# The voices of youth in a rural school on higher education community engagement partnership

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**The voices of youth in a rural school on higher education community engagement partnership**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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**(Educational Psychology)**

Faculty of Education

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March 2017

PRETORIA

"I declare that this dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Masters in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution"

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Seago Martha Seobi

23 March 2017

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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my fiancé, family, friends and anyone who is afraid to dream.

---oOo---

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people who contributed to me achieving this dream:

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# ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions have been mandated by government to engage in community development projects and partner with local communities. This was done in order for the higher education institutions to reconsider the role the play in local communities and redress some of the injustices that occurred during the apartheid era. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the experiences of young people from a rural school on higher education community engagement partnership. The participants were made up of 31 young people from a rural school in Mpumalanga and had been involved in a community engagement partnership with a higher education institution. The young people were provided with a platform to share their experiences using PRA activities and the data generated was analysed using deductive thematic analysis. The young people expressed what they think the purpose for the partnership was, how they benefitted from the partnership and indicated what should be changed for future partnerships as well as suggestions to improve the partnership.

**Key words:**

Community engagement, academic service learning, young people, social justice, rural school, partnership, marginalisation, experience, educational psychology, community.

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# DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

**EDIT CERTIFICATE**

**Declaration of Language Editor**

I, Wilna Swart, hereby declare that I performed a professional language edit of the Master's thesis by by Ms Seago Seobi entitled THE VOICES OF YOUTH IN A RURAL SCHOOL ON HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP, completing the final version in February 2017.

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| PRA | Participatory Reflection and Action |
|-----|-----|
| HSRC | Human Sciences Research Council |
| ASL | Academic Service Learners |
| FLY | Flourishing Learning Youth |
| HPCSA | Health Professional Council of South Africa |

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Higher education institutions have been urged to reconsider the role they play in local communities in order to make their mark nationally and internationally (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Part of the mandate of higher education institutions is to engage in service learning through community development projects which would "produce assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life" (Netshandama, 2010, p. 346). Service learning encourages students to learn actively and collaboratively, and to become more involved in their local communities, particularly with the youth (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000), to equip them with the skills that are necessary to better their lives. The youth I am interested in are those from a rural community as they often have limited resources and do not have the same access to basic services and opportunities as their urban counterparts (Hlalele, 2012).

According to Mitra (2004) there were many youth movements between the sixties and early seventies that had brought about drastic changes in communities around the world. However, reflecting on the history and background of South Africa, there appear to be many inequalities and barriers (Nieuwenhuis, 2011) that communities and youth at risk have to face on a daily basis. It is essential to obtain the youth perspective on matters that relate to them as not much has been written about their voices and experiences (Mitra, 2004). The voices and opinions of the youth about community engagement is crucial as it involves the means to uplift and assist with liberating communities that do not have access to the resources that they require to uplift and liberate themselves (Mitra, 2004).

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the methodological choices I made in this study, and this is followed by a discussion of background information, the purpose of the study, research questions and the theoretical framework that I used. Thereafter, I give an overview of the research methodologies and chapter outlines of the final research document.

## 1.2 Background

South Africa is a country known as the rainbow nation, *inter alia* due to its various cultures, languages and ethnicities (Nkosi & Roodt, 2004). The country has come a long way since apartheid came to an end in 1994. The government has since 1994 worked tirelessly to redress the injustices that prevailed during apartheid (Mafumo, 2011). Even though the apartheid regime is long gone, some of its effects are still being felt today (Petersen, Dunbar-Krige, & Fritz, 2008). "South Africa finds it increasingly difficult to provide for the needs of its people in terms of employment, health care, housing, water provision and education" (Prinsloo, 2003, p. 277). There seems to be a great need for basic services and not enough resources. As a result, some communities are still experiencing great inequality, poor education and high levels of poverty (Pennefather, 2008).

The quality of education that youth receive at rural schools has been a debatable issue for some time now, according to Myende (2015). Seeing that education was used as a tool for oppression, we may assume that it can also be used as a tool for liberation and for uplifting the lives of the youth at risk (Onyx, 2008). By higher education institutions' taking up the call to offer services to rural communities, they might help to inspire the communities to strive for better and contribute to their own social development (Alexander & Khabanyane, 2013).

Although every rural community is unique, many of them have similar limitations and strengths (Budge, 2006). The profile of a typical rural community is as follows: i) Geographic isolation - long distances to the nearest town and having to travel far to gain access to resources such as psychological services or even a basic resource such as a well-functioning library (Budge, 2006; Arnold, Newman, Gaddy & Dean, 2005). ii) Limited service delivery - poor condition of roads and basic infrastructure, limited or lack of services such as water, sanitation and electricity (Hlalele, 2012), as well as a lack of teachers and educational facilities available to clients (Barley, 2009). In addition, rural communities are often characterised by inadequate education, low wages, unemployment, and resource and technological deficiencies (Prinsloo, 2003). However, rural communities also have strengths and protective factors that we may sometimes overlook (Eloff, Ebersohn, & Viljoen, 2007). These include the peacefulness that often comes with there not being many people living in

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one area, the connectedness of families, the strong sense of community as well as the richness of knowledge (Hlalele, 2012).

## 1.3 Purpose of the study

Higher education institutions have been given the mandate to collaborate with communities in order to support these local and rural communities as well as to contribute to their social development and exert a positive influence on their reconsideration of the role they play in local communities (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008). According to Weeks (2009) not much research has been conducted into giving young people a chance to voice their thoughts and opinions about participating in initiatives of higher education institutions.

I selected a descriptive study in order to highlight and describe young people's experiences of higher education community engagement as well as to provide insight into and inform knowledge from their perspective. Descriptive studies refer to "unpacking the content and nature of a particular phenomenon" (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013, p. 137). By documenting youth experiences of higher education community engagement in as much detail as possible, this study could contribute to a minimal body of knowledge that exists on the phenomenon (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010).

A significant limitation of descriptive studies is that participants may sometimes not be truthful about their experiences, giving information they think the researcher wants (Cohen et al., 2003). Descriptive studies are limited to the sample alone and are not inclusive of the rest of the population (Cohen et al., 2003). In order to ensure that this would not be the case with this study, it was explained to participants what the purpose of the study and the importance of their experiences were. The study aims to contribute to literature on the voices of the young people regarding higher education community engagement, and not to be generalised in order to apply to the wider population.

## 1.4 Research questions

### 1.4.1 Primary research question

The primary research question is: *How can insight into young people's experiences of a long-term Educational psychology partnership inform knowledge of higher education community engagement?*

### 1.4.2 Secondary research questions

1.4.2.1. What value do the young people ascribe to the partnership?

1.4.2.2. What aspects did the young people most benefit from?

1.4.2.3. What should be included in future partnerships?

1.4.2.4. What aspects should be changed?

## 1.5 Conceptualisation of the study

### 1.5.1 Young people as clients

The views and opinions of young people have recently been given attention in order to involve them in issues that are relevant to them and encourage citizenship (Day, 2007). However, most societies still have doubts about the knowledge, experience and abilities of young people. As a result, young people sometimes require adults to be their advocates so they can be heard (Day, 2007; Tisdall, 2008).

### 1.5.2 Community engagement

Currently the three most important missions of higher education institutions, are: (i) teaching; (ii) research; and (iii) community engagement (Hall, 2010; Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008). The Higher Education Quality Committee (2004, p. 19) defined community engagement as "initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research is applied to address issues relevant to its community".

### 1.5.3 Higher education community engagement

Higher education institutions have a social development responsibility to local and rural communities (Bender, 2008; Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna, & Slamat, 2008). The purpose of dealing with this responsibility is that it is the local and rural communities that often have limited or no access to resources or adequate infrastructure (Hlalele, 2012). Higher education institutions are of benefit to their

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students through showing them that a greater interest in serving the community could contribute to an improvement in the nature of coursework and learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). This phenomenon is termed "service learning", which is explained by Netshandama (2010) as putting into practice the knowledge one has acquired through coursework that is directed towards a specific need of the community.

### 1.5.4 Social justice

Kose (as cited in Hlalele, 2012) postulated that social justice concerns refining individual and institutional systems that are entrenched in deficit paradigms, and a certain group of people who have been marginalised. Social justice is concerned with equal justice, rights and opportunities for everyone, from the poorest to the wealthiest, in every area of society (Hlalele, 2012).

### 1.5.5 Educational psychology

Lubbe and Eloff (2004) defined Educational psychology as "the science that concerns itself with theories and practices in psychology and education and the intersections between psychology and education" (Lubbe & Eloff, 2004, p. 29). According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2004, p. 4), the scope of practice for Educational psychologists includes that they may conduct assessments, diagnose and intervene in order to facilitate the psychological adjustment and development of children and adolescents within the contexts of family, school, social or peer groups and communities.

### 1.5.6 Rural schools

According to Balfour (2012), rural in the South African context refers to "those sparsely populated environments where agriculture is the dominant mode of economic activity" (Balfour, 2012, p. 10). However, Budge (2006) states that there is no one definition for rural, but that rural communities often have the same characteristics, namely, geographic isolation; economic distress; weak community infrastructure, business development and growth; migration of highly skilled human capital; and technological stagnation, amongst others. As with all schools, the aim of rural schools is to prepare young people for future employment and career opportunities which may have a significant influence on their quality of life and the economic status of the country (Census, 2011).

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### 1.5.7 Experience

Boud and Walker (1990) explain experience as interaction between young people and environments that are social, psychological and material in nature (Boud & Walker, 1990). The authors furthermore distinguished between an event and an experience as follows: "An event is a situation observed by an outsider or detached person whereas an experience is subjective to a person and is lived by that person" (Boud & Walker, 1990, p 62).

### 1.5.8 Community

A community is a "homogenous entity" consisting of various social groups (Francis, Dube, Mokhanyetji & Chitapa, 2010). Onyx (2008) added that all communities have shared interests and values while comprising of ongoing relationships.

### 1.5.9 Partnership

A partnership, as explained by Petersen, Dunbar-Krige and Fritz (2008), is an engagement in which resources are shared, benefits are mutual and moreover assists with the development of stakeholders (Pennefather, 2008).

## 1.6 Research paradigm

### 1.6.1 Meta-theoretical paradigm

The aim of this study is to provide a rich, in-depth understanding of the experiences of young people regarding the partnership they have had with a higher education institution. This study was conducted using the constructivist paradigm (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). The core features of this approach are that people's experiences are constructed cognitively and that they do not occur independently (Liu & Matthews, 2012). According to Jones and Brader-Araje (2002), experiences are influenced by social, historical and cultural aspects. Burr (as cited in Andrews, 2012) suggested that we are who we are in relation to our world. This implies that our world can influence the way we perceive certain things and therefore our outlook.

We judge every experience through what we have been through (Andrews, 2012). Considering that most of the young people in the relevant rural area speak Siswati, they were given the opportunity to hold their discussions in their mother tongue as it was deemed to be likely that it may be easier to think and express their views in their

mother tongue. This was done to ensure that their perspectives and opinions could be captured as accurately and richly as possible, leaving minimal room for misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

## 1.6.2 Theoretical framework – Transformative learning theory

As we move through the different stages of life, we experience various incidents or events that contribute to our pool of experience and to who we are as people. In order for any experience to be valuable, it has to be processed and meaning must be attached to it (Merizow, 1990). Merizow (1990) described the Transformative learning theory as having a significant influence on our frames of reference. Frames of reference are a collection of assumptions and expectations that inform our perspectives and influence our thought patterns as well as behaviour (Taylor, 2008).

Frames of references consist of two key aspects, the first being habits of mind and the second the points of view of an individual (Merizow, 1990). Habits of mind are comprised of common ways of thinking and behaving which are influenced by our assumptions (Merizow, 1990). Points of view are a range of feelings, beliefs, judgements and attitudes we have towards specific individuals or groups (Merizow, 1990).

The Transformative learning theory calls for a higher level of thinking as well as critical reflection (Sterling, 2010), it takes place through critical discussions in order to assess opposing perspectives of a particular topic (Merizow, 1997). It was expected that young people, the focus group of this study, all had different perceptions of partnership with higher education institutions. They were asked to discuss and share their perceptions, thus making meaning of it and associating it with their frames of reference.

## 1.6.3 Methodological paradigm

Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) is a paradigm that includes constant reflection, followed by action, which leads to further reflection and participatory involvement (Chambers, 1994a). It lends itself to visual and concrete methods of collecting data, motivates participation and can be used in various natural settings (Chambers, 1994b). PRA requires critical thinking and seeks to change the beliefs and attitudes of the participants who are involved (White & Taket, 1997).

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PRA allows participants to make different meanings of the partnership and the possibility to see themselves as experts in their experience (Chambers, 1994a). They are provided with a space where they can freely express thoughts, ideas and experiences. PRA creates a platform where the participants' experiences can be shared and they themselves can be empowered (Chambers, 1994b). One of the greatest strengths of PRA is its ability to generate rich contextual data (Chambers, 1994a). It seeks to identify and mobilise the power within people, to encourage their active participation and help them to focus on their worlds in detail (Chambers, 1994a). It is also used as a manner in which knowledge is created collectively through detailed analysis and interaction (Chambers, 1994b). This knowledge is then used as a tool for action and development (Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004).

However, PRA has limitations, which I had to be aware of as they might have influenced the quality of the study (Chambers, 1994b). In large groups the data collection process could be influenced by group dynamics (Chambers, 1994b). Some people may not actively participate, resulting in their voices not being heard and their continuing to feel disempowered (Chambers, 1994a). During the PRA discussions in this particular study, I observed the groups and reiterated the importance of every participant taking part and sharing their voices. Furthermore, most of the participants in their groups had a chance to present their discussion to the rest of the participants. They did, however, have the option to decline to do a presentation and had the freedom to decide how much information they wanted to share. Another limitation is that there is a minimal format to follow and it may therefore seem to be an unreliable tool to use. Participants are often guided by means of an informal set of questions, which is often flexible (Chambers, 2008). However, for the purposes of this study, it was used to give participants a platform to share their experiences and views, to give them a sense of empowerment (Chambers, 1994a), and an opportunity to analyse the partnership.

## 1.7. Methodology

### TABLE 1.1 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES OUTLINE

| PURPOSE OF THE STUDY |
|---|
| To explore and describe youth experiences of higher education – rural school partnership |

| PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS | |
|---|---|
| Methodological paradigm | Participatory Reflection and Action |
| Meta-theoretical paradigm | Constructivism |

| RESEARCH DESIGN |
|---|
| Case Study – Instrumental case design |
| Convenient sampling of case: Youth perspectives on a seven-year-long partnership between M. Educational Psychology trainees and young people from a rural secondary school. |

| SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS |
|---|
| Purposive sampling of young people involved in a partnership between a higher education institution and a rural school between 2006 and 2013 (n = 31, male = 14, female = 14) |
| 2006 cohort = 3; 2007 cohort = 6; 2008 cohort = 1; 2009 cohort = 4; 2010 cohort = 3; 2011 cohort = 4; 2012 cohort = 4; 2013 cohort = 6) |
| Sampling criteria: i) Each participant was a client who was involved in the Flourishing Learning Youth Educational psychology academic service learning (ASL) between 2006 and 2013. ii) The age and gender of the participants are diverse. |

| DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION |
|---|
| Multiple methods include: PRA discussions and presentations (documented as visual and audio data). |
| The verbatim transcriptions of PRA group presentations were captured electronically in  MS Word documents. Demographic questionnaires were scanned as PDF documents. |

| DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION |
|---|
| The step by-step process of thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, as suggested by Clarke & Braun (2013). |

| QUALITY CRITERIA | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Credibility** | **Transferability** | **Dependability** | **Confirmability** |
| To ensure the credibility of this study, I used reputable research methods, member checks and triangulation | Used rich and in-depth descriptions of the experiences of learners who partnered with higher education institutions | Detailed descriptions of research process and in-depth discussions as well as feedback with supervisors ensured dependability | As a measure to guarantee confirmability, I have an audit trail of documents relating to the study. |

| ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS |
|---|
| Informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and protection from harm. |

### 1.7.1 Contextualising the case

The partnership between the University of Pretoria and the rural secondary school in Mpumalanga was initiated in 2006. The school is approximately 326 km from Pretoria and is on approximately 76 495 m² of land (Census, 2011). The population of Mpumalanga is 4 039 939, of whom 90.7% are black African, 0.9% are Coloured, 0.4% are Asian/Indian and 7.5% are White (Census, 2011).

According to Census (2011), while 96% of young people attended high school only 2% were enrolled in colleges, 1% in universities and 0.1% in adult learning centres. Most males have higher levels of education than their female counterparts, and this is due to the high dropout rate among females owing to teenage pregnancy (Census, 2011). Young people in the rural schools daily face extreme challenges. These include poverty and lack of service delivery, the significant prevalence of health-related deaths and trauma, to name but a few. The geographic isolation of the rural community makes it difficult for the youth to gain access to the services that are necessary to thrive (Nkambule, Balfour, Pillay, & Moletsane, 2011) and has a significant influence on unemployment. The Department of Finance (2012) stated that the youth unemployment rate in Mpumalanga stands at 38.5%, with males comprising 23.3% and females 33%.

The Makiwane, Mokoae, Botsis and Vawda (2012) indicated that most of the families in the Mpumalanga region are multigenerational, in other words there are grandparents, parents and grandchildren. However, the rate of migration is high as most youths who are of working age relocate to urban areas for better employment opportunities (Makiwane et al., 2012). However, government pensions and children's grants appear to be stable sources of income for most homes (Makiwane et al., 2012). Issues of concern for most of the population include housing, inadequate service delivery, poor quality of education and lack of police in the area. Marriage rates are quite low, with most of the population being single, never having been married (Makiwane et al., 2012).

Photographs below show the school environment and young people.




**Photographs 1.1 & 1.2** School environment (Date captured: 02/09/2013)




**Photographs 1.3 & 1.4** Young people participating in assessments conducted by Educational Psychology students (Date captured: 04/09/2013)

## 1.8 Outline of the chapters that follow

### 1.8.1 Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 outlines the conceptual framework that was used and a critical analysis of the literature relating to the study. It provides an exploration of key concepts pertaining to the study, such as higher education community engagement and social justice as well as international trends in higher education institutions regarding these key concepts.

### 1.8.2 Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 3 provides a detailed discussion of the research design, the methodology used and research processes that were followed. An explanation of the data collection, participant sampling, data analysis, quality criteria, and ethical issues pertaining to the study is also provided.

### 1.8.3 Chapter 4: Research findings

Chapter 4 provides a presentation and discussion of the findings of the research conducted in terms of themes and subthemes that emerged through data analysis. Each theme is substantiated by an extract from the verbatim transcription that accompanies it.

### 1.8.4 Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 5 discusses the relationship between the findings of the study as well as the research questions that were put in Chapter 1. It furthermore provides a discussion of the contribution that may have been made by the study. Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future research, practice and training.

### 1.9 Conclusion

This chapter began with an introduction to background information of the research that was conducted. Thereafter, I stated the primary questions, listed the secondary research questions and explained key concepts related to the study. This was followed by a discussion of the paradigmatic approaches and methodology that was used. The chapter concluded with an outline of the chapters that follow.

## 2.1 Introduction

Higher education institutions are involved in partnerships with people from high-risk areas. However, the perspectives of young people on higher education community engagement are often absent in studies. The literature discussed in this chapter aims to take a closer look at young people from rural communities who have been in partnership with higher education institutions.

Literature will be explored to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions and experiences of partnerships between higher education institutions and the relevant stakeholders. The chapter also provides a discussion of the South African background and lasting effects of the apartheid regime on high-risk communities. Various aspects of higher education community engagement are discussed, as well as the limited opinions of young people involved in higher education community engagement.

## 2.2 Young people

### 2.2.1 South African studies on young people

Blum and Nelson-Mmari (2004) indicate that during the last two decades much has changed in South Africa in terms of the economic, social, political and educational areas. They added that most of the changes were influenced by young people. Schools play a central role in the development and functioning of young people (Mampane, 2014). In a study on the resilience of young people in a township area, it was found that they define resilience based on their character, abilities and assets (Mampane, 2014). The young people attached to resilience qualities such as confidence, being tough, being committed to results as well as being able to set goals and solve problems (Mampane, 2014). Moreover, the definition of resilience was also associated with assets such as social support and having role models (Mampane, 2014). However, young people who experience multiple risk factors are likely to be less resilient and may have difficulty identifying social support that there may be around them, and as a result they would use ineffective ways of coping

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(Mampane, 2014). The construct of resilience should therefore be encouraged and supported by teachers, parents and caregivers to ensure that it develops into a character trait in most young people (Mampane, 2014).

The different backgrounds and social interactions of young people indicate that young people will develop different mind-sets, characters and values (Matope & Badroodien, 2015), depending on the various social networks that individual learners can call upon in addition to what may be possible to them in their lives. This produces a diverse understanding of achievement, as well as an unequal familiarity with how to navigate social spaces (Matope & Badroodien, 2015).

Matope and Badroodien (2015) conducted a study on the perception of young people of achievement. The findings indicate that young people have different perceptions of achievement, while some of the young people's views at the time contradicted views in existing literature (Matope & Badroodien, 2015). The perceptions of achievement were found to be much more qualitative in nature than quantitative or about marks. The concept of achievement is a complex one and its interpretation depends on what the young people aspire to (Matope & Badroodien, 2015). The study found a relationship between aspirations and achievement. Matope and Badroodien (2015) state that aspirations are used to guide young people to doing what they desire and motivate them to work hard. However, the inability to achieve certain goals, for example, due to financial constraints, often leads to some people re-evaluating their goals and aspirations (Matope & Badroodien, 2015).

### 2.2.2. International studies on young people

Marginalisation is a worldwide phenomenon and is defined as a "process by which a person becomes distanced from the conventional institutions in society" (Eldering & Knorth, 1998, p. 153). The marginalised are often referred to as a racial or ethnic minority and literature indicates that risk factors within the family are predictors of marginalisation (Eldering & Knorth, 1998). In a study that was conducted in the Netherlands by Eldering and Knorth (1998), it was found that marginalised youth perform academically poorer than their native counterparts who are not marginalised. In addition, marginalised male youth experienced a far greater measure of contact with police officials, while among female youth there were more incidences of running away from home (Eldering & Knorth, 1998).

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In order to make sustainable changes in communities all over the world, higher education institutions should engage with young people within the context of empowerment (Benner & Wang, 2014). Benner and Wang (2014) suggest that a well-considered and organised programme has the potential to empower young people by equipping them with skills and knowledge, offering experience as well as contributing to growth in their confidence. Young people should also be involved in partnerships in which they get opportunities to make real contributions to the communities around them (Morch, 2006). Encouraging youth participation allows young people to see how their communities work, what they require and how to make changes that will serve the community well and assist in development (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). In so doing, young people would acquire valuable skills that contribute to stronger civic engagement (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

However, there are potential barriers to higher education community engagement, which include the young people experiencing intimidation by adults, lacking the confidence to give opinions, as well as fearing that their opinions would be worthless (Benner & Wang, 2014).

## 2.3 Youth voice and participation: power

### 2.3.1 Youth and marginalisation

Sommers (2007, p. 19) pointed out that "we are living in the age of the youth". There are more youth today than has ever before been recorded in history (Sommers, 2007). One of the many rights of all children and young people is to be listened to (Joubert, 2012). Unfortunately many young people are at the receiving end of social disadvantage and exclusion. Society often overlooks them and the reality is that the youth are in a continuous process of making sense of their lives, forming identities and establishing their position in the world, with these processes being influenced by ethnicity, race, gender, social class and education (Chadderton & Colley, 2012).

### 2.3.2 Youth and marginalisation in education

Schools frequently minimise the meanings of daily experiences of youth (Te Riele, 2007). According to Smyth and Hattam (as cited in Te Riele, 2007, p. 55) "students' marginalisation by schooling can be as much a struggle for the schools and teachers as it is for the young people". Te Riele (2007) argues that the education system and

practices are impacted by history and society. In order to change the state of education and its impact on marginalised youth, we need to focus on society and on improving our conditions of life and reality.

According to Benner and Wang (2014) most literature states that the longer young people stay in school, the more likely they are to be active members of society and take part in community development. Education is necessary for the health, development and upward mobility of most rural communities (Barley & Beesley, 2007). However, literature argues that more and more youth are becoming early school-leavers, which has a bearing on their engagement with society (Te Riele, 2007). What most young people require is non-formal education or training and capital in order to make a living (Sommers, 2007).

Young people who are marginalised by race or socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to experience difficulties with scholastic performance and suffer psychological ill health and dysfunction (Benner & Wang, 2014). This furthermore implies a double disadvantage for youth who are in the minority and fall within the low SES range, as posited by Crosnoe (as cited in Benner & Wang, 2014). Marginalised young people often face victimisation at their schools. It is usually up to the teachers to engage the marginalised young people in school-based activities so they can get involved and experience a sense of belonging (Benner & Wang, 2014). Megahed and Ginburg (2008) emphasise that most school systems perpetuate the cycle of social inequality and serve the needs of the elite instead of the marginalised.

### 2.3.3 Youth and marginalisation in community development

Most studies on youth voices and community development are based on definitions that came from researchers and not the youth. This further stifles the voices of the youth, perpetuating the cycle of marginalisation (Christens & Kirshner, 2011). Youth participation involves engaging young people in institutions, processes and decisions that affect their lives (Ginwright & James, 2002).

By being involved in community development initiatives, the youth have an opportunity to raise issues relating to them, advocate their needs and interests as well as to be involved in decisions that affect them (Christens & Kirshner, 2011). This process addresses marginaliation and has great potential to promote social justice and reformation. Moreover, it challenges the view that the youth are problematic and encourages their being seen as resources (Christens & Kirshner, 2011). Effective

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youth involvement in community development initiatives can impact local communities, provincial, national and international governments (Jacob, Sutin, Weidman & Yeager, 2015).

## 2.4 Community engagement

### 2.4.1 International community engagement

Bernardo, Butcher and Howard (2011) stated that higher education institutions should be morally responsible for at-risk communities as far as social transformation is concerned. The purpose behind this responsibility is that it is at-risk communities that often have limited or no access to adequate resources or infrastructure (Bernardo et al., 2011). However, there are some higher education institutions that have little or no impact on their local communities (Jacob et al., 2015). In this case, what constitutes good higher education community engagement partnership? In order for any partnership to succeed and be effective there must be mutual understanding. Sommers (2007) argues that some higher education institutions seldom seek to understand the youth. Winter et al. and Hall (as cited in Bernardo et al., 2011) identified 9 core aspects of community engagement in the Australian context, namely; "1) engagement through teaching and learning, 2) curriculum design, 3) policies, 4) research, 5) external relations, 6) social and cultural engagement, 7) partnerships with school and educational providers, 8) economic engagement and 9) organization and participation of students" (p. 2).

The United Kingdom has various approaches to community engagement, as reported by The Russell Group of Universities (as cited in Bernardo et al., 2011). These approaches range from answering a specific call from the community without the university benefitting in any way to partnering with the community about something of specific interest which could be mutually beneficial to the community and the university (Bernardo et al., 2011). Crabtree (2008) opposed the approach that is used by the UK and stated that it is not the role of higher education institutions to alleviate poverty, which is so prevalent. The purpose of community engagement, according to Crabtree (2008), is to heighten global awareness and bring about understanding of both communities at risk and universities in order to create shared goals with a view to achieving social justice as well as develop the requisite skills.

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In the Philippines higher education institutions use the term "community development and service" (Bernardo et al., 2011, p. 4) instead of community engagement. Community development and service is supported by a variety of programmes that have been developed and are presented by the staff and university students in order to support the marginalised. Bernardo et al. (2011) highlighted the models used for community engagement by the higher education institutions in the Philippines and Australia. The former uses the needs-based model, which is religion-centered, whose aims are to respond to the various critical needs of the community, whereas the latter is more mission-based and seeks to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of its communities (Bernardo et al., 2011). Waghid (2014) indicated that economic development is a tool that has significant potential to assist with alleviating poverty, thus increasing human potential and in the process lessening the effects of inequality.

A review of community engagement and the social justice approaches of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, India, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa was conducted, as was reported by Holland (as cited in Hall, 2009). Holland (as cited in Hall, 2009) identified three diverse approaches that were used to bring about change, namely, "routine, strategic, and transformative" changes (p. 16). In order for change to occur, routine approaches should be challenged by applicable and popular solutions. Greater planning and coordination are necessary for change through strategic approaches. Complex demands require a significant expansion of individual and institutional capacities and new ways of working together in order to bring about transformative change (Hall, 2009).

Jacob et al. (2015) stated that an increasing number of top-ranking international higher education institutions are in collaboration with their rural counterparts in order to strengthen human and institutional capital. However, there seems to be limited collaboration between national and international universities, particularly on the part of countries involved in BRICS, which are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Macleod & Howell, 2013).

## 2.4.2 Community engagement in South Africa

Higher education institutions have long been encouraged to get involved in the reformation of our local and rural communities through community engagement partnerships (Mafumo, 2011). Bender (2008a, p. 16) quoted Council on Higher Education, when she said community engagement is "a less paternalistic, more reciprocal and inclusive relationship between a community and a higher education institution". However, Bernardo et al. (2011) argue that the definition of community engagement is often limited and excludes cultural, political and economic development. Although the definition of community engagement makes claims of a reciprocal relationship, community engagement is often of benefit to the higher education institutions and not that of the communities.

Lazarus et al. (2008) indicated that around 1997 a survey was conducted at South African universities to ascertain their involvement in community engagement initiatives. Some of the findings from the survey indicated the following;

'(1) most higher education institutions in South Africa included community service in their mission statement; (2) few higher education institutions had an explicit policy or strategy to operationalise this component of their mission statement; (3) most higher education institutions had a wide range of community service projects; and (4) generally these projects were initiated by innovative academic staff and students and not as a deliberate institutional strategy and certainly not as a core function of the academy (Lazarus et al., 2008, p. 60).

Arnold, Newman, Gaddy and Dean (2005) stated that in the year 2000 very limited research on rural education and schools had been available. This is a matter of interest because in 1994 higher education institutions were mandated to get involved with rural schools. This statement by Arnold et al. (2005) implies that several years after the onset of democracy, while universities had been mandated to get involved in partnerships with local communities, this mandate remained merely a mission statement, and moreover one that was prioritised. However, things have changed since then as an increasing number of universities nationally and internationally are taking this mandate seriously. But the question remains, are they doing enough? Are the needs of the communities at risk and people in rural areas being attended to? (Netsandama, 2010).

It is often the poorest of the poor who live in the rural areas (Myende, 2015). According to Firfirey and Carolissen (2010) poverty is a lack of income and inadequate wellbeing. Poverty as a result extends to the self, influencing one's perception of self, such as feelings of powerlessness and of being voiceless (Firfirey & Carolissen, 2010), hence a poor sense of self. According to Prinsloo (2003), with poverty often comes a culture of vulnerability, isolation and inadequacy regarding the physical and spiritual being. It is often the marginalised who see themselves as powerless (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Prinsloo, 2003). Gallegher (as cited in Budge, 2006) supports this concept and indicated that our thoughts, behaviours and emotions are shaped by our environment, genes, biological factors, history and relationships. This implies that youth at-risk, who are surrounded by lack in almost every aspect, whose challenges are magnified (Myende, 2015), may be influenced by their environment and may see themselves as they see their surroundings. It is therefore crucial to challenge the inequalities that are prevalent in at-risk communities, because the effects of these challenges are far-reaching (Budge, 2006).

Freeman (as cited in Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008, p. 16) regards youth and communities at-risk and higher education institutions as stakeholders, and they define stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm objectives". This implies that the partnership is mutually beneficial. Higher education institutions benefit with regard to its students showing a greater interest in ways that serving the community could improve the nature of coursework and learning in the curriculum (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). This phenomenon is termed service learning. Bringle and Hatcher (as cited in Bringle and Hatcher, 2000) define service learning as:

> "course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content..." (p. 505).

Rosner-Salazar (as cited in Rosner-Salazar, 2003b) indicated that part of the aim of service learning is an individual gaining the ability to express their own cultural influences, bias, attitudes, expectations and beliefs concerning multicultural issues. Furthermore, the objective is to identify key trends and characteristics in different

populations; widen the knowledge of theories relating to multicultural skills; and identify culturally sensitive strategies to be of service to people (Rosner-Salazar, 2003b).

## 2.5 Community engagement in higher education for social justice

### 2.5.1 Community engagement and social justice in South Africa

The marginalised youth include people who to a certain degree see themselves as having little or no future, while they often feel alienated from society (Prinsloo, 2003). Jennings, Everett, Lyne and Budlender (as cited in Prinsloo, 2003) posited that the marginalised youth seldom experience the effects of the changes taking place in the broader society and may have a poor self-image. With that said, I do not dispute that there are people in urban areas who are also experiencing poverty, or see themselves as powerless, nor do I imply that poverty is exclusive to rural areas. However, there seems to be a greater trend towards poverty in rural areas, according to Nieuwenhuis (2010), Prinsloo (2003), Fifirey and Carolissen (2010). This conclusion is moreover supported by Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008), who indicated that urban areas have better and more support structures as well as access to help, and present more opportunities for receiving assistance.

It is often found that youth who perform poorly academically, largely due to the limited resources, become early school-leavers (Myende, 2015). Many of the youth from rural areas are urged to leave and seek better opportunities in cities. The geographical area does not show any progress, though (Arnold et al., 2005). Hekter (as cited in Arnold et al., 2005), stated that those who perform well academically have great difficulty deciding whether to stay in the community or leave, having to choose between future goals and the desire to stay in their community, where they may feel a sense of belonging.

Education has the power to transform lives and help inspire youth to want better for themselves. It is also an essential tool in creating a just society (Petersen, Dunbar-Krige, & Fritz, 2008). Offering educational and psychological services can assist the process of achieving social justice (Petersen et al., 2008). It is important to understand the social conditions that the young people face as they are directly influenced by them; by understanding these conditions, insight is also gained into the young people themselves (Petersen et al., 2008), thus bringing about an

understanding how higher education institutions can be of service, who must take a closer look at rural communities through a positive lens instead of seeing only what is lacking and deficiencies (Rapmund & Moore, 2002).

Seeing communities from the perspective of justice rather than charity promotes examination of the power relationships that exist in the community-university partnership. It allows communities to be understood through the identification of their strengths, assets and wisdom versus just being understood from the viewpoint of deficits and needs (Rosner-Salazar, 2003b). The aforementioned is one of the underlying principles of the asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003).

The benefits of the asset-based approach are ownership of solutions, shared responsibility, mutual support and a caring environment, as well as individual capacity-building (Myende, 2015). When higher education institutions apply the asset-based approach they are assisting the at-risk communities to be more aware of the strengths they possess, develop social support and connections as well as relationships within the communities and with other stakeholders (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012).

A number of higher education institutions in South Africa such as the Universities of Pretoria, Johannesburg and Rhodes University, to name but a few, have taken up this service mandate and understand the contribution they can make in their local and in rural communities (Bender, 2008). The University of Pretoria has been collaborating with Grade 9 learners from a remote rural school in Mpumalanga to render psychological services through service learning with Educational Psychology trainees as a community engagement initiative (Ebersöhn, Bender & Carvalho-Malekane, 2010). The key objectives of service learning was in the first instance to assess the Grade 9 learners, then compile an asset map for career facilitation in terms of the school, which was used in the second instance to develop planned, group-based activities with those Grade 9 learners in terms of Educational Psychology intervention or therapy (Ebersöhn, 2007).

Rhodes University initiated Ithemba Counselling Services which supplies psychological services such as career and subject selection to Grade 9 learners in rural communities in the Eastern Cape (Sibiya, 2017). The Teboho Trust, a community engagement initiative supported by the University of Johannesburg, empowers learners by providing opportunities for growth through tutoring, holiday

camps and workshops to strengthen learners' self-esteem and academic achievement (The Teboho Trust, 2017).

## 2.5.2 International trends in community engagement and social justice

Community engagement and social justice for a long time received little attention from universities (Onyx, 2008; Snow, 2012). Even the few universities that attempted to mobilise community engagement and social justice did so incorrectly (Onyx, 2008). The universities were often regarded as the experts and this seemed to alienate the very people they were in collaboration with, although the thought that knowledge is socially construed is now fast gaining momentum (Onyx, 2008).

When executed appropriately, community engagement has the ability to assist with the social development and transformation of communities that are at-risk (Waghid, 2014). One of the ways to advance community engagement is using community development as an approach to community engagement (Bernardo et al., 2011). Gaines and Haines in Bernardo et al. (2012) explained community development as strategies that produce resources, which may be physical, human, social and/or financial, to increase the capability of people to improve their quality of life (Bernardo et al., 2011). Social research followed from a need to protect and advance community development (Onyx, 2008). Although aspects of community development have been in existence for decades, a recent trend among universities is to empower community members to play an active part in their own development (Onyx, 2008).

When social justice is allowed to inform our perspective, we become aware of pathological behaviours displayed by youth at risk as being connected to social inequalities that need to be addressed (Snow, 2012). It also alters the community's view of themselves as being recipients of charity to that of being active participants (Onyx, 2008). There has been a significant amount of support from government to assist with achieving social justice because if social structures are seen as having created inequality, then it should be these very same structures that redress those injustices. Hence, governments in countries such as the UK and Australia are providing financial and structural aid to advance social justice and community engagement (Onyx, 2008). Sher and Long (2012) conducted a comparative study between the United States of America and South Africa regarding the relevance of psychology. The study highlighted that psychology should look at communities from

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a sociohistorical perspective in order to contribute to social justice and transformation (Sher & Long, 2012).

## 2.6 Educational Psychology training for social justice

It is imperative to remember the role that the government should play and in which way our universities may be able to assist. Lubbe and Eloff (2004) stated that the only way to address vast socioeconomic and sociopsychological disparities and inequalities in terms of the needs of South African people is for educational psychologists to focus more on communities, on establishing networks and partnerships, and to collaborate with the relevant stakeholders (Ebersohn et al., 2010). Considering the vast number of young people who require psychological services, psychologists have to adapt and be more group-community orientated to make the highest impact on the lives of those at risk (Pillay, 2003; Ebersöhn et al., 2010).

Until recently, limited literature was available about psychological services that are more relevant and applicable in the South African context, particularly as regards the needs of the marginalised (Balfour et al., 2008). Neighbors (as cited in Ruane, 2010) indicated that very few black people used psychological services due to cultural values and belief systems. This could have been one of the reasons there was not much literature on the phenomenon. Furthermore, there is major concern about the availability of psychological services for a reasonable fee or even free of charge (Ruane, 2010). Donald et al. (2010) indicates that psychological services in South Africa are often provided by psychologists in private practice, resulting in the provision of psychological services to a limited number of people. This is why the government appointed psychologists to render a service, but this office is often short-staffed and does not always reach people in rural areas (Donald et al., 2010).

Considering the growing need for psychological services and there being but a few psychologists to offer the services, higher education institutions have taken up the call to be of service in communities to work within group settings as well as to empower and support communities at risk (Pillay, 2003). It is essential that the psychology profession purposefully describes and outlines its role and its function in assisting communities that are at risk (Pillay, 2003). There seems to be a need in South Africa to revise the professional training of psychologists and to create more

relevant and appropriate psychological services that are applicable to the South African population (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2011).

According to Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi and Bryant (2007) it is about time that a movement towards multicultural competence emerges amongst psychologists. It will allow them to work with people from various backgrounds and cultures while being aware of their own values and cultures (Constantine et al., 2007). Over the years the perception and nature of psychology has evolved so that it is less diagnostic (Lupuwana, Simbayi, & Elkonin, 1999) and more inclusive and supportive (Adelman & Taylor, 2000). Psychologists have become more accessible to people from various backgrounds and use the knowledge provided by clients to co-construct meaning instead of being the experts, as was previously perceived (Pillay, 2003).

Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2008) conducted a study in which they found that even with the ever changing trends in psychology, some schools still did not have access to psychological services. Most teachers indicated that the reason was because the Department of Education had a minimal number of psychologists who serviced a large number of schools, they were overworked and had an enormous load of administrative duties to carry out (Mashau et al., 2008). Service learning addresses these types of issues.

## 2.7 Marginalisation of the youth voice in studies on community engagement and Educational Psychology training

According to McLaughlin (2000), most youth perceive themselves as invisible and often feel as though they are not receiving support from the communities in which they reside. However, Broadbent, Papadopoulos and Cacciattolo (2008) reported that a shift taking place within some societies and that instead of marginalising their youth (Sonn, Santens & Ravau, 2011), or seeing them as lacking knowledge and experience, they have sought to increase their participation in matters relating to them. This shift has in turn led to an increase in some of the youth's confidence and cooperation in civic engagement (Ausyouth, as cited in Broadbent, et al., 2008; Mitra, 2004)

With the shift that is currently taking place towards acknowledging the importance of and creating a platform for the youth to share their voices by being partners with stakeholders, it has become evident that they possess knowledge and views that

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need to be shared (Mitra, 2004). Having their voices heard would bring a sense of pride, ownership and value to young people (Mitra, 2004). "When placed into practice, student voice can consist on the most basic level of youth sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions" (Mitra, 2004, p. 651). It could also result in young people partnering with adults to challenge the problems they face in their schools and communities at large (Mitra, 2004). Sonn et al. (2011) stated that it is important for the youth to share their voices on school-based interventions as it assists with developing them as responsible citizens of the community.

Prinsloo (2003) conducted research in which researchers asked youths aged between 16 and 20 how they see themselves as South Africans. Their responses varied from being satisfied with the state of the country and their position in it to feeling excluded as members of the South African society, to feeling like outcasts, uncertain about their future in the country (Prinsloo, 2003). I am also anticipating varied responses from the youth involved in the study because, although they were a part of the same event, it is likely that each of them would have experienced it differently. What the youth bring to the study is important and will also determine how they experience the event in this case the partnership (Boud & Walker, 1990).

Some of the aspects that the youth bring to events are feelings, expectations as well as previous experiences, some of which they are not even aware of. Reflection is therefore an important process that requires the whole person to be present and to consider the learning experience and the event. Young people can also bring intent to an event, which acts like the zoom function of a camera (Boud & Walker, 1990). It focuses on detail that is more important. In the same manner intent supplies a frame of reference from which the experience is viewed. Boud and Walker (1990) mentioned that the more the youth know about a particular event, the more they will have the intent to experience it, otherwise there is a risk that they may fail to use opportunities to learn and gain insight. Boud and Walker (1990) suggest that effective learning occurs through experience, which is subjective and personal.

In her study, Mitra (2004) found that by giving the youth a platform to share their voices and perspectives, they were able to express their opinions and felt that their views were heard. The youth moreover created new roles as change-makers and saw themselves as agents of change, while they developed their leadership skills, including a sense of responsibility to assist other people in need (Mitra, 2004). They also developed the confidence to speak publicly (Mitra, 2004).

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Rendering psychological services requires, amongst other factors, a good rapport and a caring relationship. In a study conducted in 2007, young people aged between 12 and 14 were asked what constitutes a caring relationship and a caring school (Weeks, 2009). It was, from the perspective of the young people, that the person who cares, or the carer (in this context the Educational Psychology trainees) should be able to give support when the other experiences problems, they must share most of the available information, listen carefully when the other speaks and should serve as a guide for the other (Weeks, 2009). The young people wanted their schools to be more connected to the community (Weeks, 2009), which further indicates that the youth are not just individuals, but part of a bigger system, such as their communities in which they live.

## 2.8 Conceptual framework and working assumptions

The voices and opinions of young people have often been silent in local communities, which could likely have led to the young people experiencing marginalisation. In addition, for some time there were only limited studies that discussed the voices of young people regarding their collaboration with higher education institutions and community engagement. This marginalisation possibly contributed to young people's frames of reference (Taylor, 2008), which is experiencing themselves as powerless as their voices are not being acknowledged or recognised. The manner in which higher education institutions manage community engagement, incorporating social justice as a central theme in their community engagement programmes, along with the training that Educational Psychology students receive, will possibly create an environment where the youth are more open to participating and sharing experiences. This process is an integral part of the transformative learning theory, which could aid in achieving a qualitative shift in perception and meaning-making (Sterlin, 2010).

The purpose of emphasising youth voices is that it is an effective method to determine to what extent the community engagement programmes are working and contributing to the lives of the youth, in so doing contributing to social transformation (Bernardo et al., 2011). Young people's voices are underpinned by our cultural, social, educational, economic, political, or psychological beliefs (Merizow, 1990). Therefore, young people who have been marginalised and as a result see

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themselves as powerless will examine their lives and experiences through that marginalised lens or from that perspective.

The need for psychological services is so great that psychologists and psychology students do not always have the liberty to work with young people individually level, but makes it necessary to incorporate other systems. What should also be taken into consideration is the influence that social injustices have on high-risk youth. In order to promote social justice, higher education institutions should give psychology students an opportunity to develop and implement programmes for high-risk communities regarding the social injustices they face, giving the psychology students an opportunity to work outside their comfort zones (Constantine et al., 2007).

The higher education institutions in South Africa and in international countries share community engagement as one of their missions, although they have different approaches to community engagement, which are dictated by the needs of the surrounding communities that are at risk. For higher education community engagement to be effective it should have social justice as the central theme in order to influence societal systems. Higher education institutions ought to revisit the curriculum for Educational Psychology students to ensure that they have multicultural competency skills in order to assist the youth from all walks of life (Constantine et al., 2007).

Waghid (2014) emphasised that social justice and higher education institutions are an encounter. He describes the encounter as "the individual changing the entities but also being changed by the entities" (p. 449). This is when cultural exchange takes place and it is essential to the process of achieving social justice. Social justice requires psychologists to attend to the needs of the marginalised and stand up for the equality of all people (Waghid, 2014). It is of importance that higher education institutions provide Educational Psychology students with training to give them the ability and confidence to work in a multicultural setting.

## 2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I positioned my research project within the framework of the existing literature by discussing community engagement and the different forms of community engagement. Based on the literature review that I conducted, it appears that there is a lack of research that identifies the opinions of young people of higher

education community engagement. Available research on higher education community engagement states the perspectives of researchers and not those of young people. Some studies on higher education community engagement contradict each other with regard to the reciprocity of the partnership. I used transformative learning as the conceptual framework of this research study to obtain young people's experiences of a higher education community engagement partnership in order possibly to inform knowledge of this little-studied topic.

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# CHAPTER 3
# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1    Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the relationship between young people and higher education institutions as well as the collaboration between them.  Various forms of engagement and the role that higher education institutions play in redressing the injustices of the past through higher education community engagement were also explored.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the purpose of the study followed by a discussion of the research design that was used, an exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology employed as well as ways in which weaknesses were addressed. Rich context is provided to gain an understanding of the participants and the community in which they live. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical strategies, quality criteria and my role as researcher in this study.

## 3.2 Research design: Instrumental case study

### 3.2.1 Defining the instrumental case

The case study is often used when qualitative research is conducted. It is a holistic analysis which is used when one is aiming to describe and obtain in-depth data on a single phenomenon within a natural setting (Harling, 2002). In terms of this study, the case being studied is: "Young people's perspectives about an ongoing partnership between a higher education institution and a rural high school". To add depth and detail to the case study research design, it was necessary to use multiple methods to collect data (Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007), such as Participatory Reflection and Action activities and presentations as well as audio and visual data (Cohen et al., 2003; Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007).

I selected an instrumental case study design because it provides a broad understanding and descriptive view of a certain phenomenon (Harling, 2002), with the focus on the experiences of young people who have been involved in partnerships with a higher education institution. The use of an instrumental case

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study design assisted me with obtaining a deeper and richer understanding of and greater insight into the viewpoints, experiences and opinions of the participants in this research. The case study not only provided a rich and comprehensive understanding of young people's experiences, but it also provided data that the researcher might not have considered. This is the data that is unexpected and might otherwise not have been obtained (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001).

However, case studies also have certain limitations. Due to the depth and detailed nature of the data collected, one can easily become overwhelmed by the amount of data that required to be analysed (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). The findings from an instrumental case study are only applicable to the specific case and can therefore not be generalised to the wider population (Gerring, (2004). Van Wynsberghe and Khan (2007) stated that there is a likelihood of subjectivity. Researchers may at times look only for patterns that confirm their opinions of the case.

In order to address these challenges thorough management and analysis of the data were essential. The data analysis process was done extensively over a period of time to eliminate the researchers being overwhelmed. The steps provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) provided guidelines for analysing the data appropriately. The study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on higher education community engagement and is not to be generalised in order to apply in other contexts. A reflection journal (See Annexure I) was kept and there were discussions with peers and supervisors regarding the research process and findings in order to remove bias and subjectivity (Cohen et al., 2003).

### 3.2.2 Convenience sampling of the case

I selected convenience sampling for the case in this study (Cohen et al., 2003). Marshall (1996) described convenience sampling as "the least rigorous technique" (p. 523). The rationale for convenience sampling is that this study forms part of an existing long-term partnership between a rural secondary school and a higher education institution. This partnership implies that there are established relationships and resources in place.

Convenience sampling is often criticised for its lack of credibility and bias (Marshall, 1996). The sample often does not represent the larger population, hence the findings cannot be generalised (Farrokhi & Mohmoudi-Hamadabad, 2012). This study seeks to provide a deep and rich description of young people's experiences of

higher education community engagement. The data was collected from multiple sources and member checking was conducted to confirm the credibility of this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The case was conveniently selected based on the following criteria (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010):

1. Availability, time efficiency, accessibility and effortless to source.
2. An established relationship between the rural school and the higher education institution.

## 3.3 Participant sampling

### 3.3.1 Sampling technique and selection process

Purposive sampling was used (Tongco, 2007) to include young participants who would be able to share as much rich information about their experiences of the ongoing partnership with a higher education institution. Data was obtained from young people who had been in collaboration with the students from the University of Pretoria in the Flourishing Learning Youth intervention, or FLY practicum. According to Bernard as well as Lewis and Sheppard as cited in Tongco (2007) "the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience" (p. 147).

Purposive samples are not bias-free as the researcher uses his or her own judgement to select participants, and it is therefore subjective, at times influencing its reliability (Burger & Silima, 2006). Moreover, as with all qualitative methods, findings from the study cannot be generalised (Tongco, 2007). Selection criteria included: age, gender and home circumstances.

The participants were selected purposefully according to the criteria provided by McMillan and Schumacher (2001). Selection criteria included:

1. The young people participated in a rural school Educational Psychology intervention (FLY practicum) between 2006 and 2013.
2. Their residences were within an approximately 5 to 10 km radius from the school.
3. The participants were able to attend after-school data generation sessions.
4. The sample was stratified in terms of age, gender and year cohort of participation.

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Annual cohort numbers varied from 60 to 110 young people, depending on enrolment in Grade 9 at the school. The following photograph (Photograph 3.1), which was taken on the final day of the two-day data collection process (03/09/2014), shows some of the participants who participated in this study. Refer to Annexure B for consent given by participants to include a photograph that identifies participants in the research study.



**Photograph 3.1** Some of the sampled young participants, 2006 to 2013 (Photo captured: 03/09/2014)

The demographic questionnaire (See Annexure A) completed by the participants provided information on their gender, age, language proficiency, trauma-related incidents experienced, level of education, year of involvement in the FLY practicum and access to basic services. The following two graphs depict the year cohort and gender of the participants. The information was obtained from the demographic questionnaire.
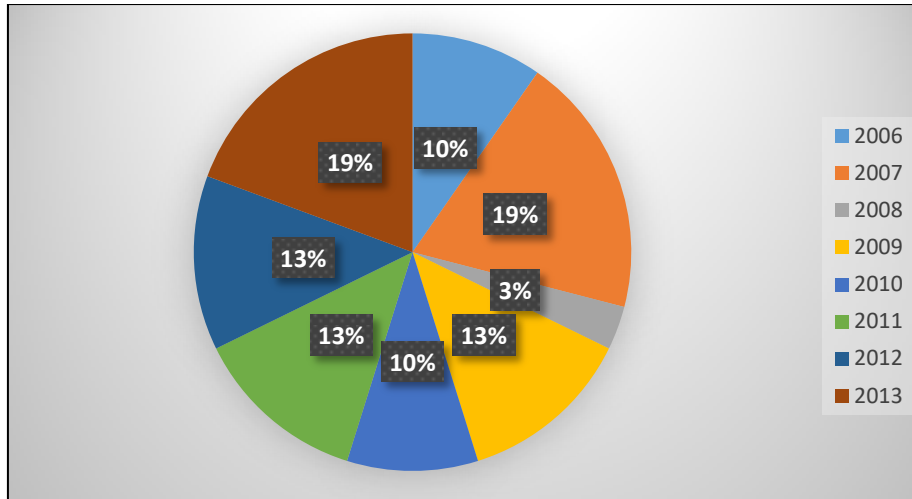
**Graph 3.1** Year cohort

For the data collection process, the young people were grouped according to the year in which they participated in the FLY practicum. Graph 3.1 illustrates a slightly uneven distribution of participants over the 8 years in question. The 2007 (n=6) and 2013 (n=6) cohorts had the highest representation in this study, while the 2008 (n=1) cohort had the lowest representation. Participants from 2006, and 2009 to 2013 had an average of four participants per year cohort who participate in the study.
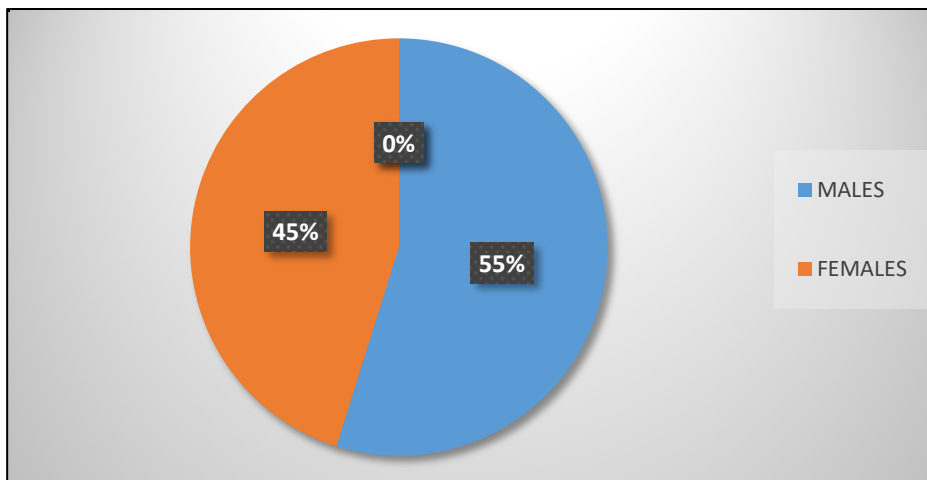


**Graph 3.2** Gender

The 31 participants in this study comprised both males and females. As illustrated in Graph 3.2, the males represented the majority, with 17 participants, while the females numbered 14.

### 3.3.2 Sampling process

A teacher at the rural secondary school assisted the researcher with compiling a list of names of the young people who were enrolled in Grade 9 between 2008 and 2013, who were consequently involved in the FLY practicum (Refer to Annexure J for research schedule). We visited all the current Grade 10 to 12 classrooms to enquire which of the young people who had been involved in the partnership were able to remain on the school premises after school hours for data generation purposes. During the classroom visits, the young people provided me with their telephone contact details so that I could contact them with regard to the details about data collection. The young people also provided me with the contact details of other young people who had already completed Grade 12, particularly young people who had been involved in the FLY practicum in 2006 and 2007.

There were 79 young people currently in the school who showed an interest in participating in the study. With the teacher's input, I selected the young people from the list of names compiled by the teacher and I based on the selection criteria specified in 3.3.1. Cohorts were unevenly distributed owing to some learners not being able to stay after school, the contact details of some were no longer in use and some post-Grade 12 learners resided further than 15 km from the school premises. The following graph (Graph 3.3) illustrates the level of education of the participants.
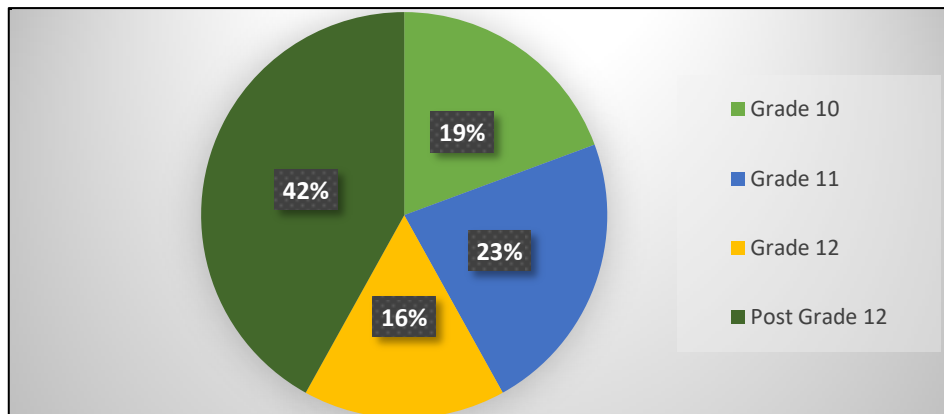


**Graph 3.3** Level of education

As depicted in the graph above, more than half of the participants were still learners at the school and 13 had completed Grade 12. From those 13, 1 had full-time employment as a secretary at a nearby primary school. Another post-Grade 12 participant had obtained a diploma in Information Technology and was seeking employment. Three had expressed a desire to study further, but experienced

financial constraints that rendered them unable to do so, and the rest were seeking employment. They all still resided near the school. **Therefore, the sample was underrepresented with respect to out-of-school young people.**
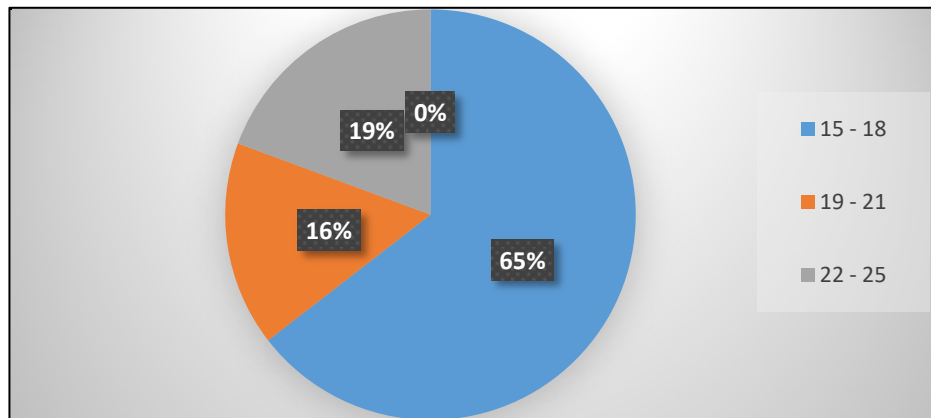


**Graph 3.4** Age group

Graph 3.4 depicts the age group of the participants. 20 (male=11 female=9) of the 31 participants were aged between 15 and 18 years and only 2 (male=2) of the 20 participants had completed Grade 12. The 5 (male=1 female=4) participants who were aged between 19 and 21, and 6 (male=3 female=3) who were aged between 22 and 25 had obtained their national certificates.

## 3.4 Data collection and documentation

### 3.4.1 In-depth Participatory Reflection and Action discussions

Participatory Reflection and Action activities were selected as a primary source of data collection. PRA requires critical thinking and seeks to change the beliefs and attitudes of participants involved (White & Taket, 1997). PRA seeks to identify and mobilise the power within people, to encourage their active participation and help them to focus on their world in detail (Chambers, 1994a). PRA is used as a manner in which knowledge is created collectively through detailed analysis and interaction (Chambers, 1994b). This knowledge is then used as a tool for action and development (Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). PRA discussions and presentations were selected because they enable people who often experience oppression and marginalisation to share their perspectives and voices on matters relating to them, thus allowing others to learn from their insight. PRA is not just about extracting information, but about the rural young people learning more about themselves, and their analysing their world in greater detail, resulting in planning and acting towards achieving solutions (Chambers, 1994). This process aids the process of

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empowerment as they altered their stance from being seen as passive to being active (Chambers, 1994a).

However, PRA discussions and presentation are at times difficult to plan and are often directed by data the participants provide (Chambers, 2007). As with all group settings, some people may not feel comfortable sharing their experiences for various reasons, resulting in their voices not being heard. It is the researcher's role to facilitate the conversation and activities as well as manage group dynamics (Chambers, 1994b).

Another limitation is that there is a minimal format to follow and participants are regularly guided by means of an informal set of questions which are often flexible (Chambers, 2008). At times PRA may seem to be an unreliable tool to use (Chambers, 2008). However, for the purposes of this study, it was used to give participants a platform to share their experiences and views, to give them a sense of empowerment, an opportunity to analyse the partnership.

### 3.4.2 Process on days of data collection

Data was collected over a two-day period, two to three hours daily (Refer to Annexure J, which reflects the research schedule). This process occurred after school hours in one of the classrooms at the school as most of the participants resided nearby. A light meal, fruit and refreshments were provided for the participants (See Annexure E for the programme). The research team comprised of two Masters in Educational Psychology students, two Doctorate students, the research leader and an international researcher.

The research leader and I explained the purpose of the research to all the participants. Participants were grouped according to the year in which they were involved in the FLY practicum (between 2006 and 2013), with six groups in total (See photograph 3.2). They were provided with a programme (Annexure E) for the two days and provided with consent forms (Annexure B) for their participation in the research, a demographic questionnaire (Annexure A), as well as a daily register of attendance (Annexure D). Considering that the participants' home language is Siswati and IsiZulu, I communicated in both IsiZulu and English, translating the instructions, consent forms, demographic questionnaire and research questions to ensure optimal comprehension and communication. They were given the option to communicate in either language.

**Photograph 3.2** Participants grouped in 6 cohorts (Photo captured: 02/09/2014)

### 3.4.3 PRA discussions and presentations

To obtain the experiences of the young people about higher education community engagement, the participants were asked to participate in PRA discussions and thereafter to present their thoughts, knowledge and experiences. The fundamental aim of PRA discussions is to obtain data for research purposes by the members of the group interacting with one another and sharing their perspectives (Chambers, 1994a). Participants had the liberty to share their perspectives and were not limited to choosing the options given to them by the researcher (Chambers, 1994a). They were encouraged to interact with one another (Chambers, 1994a) actively to contribute to the topic by sharing their knowledge. The four PRA research questions that were asked are the following, with visual presentation of the questions provided in photographs 3.3 to 3.6:

1.  Why do you think the University of Pretoria's students come to your school every year?
2.  How did they help you?
3.  What did you not like?
4.  What can they do differently in future?
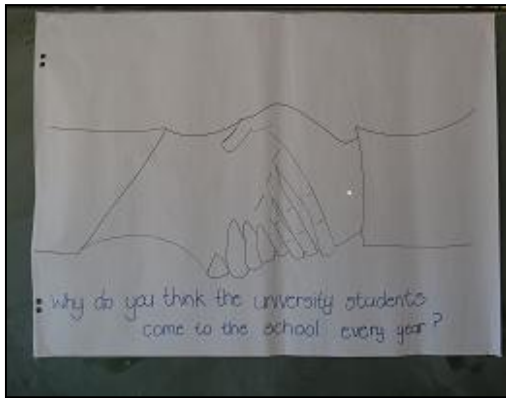
**Photograph 3.3** PRA Question 1

(Date captured: 02/09/2014)
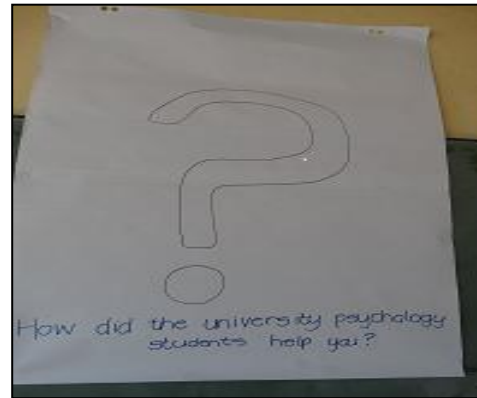


**Photograph 3.4** PRA Question 2

(Date captured: 02/09/2014)
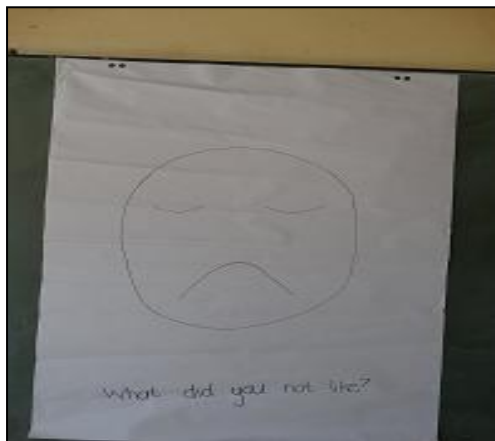


**Photographs 3.5** PRA Question 3

(Date captured: 03/09/2014)
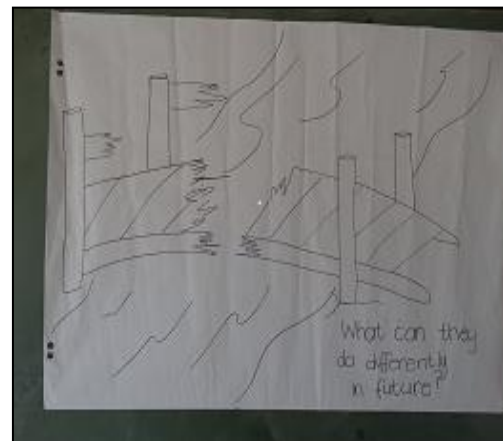


**Photograph 3.6** PRA Question 4

(Date captured: 03/09/2014)

In addition to the visual stimulus/posters I presented the questions to the participants orally (refer to photograph 3.7). I also translated and explained the questions in IsiZulu to ensure sufficient comprehension (refer to photograph 3.9). Participants were asked to discuss the questions (refer to photograph 3.8) in groups, and the groups afterwards to combine their thoughts on the posters that were provided (refer to photograph 3.10). Thereafter, they selected a group member to present their group-generated answers to the rest of the participants and research team orally (see photographs 3.11 – 3.14).

**Photograph 3.7** Researcher orally presenting the question

(Date captured: 03/09/2014)



**Photograph 3.8** Group discussion of the question

(Date captured:  02/09/2014)

**Photograph 3.9** Researcher explaining questions

(Date captured: 02/09/2014)



**Photograph 3.10** Participants writing down groups' ideas

(Date captured: 02/09/2014)

The following photographs show a few of the presentations by the groups. The participants presented in English, and had the option to communicate in Siswati or isiZulu when they were asked for clarification. They gave permission for recordings (audio and video) of the presentations, so we could capture all the data in specific detail (Cohen et al., 2003).



**Photographs 3.11 & 3.12** Presentations of PRA discussions for Groups 1 & 6
(Date captured: 02/09/2014)



**Photographs 3.13 & 3.14** Presentation of PRA discussions for Groups 2 & 4
(Date captured: 03/09/2014)

### 3.4.4 Data documentation

The responses written on the posters were captured electronically in Microsoft Word documents for the data analysis process (Refer to Annexure F) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The audio recording of the presentations was transcribed verbatim for data analysis (See Annexure G) (Fossey, Harvey, Mc Dermott, & Davidson, 2002). Written texts are sometimes inadequate, according to Stringer (2004), so I also

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made use of photographs and videos as they often add depth and richness to texts, providing better comprehension (Cohen et al., 2003). Annexure G contains a DVD of all the photographs and video footage we obtained, with the consent of the participants (Stringer, 2004), of the data collection process and observations of the context (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011).

Although photographs and videos also evoke meaning and reflection (Cohen et al., 2003), they are sometimes difficult to analyse due to the richness they contain (Harper, 2005). Moreover, they run the risk of being misconstrued (Harper, 2005). In order to address these challenges, I correlated the audio data with the photographs, video footage and member checking to ensure that I documented the young people's voices as accurately as possible.

Field notes contain observations of the data collection process that was undertaken (See Annexure L). These observations add richness and detail to the data (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). Stringer (2004) indicated that observations give researchers an in-depth view of how participants ordinarily go about their lives. By recording observations as field notes I gained an understanding of the context in which I found myself, which enriched the study (Stringer, 2004). A significant flaw in observations is that the behaviour of those being observed can be influenced, thus making the interpretation of the observations subjective (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). To challenge this flaw most of the observations were captured as visual data, while I also kept a research journal in which I reflected and noted points during the data collection process (Cohen et al., 2003).

## 3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Data sources included Microsoft Word documents of the content of PRA posters and verbatim transcripts of PRA presentations of the audio recordings (See Annexures F and G). The data analysis process involves arranging of data, compiling patterns and giving meaning to the data collected for analysis, then refining the data into themes through a process of coding and, finally, presenting the data in the form of tables (See Annexure F) (Creswell, 2007).

For the purpose of this particular study, thematic analysis was implemented to analyse the data in order to establish the experiences of the participants. Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within

data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). One has to rely on one's own judgement in this regard and should be able to provide evidence of the process that was followed during the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Relying on one's own judgement can be an overwhelming challenge as it is easy to contaminate the data analysis process with one's bias and perceptions. A way to counter this, or preventing it from occurring in my study was to conduct member checking one year after the data analysis process, when I pursued clarification and confirmation of the data the participants had provided (Creswell, 2007).

The data analysis process followed the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six steps of thematic analysis include the following: Step 1 – *Familiarise yourself with data collected*. The researcher should get to know the data thoroughly by reading through all of it to absorb as much detail as possible. After having collected the data, I went through the transcriptions (Annexure F) several times, cross-referencing the audio data with the visual recordings to make sure that I understood everything that was said and confirming that it was correct.

Step 2 – *Coding*. This step involves identifying key words, and making labels and notes of points that seem similar. Using codes, or colour-coding the data makes it easier to analyse. After having carefully examined the data, I identified similar key words or phrases throughout all four questions responded to by all six groups of participants. The key words and phrases were marked with different colours for easy identification during analysis (Refer to Annexure F for coding process).

Step 3 – *Searching for themes.* A theme is a comprehensible and meaningful pattern in the data that is relevant to the question asked in the research. In Braun & Clarke (2006, p.6) it is described as follows: "If codes are the bricks and tiles in a brick and tile house, then themes are the walls and roof panels." This process involves looking at similarities and patterns in the codes that are generated. After having done the colour-coding in Step 2, I discovered the trend or pattern that had formed. Similar key words had started to form in the groups, for example, when all the participants had given similar responses to a certain question that was asked (See Annexure F).

Step 4 – *Revising the themes.* This involves very carefully going through the themes identified in Step 3. Checking the relationship between themes followed, and seeing whether they correlated with what was asked. It allowed me to double-check

the themes I had identified, ensuring that I did not miss anything, and then I incorporated all the key words and phrases that led to these themes (Refer to Annexure F). Furthermore, it also provided me with an opportunity to look at the outliers or exclusions, which are key words and phrases that appeared once throughout all the data.

Step 5 – *Defining and naming themes*. This step requires the researcher to conduct and write an analysis of each theme, identifying the meaning of each theme and constructing a brief and informative name for each theme that had been identified. I was required to take a closer look at the data, and identify themes and subthemes (See Annexure F for themes). The themes subsequently had to be defined or explained as well as given a title.

Step 6 - *Writing up*. This is a step that is vital in the data analysis process. It is the compilation of the data in a concise albeit understandable manner. These steps proved to be helpful in the process of making meaning of the data that was collected. After having completed all five steps, I had a clear idea of what I was talking about when discussing the results of the data analysis process. I was able to make sense of the themes and subthemes, and connect them to the four questions that had been asked.

The photographs, videos and audio data (Annexure G) that had been obtained were used to ensure the transcripts were as accurate as possible, which concomitantly made the analysis accurate. The use of such data adds a sense of objectivity to the analysis process, removing bias, judgements and assumptions that I may have brought into it (Gajjar, 2013). The findings of the study will be discussed and presented in table format in the chapter that follows. I developed a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria that informed who could take part and who could not. In this study, the primary goals for inclusion were young people who had been involved in the FLY practicum throughout the previously identified years and who would be able to stay behind after school to participate in the study. Therefore, the exclusion criteria would be young people who had not taken part in the practicum and those who could not remain behind after school hours.

## 3.6 Quality criteria

I made use of Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) discussions, with presentations and observations for data collection (See research schedule in Annexure J) (Chambers, 1994a; Ebersöhn& Ferreira, 2011). Using multiple methods facilitates crystallising the study, according to Cohen et al. (2003). The process of crystallisation enriches the study and adds depth to what is being studied (Cohen et al., 2003). In this instance it is the experiences of young people who had participated in the FLY practicum.

I had to ensure trustworthiness in the manner in which I interacted with the young people and therefore used the PRA guidelines. The foundation of trustworthiness within a study is the way in which the researcher is able to convince the reader that the findings of a study are worth paying attention to and, furthermore, that the research is of a good quality (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The trustworthiness of this study was established in the four criteria mentioned by Babbie and Mouton (2001), which include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

### 3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility aims to demonstrate that the research was carried out in such a manner that it would ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Gajjar, 2013). Furthermore, it confirms that the findings of the study come from the data that were obtained and that they were not manipulated in any way (Creswell, 2007). The following strategies must be put in place to ensure the study is credible (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The first strategy was triangulation. In this specific study, I used various methods and sources to ensure that the results would remain the same. These include PRA presentations (Annexure F) and visual data (See Annexure G for photographs and videos).

The second strategy that was used was member checking (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). I documented the data obtained from the data generation sessions into transcriptions, which were presented to the participants several months later (See Annexure J for research schedule). This was done in order that the participants could confirm or deny that the data I collected was a true record of what they had said. The aim of member checking (see Annexure H) is mainly to correct obvious

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errors, clarify misunderstandings and to provide additional information that the participants believe to be relevant to the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### 3.6.2 Transferability

Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe transferability as the extent to which the findings of the study that was conducted can be applied, are relevant in other contexts or with other respondents. It involves providing rich and in-depth descriptions and information to the readers so that they are given enough information to evaluate the applicability of the findings to other contexts (Seale, 1999). In Chapter 1, I provided a rich description of the context in which the young people from the rural school find themselves.

### 3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability is when the researcher documents all the data, the methods and decisions made during the research practicum, as well as the results thereof (Seale, 1999). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), the research should be able to provide the reader with enough evidence that if the research process were to be repeated, with the same or similar participants, in the same or a similar manner, the findings would also be similar (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). As a means to ensure dependability, I engaged in in-depth discussions with my two research supervisors. These discussions involved reviewing the findings of the study to provide clarity where there may possibly be misunderstandings as well as to provide guidance for further analysis. Refer to Annexure K for appointment dates and notes of the discussions. Considering that this study is qualitative, the aim is not to generalise the findings, but rather comprehensively to understand the manner in which rural young people experienced their partnership with a higher education institution, which may possibly contribute to literature about this specific topic.

### 3.6.4 Confirmability

Babbie and Mouton (2001) indicated that confirmability is the extent to which the findings are the product of the aim of the research and not the bias of the researcher. It is therefore certain that the study is free from bias. Seale (1999) stated that it is of the utmost importance to have an audit trail of documents relevant to the study to

ensure the confirmability of the study. It was essential to have an adequate paper trail of all the documents relating to the study (Seale, 1999).

In this study, I implemented an audit trail by means of the following methods;

1. Audio recordings of the presentations made by the participants (Annexure G)

2. Visual recordings (video and photographs) of the participation within the groups and presentations (Annexure G)

3. Summaries and condensed notes of the demographic data and themes (Annexure H)

4. Field notes (Annexure L)

5. Notes for member checking (Annexure H)

6. All documents relating to the study such as consent forms, demographic forms, posters and notes made by participants.

### 3.6.5 My role as researcher

My role as a researcher within the constructivism paradigm entailed my being aware that I was not the primary source of knowledge, but was offered the chance to facilitate and observe a process of knowledge-sharing among young people about their experiences of a long-term higher education partnership. As someone who comes from a somewhat rural context, I had to be careful not to allow my experiences to contaminate the data collected from the participants (Maree, 2007). I spent time in peer supervision as well as reflecting through making notes in my journal (Annexure I). This assisted me with an awareness of blind spots. Furthermore, some of the participants found it easier to express themselves in IsiSwati, which was their mother tongue, or have the questions translated. I had to be cognisant of not leading the responses they provided (Chambers, 2008).

I began this study with the full knowledge of the importance of reflexivity. It was important for me to undergo a process of reflection so that I would always be aware of any possible bias that I might have, and therefore engage in reflection on the study in detail (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The process of reflexivity required me to take a step back as a researcher and establish the relevance of the knowledge gained from the participants, as well as to determine the potential and practical benefits of this knowledge gained. I consequently kept a reflective journal (Cohen et al., 2003) that was aimed at my achieving a heightened awareness of ways in which my perceptions, subjectivity, if any, background and standards may influence me

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and the study (Cohen et al., 2003). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a reflective journal is a document in which one expresses thoughts and ideas about a specific event. During the process of this study, I documented my feelings and thoughts as they occurred in order to capture as much rich detail about the research process as I could. This process helped me to be aware of the manner in which my thought processes unfolded and how that could possibly influence the study.

## 3.7 Ethical considerations

Considering that this study is of a social nature, firstly, I had to be cognisant of the responsibility that I had not only as a researcher in search of participants' knowledge and truth, but also towards the research participants themselves (Cohen et al., 2003). Secondly, as an Educational Psychology Master's student, I had to adhere to the ethical code of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (Department of Health, 1974). I strived to preserve the participants' dignity and rights. Moreover, I aimed to ensure that the participants were not deceived or harmed in any way, therefore I had to be transparent with them and enlighten them of information relating to the study. Aspects concerning ethical considerations are discussed below.

### 3.7.1 Informed consent

The informed consent process ensures that participants are taking part in the research voluntarily, with the full knowledge of what the study is about, its limitations, risks and benefits (Gajjar, 2013). In this regard, it was essential that the informed consent form (See Annexure B) be explained to the participants and translated in isiZulu, in order to ensure optimal comprehension. The participants then had the freedom to decide if they wanted to partake in the research and if they wanted their photographs to be used in the reports (Chambers, 2008). The participants were made aware of the purpose of the study, what their participation entailed and the right to terminate their participation should they not want to take part anymore (see Annexure B). Although they were encouraged to participate in the group discussions and presentations, they were given the option to decline if they felt uncomfortable with doing so (Chambers, 2008). This study met the requirements stipulated by the Mpumalanga Department of Education (See Annexure C) and consent was granted that the University of Pretoria may access the school and conduct the study on the

premises. It was moreover stipulated that the data collection process could only take place after school hours so as to not interrupt the school day (See Annexure C).

### 3.7.2 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

To ensure the privacy of the participants, the principle of confidentiality and anonymity had to be made a priority at all times. All identifying data had to be protected and handled with the utmost care (Cohen et al., 2003). The information that was collected was handled in a confidential manner and the data was securely stored in the research office at the University of Pretoria.

### 3.7.3 Protection from harm

Research should never cause harm of any nature, whether it be emotional, physical or psychological, regardless of the consent participants had given (Babbie, 2005). I did not anticipate any kind of harm coming to the participants, but I nevertheless explained possible harm the participants might experience. For instance, most of the participants enquired about bursaries and had hoped they would receive the financial assistance to study further. It was my ethical responsibility to explain my position as a researcher and emphasise the purpose of the study.

## 3.8 Conclusion

Chapter 3 consisted of a discussion of the paradigmatic perspective, the research design, methodology and data analysis and interpretation process that was used in the research study. Furthermore, I also discussed the ethical guidelines, quality criteria of the research and the role that I play as researcher. In Chapter 4 the results of the data analysis process and data interpretation are discussed and presented.

# CHAPTER 4
# RESULTS OF THE STUDY

## 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented a description of the paradigmatic perspective, research design, research methodology, data analysis and interpretation measures that were applied in this research study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical guidelines and quality criteria that were considered for the purpose of this study.

The aim of chapter 4 is to provide a comprehensive discussion of the results from the thematic analysis that was conducted. The evidence used for the analysis consists of Participatory Reflection and Action activities and presentations, audio and visual data. The activities and presentations relate to the experiences of learners at a rural school who were involved in a community engagement partnership with Educational Psychology students between 2006 and 2013.

## 4.2   Results of the thematic analysis

Two main themes emerged from the data collected and analysed through thematic analysis, namely: Youth perspectives on their development in a higher education community engagement partnership, as well as Youth perspectives on an Educational Psychology partnership with a rural school.

The themes, subthemes and categories are discussed in this chapter. They are furthermore supported by excerpts from PRA-verbatim transcriptions while notes copied from my reflective journal add richness to the discussions.  Thereafter, I provide a link between the themes, subthemes and literature. Figure 4.1 outlines the themes and subthemes that are to be discussed.

**Figure 4.1: Themes resulting from analysis**

**The voices of youth in a rural school on higher education community engagement partnership**

**Theme 1:**
Youth perspectives on their development in a higher education community engagement partnership

**Theme 2:**
Youth perspectives on an educational psychology partnership with a rural school

**Subtheme 1**:
The effect of a higher education community engagement partnership on skills development of the youth

**Subtheme 2**:
The influence of a higher education community engagement partnership on youth making life design choices

**Subtheme 3**:
The impact of higher education community engagement partnership on youths' level of motivation

**Subtheme 1**:
Insights into and misconceptions of an educational psychology partnership

**Subtheme 2:**
Format and ideas for educational psychology services at a rural school

Subtheme 3:
Innovative strategies suggested for educational psychology training at a rural school

Category 1.1.1
Communication in English

Category 1.2.1
Life span choices regarding career and subjects

Category 1.2.1
Aspirations

Category 2.2.1
Time-on-task between youth and students

Category 2.3.1 Inclusion of other grades in the higher education community engagement partnership

Category 1.1.2
Socio-emotional skills

Category 1.2.2
Provision of information on university

Category 1.2.2
Self-esteem

Category 2.2.2
Inadequate information regarding higher education institutions

Category 2.3.2
Feedback protocol

Category 1.1.3
Setting goals and objectives

Category 1.2.3
Commitment to education

Category 2.2.3
Arts, crafts and physical activity

## 4.2.1 Theme 1: Youth perspectives on their development in a higher education community engagement partnership

In this theme the researcher discusses the manner in which youth developed during the time spent with Educational Psychology students. Three subthemes were identified: the effect of a higher education community engagement partnership on the *youths' skills development*; the influence of a higher education community engagement partnership on *youth making life design choices,* as well as the impact of a higher education community engagement partnership on *youths' level of motivation.* The inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined in Table 4.1.

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**TABLE 4.1 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THEME 1**

| Subthemes | Inclusion criteria | Exclusion criteria |
|---|---|---|
| **Subtheme 1.1**<br><br>**The effect of a higher education community engagement partnership on skills development of youth** | Data relating to youth development and expansion of skills set. | Any references made regarding challenges experienced while expanding skills set |
| **Subtheme 1.2**<br><br>**The influence of a higher education community engagement partnership on youth making life design choices** | Data relating to youth being assisted to make informed choices regarding education, subjects and careers | Any reference to educational or career aids to assist youth in decision-making regarding career and subject choice |
| **Subtheme 1.3**<br><br>**The impact of higher education community engagement partnership on the youths' level of motivation** | Any reference made to partnership influencing youths' level of motivation, aspiration and self-esteem. | Any reference made to partnership influencing youths' level of motivation, apiration and self-esteem |

### 4.2.1.1 Subtheme 1.1 The effect of a higher education community engagement partnership on skills development of youth

In the time spent with the ASL students, the young people had a chance to expand their skills set, which would aid them in various forms and phases of their lives. The skills that were expanded include; communication in English, socio-emotional skills, objective and goal setting.

### *4.2.1.1.1 Category 1.1.1 Communication in English*

Living in that particular rural community often implies that most people communicate with one another in Siswati, which is the language that is commonly spoken in the area. As a result, the young people hardly ever conversed in English. However, their ability to communicate in English was developed during the partnership as this language at was the medium of communication for most of the students. Some young people found the communication troublesome initially but eventually gained the confidence to speak up as ASL students' engagement with them increased.

The young people indicated that *they* [students] *helped us improved communication skills,* [for] *example, how to communicate with someone from a different culture*[1] *(P 3 G 1*[2]*, line 294).* In order *to increase our vocabulary in English because English is the media* [medium] *of instruction (P 23 G 5, line 399). They regarded the following as important; listening (to give an ear), communication (to socialise with people), understanding (how to pay attention),* [to taking] *leadership (to be able to take responsibility) (P 6 G 2, line 303 - 305).*

### 4.2.1.1.2 Category 1.1.2 Socio-emotional skills

The ASL students equipped the youth with skills to interact with people from cultures different from theirs, seeing that they do not get the opportunity to do so frequently. The interaction with the ASL students allowed them to step outside of what is the norm to them and develop socio-emotional skills. They were equipped with skills in how to maintain appropriate interpersonal relationships with other people in an environment where they could share ideas, thoughts and views without feeling disengaged.

[We were shown how] *to interact with other people (P 19 G 4, line 333) and how to work with people and how I can make people enjoy the things that they do. For an example: I was like to do things on my own* (P27 G6, line 419-420). The ASL students *gave me information and knowledge about life.* [For] *examples: How to interact with other people. How to adapt to other environments. This year I live at home, it's my comfort zone but next year I must be out of the house so I can study to be a doctor at* [The] *University of Pretoria. I'll be in a new environment. I'll have to adapt (*P 19 G 4, line 332-333 & 384-388).

### 4.2.1.1.3 Category 1.1.3 Setting goals and objectives

The young people gained study skills which are aimed to assist with increasing scholastic performance. It was a tool used to help them manage their study time efficiently, provide them with strategies and techniques how to study, listen actively and summarise notes for effective analysis when studying.

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[1] Colour codes: Group 1- Blue, Group 2 – Purple, Group 3 - Grey, Group 4 – Green, Group 5 - Brown, Group 6 - Red

[2] P represents Participant, G represents Group

*They* [students] *also come to see, let us see, help us see the importance of choosing smart goals. Which SMART means Specific, Manageable, Achievable, Realistic and Timing* (P10 G4). In addition, *they came every year to teach* [us] *how can we study and applied* [how to apply] *if you want to go to their* [The] *University of Pretoria. Teach us how to study, we were now motivated and working towards a goal* (P 10 G 3, line 325-326*).*

## 4.2.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: The influence of a higher education community engagement partnership on youth making life design choices

The ASL students provided an opportunity for the youth to examine their lives and tools with which to create the lives they would like to have. This is especially relevant with regard to making informed decisions about careers and subjects that would direct them to achieve meaningful and fulfilled lives. By being self-aware, youth are able to explore careers available to them more effectively.

### *4.2.1.2.1 Category 1.2.1 Life span choices regarding career and subjects*

During the time spent with the students, the youth conveyed that they did not know about all the career options available to them, largely due to a lack of resources and geographic isolation. They also said that they received guidance on how to choose careers suitable for them as well as subjects that correlate with their career interests. Without this information that was furnished, most of the youth, who were in Grade 9 at the time, might have chosen subjects for the wrong reasons. In addition, the youth might also have chosen careers due to a lack of knowledge. They stated the following;

[They have come to] *help me choose a career (P27 G6, line 421)* and *help us choose subjects that correspond with our careers* (P10 G2, line 321-322). *As I am doing Grade 9, I had no idea of any career just have clue that maybe one day I want to be a nurse or I want to be a doctor but I don't know how and I don't know what are the consequences* (P1 G1, line 117-120). *They gave me access to a career book giving me support as well. In which I got an opportunity to choose a career that relates with the things that I like and the things that I enjoy doing* (P19 G4, line 329-331). *They gave us advice to choose a right career. For an example: I wanted to be*

*a farmer before, but when the university of Pretoria student came here and teach me about their study at university I change my mind and wanted to be a teacher* (P12 G3, line 313-316) or *if you want to be a doctor what subject I must do. It needs the 77 subject mathematics, physical, life science* (P27 G6, line 36-328). *We were sometimes following our friends and what they wanted to do and not really what we wanted to do. e.g study commerce subjects because my friend is doing it as well (*P28 G6)[3].

### 4.2.1.2.2 Category 1.2.2 Provision of information on university requirements

While the ASL students widened the young people's view of different career options, they also provided practical steps regarding how to complete an application form and which factors to consider when one goes to university. The following was expressed;

*The university's psychology students help us to fill the application form of university of Pretoria when you want to study there.  We didn't know how to fill out forms for university (*P12 G3, line 311-312), as well as *give us information about the university. To know the difference between being at high school and university* (P5 G2, line 161-162).
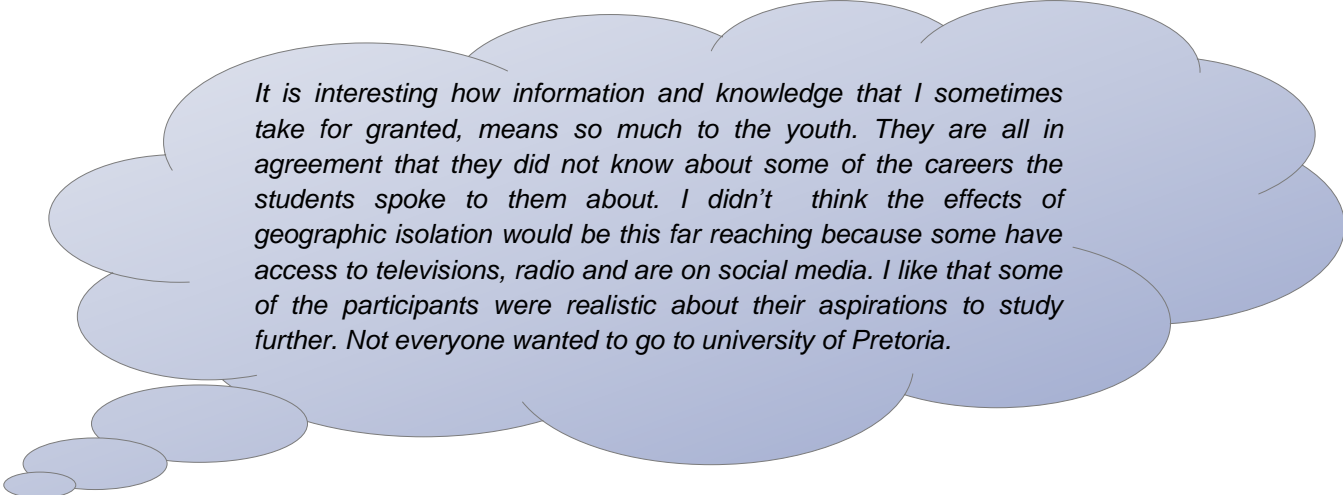
### 4.2.1.2.3 Category 1.2.3 Commitment to education

A variety of reasons, including geographic isolation and  poor social circumstances, caused the youthto often minimise the importance of education and its role in improving their lives. Education is used as a tool to navigate through life, improve quality of life,  and has added the advantage of enabling someone to work in the global market.

*They also tell us about the importance of education* (P10 G3, line 310; P13 G4, line 539) and *to know that education is our key to success and without education we are nothing* (P24 G5, line 248-249).

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[3] Extracted from member checking notes

In my research journal, I noted the following:

> *It is interesting how information and knowledge that I sometimes take for granted, means so much to the youth. They are all in agreement that they did not know about some of the careers the students spoke to them about. I didn't think the effects of geographic isolation would be this far reaching because some have access to televisions, radio and are on social media. I like that some of the participants were realistic about their aspirations to study further. Not everyone wanted to go to university of Pretoria.*

### 4.2.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: The impact of higher education community engagement on youths' level of motivation

The youth were positively affected by the partnership through positive improvement in the manner they perceived themselves and a strengthening of the motivation they experienced to pursue their dreams. Owing to all the barriers they experience in their environment, it appeared that their levels of motivation were low. Within this subtheme I discuss aspirations and self-esteem.

### *4.2.1.3.1 Category 1.3.1 Aspirations of young people*

In the time spent with the ASL students, the youth indicated that they become motivated and encouraged to work towards the goals that were set. Some of the participants had the opportunity to spend time with students who had similar backgrounds as theirs. This interaction with the university students helped the youth to realise that their career goals weren't far-fetched and that they could attain them. The young people conveyed that;

The reason the ASL students visit them *is because they want to empower the youth. How? A youth, how? It is because different people, different youth of today, they are involved in different things, we all know that, alcohol and all those stuff* (P1 G1, line 114-116). They come *to motivate and encourage the learners (*P10 G4, line 229-230) t*o study until tertiary level* (P1 G1, line 124) and *we must not give up in our dreams* (P23 G5, line 406). They assist the young people *to take good choice*[s] *in his/her future (*P28 G6, line 258). The ASL students come *to motivate the learners to make*
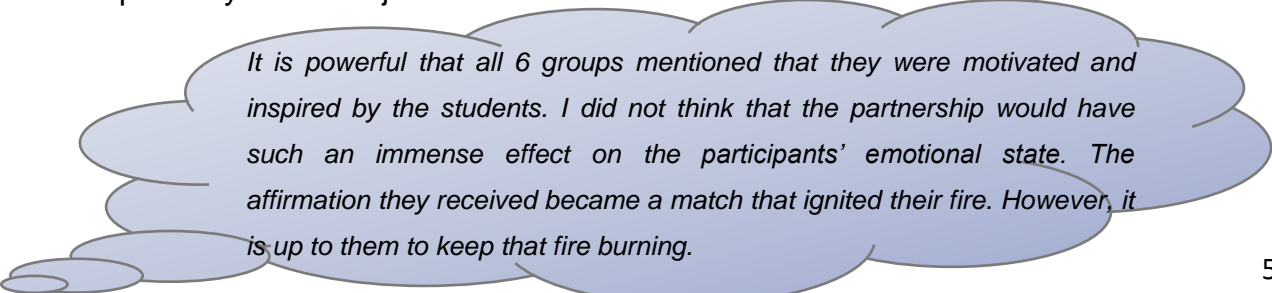
*their dream come true, to encourage learners to work hard, to encourage learners to take responsibility to fly in their dreams* (P24 G5, line 247) and *also tell us about the importance of education* (P13 G3, line 539) and *to know that education is our key to success and without education we are nothing* (P24 G5, line 248-249). *I had a conversation with one of the students who came then he told me he was from a disadvantaged background. So I was encouraged to study further despite my background* (P3 G1, line 284-286). *They* [students] *advised and inspired me. The examples: I wanted to be a lawyer so they told me that I should know English and be talkative at the same time* (P19 G4, line 323-325)

### 4.2.1.3.2 Category 1.3.2 Increased self-esteem

Belief in oneself can sometimes be difficult when there are numerous factors that present as risk factors. Sometimes, protective factors are not easily recognized due to a focus on and being surrounded by risk factors such as high unemployment rates and a high incidence of alcohol abuse, to name a few (Grobler, 2009). It is highly likely that the daily challenges that the learners face influence the manner in which they see themselves and their future. The challenges become a lens through which they perceive and judge their world (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Myende, 2015; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Prinsloo, 2003; Firfirey & Carolissen, 2010). The youth internalised the motivation and encouragement given by the students and started to see themselves differently and taking responsibility for their dreams and goals.

*I used to undermine myself, so they motivated me and I was really inspired (P19 G4, line 328) I was not aware that if I'm good at maths I can be a doctor then after they came I realise*[d] *that I can be a doctor one day (P27 G6, line 422-423).* [I also learned] *to not look at our poor background because poor today, rich tomorrow, to work hard in our studies because we are learners today, a leader tomorrow (P23 G5, line 408-409).*

I qoute my research journal below:

*It is powerful that all 6 groups mentioned that they were motivated and inspired by the students. I did not think that the partnership would have such an immense effect on the participants' emotional state. The affirmation they received became a match that ignited their fire. However, it is up to them to keep that fire burning.*

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### 4.2.2 Theme 2: Youth perspectives on an Educational Psychology partnership with a rural school

I discuss the perspectives of the youth on training in Educational Psychology under this theme. Three subthemes were identified: insights into and misconceptions of Educational Psychology partnership; format of Educational Psychology services at a rural school; as well as innovative strategies for Educational Psychology training at a rural school. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are listed as follows.

**TABLE 4.2 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THEME 2**

| Subthemes | Inclusion | Exclusion |
|---|---|---|
| **Subtheme 2.1**<br><br>**Insight into and misconceptions of Educational Psychology partnership** | Data relating to the role of the Educational Psychology students as well as the youth's view of the purpose of the partnership | Data not relating to the role of the Educational Psychology students as well as the youth's view of the purpose for the partnership |
| **Subtheme 2.2**<br><br>**Format and ideas for Educational Psychology services at a rural school** | Any reference made to the community engagement processes followed by the Educational Psychology students and youth | Any reference made to the manner in which the Educational Psychology students interacted with the youth |
| **Subtheme 2.3**<br><br>**Innovative strategies suggested for Educational Psychology services at a rural school** | Data relating to suggestions made by the youth on how to improve the partnership | Any reference made to suggestions that do not concern Educational Psychology training at the school |
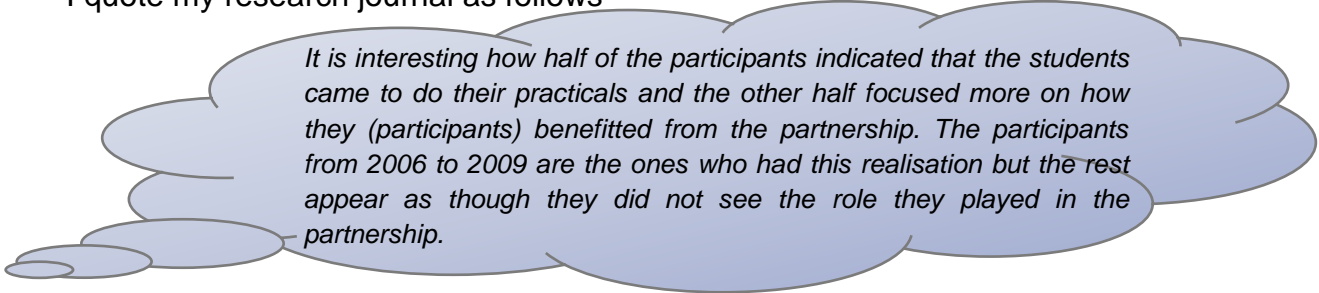
### 4.2.2.1 Subtheme 2.1 Insight into and misconceptions of Educational Psychology partnership

Some of the participants were aware that the Educational Psychology students came to their school in order to complete their practicum, making the partnership a mutually beneficial one. However, a few of the participants misunderstood the purpose of the partnership.

[The ASL students came] *to gain exposure on how to interact with students after completing their studies (*P5 G2, line 163-164). *Because they came here to do their practical with the Grade 9 learners* (P10 G3, line 203) and *to interact with the*

*learners as we know that they are improving themselves in their course, Educational psychology* (P1 G1, line 132-133).

I quote my research journal as follows

*It is interesting how half of the participants indicated that the students came to do their practicals and the other half focused more on how they (participants) benefitted from the partnership. The participants from 2006 to 2009 are the ones who had this realisation but the rest appear as though they did not see the role they played in the partnership.*

### 4.2.2.2 Subtheme 2.2 Format of and ideas for Educational Psychology services at a rural school

The programme schedules visits to the school twice a year. On the first visit, academic service learning (ASL) students conduct informal and multicultural assessments and activities. The second visit includes providing feedback and recommendations to the youth based on the assessments that had been conducted. The youth shared their concerns regarding the Educational Psychology assessment and feedback processes. These are aspects of a higher education community engagement partnership that requires revision in order to make it more beneficial to the youth as client beneficiaries.
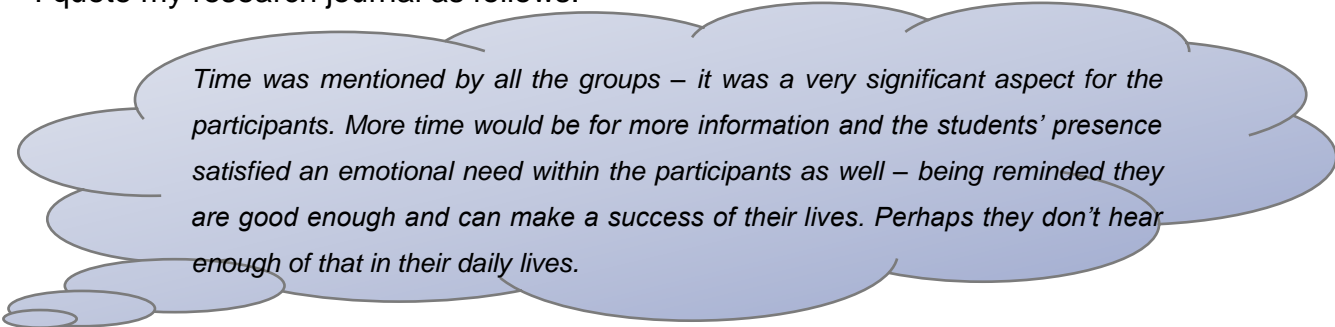
### *4.2.2.2.1 Category 2.2.1 Time-on-task between youth and students*

The participants indicated that they would have preferred to spend more time with the students, participating in the partnership. The youth believe more time would have added greater depth and richness to their interaction with the students.

The young people indicated that *visiting time like they must allocate more time with us,* we enjoy being with you guys man (P5 G2, line 631-632). *They came here for two days to visit us, it would be better for us if they stayed for the week with us and we were disappointed because they came for two days after that they gone back to Pretoria (P14 G3, line 533-535). The students should have been with us for at least a week. In that week, they would have provided us with more information about the University of Pretoria, give us in depth career guidance, for example as the Grade 10's we come up with our top 3 careers and do research on the careers, help us see*

*the advantages and disadvantages of the careers we chose (P2 G1)*[4]*. Others indicated that they didn't get enough time with the students as they were helped in terms of choosing careers. Slow learners as they need more time and special attention to understand some things (P14 & P15 G3)*[5]*. There must be an increase in the number of days that they spend with us learners, maybe the slow learners might get enough time to understand and get helped somewhere somehow in the information they gave us.  Maybe they must, they must be a decrease in the number, the time that they spend with us playing sports like soccer with us.  If this happens then there will be an increase in the time that they spend advising, motivate, motivating, teaching and encouraging us, which is more important (P21 G4, line 678-683) They must give them enough time (P30 G 6,line 762)*

I quote my research journal as follows:

> *Time was mentioned by all the groups – it was a very significant aspect for the participants. More time would be for more information and the students' presence satisfied an emotional need within the participants as well – being reminded they are good enough and can make a success of their lives. Perhaps they don't hear enough of that in their daily lives.*

### 4.2.2.2.2 Category 2.2.2 Inadequate information regarding higher education institutions

The youth conveyed that the information provided relating to higher education institutions was only about the University of Pretoria.  They said that they required a greater variety of information on higher education institutions as some of them did not have the desire to further their education in Pretoria nor did they have the financial assistance and/or the academic ability to study at a university.

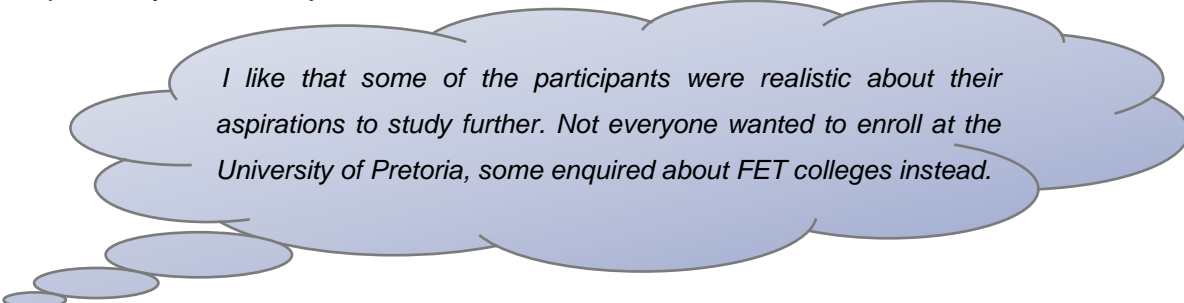They pointed out that there *was biasness, maybe you guys were supposed to tell us about other colleges* (P7 G2, line 517-518). *They must bring the other pamphlets from other universities (*P5 G2, line 523). *They did not tell us about other universities (*P28 G6, line 569). *They should teach the Grade 9 learner about the other*

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[4] Extracted from member checking notes
[5] Extracted from member checking notes

*universities besides university of Pretoria* (P15 G3, line 560-561) but also *tell them with other universities* (P30 G6, line 765).

I quote my research journal as follows:

> *I like that some of the participants were realistic about their aspirations to study further. Not everyone wanted to enroll at the University of Pretoria, some enquired about FET colleges instead.*

Some of the youth were concerned that they did not receive practical tools to assist them in making sound career choices. They indicated that they would have liked to have pamphlets, brochures or a career book to keep after the students had left so they could be reminded of all the information regarding which careers to choose from and the requirements for those careers. The young people indicated that *they* [ASL students] *must bring more useful things with them which include career books, which will, help us in our search for careers* (P21 G4, line 694-696). *Maybe they bring along brochures from the University of Pretoria, ask questions so that if someone answers the questions they can show them* (P1 G1, line 485-486).

Some of the participants indicated that at times, they did not know about the ASL students' visits and as a result, could not prepare themselves appropriately for the partnership or make arrangements to be present when the students were there. This miscommunication might have contributed to the youth's feeling of disempowerment. *The young people reported that they were not inform*[ed] *like letting us know when they come and leave (*P5 G2, line 624). *They must tell them in time when they are coming (*P30 G6, line 766). Due to not being informed, we had [a] *surprise visit, example, sometimes we are busy with trial exams* (P7 G2, line 510).

### 4.2.2.2.3 Category 2.2.3 Arts, crafts and physical activity

Sometimes young people do not get the opportunity to engage in playful and creative activities. During the course of the partnership, they participated in arts, crafts and physical activities as tools for relaxation. These are also interactive ways to present the assessments that had been done by the ASL students.
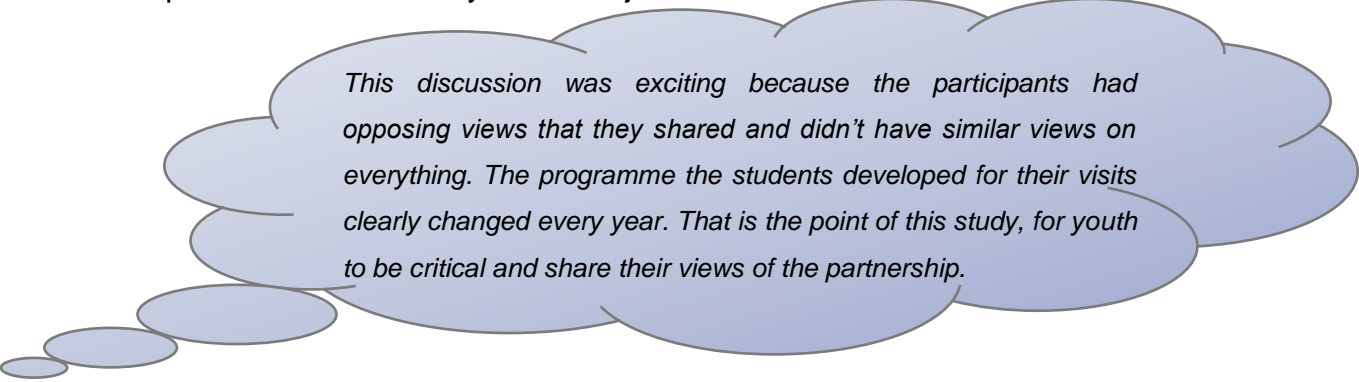
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The ASL students introduced *different skills like art and collage. Maybe you can find that I'm interested in painting, I'm interested in pictures, like as, pasting and all the stuff. Is like they give us a clue of how I can do or how I can go deep into this thing* (P1 G1, line 138-145*).* They showed us how *to exercise,* [for] *example, on how to refresh your mind using different kinds of sports like soccer, netball, etc. Healthy mind, healthy body, creative skills,* [for] *example, drawing, painting and design and making, like in Arts and Culture* (P6 G2, line 300-302*).*

However, they youth seem to be divided regarding being equipped with skills. While some enjoyed drawing and playing different kinds of sports, others indicated that they would have preferred to use that time to get more information about careers, subject choices and requirements for university, which they deemed more important.  The following extracts are from a discussion that took place between groups regarding the allocation of time;

*Maybe they must, they* [there] *must be a decrease in the number, the* [amount of] *time that they spend with us playing sports like soccer with us.  If this happens then there will be an increase in the time that they spend advising, motivate, motivating, teaching and encouraging us, which is more important.* (P21 G4, line 681-685). *I'm sorry, do you disagree with us that they must allocate more sports facilities? It's important* (P4 G2, line 687-688). *We have different types of challenges. This is about education, not talent No not only talent. No the important thing is education, not talent* (P20 G4, line 689). *But us we need the school to provide more sport*[s] *facilities you get me?* (P4 G2, line 704). *Let me answer you, in each and every school there is time for sports. So this* [these] *psychology students, they come here to give us information which we don't have so in that particular time we should use that information, or I mean that time that they give us in school and we should appreciate that time, not to play* (P20 G4, line 706-710). *You know what, playing is part of learning* (P7 G2, line 711). *I know that it's a part of learning. You can even play soccer for the rest of your life but you can only get information there over* [during] *some specific times so we should learn to do things in the right way. You can even play soccer at home after school. When they come here, they come here to give us information which we*

*don't have* (P20 G4, line 712-716). *But we are not saying we must play the whole day, just a few minutes outside* (P4 G2, line 717). *Let me tell you my man, a healthy mind is inside a healthy body* (P9 G2, 720). *We are on the same page here. We are saying that they time for playing must be decreased, not must be cancelled* (P20 G4, line 723-724)

The quote below is from my research journal:

*This discussion was exciting because the participants had opposing views that they shared and didn't have similar views on everything. The programme the students developed for their visits clearly changed every year. That is the point of this study, for youth to be critical and share their views of the partnership.*

### 4.2.2.3 Subtheme 2.3 Innovative strategies for Educational Psychology services at a rural school

The youth recommended strategies to improve the partnership between the rural school and Educational Psychology students as a means to address the challenges they faced.

### *4.2.2.3.1 Category 2.3.1 Inclusion of other grades in the higher education community engagement partnership*

Considering the importance of the services provided by the ASL students, the young people stated that including other grades in the higher education community engagement partnership would add depth to and enrich the partnership. They indicated that the Grades 11 and 12 learners especially should be a part of this partnership because during that stage they have to start applying at universities and colleges. The information provided by the ASL students regarding career choices and how to submit application forms to higher education institutions would be of great value to them.

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*They must also invite the other grades to pay a visit* (P2 G1*)[6]. They must not come for grade 9 learners only, also the other grades so that they motivate them to choose their best career choices. Other grades need motivation as well, they need to be encouraged to do better (*P23 G5, line 751). Additionally, *they should also visit the grade 11 so that they should let them know that they should do things in time (applying early). They must also be told about the minimum requirements for admission at universities for their different careers* (P21 G4, line 699-700*). The grade 12 learners they must also be present so that they can gather information about career exhibition (*P1 G1, line 597-598)

### 4.2.2.3.2 Category 2.3.2 Feedback protocol

The young people reported that they would have liked to see the photos and videos taken by the students at their first visit. These would serve as reminders of their participation in the partnership and activities in which they engaged. The young people made reference to the *feedback about the visit, example, videos that they took* (P7 G2, line 505-506). *They must bring back their photos and videos that they took when they were with them, from first visit* (P30 G6, line 767-768)

## 4.3 Literature control on youth perspective on higher education community engagement

### 4.3.1 Existing knowledge that correlates with current research findings

#### 4.3.1.1 Communication and socio-emotional skills

Mitra (2004) advised that by creating a platform for young people to share their views and engaging with them, we are helping to develop their leadership skills, including a sense of responsibility, as well as to develop the confidence to speak publicly, which is what occurred with the young people in this study. They also gained the skills to conduct a positive assessment of the future, and the knowledge of how to plan for it, which contributed to their perception of self. Bajema, Williams and Miller (2002) agreed that through partnerships with higher education institutions, young people gain socialisation and leadership skills. In addition, they undergo character-building, which is essential for daily life. Through partnering with stakeholders, young people "develop knowledge, skills, and opportunity to become agents of change" (Evans,

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[6] Extracted from member checking notes

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2007, p. 705). These skills acquisitions and expansions have the potential to aid community development and empowerment of the youth (Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009).

### 4.3.1.2 Life design choices

Existing knowledge of the involvement of the youth in higher education community engagement supports some of the findings arising from this study. The purpose of the career guidance process within the partnership was to expose the youth to a wider variety of careers to choose from and assist them with making sound educational decisions about their desired career paths (Buthelezi, Alex & Seabi, 2009) because *I had no idea of any career,* [I] *just have clue that maybe one day I want to be a nurse or I want to be a doctor but I don't know how and I don't know what are the consequences (*P1 G1, line 118-120). This supply of information has the potential to assist with making appropriate career choices, in so doing contributing to social justice (Mncube, 2008). The youth were provided with information about careers that could one day enable them possibly to compete in the global economy (Schultz & Jorgenson, 2009). According to Barley and Beesley (2007), education is necessary for the health, development and upward mobility of most rural communities. It has the power to transform human lives and help to inspire the youth to want something better for their lives and it is also an essential tool in creating a just society (Petersen, Dunbar-Krige & Fritz, 2008).

### 4.3.1.3 Motivation

Belief in oneself can sometimes be difficult to achieve when there are numerous factors that present as risk factors. Sometimes protective factors are not easily recognised due to the focus on and being surrounded by risk factors such as high unemployment rates and high incidences of alcohol abuse, to name but a few (Grobler, 2009). It is highly likely that the daily challenges that the learners face influence the manner in which they see themselves and their future (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Myende, 2015; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Prinsloo, 2003; Firfirey & Carolissen, 2010).

A study by Pennefather (2008) indicated that learners (youth) gain a sense of motivation when in partnership with students, which correlates with the results of this particular study. Pennefather (2008) pointed out that:

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Learners can be encouraged to set goals and work hard for the future, for example    when they see a past student such as Vuka Kheswa who is from the community – having gone so far and achieved so much. Their own lives and dreams for the future may be inspired by our voices (p. 92).

After their participation in the community engagement partnership with the university students, the youth professed that they saw themselves differently and felt more confident in themselves and their abilities. This in turn showed that they had developed intrinsic motivation that enabled them to work harder, persevere and pursue their goals. Previous studies showed that providing a platform where student voices could be raised led to the youth gaining a stronger sense of their own abilities (Mitra, 2004).

Like the limited literature on youth voices, the findings from this study confirm that the marginalised youth often experience powerlessness and have a low sense of self (Prinsloo, 2003). The findings furthermore confirm that most youth do not have access to career guidance opportunities due to their isolated geographic location or limited financial support hence the significance of this partnership. The partnership has the potential to aid transforming and reframing the way that youth perceive themselves, their abilities and their surroundings. Through discussions about career options, they developed an awareness that they could be more than they were, therefore influencing their self-esteem. Walberg in Bajema et al., (2002) confirmed that through interacting with higher education institutions, young people develop high aspirations, which have a significant influence on how they learn and perform scholastically.

Haller and Virkler (1993) pointed out that most young people from rural communities have low aspirations because they do not have a point of reference. There are minimal career role models to look up to in their immediate communities (Haller & Virkler, 1993). The young people in this study sought motivation and encouragement from the ASL students as they do not receive that affirmation in their environment. The extensive research into the involvement of young people in community partnerships with other stakeholders indicate that the benefits young people experience vary from appropriate social behaviour to a strengthened sense of self (Evans, 2007).

### 4.3.2 Contradictions between the current research findings and existing literature

Bajema et al. (2002) posited that most rural young people have aspirations, career goals and are aware that there is support in their immediate environment to help them work towards their goals. Most of the young people in this study have had a different experience. Some of them perceived their community as not being conducive to achieving their goals and aspirations. The young people indicated that through their interaction with the ASL students, they were able to make career-related decisions based on the options available to them. However, there was no mention of taking contextual factors into consideration, such as family influence, "background and learning experiences" (Tang, Pang & Newmeyer, 2008; p. 2).

Geographic isolation often comes with low levels of aspiration among young people, because most of the jobs available in the immediate community do not require a high level of education (Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer & Hutchings, 2011). However, some of the young people involved in this study indicated that they had high aspirations, which had been enhanced after their interaction with the ASL students. The young people had hopes of careers that require high levels of education, such as nurses, doctors or lawyers. Through the partnership, some changed their minds and others gained an awareness of how to achieve their goals and make decisions that would lead them to their desired career options.

### 4.3.3 Novel insight gained from activities

There seems to be limited literature on the impact of arts, crafts and physical activities on young people involved in higher education community engagement. The young people involved in this study experienced the aforementioned as enjoyable and relaxing activities as well as fun ways to conduct the assessment and engage with the ASL students.

### 4.3.4 Silences found in the current research findings when compared to existing literature

The young people involved in this study did not mention how they performed scholastically following their partnership with the higher education institution. According to Gushue, Scanlan, Pantzer and Clarke (2002), the extent to which young people believe in their ability to perform certain tasks determines how likely

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they are to engage in those tasks. Assisting young people to identify their interests and aptitudes as well as to gain an awareness of the career options available to them would most likely enhance their sense of self-efficacy regarding engaging in decisions and tasks related to their career options (Gushue et al., 2002). Young people who are marginalised by race or socio-economic status (SES) are more likely to experience difficulty with scholastic performance, psychological ill health and dysfunction (Benner & Wang, 2014).

The young people did not seem to know which factors to consider when choosing a career. According to Maree (2009), interests, personality and aptitude have been considered significant influencers in making informed decisions about careers. Lent et al. cited in Tang, Pan and Newmeyer (2008), added that other factors that influence career choice are environment, background, significant others, finances and school experiences. Nicholas, Naidoo, and Pretorius cited in Perry (2009) acknowledged three favourable conditions for one to make sound career choices; determining career alternatives, having the motivation to make the choice, and the freedom to make a choice.

## 4.4. Existing knowledge of youth perspectives on an Educational Psychology partnership with a rural school

### 4.4.1 Insights into and misconceptions of Educational Psychology partnership

The participation of young people in higher education community engagement is an undeveloped subject of study. There is a great call for more knowledge in this field (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2003). In the literature that discussed on higher education community engagement, Bender (2008) stated that partnerships are meant to be reciprocal in nature, with shared roles and responsibilities. The young people recognised that the psychological services provided were the students' contribution. The youth had the opportunity to contribute and play their role in the higher education partnership and in so doing, gained an awareness of the significance of their roles. This helped with changing their mindset from that of receiving charity to that of sharing power and responsibility (Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009). Young people who were involved in a community engagement project advised on the creation of an action plan for racial attitudes in schools and developed a programme for other young people to educate themselves on racial discrimination (Kulbok, Meszaros, Bond, Thatcher, Park, Kimbrell and Smith-

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Gregory, 2015). When young people are creative or are given the opportunity to define their own problems and are proactive, they become aware of their role in the community. Young people are often used in research, but their voices are not actually heard. Some partnerships serve their own purpose or attempt to solve the young people's problems for them instead of involving them in the solutions (Sommers, 2007).

## 4.4.2 Format of ideas for Educational Psychology services at a rural school

The information on career guidance that the youth received was linked to their personal needs (Watts & Sultana, 2004), which assisted them with being proactive in working towards their goals and making informed choices. Although the information provided during career guidance sessions is essential, it is not always enough (Watts & Sultana, 2004). The young people reported that the information on higher education institutions was limited to the University of Pretoria and excluded all others.

The young people in this study also agreed that they required more time with ASL students and gave varied reasons as to why. However, Naidoo and Devnarain (2009) stated that the university curriculum is often so detailed and demanding that ASL students do not have time to spend on site and engage more with young people.

## 4.4.3 Innovative strategies suggested for Educational Psychology training at a rural school

According to Kulbok et al. (2015) young people in New York decided to research the image of the youth in their community. They made the decisions about the way that the study would be conducted and were accountable for reporting the findings. Casto (2016) indicated that in other studies, adults initiated research projects and sought advice from young people about how to make their operations effective. Young people possess creative and fresh ideas that are useful to most researchers. O'Donoghue, Kirshner and McLaughlin (2006, p. 5) posited that "young people are recognised for their special knowledge about themselves as a group at a particular stage of human development".

According to Kulbok, et al. (2015) some young people who were involved in a community engagement project planned the evaluation and intervention processes

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for the other young people in their areas in order to improve the quality of life in their community (Kulbok et al., 2015). Like many marginalised people, decisions about young people are often made without their input.  When given a chance, the contribution and suggestions of young people could have a significant influence on policies (Kulbok et al., 2015). When put into practice, the student voices can consist at the most basic level, of youth sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions (Mitra, 2004, p. 651). It could also result in young people partnering with adults to challenge the problems they face in their schools and communities at large (Mitra, 2004).

### 4.4.4 Contradictions

Very little existing literature discusses the format in which the execution of higher education community engagement partnerships should take place. The young people in this study agreed that they required more time with ASL students and gave various reasons why.

Although most of the young people understood that they too had to play a role in the community engagement partnership, some of the participants did not experience the reciprocity that Bender (2008) speaks about. Instead, in their view the partnership benefitted them more than the Educational Psychology students. This contradicts Bernardo et al. (2011), who indicated that higher education institutions often only state that their community engagement projects are reciprocal, but in reality, they are to the advantage of the students. The young people provided the students with a learning environment where they could interact with young people from backgrounds and cultures different from theirs, in so doing producing future educational psychologists with multicultural competence (Constantine et al.*,* 2007).

### 4.5 Conclusion

In summary, it seems as though the participants had positive experiences of the community engagement partnership. Some of the positive experiences include being informed about career guidance, subject choices and being motivated to work hard and to work towards a goal. Through the interaction of the youth with the students, the youth's self-concept was enhanced and they had the opportunity to develop skills

such as communication and leadership. They also had a chance to engage in arts, crafts and physical activities.

However, there were also unmet expectations as indicated by the participants and these include the limited time spent with the students during the community engagement partnership, and the limited information that was given regarding tertiary institutions. Some of the participants reported that they had difficulties communicating with the students as they were not used to speaking English. Although they were provided with information, some said that they would have liked to have brochures so they could refer back to them at a later stage.

The young people recommended that the university students should increase the time spent at the school, so that they could provide the young people with more information. The youth added that the inclusion of other grades would be more beneficial and provide the students with a wider perspective. Research into youth voices in higher education community engagement is relatively undeveloped as a field of study. Generalisations therefore cannot be made, but preliminary observations can.

# CHAPTER 5
# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to highlight and describe the experiences that young people had of a higher education community engagement partnership to inform knowledge in this field from their perspective. The findings of this study were discussed in Chapter 4, along with the concomitant themes and subthemes. Literature control was provided for the study to confirm findings and/or to elucidate where findings were different, or where similar studies were lacking.

In this chapter, I conclude the study and provide answers to the primary and secondary research questions that were posed in Chapter 1. The chapter reflects the limitations of the study in addition to contributions that are made by the study, and concludes with recommendations for further research, practice and training.

## 5.2 Primary and secondary research questions

The following paragraphs reflect a discussion of the research questions, drawing from the findings of this study in addition to those captured in existing literature. I will start with addressing the secondary research questions and thereafter provide a reflection on the primary research question.

### 5.2.1 Secondary research questions

### 5.2.1.1 What value do young people attach to a higher education community engagement partnership?

The young people perceived the higher education community engagement partnership as beneficial for their development in the educational, socioemotional and skills areas. They experienced, *inter alia*, an improved ability to make life choices as a result of the career-related information that they received. The higher education community engagement partnership provided the young people with the opportunity to interact with people from various backgrounds and cultures. This seldom happened in their lives due to the geographic isolation of these young people.

The partnership influenced the young people in this study to work towards achieving their aspirations, such as pursuing tertiary qualifications. A further outcome was that they were equipped with the skills to manage their present studies and set goals. In addition, they were able to enjoy engaging in creative, playful activities with the purpose of learning and relaxing. The young people gained skills that could positively influence their lives, namely socioemotional, communication and goal-setting skills, while at the same time they experienced a significant growth in self-knowledge. The young people who were part of this study indicated that they benefitted specifically from the career guidance and motivation, and this is evidenced by their taking responsibility for their educational goals and seeing themselves through a positive lens.

When interacting with the ASL students, the young people communicated in English much more than they generally did, which contributed to their gaining a greater measure of confidence in speaking the language publicly (Mitra, 2004). Like Pennefather (2008), the young people in the current study indicated that they did not perceive their everyday environment as supportive of their goals and dreams. They conveyed that they had experienced an increase in their levels of motivation through their partnership with the students from a higher education institution.

The experiences of young people in this study correlate with Bender's (2008) concept that a community engagement partnership should be reciprocal in nature. The young people indicated that they were aware of both the role that the ASL students played as well as their own role in the partnership. The youth declared that they provided the ASL students with a platform to learn and achieve excellence in the skills that are required to be a successful educational psychologist. This awareness is essential in the type of partnership in question as it contributes to young people being proactive agents in society (Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009).

The findings of the study contradict what Bajema et al. (2002) stated, namely that most young people from rural communities were aware of career-related support around them. This proved not to be the case in the current study, most likely due to the limited education services and resources that are available to the young people in this rural community. Their experiences of a higher education community engagement partnership also differ from what Irvin et al. (2011) found, namely that most young people from geographically isolated areas have fewer aspirations than their urban counterparts. In this study it was found that most of the young people

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have aspirations to study further in fields such as education, law and medicine, which all require higher education qualifications. However, it is likely that the engagement with ASL students, who provided career-related information and encouragement, may have influenced the voiced aspirations of the youth.

### 5.2.1.2. What should be changed in higher education community engagement partnerships according to young people?

The young people were aware of the role that the ASL students played in the partnership as well as of their own roles. However, some of the young people perceived the partnership to be of greater benefit to them than to the ASL students. This may imply that they did not wholly comprehend the role they played in the partnership.

The youth indicated that making available more information about various careers and their academic requirements would have contributed to their being able to make better informed life choices. In addition, they put forward that information about a greater variety of higher education institutions would have provided them with more options to choose from. The young people indicated in this regard  that they would have preferred to receive brochures or pamphlets containing the information provided by the ASL students so they could refer to them after the students had left.

The young people expressed their dissatisfaction with miscommunication about when on-site visits by the ASL students would take place. Some of them consequently felt that they could not prepare themselves adequately as they had tests to write during those periods. They suggested that operational communication should not be limited to teachers, but that university partners should also include a learner representative in the communiqués.

Another suggestion by the young people is that higher education community engagement services should include Grades 11 and 12 as learners in these grades have a great need for career-related information. The youth requested that feedback processes should be adjusted to include photographs from assessments that had been conducted during initial on-site visits by ASL students. The photographs could serve as reminders of the activities in which the young people had participated, thus assisting them better to understand recommendations made by the ASL students.

Consistent with the argument of Naidoo and Devnarain (2009), the amount of time that ASL students and young people shared was limited due to restrictions

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relating to the higher education curriculum. The young people asserted that the duration of the engagement with the ASL students was too limited and that this had had a negative effect on the partnership. As a result, the perception was that the quality and quantity of information, including information generated in the engagement between the young people and the ASL students, was compromised. The young people stated that they would have preferred to spend more time with the ASL students in order to receive more career-related information, a greater degree of encouragement and a more significant expansion of skills.

Similar to Watts and Sultana (2004), the young people in the current study found that information regarding career guidance in emerging economies is often limited. Information about career guidance tends to be restricted owing to a paucity in societal support, low levels of public resourcing and most of the community focusing on economic survival rather than the development of the youth (Watts & Sultana, 2004).

### 5.2.2 Primary research question

**How can insight into young people's experiences of a long-term Educational Psychology partnership inform knowledge of higher education community engagement?**

The Transformative Learning Theory was instrumental in my gaining an understanding of how the young people constructed meaning of their experience of a higher education community engagement partnership (Merizow, 1997). When young people are provided with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, they can share their knowledge about how to navigate future partnerships with one another, higher education institutions and young people from other rural schools. The youth provided ASL students and researchers with a glimpse into their lives and what is important for their development and functioning, which they made clear during interactions. The findings of this study indicate that knowledge of higher education community engagement partnerships can be informed by young people's experiences of such partnerships.

Some of the findings reflect that young people experienced an increase in their levels of motivation through the partnership, which is in accord with the findings of Pennefather (2008), as captured in literature. Findings regarding skills acquisition and development are moreover supported by Bajema et al. (2002) as well as Mitra

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(2004). Buthelezi et al. (2009) support findings regarding higher education community engagement partnerships assisting young people with career guidance and their making sound educational choices. The young people in this study indicated that they experienced the community engagement partnership as being greatly to their benefit, more so than to the benefit of the ASL students. This contradicts Bernardo et al. (2011), who state that these partnerships are often to the benefit of the ASL students and Bender (2008), who states that community engagement partnerships are regularly reciprocal in nature. The findings of this study reflect the high aspirations of these rural young people, which contradicts the findings of Haller and Virkler (1993), who indicate that young people from rural schools often have lower aspirations than their urban counterparts. The aforementioned emerged when comparisons with other studies on higher education community engagement partnerships were undertaken.

The findings of this study contribute to a limited body of knowledge about young people's perspectives of higher education community engagement partnerships at rural schools. The study provided the youth with the space to voice their perceived roles in higher education community engagement partnerships. Young people's perspectives of a higher education community engagement partnership furthermore provide higher education institutions and ASL students with insight into, as well as inspire strategies about ways to engage with young people as clients.

Central insights about higher education community engagement from the perspectives of young people are as follows:

1. The young people declare that the geographic isolation and lack of proximity to services, as well as a general absence of resources, mean that a higher education community engagement partnership enables ASL students to provide the necessary education psychology services to young people as a way to contribute to human capital development with a view to achieving social justice.

2. According to the young people communication between ASL students and young people about their expectations may eliminate misconceptions and skewed expectations that might conceivably exist regarding the higher education community engagement process.

3. Young people voiced that the time spent with and on communication between young people and ASL students was insufficient. This factor may be addressed by means of enabling a greater number of higher education community

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engagements and designing innovative academic service learning models, which may contribute to improvement of the services that are currently provided.

4.  Young people conveyed that the interaction between young people and ASL students from diverse backgrounds meant that an exchange of knowledge took place, which had a significant, positive impact on the levels of motivation of the youth, and contributed to their experiencing a marked improvement in their socioemotional state.

5.  According to young people the inclusion of Grades 11 and 12, the furnishing of more comprehensive information about career options and their educational requirements as well as making available more time for interaction between the ASL students and the youth would enrich the partnership. In addition, the inclusion of arts, crafts and physical activities would in their view provide the young people with enjoyable activities in which to engage.

## 5.3 Limitations of the study

There are three possible limitations of the study, which I discuss in the subsections that follow.

### 5.3.1 Researcher subjectivity

Working from a constructivist point of reference, I had to ensure that I gain an understanding of the environment in which the young people find themselves as this would inform their perspectives. Coming from a background that is reasonably similar to that of the young people, I had to be aware of not projecting my voice onto them (Maree, 2007). I relied on my personal interpretation of the data analysis process in order to gain a better understanding of the young people's experiences of a higher education community engagement partnership. In order to track my thoughts, avoid possible bias and reflect on processes that were followed throughout the duration of the study, I used a researcher journal (Cohen et al., 2003). Attending supervision sessions with peers and supervisors also assisted me by providing further reflection opportunities and contributed to my gaining a greater awareness of blind spots that I might have had (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### 5.3.2 Lack of generalisation

This study was conducted at one rural school and involved a limited number of young people. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. However, generalisation is not the aim of the study (Farrokhi & Mohmoudi-Hamadabad, 2012; Gerring, 2004). I provided rich context with respect to the environment in which the young people live in order to provide the reader of the study with an opportunity to assess the possible applicability of the findings to other contexts (Seale, 1999).

### 5.3.3 Unequal representation

Another limitation was that the cohorts were not equally represented (see Graph 3.1). The 31 young people who participated in this study were selected purposively based on the sampling criteria. During the data collection process most of the young people who participated in the partnership between 2006 and 2009 had moved to other areas that were far from their high school. Although the sample size of participants in this study was fairly small, the aim was to assemble a sample that displayed similar characteristics and was representative of the larger population of young people who had been involved in that particular rural school-higher education community engagement partnership (Burger & Silima, 2006).

## 5.4 Recommendations

In conclusion, I present some recommendations for future research, practice and training.

### 5.4.1 Recommendations for future research

Future researchers could focus on the proposed recommendations, which accrued from the findings of this study. It is recommended that:

1. Another, similar study should be conducted on young people's experiences of a higher education community engagement partnership with a larger sample size in order to enable generalisation of the findings of the study;
2. A similar study should be conducted with young people from a greater variety of rural schools and backgrounds;

3. A study should be conducted to explore the educational performance of the participating youth after the higher education community engagement partnership.

### 5.4.2 Recommendations for practice

1. Higher education institutions that are planning to establish partnerships with young people from rural schools may apply the findings of this study to obtain an understanding of young people's views concerning community engagement partnerships.
2. ASL students and researchers working with young people from rural schools may use the findings of this study to enhance the manner in which they engage and communicate with their clients.

### 5.4.3 Recommendations for training

1. Institutions of higher education may use the findings of the study possibly to guide the adjustment of the curriculum of ASL students in order to render the partnership more effective for both ASL students and participating young people.
2. ASL students may be given more training in factors relating to the social justice framework, which might possibly inform many and various aspects of their partnership with young people at rural schools.

## 5.5 Closing remarks

In this study I highlighted and described the experiences of young people at a rural school about a higher education community engagement partnership. A qualitative research design was applied, which enabled the researcher to obtain data and explore the themes that emerged from the study. The findings demonstrate that knowledge of this little-researched topic could be expanded through gaining insight into the experiences of young people about their partnership with higher education institutions and in doing so their association with ASL students.

Marginalised young people may possibly play a role in further partnerships with higher education institutions and therefore contribute to the advancement of their own communities by making informed career-related decisions and creating employment opportunities for themselves and others, in the process achieving social

justice in the sense that all young people receive the same opportunities to improve their lives and those of others around them.

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