You are one of us".
And I think perhaps relating to a white person in a different way.
You see what you are saying is how they would normally relate.
The white person takes over
and they just sit back
and I think you perhaps introduced a different way of relating,
that you could all be people together, students together.
I hope I did because I consciously made a decision,
I am not gonna be the role player here.
We actually often watch
191 and we are always touched really
192 when people like yourself do that
193 because you know you often get people
194 where it is easier just to take over and take control
195 and also obviously
196 one also appreciates someone who does encourage them to talk,
197 because it is true,
198 some black people are very reticent
199 and it is often, they just need that little bit of encouragement,
200 not even an awful lot,
201 just to open up
202 so we really also want to express our gratitude,
203 because I think it is also,
204 you know this sort of programme
205 it is not just the presenters who are doing the work.
206 Everybody is doing it together,
207 that is what it is all about.)

Story 3

208[V: And Celeste, just to ask you in terms of your own personal life,
209 was there anything perhaps in particular that you felt,
210 gee this is like an eye opener,
211 or this is changing me in some way,
212 or this has made me think differently? (A)
213C: One particular thing that stands out
214 is the fact that personalities are complex,
215 that a personality is a combination of various theories.
216 That is the main message I got.
217 If you try and analyse a person don’t just use one theory.
218[V: Well that is a good message.
219C: Is it the correct message?
220V: Yes.)
221C: That is the one thing, because in my job I deal a lot with people
222 and that is the one thing I thought, this is something I must hold on to.
223V: It is very true. As we always say, theories are like the slices of a cake.
224 They give you a lens to look at people.
225 They only tell part of the story
226 and to take one theory
227 and think that that is going to explain all of behaviour
228 then you are in big trouble.
229C: It is not the Alpha and Omega of analysis.
230V: (No, you use what is,)
231 if something seems to really be applicable and relevant,
232 that is what you use.
233 (I don’t know we often get asked
234 how would Erikson explain the behaviour of a drug addict, or something. Erikson’s
235 theory is quite different.
236 It doesn’t look at things like that,
237 you would use other theories for that.
238 It’s that same kind of thing,
that not every theory is equally applicable to a specific situation.)

240C: And my interpretation is,
241 or maybe it is just my own thinking of making it easier for myself,
242 is that each person has a passion in their lives
243 and if a certain theory’s passion was a particular aspect of a personality
244 then they would concentrate on that
245 and not necessarily explore the other aspects in such depth
246 as this one specific one (CA)

247V: And then Celeste in terms of say the developmental psychology
248 was there anything there that particularly jumped out at you? (A)
249C: I found that fascinating too. (E)
250 (That people, because I always say,)
251 it is most probably because I am in my thirties
252 and studying a degree for the first time,
253 I always believe that the human potential must always grow,
254 you must always enrich yourself,
255 empower yourself,
256 learn more,
257 get to know more
258 and develop yourself in the things you have a natural feel for
259 because I think maybe that’s your talent or something that God gave you,
260 your natural feel for science or people or whatever it is,
261 then develop that in a formal way as well.
262 Okay, and to be exposed
263 to the development of a person from infant stage till old age,
264 I thought that was excellent
265 because it is also very accurate because you can relate to it.
266 Being in my thirties I can look back and see, (CA)
267 ‘Oh yes, I did experience this during that age period’, and so on.

268V: I think in a way what you have just said is really your guiding philosophy of life.
269C: Yes.

270V: Seeking out personal growth and not standing still.
271 I think that is pretty great,
272 that is even why you chose the group you chose,
273 you wanted to expand yourself.
274C: Yes (R)
275 Another thing about the developmental psychology we did
276 that I actually find in my personal life
277 which I find at least now I can speak with a bit of authority on it,
278 is children (A)
279 because people of my age
280 most of them have young children
281 and then they talk about things
282 and now at least I understand more
283 and I can relate to it more
284 and I can even give advice,
285 but I always say, “You know in Psychology, according to research ....”.
286 They think that is what the researchers or the authorities say
287 because they know, my friends and my family know
I do not have children of my own, so where do you come from with your comments, so I always base it on, “According to research ....”. (CA)

Then it opens people to talk more and question more and sometimes come back to me with questions. 

So in a wonderful way it has also given you a bridge into other people’s world of experience and if you have something like a language to talk about, hey?

Yes, because I was always lost when people of my age would get together, colleagues, friends, family, and then children, they talk about children and then I sit there and you have your own thinking sometimes, but you do not know and when I say this, am I not going to offend the person or the mother if I say this or that?

But now yes, absolutely it is a bridge which I am glad about. (R)

And the community session, how did you enjoy that?

What group were you part of on the last day?

That was the adult therapy, adult group, not just women, it was adults. (A) That was also good, I enjoyed that (E) and why I would prefer to work with adults is because I find children so vulnerable and I get emotionally too upset about the suffering children go through. I am not psychologically strong enough to cope with that. I will most probably lose my mind.

So you need a bit of psychological distance?

Yes, it is a very specialised area.

It is and children are just so precious and vulnerable and I’ll rather deal with adults where I can tell them straight in the face, “Pull yourself together”. That is why I joined the adult group.

What was your particular theme, can you remember?

It was marriage counselling, which I am also not really interested in because I am not married,)

but the majority of the people in the group were interested in marriage counselling not just in counselling adults so I had to join.

I learnt from it, but I am not a strong believer in the institution of marriage and I think people destroy each other in most cases, that is why the divorce rate is so high.

That is unfortunately true. (CA)

(Were you ever involved with anyone Celeste?)

Yes, I have a relationship currently as well, but it is a type of relationship I enjoy which gives me freedom and there is not this possessiveness and bossiness, things like that.

It is very equal.
I think in a way, that is also to me a good part of the new South Africa. There is more acceptance for different ways of being and I think to me what you say is very valid. One sees as you say people destroying one another and that is not the ideal. And then Celeste you said in terms, in other words this course gave you a language to talk to other people, even I am sure this marriage counselling also gives you an eye opener of the sort of problems and so on. Absolutely.) And then you said your community involvement, you are starting a project in September, you told me about that. (A) Yes. The reason why I was a bit reluctant to join one of the groups we were told about was because I am not sure with which or what type of environment and people I'll be dealing with and I don't want to be scared away from psychology so Dr X is a medical practitioner, she also does trauma therapy and she does psychology. She is a qualified psychologist and I got to know her and she has done this in the UK as well, it was very successful there. She is now living in South Africa in Johannesburg and she is starting this group again. She invited eight people. The group needs only eight people. It is a weekly session every Wednesday from September through to middle of December. We will get together once a week and we will discuss specific topics like marriage counselling and certain things like that and say for instance, depression, she gave a simple agenda of the topics we will discuss and so on. And then will you become involved in doing counselling from that course? No I won't be doing counselling, but I'll participate in the discussions. And you know that is also a very worthwhile area, isn't it because one's insights or the new ideas coming in from different people can often open even a counsellor or a therapist's eyes. Often you get stuck in looking in a certain way and someone says something, "Gee I never thought of that", you know, so yes that sounds really interesting.) I won't be doing counselling or assisting in doing counselling, but I will be involved with her group discussions and Dr X is not the only qualified psychologist who will be there. She has someone, a qualified psychologist, with her also part of the group just to assist her as well and then eight members. And then how did you get selected?
That is quite a great honour.

Ja I thought so.

I was severely victimised at work earlier this year, which was a very unpleasant experience and one day it just reached a stage where I felt that I am gonna lose control over my emotions so I went to a clinic and just asked them, "Just give me something for anxiety" and then they said to me, "Well, we will give you something for anxiety, but take one of Dr X's business cards. She is one of our GP's. She is just not here at the moment, so speak with her as well". (CA)

And I made an appointment and went and spoke with her and we clicked. I think if you have a good relationship with your counsellor then you will be lucky enough to get invited to special groups. (R) Also I think a therapist or a psychologist would always want someone, like yourself who is perhaps willing to learn to perhaps confront the issues, to which I am sure, I hope I am not putting the words in your mouth, but I could imagine how it got to you being invited. Yes, I think so because Dr X at one stage told me she found me quite different from the run of the mill South African because we started speaking about my future plans. Well how we started talking about that, she asked me where I was from and I am South African, so we just started talking about that and I think maybe because she thinks I am a little bit different from the run of the mill, maybe that is also one of the reasons which contributed to her asking me. Yes, I think often one is attracted, or you notice somebody who is a bit different. I think that is an important issue, you know. And just to ask you now...

What I really just wanted to say to you, was this conversation that you and I have had because it hasn't hopefully been just you talking, that I have also come in with my little bit, what has this conversation,)
What is the meaning of this conversation for you, or what have you learnt? (A)

Val, first of all I can assure you that I feel honoured to be part of your research, whether you are going to use my input or not, but it also makes me think back of the worth of the few days I attended. What did it really mean to me because we live in such a rushed time.

You know, you attend and you go back to work and you carry on with your life. You don't sit still and think about, listen, well I know I was the only whitey in my group, but certain aspects you don't even think about unless someone actually questions you and then you actually realise the full value of that course that you attended. And talking about the course makes me understand myself how I really experienced it and also makes me think about things that I did not think of during the course but you questioned me about it so, (CA)

(V: No not at all, that makes perfect sense.) Because I think it is true that it is in the conversation that things gain Clarity, you gain clarity, I think that is maybe how I can sum it up.

You gain clarity of what you experienced and maybe I can just ...(R)]

I would think hopefully that is a nice way of summing it up? I just wanted to ask you, your victimisation, when did that come about, before the programme or after the programme?

The programme was in March, that was before and after. The course happened in the middle of the victimisation.

So you were almost in quite a hard place at that moment.

Yes I was, but Dr X, one thing she said which pulled me through was, “You are going through a waiting period” and that waiting period ended and the fact that she just said, “Celeste you are going through a waiting period”. Those few words pulled me through. I know everything is temporary.

You know things come to an end, OK, but when you really feel this is starting to affect me in a bad way, “Celeste you are going through a waiting period” and then I am on my way again. That helped me a lot.

I think it is actually wonderful. That also reflects you, that says something about you as a person you know that one is even prepared to be in a hard place.
because you know you are going to get somewhere else, hey?
I was going to say the fact that I attended the course for those few days was a good break from the office of course.
So that was good timing. Yes, I am sure it was.
And is everything OK now?
Absolutely, everything worked out.
So it was temporary?
It was absolutely temporary
and things worked out in my favour, one hundred percent.
So that is a good story to be able to tell.
But Celeste, thank you very much, I really appreciate your input
and you know I think I thought in the thesis one always, [tape stops]
a lot I think also depends on what you are saying to me,
you as a person,
the kind of attitude that you come into the situation with is also important.
You know if you come in and you are open
and you say “This is a new experience. I am going to learn from it”,
then that I am sure will be your experience,
but if you come in and you don’t want to open yourself up to anyone,
and you want to cut yourself off and be on your own,
then your experience is going to be different,
you see and I think this is the kind of thing that I am looking for.
You know what are the things,
what are the processes that contribute to people’s growth,
that is what I am really looking for
and you see so those are important,
and those I am able to get from things you have said.
I think something that really contributes to growth is also communication.
Well that of course is my absolute belief, that conversation is really, isn’t it?
Absolutely.
If you sit and you don’t talk to anybody, what are you going to learn?
A closed book.
So these are just as I say, they are sort of ideas.)