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ADVENTUROUS BEGINNINGS TO PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT DURING PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATION: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts (Counselling Psychology) degree in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, Pretoria

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March 2011

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, to my Mom, Kim, and Pippa – there have been numerous ups and downs during this research project, and I am certain that I have not always been the easiest person in the world to live with. You have all been extremely supportive and patient. You have reminded me who I am and what is really important in life. Without you none of this would matter, and it is the knowledge that you are always behind me that has brought me through the toughest of times.

Then, to my participants, and fellow MA (Counselling Psychology) students. It was a privilege going through this process with you. From the first day of our adventure experience together when this process began, until our last feedback session I have learned so much from you all. I only hope that the experience enriched your training as much as it did mine. I have a much better understanding of who I am as a person and a professional because of our experiences together. Going forwards, it is my goal to remind myself of this every day. Thank you for being my fellow social constructionists.

To my critical agent – Adri Prinsloo. Your fresh perspective and objective, balanced comment proved invaluable to both my fellow participants and myself in reflecting on our professional identities. Thank you for fulfilling this role.

Lastly, to my supervisor, Prof. Lourens Human – thank you for all you have taught me through this process, and for all your help in overcoming obstacles that popped up unexpectedly. I thoroughly enjoyed our discussions about Narrative and Social Constructionist thinking, which not only enriched my understanding of research, but also of counselling practice from this perspective. You made conducting a research project seem less like an insurmountable challenge, and more like a valuable exercise in which I could develop myself. Research went from being an academic chore to an activity in which I found value and worth, and I thank you for being part of that.

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Paul Galbraith, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation is my own work. To my knowledge I have not committed any form of plagiarism.

Paul Galbraith
1 March 2011

ABSTRACT

The development of professional identity during professional counselling psychology education is seen as a cornerstone of the professional development of prospective counselling psychologists. This research project looked at how students in an MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at the University of Pretoria constructed their professional identity(ies) through adventure experiences - which included archery, a ropes course, sea rafting, sea kayaking, and abseiling. This research project was conducted from a Narrative approach. The participants were required to construct their professional identity(ies) through written adventure narratives in which spontaneous metaphoric transfer had taken place. These narratives were then analysed through the "Problem-Solution Approach" to narrative research. Thereafter, the findings were given back to the participants, who were then asked to apply the findings to the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology. The research found that the participants were able to move from the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts", and construct preferred professional identities through the adventure experience.

Keywords: Adventure; Adventure Therapy; Counselling Psychology; Counselling Psychology Education; Narrative; Narrative Analysis; Professional Identity; Professional Identity Development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**	p 1
1.1.	CONTEXT	P 1
1.1.1	University of Pretoria (UP)	p 1
1.1.2	Department of Psychology	p 2
1.1.3	MA (Counselling Psychology) Programme	p 3
1.2.	QUESTION	p 8
1.3.	GOALS	p 8
1.3.1	Primary Goal	p 8
1.3.2	Secondary Goals	p 8
1.4.	STRUCTURE	p 9
2.	**CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH OVERVIEW**	p 10
2.1.	TRADITIONAL LEARNING	p 10
2.1.1	Traditional Learning	p 10
2.1.2	Traditional Learning Theories (TLT)	p 11
2.2.	EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	p 12
2.2.1	Experiential Learning	p 12
2.2.2	Experiential Learning Theories (ELT)	p 13
2.2.3	Experiential Learning Model (ELM)	p 14

2.3. ADVENTURE p 15

2.3.1 Adventure-Related Experiential Learning (AREL) p 16
2.3.2 Adventure Programming p 17
2.3.3 The Stages of the Adventure Experience p 19
2.3.4 Transfer of Learning During Adventure p 19
2.3.5 Theories on Adventure p 20
2.3.6 Research on Adventure-Related Experiential Learning (AREL) p 24

3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH INQUIRY p 28

3.1. RESEARCH CONTEXT p 28

3.2. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS p 29

3.2.1 MA (Counselling Psychology) Students p 29
3.2.2 Student Researcher p 30

3.3. RESEARCH POSITION p 31

3.3.1 Quantitative Research p 31
3.3.2 Qualitative Research p 31
3.3.3 Narrative Research p 32

3.4. RESEARCH MATERIAL p 35

3.4.1 Adventure Experience p 35
3.4.2 Producing the Adventure Narratives p 36
3.4.3 Analysing the Adventure Narratives p 37
3.4.4 Applying the Adventure Narratives p 39

3.5. RESEARCH QUALITY p 40

3.5.1 Research Supervision p 40

3.5.2	Peer-Review	p 40
3.5.3	Member Checking	p 41
3.6.	RESEARCH ETHICS	p 41
3.6.1	Participation	p 41
3.6.2	Confidentiality	p 42
3.6.3	Storage	p 42
3.7	RESEARCH RELEVANCE	p 42
4.	**CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT "A")**	p 44
4.1.	"COLLABORATOR"	p 44
4.2.	PRACTICING AS THE "COLLABORATOR"	p 46
4.2.1	Scope of Practice: Assessment	p 46
4.2.2	Scope of Practice: Counselling	p 47
4.2.3	Scope of Practice: Education	p 48
5.	**CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT "B")**	p 50
5.1.	"RELATIONSHIP BUILDER"	p 50
5.2.	PRACTICING AS THE "RELATIONSHIP BUILDER"	p 52
5.2.1.	Scope of Practice: Assessment	p 52
5.2.2.	Scope of Practice: Counselling	p 53
5.2.3.	Scope of Practice: Education	p 54
6.	**CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT "C")**	p 57
6.1.	"ROLE NEGOTIATOR"	p 57

6.2. PRACTICING AS THE “ROLE NEGOTIATOR” p 59

6.2.1. Scope of Practice: Assessment p 60
6.2.2. Scope of Practice: Counselling p 61
6.2.3. Scope of Practice: Education p 62

7. CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT “D”) p 64

7.1. “EMPOWERER” p 64

7.2. PRACTICING AS THE “EMPOWERER” p 66

7.2.1. Scope of Practice: Assessment p 66
7.2.2. Scope of Practice: Counselling p 67
7.2.3. Scope of Practice: Education p 68

8. CHAPTER 8: RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT “E”) p 70

8.1. “RESPONSIBILITY GIVER” p 70

8.2. PRACTICING AS THE “RESPONSIBILITY GIVER” p 73

8.2.1. Scope of Practice: Assessment p 73
8.2.2. Scope of Practice: Counselling p 74
8.2.3. Scope of Practice: Education p 75

9. CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION p 77

9.1 LITERATURE REVIEW p 77

9.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY p 78

9.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS p 79

9.4 GROUP REFLECTION SESSION p 81

9.5 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS p 81

REFERENCES p 84

CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND

Introduction

The first chapter will focus on providing the reader with insight into the context that this research project falls under, as well as orientating the reader to why this research has been undertaken. This chapter will also explain the goals and the structure of this research report.

1.1 CONTEXT

This research project is informed by is an academic and experiential context, which come together in the training of postgraduate students in counselling psychology.

The academic and experiential contexts are part of the Master of Arts (MA) (Counselling Psychology) course offered by the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria (UP), South Africa (SA).

1.1.1 University of Pretoria

UP is a tertiary academic institution situated in the administrative capital of SA, Pretoria. UP was founded in 1908 and has become the leading research university in SA, as well as one of the biggest universities in the country. UP has six campuses and offers more than 1800 academic programmes. UP has a vision that includes striving to be an internationally recognised leader in higher education with a focus on quality, being internationally competitive and locally relevant through continuous innovation, a university of choice for those seeking research solutions that provides an intellectual home for South African talent, and the premier South African university that accepts a prominent role in Africa (University of Pretoria [UP], 2010a).

There are nine faculties and a business school at UP. The Faculty of Humanities at UP is recognised nationally and internationally for its valuable contributions to human

sciences, including the languages, the social sciences, and the arts. The Department of Psychology at UP is a department within the Faculty of Humanities (UP, 2010a).

1.1.2 Department of Psychology

The Department of Psychology at UP aims to train students extensively, through the development of critical conceptual skills and thorough understanding of the discipline of psychology. The aim of the department is to give students insight into the field of psychology, but ultimately to develop the application of this knowledge to different personal and professional contexts (UP, 2010b).

A number of undergraduate, postgraduate, and extracurricular degrees in psychology are offered in the training of students, who wish to pursue a career in psychology at UP. Students who want to study psychology on a postgraduate level are required to complete a three-year undergraduate degree majoring in psychology. Students who meet the academic criteria stipulated by the department of psychology can then apply for an honours degree in psychology. The honours degree provides advanced academic and research training which will equip students with the skills necessary to proceed to a masters level degree, or to apply their knowledge and skills to a variety of work contexts (UP, 2010b).

After the completion of an honours degree, students can apply for three different masters level degrees in psychology. These include research psychology, clinical psychology, and counselling psychology. Admission to these degrees is limited and dependent on an extensive selection process. This study falls under within the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme, which is presented over a period of two years that include full-time theoretical lectures, practical training, and the completion of a mini-dissertation. In order to qualify as a counselling psychologist, the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) requires the completion of a 12-month internship at an institution accredited by the HPCSA (UP, 2010b).

1.1.3 MA (Counselling Psychology) Programme

The training of students in the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at UP is based on the scientist-practitioner model. Through this model, students are required to engage in both research-based training and practice-based training, each of which account for 50% of the training done during the MA (Counselling Psychology) course (Human, 2008). The scientist-practitioner model was developed to improve counsellor training, and thereby improve counsellor practice. According to this model, students must integrate both science and practice by developing skills in both research and an understanding of the human condition (Myers, 2007).

Of increasing importance in the practice of counselling psychology is the need for a link between science and practice. This implies that it is crucial for the daily practice of psychology to be informed by systematic and relevant research. Conversely, research undertaken by counselling psychologists should be relevant and useful to their everyday practice. This will ensure that counselling psychologists add value to the practice of counselling psychology, and will also allow counselling psychologists to evaluate their own practice critically (Woolfe, 1996).

The scientist-practitioner model addressed three aspects in the training of counselling psychologists. These three aspects include knowledge (academic training), skills (practical experience), and professional development (professional practice and professional identity), and will now be discussed further.

1. Knowledge

Academic training, and therefore the knowledge component, includes the development of theoretical knowledge in psychology and is presented over a period of two years in the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at UP. The theoretical knowledge consists of core and elective modules, which include (Human, 2008; Martins, 2008):

a. SLK 801: Fundamentals of Psychology (Core Module), which includes the following subjects: Developmental Psychology, Neuro-Psychology, Psychopathology and Professional Practice.
b. SLK 806: Psychological Assessment (Core Module), which includes the following subjects: Psychological Assessment: Theory and Psychological Assessment: Practice.
c. SLK 802: Counselling Psychology (Core Module), which includes the following subjects: Basic Interviewing Skills and Advanced Interviewing Skills (Cognitive-Behavioural Practice, Systemic-Narrative practice)).
d. SLK 804: Community Psychology (Elective Module), which includes the following subjects: Community Psychology: Theory and Community Psychology: Practice.
e. SLK 805: Sport Psychology (Elective Module), which includes the following subjects: Sports Counselling and Sport Psychology.

Students are required to complete all core modules and either one of the elective modules during the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at UP, which constitutes 50% of their final mark. Students are also required to complete a mini-dissertation which forms the scientist component of the scientist-practitioner model, which constitutes the remaining 50% of their final marks for the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at UP (Human, 2008).

2. Skills

During the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme, students are provided with opportunities to gain practical experience at various institutions that are accredited by the HPCSA.

During the MA I year, students studying the community psychology elective module gain practical experience at the Khalefong Hospital. Students studying the sport psychology elective module gain practical experience at placements that include the TuksSport at the High Performance Centre (HPC), Pretoria; Stabilis, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Pretoria; as well as through the Street Kids Project which is run by UP and the Tshwane Alliance for Street Kids (TASK).

During the MA II year, all students are required to complete 12 hours per week at practical placements which include UP Student Services, Tshwane University of Technology Student Support and Development, and Stabilis. These placements are attended on a rotational basis, and are supervised by the psychologists based at each placement. In addition to this, community psychology students complete practicals at Khalefong Hospital, while sport psychology students complete practicals at TuksSport at the HPC.

Lastly, students complete a 12-month internship, which is completed once all the requirements of the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme have been met. Internships are completed at institutions accredited by the HPCSA as approved training sites. Once the 12-month internship has been successfully completed, students may write a board exam and register with the HPCSA as counselling psychologists.

3. Professional Development

Professional development is the third aspect that is addressed within the scientist-practitioner model, and is specifically required by the HPCSA in the training of psychologists (Human, 2008).

Professional development is attended to through the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to professional practice, and through the development of student's professional identity. Professional practice involves knowledge related to conducting ones professional life in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution of SA, the civil laws of SA, and the code of conduct of the HPCSA (Human, 2008).

Professional identity development during training as a counselling psychologist is vitally important, especially when training is done from a social-constructionist approach, as it is done in the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at UP (Human, 2008). The development of professional identity involves creating an environment where students can develop their professional 'selves' in a manner that is consistent with the values and skills informing their counselling practice. By

assisting students to know who they are as psychologists, and what they would like to achieve as psychologists, through the values, attitudes, ideas, knowledge, and skills informing their practice, an identity consistent with their professional standpoint can be developed (Winslade, 2002).

According to Winslade (2002), a social-constructionist view of professional identity is one that is constantly storied through interactions with others, and not self-contained and owned within the individual. During weekly supervision, students have the opportunity to discuss their practical work, and personal and professional development with supervisors, thus storying professional identity through interaction with psychologists who can assist students in the development of their own professional identity. During the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme at UP, professional identity is also addressed during a five-day adventure experience.

Adventure can be described as a practical and experiential approach to counselling or education that uses challenges as the key to facilitating growth and change through these experiences (Durr, 2009; Gillis & Thomsen, 1996; Newes & Bandoroff, 2004). Adventure experience is based on the premise that people function within three zones: the comfort zone, the stretch zone, and the panic zone (Human, 2008). According to this premise, people are most likely to learn more about themselves if they are moved in to their stretch zone. This can lead to much growth on both a personal and interpersonal level, and can be used to facilitate these, as well as other aspects of the participants' life and identity.

During the yearly adventure experience the students in the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme are accompanied by two senior lecturers to the Kwa-Zulu Natal South Coast. On the one hand the adventure experience is used for academic training and practical experience of group counselling. On the other hand students participate in a number of adventure activities (including archery, sea rafting, sea kayaking, a ropes course, and abseiling) as part of the development of their professional identity. Through spontaneous metaphoric transfer (Bacon & Kimball, 1989; Priest & Gass, 1997) the 'adventure activities' become 'adventure metaphors' which are then explored in terms of professional identity.

As part of the adventure experience, the participants were required to complete three different assignments. These assignments are described below:

a. Group Counselling Assignment: As a group, the participants were instructed to reflect on the group process of the week through the work of Yalom (1995) and appropriate adventure therapy literature. This assignment forms part of the knowledge/skills components of the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme, and can thus be seen as practical-academic work. Students receive a group mark for this assignment.
b. Personal Reflection Assignment: Students were instructed to describe, individually, their most significant physical, personal and interpersonal adventure of the adventure week, and to explain how that could be translated to their professional identity. As this assignment relates to professional identity, no marks are received for this assignment, and it is not evaluated as part of the academic programme. This assignment is however used in supervision and during group feedback sessions in order to help students develop their professional identity.
c. Adventure Activity Assignment: For this assignment, students were asked to place themselves in the adventure activity where they thought their role as a psychologist was best represented. There were five different adventure activities related to this assignment, including archery, sea-kayaking, sea-rafting, ropes course, and abseiling adventure activities. This assignment also relates to professional identity, as it is essentially asking the students to describe how they see themselves in their professional capacity as psychologists. As this assignment relates to professional identity, it too is never marked or evaluated in terms of the academic programme.

This was the first time, since 1998, that this “Adventure Activity Assignment” was part of the entire adventure experience. On reading these adventure narratives, Prof. Lourens Human realized that the process of spontaneous metaphoric transfer had taken place (Bacon & Kimball, 1989; Priest & Gass, 1997). Through the process of spontaneous metaphoric transfer the “adventure activities” became “adventure metaphors”, which would be very valuable for the professional identity development of the postgraduate counselling psychology students.

Prof. Human asked the MA (Counselling Psychology) group if research on these adventure narratives would be possible, with the purpose of developing their professional identity, to which all the students agreed, both after the adventure week and subsequently once it had been determined that I was going to utilise these narratives in research. In this research project, the focus is only on the adventure narratives written for the "Adventure Activity Assignment".

1.2 QUESTION

The research question for this research study was: "How did postgraduate counselling psychology students construct their professional identity through adventure narratives during postgraduate counselling psychology education?"

1.3 GOALS

1.3.1 Primary Goal

The primary goal of this research project was to understand how postgraduate counselling psychology students constructed their professional identity through adventure narratives during postgraduate counselling psychology education.

1.3.2 Specific Goals

The specific goals of this research were to:

1. Review relevant literature (Research Overview)
2. Describe the research inquiry (Research Inquiry)
3. Conduct the research project (The Adventure Experience)
4. Write the research report (Research Findings)

1.4 STRUCTURE

This research project will be structured throughout nine chapters. Chapter One (the current chapter) orientates the reader to the research project by situating the project within a context, and providing the research question to be looked at, as well as the goals of the project. Chapter Two, is an in-depth literature study where I will discuss all relevant theory and literature pertaining to this project. Chapter Three will contain the methodology that was followed for this research project. Chapters Four to Eight will include a presentation of the findings obtained during this research project, with each participants findings being presented in a separate chapter. Finally, conclusions and recommendations will be provided in Chapter Nine.

Conclusion

With the context, justification, goals, and structure for this research project set out in this chapter, we can now proceed to examining the relevant literature that forms the basic elements which make up this study.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Introduction

To better clarify my research study, I will provide an overview of relevant literature that will cover the basic elements of this study. The major aspects of this study that will follow include: pertinent information relating to the types of learning that may be present during training, which includes traditional learning and experiential learning. Lastly I will discuss adventure-based experiential learning, which forms the basis for the adventure experience to be studied.

2.1 TRADITIONAL LEARNING

Below I will discuss traditional learning by clarifying what exactly traditional learning is and then by looking at the different theories relating to traditional learning.

2.1.1 Traditional Learning

Learning can be defined as “any relatively permanent change in behaviour, thoughts and feelings of an organism - human or other animal - that results from prior experience” (Sternberg, 2001, p. 197).

When talking about traditional learning, we talk about the learning that commonly takes place in the classroom. This learning usually involves a teacher, who is seen as the expert, imparting knowledge of a particular subject to a group of students or learners who must listen to and memorise the information given. The teacher must then evaluate the student’s acquisition of this knowledge by means of tests or exams. Traditional learning therefore uses didactic instruction to teach, with the basic assumption being that the students learn because of the actions of the teacher. This method of learning is thus teacher-centered with the students being seen as rather passive recipients in the process (Human, 2006; 2008; Martins, 2008).

There are a number of reasons why didactic instruction is so prevalent in education

today. The institutional framework of most schools and tertiary education institutions require teachers and lecturers to be held accountable for what they teach their students. Through a structured syllabus where the learning is facilitated by the transmission of knowledge, greater control can be maintained, and more predictable results obtained. The less structured the teaching environment, the more difficult it becomes to create concrete objectives, design structured lesson plans, and evaluate students (Du Toit, 2002).

2.1.2 Traditional Learning Theories

In the domain of traditional learning there are two main theories that describe how learning takes place, namely cognitive learning theory and behavioural learning theory. Behaviour observed either inside or outside the classroom is what forms the basis for behavioural learning theories, while the mental processes that individuals use to learn or remember new skills or information form the basis for cognitive learning theories (Miles & Priest, 1990).

Cognitive learning theory states that information is acquired because the individual has played an active role in acquiring, analyzing, evaluating, memorising, and recalling the information presented to them (Kolb, 1984). Thus, the teacher will impart their knowledge of a subject to the students, who will listen to the information with the goal of understanding and memorising the information. Finally they will be required to recall the information learnt when being evaluated. Attention, perception, and thinking are also important for the learning process in this context (Human, 2008, Martins, 2008).

Behavioural learning theory states that classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning facilitate the learning of new information. In this type of learning the student plays a more passive role as the environment acts upon the student to facilitate learning. According to this theory, students learn because there is some reward associated with learning (classical conditioning), or because their responses within the learning environment are controlled by certain consequences (operant conditioning). In this context, learning is also facilitated by observation and mimicking (observational learning). Thus according to this theory, students learn by

observing and mimicking and are motivated by the reward gained from learning and by the consequences associated with their actions in the learning context (Baron & Byrne, 2003; Martins, 2008).

2.2 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Below I will discuss experiential learning by defining experiential learning, and then by looking at experiential learning theory, I will present the theoretical background that underpins this type of learning.

2.2.1 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning has been defined by a number of authors as “learning by doing, with reflection” (Beyers, 1981; Gass, 1993; Human, 2006, 2008; Priest & Gass, 1997). Kraft (as cited in Miles & Priest, 1990) argues that experiential learning should not be seen as completely separate from traditional learning theories as many of the principles found in experiential learning come from the traditional learning theories. The immediacy of consequences for actions performed in the experiential learning environment can be seen as an example of behavioural learning. Experiential learning is different in that a more practical learning environment is provided to students where reflection is encouraged in the process of learning.

Traditional learning, as described earlier, is very teacher-centred and involves the dissemination of knowledge from one person (expert teacher) to another person (recipient student). Experiential learning, in contrast, is more student-centred, with the teacher playing a more facilitative role by providing an environment where meaningful experiences can take place. In this environment, knowledge is acquired through experiencing actual lived activities, and then reflecting on these lived experiences. Thus, knowledge is constructed and incorporated in to the students own meaning system through interpretation of, and reflection on experienced activities (Human, 2006; 2008). Experiential learning is also based on the belief that people are more likely to experience shifts in their own meaning system, and consequently change, when they are moved from a state of comfort (homeostasis, acquiescence) and in to a state of dissonance. In the process of adapting to the state

of dissonance, it is believed that growth and learning is facilitated (Gass, 1993).

In an academic setting, it is believed that students will learn more effectively when they are active participants in the process of learning. In addition to this, it can be argued that when experiential learning is used in academic courses, students are better able to link the knowledge they have acquired with practical ability. This enables them to utilise this knowledge outside of the classroom setting. Experiential learning can take place within the classroom setting, for example in demonstrations, recalling personal experiences, and instructor modelling, or it can take place outside of the classroom. Experiences outside of the classroom allow teachers to create optimal environments where experience can take place, and environments for students to better assimilate the course content and practical experience (Jernstedt, 1980).

2.2.2 Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Learning is defined within ELT as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.41).

According to Kolb and Kolb (2005), ELT is a theory that is based on the work done by a number of notable scholars, including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, and others, all of whom have been prolific in their work on learning and development. Dewey (as cited in Kolb & Kolb, 2005) presents six propositions that have been integrated from the above scholars work to form the basis of ELT. These six propositions will be discussed below:

1. The goal and the process of education are one and the same thing. Thus according to this theory, the focus of learning should be the process thereof, as this will facilitate the outcome. A process that includes feedback and reflection on the process and the effectiveness of the students learning efforts will best enhance learning.
2. This theory states that all learning is actually re-learning. For learning to be optimal, the process needs to allow for the students current beliefs and ideas

to be assessed, analysed, and finally integrated with the new ideas being presented. Thus learning is building on current knowledge held by the student.

3. Learning requires a student to resolve conflicting ways of seeing and adapting to the world. In this process of learning, students are required to move between these conflicting ways of seeing and adapting to the world, thereby allowing them greater insight and understanding of these conflicting points of view.
4. Learning does not only involve cognition, but also requires thinking, perceiving, feeling, and behaving as important building blocks for learning and adapting to new information.
5. The learning process is most optimal when there is an interactive transaction between the person and the environment, where people can integrate their new experiences into existing ways of thinking, and where adaption of existing ways of thinking takes place to accommodate these new ideas.
6. Learning is a process of constructing new knowledge. This theory proposes that social knowledge is created and re-created in the personal knowledge of the student. Thus, the student plays an active role in constructing and assimilating this new knowledge.

2.2.3 Experiential Learning Model (ELM)

With a definition and a theoretical background in place regarding experiential learning, we can now look at a model for experiential learning that takes all of the above information and provides a practical framework from which to view the process of experiential learning.

The most widely recognised ELM was developed by Kolb (1981). Kolb's model comprises a cyclical process consisting of four elements that Kolb believed were necessary for experiential learning to take place. These four elements are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Concrete experience would involve that actual experience of and exposure to the

learning environment, which could include an experiment, a demonstration, or in the case of this study an adventure activity. This concrete experience provides the basis for observation and reflection where direct involvement stimulates student's thoughts, impulses and responses to the experience.

Reflective observation involves stimulating student thought and awareness of the experience through observing and reflecting on that experience. Through this students make meaning of the experience and consider alternative perspectives and how this fits in with their current knowledge.

Abstract conceptualisation involves critically assessing the experience by analysing and evaluating what was learnt, and integrating this new knowledge into already existing knowledge. In this phase, students will be concerned with the uses and implications of the new knowledge that is being acquired.

Lastly, the active experimentation phase involves action, experimentation, problem solving, participation, and direct testing of the newly acquired knowledge. Through the process of experimenting with, as well as implementing this new knowledge, students are once again ready to engage in a new concrete experience (Sugarman, 1985).

This model sets the stage for much of the process that is followed during adventure, which will now be discussed.

2.3 ADVENTURE

Adventure can be defined as a leisure experience that is intrinsically motivating through the merit of the experience itself, which must be entered into voluntarily by the participant. Most importantly however, the outcome of the experience must be uncertain for the experience to qualify as an adventure (Miles & Priest, 1990).

Adventure has been adapted for a number of different uses, including as a recreational medium, a developmental medium, as a therapeutic medium, and as an educational medium (Miles & Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997). The use of

adventure programming will be discussed later in this text. The focus of this study is the use of adventure in adventure-related experiential learning (AREL), which will be discussed next. This section will also provide an overview of adventure programming, the adventure process, and the facilitation process to describe how adventure takes place. Lastly, theories on adventure and research on AREL will be discussed in order to describe why adventure is used in this study.

2.3.1 Adventure Related Experiential Learning (AREL)

According to Priest and Gass (1997), adventure consists of three different areas. These are outdoor recreation, outdoor leadership, and outdoor education. The area that will be the focus of this study involves outdoor education. Adventure, specifically in this study, consists of activities including archery, sea kayaking, sea rafting, ropes courses, and abseiling.

Outdoor education follows the principles of experiential learning, and comprises of two different aspects: environmental education and adventure education. Environmental education is concerned with relationships in the ecosystem, and with the interaction between humans and the ecosystem. Adventure education is concerned primarily with interpersonal relationships (how people relate to one another) and intrapersonal relationships (how an individual relates to their self) (Priest & Gass, 1997).

For an experience to be considered adventure it must have four characteristics. It must be a state of mind, it must be a voluntary activity, the activity must be in itself an intrinsically motivating experience, and lastly the experience must be uncertain. The last characteristic mentioned above alludes to another essential facet for an experience to be considered adventure – risk. Risk is an important aspect of an adventure experience as it creates a challenge and allows participants to move from their ‘comfort zone’ in to their ‘stretch zone’, which is essential for an adventure experience to be beneficial (Miles & Priest, 1990; Neill, 2005; Priest & Gass, 1997).

Priest and Gass (1997) state, “We can use facilitated adventure experiences to enhance learning. By manipulating perceived values of risk and competence while

keeping real values at acceptable levels, facilitated adventure experiences are possible." (p. 19). Adventure based education is a branch of outdoor education that makes use of adventurous and challenging activities as means of experiential learning (Human, 2006; 2008). Riggins (1986) identified five characteristics that make adventure-based education a valuable addition to classroom learning. These characteristics include: small learning group size; cooperative learning environment; communication of high expectations for students; building on student success; creating an identifiable classroom culture reflecting positive, supportive values.

Interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships are the prime focus of adventure education. The main premise of adventure education is that change can be facilitated in these areas through direct and purposeful exposure to challenge, adventure, and new growth experiences. By providing participants with challenging tasks, personal growth and development can be facilitated as participants learn to overcome these challenges. In the process, participants are able to learn much about themselves and how they relate to others (Human, 2006; 2008; Miles & Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997).

2.3.2 Adventure Programming

Adventure programming can be seen as the effective planning and use of adventure experiences to achieve different goals. All of the goals will be directed towards personal growth in some or other way, but the specific focus of different adventure programmes will determine the programme design. For an adventure programme to be effective, the programme should contain the following attributes (Priest & Gass, 1997):

1. Experiential: Activities should be hands on where the participants are able to learn through active participation, and thereafter reflection.
2. Dramatic: Programmes should create a sense of excitement and drama, which creates the need for participants to sharpen their focus and engage in the activity consciously.
3. Novel: Activities should present unique challenges where the outcome is uncertain, as this will provide for an optimal learning environment.

4. Consequential: There should be consequences for errors in the adventure activity (either real or perceived) as this puts the burden of effort and responsibility on the participant and the group.
5. Metaphoric: Adventure activities are a metaphor for challenges in everyday life. Thus, the behaviours and experiences can be applied to the outside world through the adventure.
6. Transferable: Adventures need to allow for the opportunity to transfer what is learnt in the adventure experience to daily life, where learning new things can be limited.
7. Structured: The activities in an adventure programme need to be planned to meet the needs of each specific group. Participants need to feel challenged as they gain competence, and programmes should reflect this.
8. Voluntary: Activities must be voluntary as this creates a dynamic where participants are free to learn what is important and motivating to them, thus making the experience more personally applicable.
9. Holistic: An effective adventure programme should incorporate cognitive, affective, physical, and psychomotor learning in the achievement of programme goals. The programme should also incorporate all of the senses and a variety of learning styles.

Adventure programmes can also have a number of different applications, as mentioned earlier, that include: recreational adventure programmes, developmental adventure programmes, therapeutic adventure programmes, and educational adventure programmes. Recreational adventure programmes are aimed at creating fun and energising experiences where people can learn new activities and in the process change the way they feel. Developmental adventure programmes are aimed at targeting functional behaviour and promoting new and different behaviour through adventure. Therapeutic adventure programming is used to foster change in dysfunctional behaviour patterns, and also in the rehabilitation process. The therapeutic benefits of adventure are combined with more traditional therapeutic modalities on individual and group levels in therapeutic adventure programming. Lastly, educational adventure programming is aimed at understanding new ideas, enhancing old ideas, and creating awareness of previously unknown needs through adventure (Miles & Priest, 1990; Newes & Bandoroff, 2004; Priest & Gass, 1997).

2.3.3 The Stages of the Adventure Experience

The stages of the adventure experience proposed by Mortlock (as cited in Priest & Gass, 1997) consist of four stages that are dependent on the presence or absence of fear in the activity or experience itself. These four stages are as follows:

1. Stage one (play): This stage of adventure is present when there is an absence of any fear in the activity or experience. This implies that there is little challenge or difference from activities experienced in normal daily functioning, but learning will take place.
2. Stage two (adventure): This stage is characterised by the presence of some fear that allows the activity to have a novel and unique quality. This creates an experience where participants are required to move out of their comfort zones to meet this new challenge, and thus learning can takes place.
3. Stage three (frontier adventure): During this stage there is a high degree of fear and participants will feel that they are not in complete control. This too will require participants to move out of their comfort zones to meet the challenge presented to them. Learning is also possible during this stage.
4. Stage four (misadventure): This stage is characterised by an excess of fear where failure is most likely. During this stage, participants will only learn new things from making mistakes, provided serious injury or death are avoided. Typically, this stage may result in physical or psychological damage, and is thus not an appropriate use of adventure.

2.3.4 Transfer of Learning During Adventure

The key concept in the facilitation of adventure is the transfer of what is learnt during the adventure experience to daily life. Participants in an adventure experience may not always be able to connect what was done in the adventure experience, where they may have learnt a great deal about themselves and their competencies, with real life applications. For this reason it is essential that effective facilitation takes place to complete this transfer of learning.

The transfer of this newly learnt information can be achieved in a number of ways. Gass (1991) identified three types of transfer that can be used during adventure programming:

1. Specific Transfer: involves the transfer of learning of habits and associations. Skills learnt in the adventure activity are the same or very similar to the skills in the real world context that transfer of learning is aimed at. A practical example would be learning how to balance on a ropes course in order to improve balance in a real life sporting application. In this example, the transfer of learning is aimed at improving a skill, which is similar in both contexts.
2. Nonspecific Transfer: is aimed at learning general principles that can be applied and transferred to different contexts. Thus, the principle learnt may be the same in each context, but it will be utilised differently from the manner it was learnt in the adventure experience. An example of nonspecific transfer is the building of trust between participants using the 'trust fall' exercise so that these people may work better with, and trust one another more in the real world context.
3. Metaphoric Transfer: A metaphor can be described here as an idea, object, or description that is used when parallels exist between that and another idea, object, or description, in order to show the comparative similarity between the two (Gass, 1991). Thus, metaphoric transfer occurs when the parallels between an adventure experience and real life applications become apparent, and something new can be learnt that can be applied to the real world. An example of metaphoric transfer, which forms the basis for the data used in this study, is the parallels that can be seen between the process of an adventure experience and the therapeutic environment in which psychologists work.

2.3.5 Theories on Adventure

1. The Adventure Experience Paradigm (AEP)

The AEP, developed by Martin and Priest (1986), was designed so that we may have a better understanding of the adventure experience, and also in order for us to better interpret adventure experiences. The AEP consists of two axes – risk and

competence. Within this theoretical understanding of adventure experiences one of the main ingredients for a successful adventure experience is the presence of a challenge. Challenge can be seen as resulting from a balance between risk and competence. When risk is low and competence is high the activity will be seen as a safe and common activity. As risk increases and competence decreases, the perceived challenge becomes greater and thus the activity moves in to the realm of adventure (Martins, 2008; Miles & Priest, 1990).

Based on the balance between perceived risk and competence, five conditions can be present in the AEP. The sea kayaking adventure experience that forms part of this study provides a useful analogy for these five conditions, and will be used to explain them. This first condition is called exploration and experimentation, and is present when perceived risk is low and competence is high. During the sea kayaking experience, participants were taken in to a calm shallow lagoon to practice safety procedures and paddling techniques with the instructors present, and this would have allowed for exploration and experimentation conditions to be present.

As risk increases the next conditions are met, called adventure, peak adventure, and misadventure. These conditions were met in the sea kayaking adventure experience when we began paddling out in to the shallows of the ocean (adventure), when we attempted to ride a wave on our kayak (peak adventure) and when we were knocked off our kayak by a wave and had to retrieve the kayak and attempt to get back on it (misadventure). These conditions are all seen as useful to the learning experience that can take place during adventure.

The fifth condition, called disaster and devastation, is not seen as useful to the learning experience. The condition of disaster and devastation is met when the perceived risks far outweigh the participants perceived competence, so much so that the participant may fear severe injury or even death. This negative adventure experience should be avoided at all costs as it is likely to only reverse any positive gains created through the adventure experience (Jones, Hollenhorst, & Perna, 2003; Miles & Priest, 1990; Morgan & Stevens, 2008; Priest & Baille, 1987).

An important consideration for adventure experiences is that adventure will be

personally specific. All people will not experience the same levels of perceived risk and competence for a specific adventure experience. Timid and fearful people will perceive the risks associated with an adventure experience as being higher than the actual risks involved. They are also most likely to perceive their competence as lower than it actually is. Arrogant and fearless people on the other hand will perceive the risks as being lower than they actually are. They are also most likely to perceive their competence as being higher than it actually is. This has important implications for adventure experiences as these variations between participants will have an impact on the conditions that may be met within the AEP. This is why effective adventure programming is essential (Miles & Priest, 1990).

2. The Adventure Experience and Flow

Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) posit that human beings derive a great pleasure from exploring and confronting the unknown and unexpected, a characteristic that has ensured our survival over time. Through exploring and confronting the unknown and unexpected, these authors report that human beings attain a state of optimal experience, which they have termed ‘flow’.

Flow is described by Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as “a state of experience that is engrossing, intrinsically rewarding, and outside of the parameters of worry and boredom” (p. 150). This definition seems to describe what I have already shown to be the essence of the adventure experience. This definition also describes the state of flow as one where people are able to act and participate in a mindset that is not restricted by cognitions and emotions that limit human experience in everyday life, which is one of the vital characteristics of the adventure experience.

Part of what creates the state of flow in adventure activities is the level of absorption in the activity. When a person is totally involved in an activity, their goals become extremely clear and they will receive constant feedback regarding the attainment of those goals. This characteristic of the flow experience creates a merger between action and awareness where a person is not necessarily thinking about each next step or focusing on internal stimuli, but rather attention is only focused on necessary external stimuli required to achieve goals. This state ensures that consciousness is

narrowed and a loss of ego and self-consciousness is achieved, allowing people to feel control of themselves and their environment (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Jones, Hollenhorst, & Perna, 2003). This loss of ego and self-consciousness is what allows great interpersonal and intrapersonal learning to take place. People are given the opportunity to learn a great deal more about themselves and how they interact with others than is afforded to them during everyday life.

3. Adaptive Dissonance

Adaptive dissonance is a condition that occurs when people have two different or conflicting thoughts about something they are faced with. Adaptive dissonance can be seen as a cognitive, affective, or psychomotor condition that occurs through the contradiction they are faced with through the opposing views they experience (Priest & Gass, 1997).

To illustrate adaptive dissonance with an example from the adventure experiences that formed this study, let's consider the abseiling activity. In abseiling one uses a rope to lower oneself backwards or forwards off the edge of a cliff. Naturally, when faced with this, participants experience anxiety over the danger and difficulty of this new and challenging experience. While participants experience this anxiety they are told by instructors how safe the activity is and how the ropes and instructing team operate to keep you safe. This creates the contradiction through the opposing perceptions that participants are faced with, and participants are thus motivated to resolve this dissonance (Priest & Gass, 1997).

This ties in with the AEP, which takes in to account that all people will have differing perceptions regarding their competence levels as well as the risk involved in the activity. It is through the participant's experience of the activity as well as their perceived competence levels being different in reality to what they expected that creates adaptive dissonance. When this state is created, good judgement and decisiveness can be expected, similar to the state of flow discussed above. Once this experience is reflected upon, the transfer of learning to other experience can take place (Martin, 2010; McKenzie, 2003; Priest & Gass, 1997).

2.3.6 Research on Adventure-Related Experiential Learning (AREL)

Wheeler, Goldie, and Hicks (1998) conducted research on the effectiveness of a residential outdoor pursuits weekend on the personal development of trainee counsellors. The participants of this study were 17 second-year students enrolled in a part-time two-year professional counselling course at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. This study utilised a same subject experimental design to analyse data that was obtained in the form of repertory grids and a questionnaire that used a bi-polar construct.

In terms of the evaluation of the adventure experience, the authors report that evidence gathered is varied. Participants seem to have gained some insight and self-awareness through the programme. This research was limited by the fact that a large number of participants did not complete the repertory grids or questionnaires completely or suitably, thus the data obtained was thin. The data collection method could have been enhanced by utilising qualitative methods. Reflective essays, for example, could have been used in assessment of the students, and the participants could have found value in completing these essays.

Carlson and McKenna (2000) conducted research on the professional development of 40 third year physical education students enrolled at a prominent Australian university, in order to give these students an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences through adventure activities, and how this may influence the method and content of what they teach. The study was conducted over two consecutive years, with 15 students involved in 1995 and 25 students involved in 1996. Of the 14 female and 26 male students, ages ranged from 20-27 years.

Data was collected through a reflective writing task in which the students were asked to describe one experience in the adventure activities where they felt scared or concerned, and what they did to overcome this fear or concern. Finally, they were asked to relate this experience to the teaching of others. Data analysis was conducted through the reading and coding of the reflective essay to identify common themes, and a process of constant comparison was used. This study found that the

adventure programme had a positive effect on student learning, and was therefore a credible programme.

The analysis of the data showed that the participants were able to construct new knowledge about themselves and the way they planned to teach. The research also found that the participants gained valuable insight into challenges facing more vulnerable students that they may teach one day, further influencing how they could handle situations with these students in the future.

This study is limited in that the data included in this study consisted only of a reflective task completed shortly after the completion of the adventure experience. The study could have been enhanced by broadening the study to include data obtained after the application of what was leant during practicals that the participants completed. The study was also limited by the fact that the focus was on the application of new knowledge to the teaching environment. The use of adventure learning to gain insight into one's self is paramount in this field and this could have been a useful additional aspect included in this study.

Human (2006) conducted a study that evaluated the use of an adventure medium to enhance the personal and professional development of counselling psychology students enrolled at UP. The adventure medium used in this study took the form of a one-day high-ropes course. The participants of this study were asked to reflect, in writing, on four questions related to their individual experience of the adventure activity. This data was then analysed through a phenomenological research design. This research study found that five main themes emerged, namely: boundaries, anxiety, roles, cohesion, and trust. The author concluded that this adventure experience did contribute to the personal growth and professional development of the participants, and that an adventure-based experience during professional training in psychology can be a valuable component of the training of these students.

Human (2008) conducted a study entitled 'Unique outcomes in professional psychology training through an adventure experience'. This study differs from the previous study (Human, 2006) in that it looked at the professional identity of the participants. More specifically, this study focused on constructing unique outcomes

in terms of professional identity by challenging the students to move from the dominant narrative of “I am an expert”, to an alternative narrative of “I am a collaborator”. This was important for the professional identity of these participants as they were being trained from a social constructionist perspective. The data in this study was collected in the form of narratives.

The participants were asked to reflect on their experience of the adventure programme through the question “How did you experience the adventure programme as part of your MA (Counselling Psychology) training?” These narratives were then analysed through narrative analysis. This study found that an adventure medium assisted the participants to experience unique outcomes that challenged the dominant narrative of “I am an expert” and made space for them to experience an alternative narrative of “I am a collaborator”. This assisted the participants to experience a more congruent professional identity in terms of the social constructionist perspective from which they were being trained.

Lastly, Martins (2008) conducted a dissertation in which she attempted to understand how students experienced adventure during professional training in psychology. This phenomenological analysis looked at the reflections of students experiences of an adventure experience and how they understood this experience influencing them as future psychologists. This study found that through the adventure experience, students experienced an increased self-awareness, challenged their boundaries and limitations, experienced increased group cohesion, and experienced personal development. This study does not take into account the role of the adventure experience in shaping the students professional identity as future psychologists. Reflections on the findings of the material analysis were also not included in this research report, which is a possible limitation with regard to the professional development of students.

Conclusion

This chapter will have provided the reader with an understanding of all of the relevant literature and theories that form the cornerstones of this research project. With the relevant literature presented regarding the important aspects that make up

this research project, we can now move on to looking at how this research project was conducted.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH INQUIRY

Introduction

The goal in this chapter is to provide the reader with an understanding of how this research project was undertaken. To do this, I will present the research context. I will also discuss the research participants, my research position, the research material, as well as the efforts to improve the quality of the research, and the ethical aspects of the research project.

3.1 RESEACH CONTEXT

The Venture Group is an independent company that specialises in running adventure-based activities for groups. The Venture Group is an accredited service provider of adventure activities and is registered with the Adventure Recreation Association (ARA) in South Africa. The ARA's role is to uphold a professional code of ethics, ensure quality training and centre accreditation for the industry. The ARA strives to promote activities in line with national & international affiliates practice and standards in adventure-based learning (ARA, 2010).

All of the adventure activities are run and conducted by trained professionals working for The Venture Group. These facilitators were responsible for setting up activities, briefing participants on the activities, and providing information on safety, procedures, and goals of the activities. The adventure programme was structured according to the "briefing-activity-debriefing" model. The students were first briefed on the nature and safety of the activity they would be participating in. Next, the participants would participate in the adventure activity, and lastly a debriefing in the form of a group discussion took place. The debriefing focused on the students experience of the adventure activity itself, and also on the transferability of the adventure activity to the students training as student psychologists (Human, 2008).

The "challenge-by-choice" principle is also a vital aspect of the adventure activity that was followed during the adventure experience. According to this principle, people

generally function within their own comfort zones where there is little opportunity to learn new things about themselves. Participants of an adventure activity are able to operate in their stretch zone, where they are able to have unique experiences that have valuable learning applications. Through the "challenge-by-choice" principle, participants can choose how far they want to stretch themselves, and have complete control over ensuring they are comfortable enough not to move in to their panic zone (Human, 2008).

The facilitators from UP (Prof. Lourens Human and Prof. Dave Beyers) were there to observe the activities, and once completed, ran group sessions where the activities were discussed and reflected on. Thus, they formed part of the debriefing process that was undertaken within the briefing-activity-debriefing model.

3.2 RESEACH PARTICIPANTS

3.2.1 MA (Counselling Psychology) Students

Six MA (Counselling Psychology) students participated in the adventure experience that is being studied by this research project. The group consisted of two white females, one black female, and two white males. Their ages ranged from 26 to 28 years. These participants have been selected due to their availability and their willingness to participate thus, a form of convenience sampling was used in this research project (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

Participant	**Age**	**Gender**
Participant A	26	Male
Participant B	27	Female
Participant C	26	Male
Participant D	27	Female
Participant E	27	Female

Table 3.1 Research Participants

3.2.2 Student Researcher

I am an MA (Counselling Psychology) student and part of the MA (Counselling Psychology) group that forms the participants of this research project. As I wanted to conduct this research project, I was put in a dual role, that of "student participant" and "student researcher". Conducting research where dual roles were present is found in various fields, such as psychology (e.g. Coy, 2006; Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999); sport (e.g. Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007; Macphail, 2004); medicine (e.g. Levine, 1991; Trondsen & Samdaunet, 2009); nursing (e.g. Holloway & Wheeler, 1995; Tilley & Tilley, 1995) and marketing (e.g. Wilson, 2004).

Literature indicates that there can be some problems with dual role research, such as insufficient transparency regarding the boundaries and responsibilities of the dual roles, transferability of confidential information between two roles, and the fair treatment of participants when negotiating and acting out the dual roles (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007). However, the usefulness of dual roles in research is also evident in the literature as can be seen in the words of Hodgson (2000, p.3) who states that "the researcher's part in the social world that is being investigated and that "subjects" responses to the presence of the researcher, and the researcher's response to the context, are as valuable as any other aspect of the study". Furthermore, the dual role allows for mutual learning to take place between the researcher-participant and the participants within the social-cultural context (Trondsen & Sandaunet, 2009).

There are various actions that can be taken to guard against exploitation when the phenomenon of dual roles is apparent in research. These are, for example, (1) undergoing supervision, (2) making use of a critical agent, (3) transparency for setting ground rules for the research and (4) being clear regarding the responsibilities of the dual roles (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007; Krefting, 1991; Macphail, 2004). In this research actions 1-4 will be implemented.

Lastly, it should be noted that the adventure group that forms part of this study ended after the adventure week in May 2009. The adventure week had an impact on

the functioning of the adventure group after the adventure week took place, but this group is no longer functioning as a group. The members of the group do not currently participate in group activities or function as the adventure group did. As I was not a researcher during the adventure week and am no longer part of the adventure group, the effects of a dual-role relationship are greatly lessened.

3.3 RESEARCH POSITION

3.3.1 Quantitative Research

The term quantitative research implies that there are variables being measured that vary in quantity (size, magnitude, amount). Thus, quantitative research involves the measurement of variables in order to conduct statistical analysis on the scores obtained from the participants of the study. These statistical analyses are then summarised and the data interpreted in order to reach a conclusion (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). The major goal of quantitative research is to reach hypotheses that are predictive of human behaviour through reliable and valid research design, so that this research may be replicated and generalised to groups or portions of a population (Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993).

3.3.2 Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative naturalistic approach to its subject matter … qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials … that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (p. 2)

According to Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) some of the cornerstones of qualitative research come from what they call the 'turn to language' and the 'turn to interpretation'. These concepts are based on the belief that our own realities are

shaped and affected by the way we talk about and interpret these realities. From this we can see that qualitative research is concerned with how people interpret, make sense and meaning of, and subjectively experience their own realities. There are a number of different research designs that fall under qualitative research. These research designs include ethnography, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Lastly, there is also the narrative approach to research, and this will be the design that I have selected for this research project (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008).

3.3.3 Narrative Research

Narrative research can be seen as any study that makes use of narrative materials as data, which can come in many forms, including life stories, interviews, literary works, field notes, or even personal letters (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Polkinghorne (1995) describes narratives as a form of discourse in which events and happenings are organised into a sequenced whole through the use of a plot.

Riessman (1993, p.5) states that the narrative research "approach gives prominence to human agency and imagination". This makes the narrative approach perfect for the study of human subjectivity and identity. This study is concerned with the professional identity of MA (Counselling Psychology) students who are undergoing training to be psychologists. The question that is being asked is how do these students construct their identity(ies) as psychologists. Thus we can use the narratives they tell about their experiences during training as psychologists, to better understand how they construct their professional identity.

From the Narrative Research perspective, narratives are seen as having specific functions in a narrators' life, and are also seen as being constructed within specific contexts that shape the narratives. The function and construction of narratives will now be discussed further.

1. The Function of Narratives

Narratives are seen as having two functions in people's lives. Andrews (2000, pp. 77-78) most succinctly summarises these functions, as well as the fundamental research position on which this research project is based, when he states:

> Stories are not only the way in which we come to ascribe significance to experiences…they are one of the primary means through which we constitute our very selves…We become who we are through telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell.

This statement contains two parts in a cyclical process that interact to shape each other. The first part of this statement has to do with the premise that people tell their narratives and by doing so give a sense of how they interpret their self-world. Thus, by listening to people's narratives, we can get an idea of how they experience the world in which they live. The second part of this statement concerns the idea that through the process of telling narratives, people constitute their own self-world. Thus, by listening to people's narratives we get an idea of how they construct their own identity(ies). Narratives can therefore be seen as having an interpretative, as well as a constitutive function (Sclater, 2003).

a. The interpretative function of narratives

The first part of Andrews (2000, pp. 77-78) statement that "stories are not only the way in which we come to ascribe significance to experiences" indicates how narratives are seen as the means through which people give meaning to their lives. The narratives that people tell about their experiences can be seen as the means through which people understand their experiences in a process of constructing their subjective reality through language. Thus the meaning making and understanding of experiences by narrating one's life shows how narratives have an interpretative function (Joshi, 2011; Lock, Epston & Maisel, 2004).

In this study, the participants' narratives about their adventure experiences allowed them to interpret these experiences as they related to their professional identity as

psychologists. Through the telling of these narratives, participants were able to understand and give meaning to these narratives.

b. The constitutive function of narratives

The constitutive function of narratives can be seen where Andrews (2000, pp.77-78) states “they are one of the primary means through which we constitute our very selves… we become who we are through telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell.” This statement indicates that the telling of a narrative has the second function of constituting the narrator’s identity (Joshi, 2011).

Narratives and identity are inextricably linked, we narrate our experiences and in doing so form our identities through narrating how we understand and make meaning of our experiences (Sclater, 2003). As the participants in this study narrate their experiences of the adventure activities, they are constructing their identity(ies), and more specifically their professional identity(ies) as a psychologist.

2. The construction of narratives

Sclater (2003, p. 327) states “The story provides an intermediate or transitional area of experience in which the self continually negotiates its position in the world, inscribes itself in relation to available cultural scripts, integrates past, present and future through acts of remembering and telling.” Narratives are not constructed in a vacuum. As people tell their narratives, forces of history (consisting of past, present, and future) and culture affect how these narratives are constructed.

a. History

Kirkman (2002) discusses the role of the past, present, and the future in our narratives, and how the past and the future affect our ‘selves’ and the telling of the narratives in the present. She states that the continuity of memory through our narratives acts to construct a coherent ‘self’ by incorporating the past and anticipating the future. The possibilities that we see in the future will have an effect on the narratives we tell, and thus our identity as we make sense of it in the present.

As psychologists in training, certain possibilities will be present in our minds during

professional training. Achieving a preferred professional identity will be one of the most important of these possibilities. By looking at the narratives that students undergoing professional training in psychology tell regarding their 'selves', we can gain an understanding of how their professional 'selves' are constituted and developed through the past that has affected them, and the future possibilities that they aspire to as psychologists.

b. Culture

People make sense of and understand their lives and their experiences through narratives. These narratives are shaped and affected by the cultural narratives that are dominant in the context that the narrator is living in. The cultural narrative of "psychologists as experts" for example, will shape the narratives that many psychologists tell and work by, and will affect how these people make t of their experiences and how they construct their professional identity(ies) (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1991). In addition to this, the different contexts within which people tell their narratives, and the cultural discourse present in these contexts, will have an effect on the narratives people tell.

Traditions, discourses, metaphors, rituals, heritage sites and folk tales make up the context and cultural narratives that people live in, which shape the experiences of people. People draw on these cultural narratives in order to make sense of their experiences and thereby construct their identity(ies) (Human, 2008).

3.4 RESEARCH MATERIAL

3.4.1 Adventure Experience

As part of the professional development component of the MA (Counselling Psychology) program, students participate in a week-long adventure experience. The student's experiences of that week form the basis of the narratives that were used in this study, which were gathered in the form of assignments.

3.4.2 Producing the Adventure Narratives

Students were required to complete three separate assignments as part of the adventure experience. The assignment that was used as the data in this research project is the “Adventure Activity Assignment”. For this assignment, students were asked to place themselves in the adventure activity where they thought their role as a psychologist was best represented. There were five different adventure activities that this assignment related to, including the archery, sea-kayaking, sea-rafting, ropes course, and abseiling adventure activities. This assignment relates to professional identity, as it is essentially asking the students to describe how they see themselves in their professional capacity as psychologists.

The five adventure narratives based on the five adventure activities participated in form the data that was used in this study. Through the process of spontaneous metaphoric transfer the five adventure activities became “adventure metaphors”. These “adventure metaphors” formed a means of understanding how the participants constructed their professional identity(ies), and were thus utilised in this study. As there were five different students writing about five different adventure activities, there are 25 different accounts of professional identity that were available to be analysed.

As a participant in the adventure week, I was also required to complete the adventure week assignments. Thus I was a “student researcher” and a “student participant”. In narrative research, researchers are seen as part of the world being studied. Participants and researchers are co-participants in the research process where knowledge is understood and constructed through language during the process. As a researcher from a narrative position I am present in the research, reconstructing, and thereby re-learning stories with the participants from our experiences, and occupying multiple positions such as fellow student and researcher-participants. Thus, I analysed my own “Adventure Activity Assignment” before analysing those of the participants. This allowed me to acknowledge the similarity of my own process of professional development with that of the research participants. This also allowed me to identify my own understanding of my narratives and, in doing so, be more open to, and aware of the influence of my own narratives

in reading and analysing the narratives of the research participants (Kelly & Howie, 2007).

3.4.3 Analysing the Adventure Narratives

The analysis of narratives involves the restorying of texts based on the narrative elements of the story, such as the problem, characters, setting, actions, and resolution (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002).

Narratives consist of basic elements that involve a predicament, conflict, or struggle; a protagonist or character; and a sequence with implied causality during which the predicament is resolved in some manner. Often when people tell a story the chronological sequence that provides a logical order is missing. This sequence provides a causal link among the ideas and through the process of analyzing the data for key elements, and retelling the story within a chronological sequence, the researcher can identify this causal link between the ideas in the story (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Thus, the goal of a narrative analysis is to make sense of a text through restorying the text.

Narrative analysis can be conducted from a number of different approaches. The approach that will be utilized in this research project is the problem-solution approach, as discussed by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002). The problem-solution approach is applicable for this study as a problem or dilemma was presented to the participants in the form of the question “Where would you place yourself in the adventure activity as a student psychologist”. Through answering this question the participants were required to resolve the dilemma through the metaphor of the adventure activity.

1. The Problem-Solution Approach to Narrative Analysis

In this approach the researcher analyses the raw data, in the form of a transcription, for five elements of plot structure, which include characters, setting, problem or predicament, actions, and resolution. The analysis involves organizing the elements of the narrative into attempts at resolving the predicament, and then sequencing

these attempts in a logical order (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002; Yussen & Ozcan, 1997)

The process of analysis involves the following steps (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002; Yussen & Ozcan, 1997):

1. Transcription of the raw data.
2. Read and re-read through the transcript to get a sense of the data.
3. Colour-code the transcripts in terms of the elements of plot structure.
4. Organise the colour-coded transcripts into events or attempts of the characters at resolution of the predicament.
5. Re-sequencing the events until sense can be made, and until a resolution to the predicament can be seen.

The above described problem-solution approach was utilised in the analysis of the "Adventure Activity Assignment". In this research project, this research methodology was utilised first by transcribing the data into single sentences that were numbered. This was done so that the raw data could be organised and re-sequenced into a narrative that showed a resolution of the predicament of "Where would you place yourself in the adventure activity as a student psychologist?" The data was then read and re-read, and then colour-coded and organised in terms of actions or events within the narrative that shows an attempt at resolving the predicament. These actions were the re-sequenced into a narrative that showed how the participants resolved the predicament, and therefore constructed their professional identity through the adventure narratives.

Once the "Adventure Activity Assignment" data had been analysed, the findings were returned to the participants so that they could apply the findings to their professional development within the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme. This data was returned to the participants in the form of the re-sequenced narratives, and the participants had the opportunity to decide whether the re-sequenced narratives captured the meaning they had intended when writing the "Adventure Activity Assignment".

3.4.4 Applying the Adventure Narratives

As this research project is looking at the development of professional identity of students, it is essential that students reflect on the application of what is learnt during the above-mentioned analyses. The process described below occurred as part of the student's professional identity development. Participants were asked to do this in the following way:

1. Individual Application

Participants met with my supervisor (Prof. Lourens Human) and I, for the purpose of reflecting on the findings of the "Adventure Activity Assignment" analysis. As part of their professional identity development, research participants were then asked to reflect on the application of the analysis of their "Adventure Activity Assignments" as it relates to following:

a. Scope of Practice: Psychological Assessment
b. Scope of Practice: Psychological Counselling
c. Scope of Practice: Psychological Education

These reflections were then given to me and also formed part of the final narratives that were researched, as they showed how students constructed, and applied what they learnt about their professional identity(ies), through the use of an adventure experience.

2. Group Application

Participants also participated in a group reflection session. This session involved the five members of the adventure experience that are participating in the study, my research supervisor, and a critical agent from the UP Department of Psychology (Ms. Adri Prinsloo). During this session the group reflected on the findings of the analyses, and had a discussion around the findings, with the critical agent providing an objective, new perspective on the findings. This process allowed the participants to learn from each other and apply what they learnt to the development of their

professional identity in the future. The presence of a critical agent is recommended in research where the researcher plays a dual role as the outside agent provides support, balance, objectivity, and guidance to the researcher fulfilling the dual role (Jones, Evans, & Mullen, 2007).

3.5 RESEARCH QUALITY

In narrative research, criteria such as validity, reliability, and generalisability do not inform the quality of the research. Unlike quantitative research methods, the aim of qualitative, and more specifically, narrative research is not to produce results that are predictive of human behaviour, or that can be seen as absolute truths. For this reason narrative research is not concerned with generalising results to a broader population, or with the ability to replicate the research and results (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In addition to this, because the relationship formed during the research process is seen as central to the research process, objectivity is also not applicable to narrative research. Narrative research is more concerned with the collaborative construction of narratives and meaning, and is less concerned with maintaining a divide between the research and the research participant (Hardy, Gregory, & Ramjeet, 2009). The following is suggested to enhance the quality of narrative research.

3.5.1 Research Supervision

My research supervisor, Prof. Lourens Human, conducted weekly supervision during the writing of this research project. Supervision was provided in order to give feedback and to enhance the quality of the analysis of the research material, to ensure ethical standards were maintained, and to develop a professional method and approach to the writing of the research report.

3.5.2 Peer Review

A peer review process was also utilised where critical feedback was provided by fellow MA (Counselling Psychology) first year and MA (Counselling Psychology)

second year students also in the process of conducting research projects. This peer review process is seen as enhancing the dependability and credibility of the research report (Krefting, 1991).

3.5.3 Member Checking

Member checking was utilised during the data analysis process to ensure “accuracy in representation” (Krefting, p.215, 1991) and credibility of the research. Member checking ensures that the interpretation and understanding of the narratives remains the primary aspect of the final analysis and allows the research participants to correct, change, or elaborate on the findings of the data analysis (Hardy, Gregory, & Ramjeet, 2009). This was done in this research project during the individual and group application sessions where participants were given the opportunity to confirm their understanding of their own narratives and the findings arising from them.

3.6 RESEARCH ETHICS

3.6.1 Participation

Participation in the professional identity development process that this research project studied is compulsory as it is part of the research participants’ practitioner training (and an HPCSA requirement). Participation in the research project however, was strictly voluntary. Participants of this study had the right to refuse participation in the research process at any time, and were under no obligation to have their part in the professional development process written up as part of this research project. Identifiable information, like participant’s actual names and the year of the program being studied, have not been used or mentioned in this document. Participants were informed that if, at any stage, they wished to withdraw from the study, their material would be destroyed.

Full information regarding this research project was communicated to the participants before the commencement of the research study. Participants were also granted full access to any information pertinent to their part in the study, and thus no deception was present and transparency was maintained.

The participants of this study are all of legally consenting age, and signed an informed consent letter for their participation in this research project.

3.6.2 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the participants in this research has been maintained as any identifiable information, including participants' names and year of study, have been excluded from this research report.

3.6.3 Storage

The Department of Psychology at UP will store a copy of the research material for a period of 15 years.

3.7 RESEARCH RELEVANCE

As previously discussed, the training of students as counselling psychologists at UP is done within the scientist-practitioner model. The scientist component consists of the research aspect of the programme. The practitioner component of the counselling psychology programme consists of academic training, as well as practical training during the first year of the course, and a one-year internship once the course has been successfully completed (Human, 2008).

According to Human (2008), professional development of students underpins the scientist-practitioner model. Professional development can be seen as the development of students' professional identity and ethical stance (Beyers, 1981; Farrell, 1996; Human, 2008; Phares, 1992), and is a major requirement of the HPCSA for students undergoing postgraduate professional training, which is thus required by law (HPCSA, 2007).

Understanding how students in professional psychology training make sense of and construct their own professional identity is thus crucial. The use of an adventure medium to provide these students a challenging environment in which to learn about

themselves and their professional identity has been shown to be effective and valuable. From looking at the research that has already been conducted on the use of an adventure medium to address professional identity, it appeared that there was a need for further research to be conducted.

The available research does not address how students construct their own professional identity, but rather focuses on a single aspect of professional identity. Professional identity in counselling psychology can be seen as a sense of relation to, and connection with, the values and emphases of counselling psychology (Mrdjenovich & Moore, 2004), and thus we can see that professional identity will be far more complex than the single aspect studied previously in Human (2008).

This research will be useful and relevant to students and lecturers who participate in the training of professional psychologists in SA, and internationally.

Conclusion

With an understanding of how this research project was conducted, we can now look at the findings of this research project. Each participant of the research project will have a chapter allocated to the presentation of their findings, thus chapters four to eight will be a presentation of each individual participant's research findings.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT A)

Introduction

Participant A is a 26-year-old male. This chapter will look at how Participant A constructed his professional identity through the adventure narratives discussed in Chapter Three.

4.1 "COLLABORATOR"

Through Participant A's narratives it became apparent that the professional identity that he constructed in each adventure metaphor is that of being a "Collaborator". The construction of the "Collaborator" identity can be seen in Participant A's narratives through the themes of working together, allowing the client ultimate control, not being the "expert" on the clients life, and in giving responsibility to the client to overcome their difficulties. This identity seems to be in direct contrast to the dominant cultural narrative regarding psychologists as "experts".

The construction of the "Collaborator" identity can be seen in the archery adventure narrative where he writes: "*As a psychologist, it would be my role to help the client find direction, and together with the client work out in which direction to move to resolve the problem"*, and in the sea rafting adventure narrative where he describes his role as a psychologist as being an *"active participant in helping the client to decide on the best course through difficult times."* Participant A seems to disregard the dominant "expert" identity where he collaborates with the client to find the right direction for that particular client, rather than dictating what his "expert" knowledge tells him is the right course. Participant A seems to understand his role as a psychologist from these extracts as being one of actively working with the client to find the right solution for that particular client. Participant A does not seem to think that he possesses "expert" knowledge that will fix the clients problem, thus the client is given the role of being the "expert" in his or her own life.

In clarifying his position as a "Collaborator" in the sea kayaking metaphor, Participant A writes: *"I feel that the paddle is a useful metaphor here because once again it is an instrument that the client can use to take them in the right direction, but in the end it is how the client uses that paddle that will determine their success or failure in achieving a goal."* In this statement we can see the theme of allowing the client control and responsibility in overcoming challenges, again giving them the role of being the "expert" and allowing the client to utilise their own resources in order to overcome the problem. The "Collaborator" identity is favoured over the "expert" identity here, as Participant A implies that a collaborative relationship is required during the therapeutic process where each party brings their own resources and knowledge in searching for a solution to a problem.

In the ropes course adventure narrative, Participant A states: *"While I do not think that it is the role of the psychologist to ever carry the problem if the bin is seen as the problem in the metaphor, I do think that the psychologist can assist the client in deciding a new course of action if a previous way of doing things is not working".* This gives an indication of how Participant A again sees his role as a "Collaborator" by working with the client to decide on how to approach difficulties, rather than dictating what should or should not be done in this process. Again, the themes of not being the "expert", and allowing the client ultimate control and responsibility are present.

These themes are also seen in the abseiling adventure activity where Participant A writes: *"As a psychologist you can be there to guide the client if you think they are in trouble or they are trying to overcome a problem in an unproductive manner, but it is up to the client to decide what to do with your help. Our role is not to dictate how a problem should be resolved but to provide options and objective insight."* This seems to imply that while Participant A does see his role as providing other options to the client, he does not seem to believe that his opinions are "expert" opinions that should be accepted as such. Thus it seems that Participant A understands his identity as a psychologist as one of collaboration with clients in order to find options that suit their own specific knowledge and situations.

An important aspect of professional identity development is the application of ones identity to the different scopes of practice that one will work in. As these participants will live and work in a culture where the psychologist is seen as the "expert", we need to address how they are going to practice according to their preferred identity(ies) within this dominant cultural narrative. Thus, participants were required to construct their professional identity(ies) by applying the findings of the material analysis to these scopes of practice. This will now be discussed further.

4.2 PRACTICING AS THE "COLLABORATOR"

The "Collaborator" identity is constructed in terms of practice through the themes of working together, allowing the client ultimate control, being a "non-expert" in the clients' life, and in giving responsibility to the client to overcome their difficulties. Participant A's understanding of how this identity would be applied in practice is now shown in the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology.

4.2.1 Scope of Practice: Assessment

From the assessment aspect of the role of the psychologist, Participant A's professional identity of being a "Collaborator" is understood in the following way: *"We can work together during the assessment process in understanding the findings of an assessment and how that might fit with the clients' wishes."* This implies that Participant A will work together with clients to ensure that his assessments are relevant and applicable for each individual client. He does not see himself as the "expert", but will collaborate with the client during assessment to ensure that recommendations fit with the client's needs and wishes. This can be seen again in the following extract where Participant A describes the process of assessment as one where he and the client "*will work together to find the best way to approach a problem or a situation in their lives. Through our collaboration in the process of assessment, I can help clients find the right way forward but it will be completely up to them what they do with that information."*

Working together with clients means that Participant A acknowledges that he is not an "expert" in each individual clients' life. This can be seen when Participant A

states: *"I do not want to be the kind of psychologist that believes they know best and can apply the same rules to every person and get the same results."* The manner in which the "Collaborator" will work as a "non-expert" is understood in the statement: *"I want my clients to be aware that my recommendations are not the final truth in any particular manner… If my recommendations do not make sense for a client, I do not want them to go ahead with them anyway just because an "expert" told them to do so."* In correspondence with the "non-expert" identity, Participant A again implies not wanting to have control over clients but rather allowing them ultimate control over what they do with information gained during the assessment process.

By being a "non-expert" in each clients' life and giving ultimate control to each client, Participant A gives much of the responsibility to the client to overcome their challenges, as can be seen in the above quoted extracts. This can also be seen where Participant A understands the importance of the role of the client in the assessment relationship, he writes: *"If the clients do not put in enough effort on their part, then there is not much I can do to change their situation."*

4.2.2 Scope of Practice: Counselling

Within the scope of practice of counselling, Participant A constructs the identity of the "Collaborator" through being a "non-expert" in the following way: *"I want to work from the perspective that my clients have all they need to live a meaningful life already, and it is only my job to help them uncover this. I will not lead them in a direction that is meaningful to me, but will work with them to recognise different possibilities in their lives and give them full control to decide where to take their lives after that".* Participant A is showing how his professional identity as a counsellor is informed by his belief that clients are "experts" in their own lives and that by working in collaboration with clients, more meaningful and preferential narratives can be discovered. Participant A does not seem to see himself as having all of the knowledge in the therapeutic relationship, but rather as being part of constructing knowledge with the client, that will help the client to progress in overcoming their life challenges. The theme of working together is also evident in the above quote.

In order for Participant A to work as a "Collaborator" and "non-expert" in the counselling process, control needs to be allowed to rest in the hands of the client. This is seen in the previously quoted statement, and when Participant A applies this theme in the counselling process in the following way: *"I will work with them (clients) to recognise different possibilities in their lives and give them full control to decide where to take their lives".* By allowing clients control in a collaborative relationship, Participant A is also giving responsibility to clients. Participant A understands the importance of giving responsibility to clients in the counselling process when he states: *"Once we have found meaningful new perspectives and ideas, it is up to the client to live these new stories, as this is not something I can do for them".* Here we can see that the "Collaborator" is responsible for working with clients to uncover *"meaningful new perspectives and ideas"*, but thereafter the responsibility is with the client to make use of these new perspectives and ideas to overcome problems in their life.

4.2.3 Scope of Practice: Education

The "Collaborator" identity during educational activities can be clearly seen in Participant A's understanding of education as a process of "*offering new ideas and perspectives (that) will be a collaborative process of meaning-making rather than lecturing on any particular subject."* This implies that Participant A will utilise the process of education as an opportunity to work with clients to understand how privileged knowledge can become meaningful for that particular client, rather than taking an "expert" position in which knowledge is fixed and can be readily applied to all individuals.

Participant A does concede that in educational activities, psychologists do possess information that makes them seem as the "expert". Again however, Participant A shows how his professional identity of being a "Collaborator" working as a "non-expert" will allow psycho-educational activities to be more applicable and meaningful to clients. Participant A states: *"I would still like to make psycho-education a collaborative process… clients can have the opportunity to decide how best to utilise the information I give them in their own lives. This will make psycho-education more applicable and meaningful to clients, rather than just having them feel like they are*

being lectured at." Participant A also shows how being a "non-expert" will inform how he makes sense of his own limitations in terms of the education process, he writes: *"In providing education to clients I will make it clear to them that I do not have all of the final answers to all of their questions. I need to be aware of this too as I cannot always see myself as having all of the answers".*

Participant A understands the process of education as being partly one of giving the clients knowledge that he has as a psychologist. He believes however, that *"it is up to the client to best utilise that knowledge to make valuable changes in their lives."* Again we can see the aspect of client responsibility being a theme that is important to how the "Collaborator" will work within the education scope of practice. Related to this, is the belief that *"the client has a say and can decide whether or not they want to use the information I give them. Through the process of education, clients can have the opportunity to decide how best to utilise the information I give them in their own lives."* The client is seen here again as having ultimate control in the process of education, and thus the "expert" in his or her own life. If knowledge does not fit with a particular client, then the "Collaborator" will engage in a *"collaborative process of meaning-making rather than lecturing on any particular subject"* to ensure that the client is understood and has a relevant and useful therapeutic experience.

Conclusion

The research question for this research project is: "How did postgraduate counselling psychology students construct their professional identity through adventure narratives during postgraduate counselling psychology education?" From Participant A's narratives, we can see how he constructed the preferred identity of being the "Collaborator", and how he understands his work as the "Collaborator" in a world where the dominant cultural narrative available to psychologists is that of being the "expert".

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT B)

Introduction

Chapter five will look at how Participant B, a 27-year-old female, constructed her professional identity through her adventure narratives discussed in Chapter three.

5.1 "RELATIONSHIP BUILDER"

The building of a strong and supportive relationship, where there is trust and understanding seems to be the common narrative in the identity that Participant B has constructed. Participant B has constructed the identity of being the "Relationship Builder" in her work as a psychologist in a number of ways, which include: building trust, showing genuine interest, being congruent, respecting the client, and creating a partnership. The dominant cultural identity of psychologists as "experts" does not seem to feature for Participant B. Instead she seems to construct her identity as a psychologist in terms of the partnership that is created with her clients where clients can feel heard and understood.

From the adventure activity narratives, the identity of being a "Relationship Builder" can be seen in the archery adventure, where Participant B describes the role of the psychologist within the metaphor in terms of *"The foundational integrity provided by the bow as compared to the integrity of the psychologist (which) can be seen as congruency of the self, coherence, trust, empathy, genuine interest and curiosity. This providing the essential fundamental basics on which the therapeutic relationship is built."* From this statement it becomes apparent how the "Relationship Builder" identity has been constructed through the themes of trust, empathy, interest and curiosity, and congruency. This seems to be the prerequisite for Participant B's understanding of how she will work as a psychologist, discarding the dominant cultural identity of psychologists as "experts" where privileged knowledge is seen as the prerequisite for working as a psychologist.

Similarly, the building of the relationship within the sea rafting adventure metaphor is seen in terms of the psychologist and client engaging in a process where *"Working together was based on group values such as trust, support and reciprocal communication and receiving feedback."* From this statement it seems that Participant B understands her work as a "Relationship Builder" as being developed through trust, support, and reciprocal communication and feedback. The dominant "expert" identity would require clients to act as passive recipients of privileged knowledge. Participant B however, implies that trust, support, and reciprocal communication and feedback between her and her client is more important for her work as a psychologist than the "expert" role or privileged knowledge.

Participant B writes: *"In teaming up to do the kayaking activity, the relationship becomes a partnership. Each person has a specific role in the partnership... The relationship is governed by trust, communication, feedback, support, encouragement and a genuine care and interest."* This is how Participant B describes the therapeutic process in the sea rafting adventure metaphor, where participants formed groups of two in order to complete the activity. The fundamental aspect of her professional identity seems to be in the building of a relationship based on *"trust, communication, feedback, support, encouragement and a genuine care and interest"* rather than the dissemination of "expert" knowledge, as would be expected within the dominant discourse of psychologists as "experts" in society.

Perhaps most significantly for the "Relationship Builder" identity is Participant B's understanding of the role of the psychologist within the abseiling adventure metaphor, where she writes: *"in a therapeutic relationship one would have reciprocal input and feedback, setting goals and establishing activity norms. In the process of providing information and discussing the process the instructor is establishing a relationship with his client. Here they are already establishing rapport, building trust and allowing for a supportive relationship to be formed."* In this statement, Participant B again constructs her professional identity as the "Relationship Builder" as even during initial discussions regarding the therapeutic process she seems to identify the establishment of the relationship as paramount.

From Participant B's narratives, it seems that the "Relationship Builder" is the identity that precedes any other, as this identity allows for all aspects that are to follow to do so in a therapeutic and optimal manner. The dominant cultural narrative of the psychologist as an "expert" seems to be discarded by Participant B for the preferred identity of being the "Relationship Builder".

5.2 PRACTICING AS THE "RELATIONSHIP BUILDER"

The "Relationship Builder" seems to construct her identity as a psychologist through working to build trust, showing genuine interest, being congruent, respecting the client, and creating a partnership. The identity of the "Relationship Builder" will now be looked at, as Participant B constructs this identity in the different scopes of practice within counselling psychology.

5.2.1 Scope of Practice: Assessment

The creation of a therapeutic relationship for the purpose of assessment seems to be an important aspect of the identity of the "Relationship Builder". For the "Relationship Builder", this is achieved through the creation of *"an atmosphere that is safe and supporting. This is done by allowing the client to express their feelings and possible fears in the assessment context. Here the client should be able to trust in their capabilities and give their best in the assessment situation by working collaboratively with the psychologist."* The "expert" knowledge inherent in the assessment process seems to be secondary to the establishment of a therapeutic relationship for therapeutic gains to be made in this particular scope of practice.

Similarly, the "Relationship Builder" argues that it is her role as a psychologist to *"portray these qualities (empathy, congruence, trustworthiness and genuine interest) by creating a context through listening and reflecting in which the client feels free to engage in the assessment process".* It thus seems like Participant B will strive to develop a safe and trusting relationship with her clients in order to make sure that the process of assessment can be conducted in an optimal manner.

Another important aspect in the building of a therapeutic relationship for Participant B seems to be openness and honesty, and informing the client of all aspects of the assessment process. By doing this, Participant B seems to see the client as being more comfortable and open during assessment, thus ensuring the process is more relevant for the client. Participant B argues that during the assessment process *"the psychologist would inform the client about the purpose, goals, procedures etc. involved in the assessment."* She qualifies this where she states: *"It is important to engage in a discussion with the client surrounding limitations, queries, fears etc. that the client may have with regards to the assessment. With the client and psychologist working together and discussing the process, rapport will be established and trust will develop in the relationship."* This too seems to indicate that Participant B understands her identity during assessment as the "Relationship Builder", rather than the "expert".

5.2.2 Scope of Practice: Counselling

Participant B writes: *"Creating a safe and supportive environment in the counselling context is essential. This is done when the psychologist and the client collaboratively create a space together that is respectful, empathic and caring."* This seems to be the paramount aspect of the "Relationship Builder" identity from which all aspects of the counselling scope of practice take place. Participant B will achieve this through *"building trust and empathy in the process of listening and reflecting and giving feedback".* By achieving this Participant B seems to believe that the rest of the process of counselling can move forward through trust and collaboration. One would expect that, within the dominant cultural identity of psychologists as "experts", Participant B would see her "expert" knowledge as essential. Participant B however, describes *"Creating a safe and supportive environment in the counselling context"* as being essential.

Participant B sees the development of a partnership as crucial in the counselling scope of practice. She argues that *"In the counselling context working together with the client and establishing a partnership that allows this is important."* For Participant B this is achieved through *"reciprocal communication and feedback"* where both the counsellor and the client will work together in conversation to build a meaningful

partnership. This allows for a space where *"meaningful conversation"* and the setting of *"attainable goals"* can take place.

Within the counselling scope of practice, Participant B acknowledges the importance of establishing boundaries when building the therapeutic relationship. Participant B sees this being achieved by informing the client of all aspects of the counselling process. Participant B understands this in the following way: *"Aspects such as amount of sessions, duration of therapy, expectations, goals, termination etc. should be actively discussed. By actively discussing these aspects and allowing the client to establish these boundaries with the psychologist, the client is assuming responsibility for the process that they are involved in and this will build rapport in the relationship."* As we can see from this extract, not only does Participant B see the active discussion of the process of counselling as a means of creating boundaries, but also as a way of developing rapport with the client through openness. Participant B has also made it clear how the establishment of these boundaries will become the responsibility of the client, therefore allowing the client to be the "expert" in the therapeutic relationship.

Lastly, Participant B shows how she feels that the development of a therapuetic relationship must be maintained by the psychologist through *"the qualities of congruence, empathy, trustworthiness and genuine interest in the client as a person."* Participant B will achieve this by by *"employing good listening skills, giving an accurate reflection back to the client, asking meaning related questions and by also allowing the client to respond and respectfully reflecting on that."* By doing this the "Relationship Builder" is fostering a relationship which is *"mutually respectful"* and *"allows for maximum growth and engagement by client."* It is clear from this statement that Participant B favours the development of a therapeutic relationship built on congruence, empathy, trust, and interest, over the "expert" role and privileged knowledge in her work as a counsellor.

5.2.3 Scope of Practice: Education

In the education scope of practice the acts of *"listening, reflecting and asking meaning related questions"* is crucial to the development of an *"environment where*

the client feels respected and included in the process of learning." Participant B argues that this will allow the client to feel respected, will encourage them to give their best, and be fully engaged during the process of education. Within the education scope of practice, psychologists are seen as possessing "expert" knowledge that can be given to the client to solve their problems. Here Participant B indicates that in her understanding of this process, allowing the client to feel respected and included is far more important than the dissemination of "expert" knowledge.

Participant B shows how she sees the development of a strong therapeutic relationship as paramount to achieving the goals of education where she states: *"In this context a safe and supportive environment shall allow the client to give their best effort in the learning context."* In her understanding, Participant B feels that this is important during the practice of education, as it *"shall enable the client to take what was learnt and trust in their capabilities to apply this in their life."* From this we can see that Participant B understands the process of education as being much more beneficial and meaningful to clients when a safe and supportive relationship is developed.

The development of an educational context that is meaningful to the client also seems important to Participant B. Through the development of a trusting relationship, the client will be more likely to engage this process. Participant B believes that *"The client should actively work with the psychologist in this context to develop and build the therapeutic relationship and to actively personalize and implement the learning in this context."* By actively personalising and implementing learning, Participant B seems to imply that she gives the client the "expert" role to make the educational process a fit for their own life. The "Relationship Builder" identity seems to be crucial for this to happen as clients feel safe and supported by this, and can thus feel free to make the educational process one that is meaningful to them.

Conclusion

In answering the research question stated in Chapter One, this chapter has shown how Participant B has constructed her professional identity as one of being the

"Relationship Builder", and how she will work as the "Relationship Builder" in a profession that is informed by the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts".

CHAPTER 6
RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT C)

Introduction

Participant C's adventure narratives will be discussed in this chapter in order for us to understand how he constructed a preferred identity as a psychologist. Participant C is a 26-year-old male.

6.1 "ROLE NEGOTIATOR"

The most prevalent identity that Participant C has constructed is that of being the "Role Negotiator". The identity of being the "Role Negotiator" seems to come from Participant C constructing his role as a psychologist as one of alternating between being the "expert", and "non-expert" where the client is given the role of the "expert". Participant C seems to agree with the dominant cultural narrative that psychologists are "experts" to a certain degree. He does however seem to believe that the psychologist cannot be the "expert" in all aspects of the therapeutic process, and thus has constructed his identity through negotiating roles with the client. This can be seen in Participant C's narratives where he seems to find building trust and offering support important initially, but also finds giving autonomy and responsibility to the client to be the "expert" in their own lives and to take control once they have had support from the psychologist.

Within the archery adventure metaphor, Participant C states: *"I would translate my archery experience to my role as a future psychologist by seeing the client and myself as alternating between being the 'blind person with the bow and arrow' and the 'person who can see'."* Here we can see how Participant C sees the psychologist and the client as both having roles of being the "expert" that need to be negotiated during the therapeutic process. This is seen further where Participant C writes: *"The psychologist and the client are not limited or confined to one or the other role. The roles alternate and are even played by both individuals simultaneously throughout the therapeutic process."* Participant C seems to understand his identity as one that is fluid and changing depending on the requirements at the time.

Giving the client autonomy and accountability during the therapeutic process, even when the psychologist has other ideas is another way that Participant C sees his identity as the "Role Negotiator". This can be seen in the following extract from the sea rafting adventure metaphor, where Participant C describes the client taking a different course to the one offered by the psychologist. Participant C writes: *"What I see as the most optimal paddle to use in a certain ocean (context), the client may see as the worst. He may get frustrated by my suggestions, and may in fact wish to take a spade out into the ocean to try and paddle. Just because he/she opposes my methods of moving forward, does not mean that I should abandon helping him/her, nor get frustrated with them, or the process."* Here we see Participant C's willingness to negotiate roles with the client and allow the client autonomy and accountability, despite his plan of action. This implies that he does not see himself as the "expert" in all situations and while he may have a preferred idea of the best course of action, he will allow the client to take the responsibility to determine what they think is best for them.

The negotiation of roles can be seen in the sea kayaking adventure metaphor where Participant C discusses his role as a psychologist as alternating between directing the process, and checking with the client to determine if they are on course. Participant C describes his interchangeable role as the psychologist who *"will generally direct the therapeutic process"* but also as one of being willing to *"'check' with them (client) as to how far 'off course' I am, and also how to get back on track in terms of the client's individual needs."* Participant C seems to understand his role as being the "expert" on the therapeutic process, but also of being the "non-expert" in the life of the client. He is therefore constructing the identity of being the "Role Negotiator" as he adapts to the needs of the client as required.

In the ropes course adventure metaphor, Participant C discusses how the psychologist can support the client, but also that the client needs to be willing to take responsibility and accountability for their own progress at some stage. Participant C writes: *"I can help my patients cope and empower them to push forward on the difficult 'courses' that lie ahead, I can encourage them and offer them guidance, and even lend them a helping hand here and there where I can, but I cannot hold them*

up every time their legs get shaky and they are about to fall. The client also needs to realise that it is not my responsibility as a psychologist to carry them through every obstacle, and if I don't, or I let the client fall that I am then seen as a bad psychologist". This again shows the "Role Negotiator" identity where the psychologist and client will move together to a certain point where the role that was initially played by the psychologist, to help the client gain autonomy, needs to be taken over by the client.

Lastly, the "Role Negotiator" identity can be seen in the abseiling adventure narratives where Participant C argues for the need to make clients aware of how he will work as a psychologist, or what his role as a psychologist is. The role negotiation will take place so that the client and psychologist are both aware of what each person is responsible for during the therapeutic process. This can be seen in the following: *"It may be that my clients have certain prescribed ideas about who psychologists are, or how they can help them in their personal lives. Whether these ideas are negative or just too rigid/narrow, they need not approach therapy or psychology sessions in an inflexible manner. I need to communicate such issues to clients – that there is not a single way that I am able to help them in their personal lives."* This seems to indicate that Participant C is aware of the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts", and how this may influence a client's approach to the therapeutic process. By acting as the "Role Negotiator", Participant C will make clients aware of the perceptions related to this, and negotiate what his role and the clients role actually is in practice.

6.2 PRACTICING AS THE "ROLE NEGOTIATOR"

The identity of the "Role Negotiator" seems to be understood by Participant C as one of alternating between being the "expert" and being the "non-expert" in the therapeutic process, where autonomy is given to the client to act as the "expert" in his or her own life. The application of this identity will now be looked at, as Participant C constructs this identity in the different scopes of practice within counselling psychology.

6.2.1 Scope of Practice: Assessment

In order for the "Role Negotiator" to provide an optimal assessment process, Participant C sees the need for the psychologist and client to have trust in one another, as this is required by the alternating roles of being an "expert" and a non-"expert". Participant C argues that trust needs to *"be a two-way street in the relationship between the client and the assessor: The psychologist needs to trust that the information that the client is giving on the assessments is true and reliable…. The client needs to trust in the assessor such that he/she is comfortable enough to tell the truth on all parts of the assessment, and furthermore trust that the results will be utilised in a manner most effective and ethically for the ultimate benefit of the client".*

Another aspect of the "Role Negotiator" identity that is facilitated by trust is that of deciding the direction and meaning of assessment, which is done between the psychologist and client. For Participant C it is important that the psychologist *"direct an assessment in that he/she should explain the logistics and other aspects of the assessment."* It seems like Participant C feels it is his role to take control of the assessment initially, but thereafter *"The client can 'negotiate' or ask questions".* By doing this, the client is given an opportunity to direct the process and thereby take on the role of the "expert" in the assessment process.

The interchangeable role of the psychologist in the assessment process seems to be seen by Participant C as one of giving initial support, and then giving autonomy and responsibility to the client. By doing this, his and the clients roles are being negotiated throughout the assessment process. Participant C applies how he sees this interchangeable role in the following way: *"I can offer my support in an assessment context, be it during an assessment or following the results and interpretations of the assessment, but it is ultimately the client's responsibility to move forward with this support, and their responsibility as to what they do with the information that was attained from the assessment."*

Similarly, Participant C shows how he gives the role of being the "expert" during the assessment process to the client when he states: "*I can only reassure clients and*

offer my perspectives of what certain results mean, and their interpretation, but they need to trust in themselves when it comes to future decisions and what they decide to do with certain knowledge and advice." Here, Participant C shows how his role as the "expert" will change and how he will give the role of the "expert" back to the client, so that they may decide how best to utilise the results of an assessment to suit their own lives.

6.2.2 Scope of Practice: Counselling

Within the counselling scope of practice, Participant C again argues for the importance of trust, as it is *"an essential element for both parties to possess with regards to one another in order for their therapeutic relationship to be more optimal."* This seems to be a prerequisite for Participant C to be able to act as the "Role Negotiator" as it is the foundation of an optimal therapeutic relationship. During counselling, *"There is also constant negotiation going on between myself and my client in terms of the direction and various interpretations of stories. The client will direct the sessions when it comes to the stories he/she tells, but the psychologist should never deceive the client as to the direction of therapy."* Here again, giving the client autonomy and responsibility, while maintaining trust seem to be prerequisites for the "Role Negotiator" identity to be viable.

Participant C argues that *"the interchangeable roles (as mentioned literally with regards to the archery activity) are very applicable."* We can see the "Role Negotiator" alternating between "expert" and "non-expert" when Participant C writes: *"The psychologist is the "expert" in terms of the psychological knowledge and training and skills he/she has learnt. In this domain, the client is not the "expert", and thus the client seeks such expertise from the psychologist. The psychologist is not the expert in terms of the life of the client."* Role negotiation will take place throughout the counselling process according to Participant C as the *"roles of expert/non-expert, as well as listener/talker will always be flexible and be alternating throughout the process or sessions."*

While it is clear that Participant C sees being a "non-expert" at times as important, he also argues for the need for him to know when it is appropriate to act as the "expert",

and at the same time explain his direction and motivations to his clients. Participant C writes: *"Although the client is the expert on his/her own life, and not the psychologist, I believe that I, as a counsellor, should always give a clear explanation of the direction of the therapeutic process where possible to keep the client as comfortable as possible and to build trust with him/her."* Here we can again see the importance of trust and communication during the process of counselling for Participant C, in order to work as the "Role Negotiator".

6.2.3 Scope of Practice: Education

Participant C shows how he will start the education process from the position of the "expert", but will give the client autonomy and responsibility in the process by allowing them to negotiate and give direction to the process. This can be seen in the following statement: *"With regards to education, the psychologist will be the expert and will guide the education aspect in terms of communicating certain material to the client. I, as the professional to educate will direct the process in terms of the material I choose to speak about or convey, as well as the manner in which I do this. Negotiation may occur in terms of the client asking certain questions or asking to elaborate on certain aspects, but the psychologist who "educates" ultimately directs or gives clear explanation as to the direction of the education/the nature of it."* This shows how the "Role Negotiator" will work from a position of the "expert" with regards to the educations process and content, but then will negotiate with the client to ensure that this process is applicable and meaningful to the client.

This can also be seen when Participant C discusses how it is ultimately the choice of the client to decide how to proceed with the information they have been given, thus giving them the role of being the "expert" in their own lives. As a psychologist working within the education scope of practice, Participant C believes that *"I can only offer my perspectives to clients in an educational context. If they choose to ignore certain education or not apply it to their own life, that is not my decision to make."*

Conclusion

In Chapter 6, the research question has been answered by showing how Participant C has constructed his professional identity as being the “Role Negotiator”, despite the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as “experts”. It has also been shown how Participant C understands this identity operating in the work he will do as a psychologist.

CHAPTER 7
RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT D)

Introduction

Participant D is a 27-year-old female. This chapter will look at how Participant D constructed her identity, and how she will work according to this identity as a psychologist.

7.1 "EMPOWERER"

Participant D has constructed a professional identity that seems in contrast to the dominant cultural discourse of psychologists as "experts". The identity that has been constructed by Participant D through her adventure narratives is that of the "Empowerer". The "Empowerer" identity is constructed in Participant D's adventure narratives through themes which include: the creation of an environment where the client has control, working with the clients to facilitate growth, working with the client to develop preferred identities, and creating a trusting relationship with the client. Participant D does not seem to see herself as the owner of privileged knowledge that she will use to help the client, but rather as a partner in a process where an environment will be created that facilitates growth for the client, thus acting as the "Empowerer".

The "Empowerer" identity is seen in the archery adventure metaphor where Participant D argues *"The psychologist should not be the archer, the one who makes all the decisions for the client, controlling every aspect of the experience. Therapy in this particular metaphor could be considered exploratory for the client, becoming comfortable with their capabilities and discovering what their desired goals are. In moving with the client through this process the psychologist is a facilitator who helps the client become familiar with these attributes and also motivate and encourage them in their attempt to work towards this."* This seems to be in direct contrast to the dominant cultural discourse of psychologists as "experts", and shows how Participant D will work as the "Empowerer" by giving the client control of the process to explore their capabilities and develop their abilities.

Participant D understood her identity as a psychologist within the sea rafting adventure metaphor not only in terms of her work with clients, but also through her work with her colleagues and fellow psychologists. Participant D seems to find the empowerment of herself as well as her colleagues as another important role of her professional life. This is seen in the metaphor where Participant D writes: *"The sea could be seen as our professional lives, sometimes being encouraging but at other times being unpredictable and intimidating, but I felt safe and capable knowing that my colleagues were in the raft with me."* From the statement: *"Translating this to my future role as a psychologist I enjoy the prospect that I will have colleagues in the raft with me; to support me when I feel discouraged, provide new perspectives and guidance when I need a fresh view on a situation and also that I will have the opportunity to reciprocate this goodwill when they call on me."* we can see how Participant D will not only work to empower her colleagues, but will also empower herself through support, guidance, and new perspectives that can be offered through collaboration.

During the sea kayaking adventure activity, the participants were given training in a lagoon before moving into the ocean on their own. Participant D sees her role as a psychologist as taking place in the lagoon, as the *"Work done in the lagoon with the instructor increases the clients trust in self, opening up new opportunity for growth and development in that the client feels that they can attempt a novel experience."* From this it becomes apparent how Participant D constructs the "Empowerer" identity where she will work with the client to facilitate growth and development, thereby empowering the client to take on new challenges. The "expert" discourse would require psychologists to give clients privileged knowledge so that the client can "fix" their problems. Participant D does not seem to see this as her role, instead she seeks the facilitation of growth and development, where clients are empowered, as the means to helping clients take on problems they may be experiencing.

Participant D constructed her role as a psychologist in the ropes course adventure metaphor through the following statement: *"The role of therapy and the psychologist is not only one of comfort, but also one of challenging the client. The experience of frustration can be a very conducive force to help a person realize that the current*

experience is an opportunity for growth and development." Here we can see how Participant D not only sees her "Empowerer" identity through supportive activities, but also through activities that work to challenge the client giving the client an opportunity to experience growth and development, thereby empowering the client. The dominant cultural narrative of the psychologist as the "expert" can be seen as the opposite of this, where the psychologist uses their "expert" knowledge to fix the problem, rather than allowing the client to grow to achieve mastery over their problems in a manner that makes them feel empowered.

In the abseiling adventure metaphor, Participant D again shows how she disagrees with the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts" where she writes: *"As psychologists we do not want to take control of the client's experience, dictate how they must feel or behave, or impose ourselves upon them."* Instead, Participant D constructs her identity as an "Empowerer" where she describes her role as one where the *"instructor/psychologist shows the client that they are able to contain the situation and that the client may feel free, safe and able to take on a particular challenge."*

7.2 PRACTICING AS THE "EMPOWERER"

Participant D has constructed her "Empowerer" identity through the themes of creating an environment where the client has control, working with the clients to facilitate growth, working with the client to develop preferred identities, and creating a trusting relationship with the client. We will now look at how Participant D constructs the identity of the "Empowerer" within the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology.

7.2.1 Scope of Practice: Assessment

Participant D shows how she will ensure that the process of assessment is an empowering one where she writes: *"I will make sure to empower the client through providing enough information about the nature and the purpose of psychological tests, and also provide honest, but benevolent feedback."* It seems from this statement that Participant D understands her identity of "Empowerer" within the

assessment scope of practice as occurring through keeping the client informed through honest feedback, which at the same time allows the client to feel that they have some control in the process. This can also be seen where Participant D argues that *"If a client wishes not to take such tests, we will work to find different and more creative ways of obtaining the needed information."* This is also in contrast to the dominant psychologist as "expert" identity as Participant D allows the client to be the "expert" in his or her own assessment process.

Within the assessment scope of practice, Participant D shows how trust and empowerment work together in the statement: *"In the relationship one becomes aware of testing needs and so assessment will always be secondary to rapport and the forming of the alliance. Again empowering and informing the client throughout the assessment process is important in order to protect the relationship, since trust is fragile and easy to break."* Thus Participant D constructs her "Empowerer" identity through the development of rapport and trust, which seems to work to facilitate the empowerment of clients during the assessment process.

Participant D writes: *"If traditional assessment can help the client explore more of whom they experience themselves to be, I will happily employ them in my practice. Creating different and alternative assessments such as role playing different characters to find patterns of behaviours, attitudes, or understandings that might be more in line with a client's values, or the story they wish to live, is another option for therapy".* This statement again shows how the dominant psychologist as "expert" identity is disregarded for the "Empowerer" identity, where Participant D argues that she will adjust her role as a psychologist to fit with individual clients, thereby making the process of assessment one that is applicable for them. By doing this, the client's own values and knowledge are brought in to the assessment process, which can be seen as empowering the client.

7.2.2 Scope of Practice: Counselling

Within the counselling scope of practice, Participant D again shows how she disregards the dominant "expert" identity for the preferred identity of being an Empowerer where she writes: *"I will not assume to give advice, or force my opinion*

onto the client by being an 'authority figure'. The client will be the author of his or her own life story." Here we can see how by not being the "expert", the "Empowerer" identity is constructed where clients can have control over their own life narratives, thereby leaving them with an experience of feeling empowered through the counselling process as they take control of constructing preferred identities and narratives.

The "Empowerer" identity is understood by Participant D in terms of the counselling scope of practice as *"giving the client a different experience than the one they are experiencing in the world outside, they might experience themselves differently and find strengths and weaknesses in themselves they did not know of."* The "Empowerer" will work to provide the client with an experience of counselling that is different from what they expect or experience in the outside world, one that is in contrast to the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts". By doing this it seems that Participant D sees her role as empowering clients through opportunities for them to experience their strengths, rather than dictating to the client what is best for them.

Participant D again shows how the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts" is less favourable to her when she writes: *"I believe that you should use your own person to connect to the client as another human being firstly, and not necessarily do it by way of narrative or CBT or any other approach to therapy."* Participant D is showing here how the "expert" knowledge that is traditionally seen as the means to a therapeutic end is put aside in order to create an experience where the client feels heard and connected with. As the "Empowerer" who values the creation of a connection with her clients, she will work to help her clients *"gain a greater understanding of what they want to choose for themselves"* which seems to give the client an experience of being empowered.

7.2.3 Scope of Practice: Education

The dominant "expert" identity within psychology is put aside for a preferred identity by Participant D within the education scope of practice when she states: *"I will not pour information out over them, from a position of expert/power, leaving them with it*

to make with it what they wish, or enforce on them what I feel is appropriate." Instead, Participant D will work from the "Empowerer" identity in the following way: *"Education and information is only useful if it is true for the person, and they know how to apply it in their lives, therefore the control over information and how they use it needs to be their responsibility; but my responsibility remains to ensure that the knowledge empowers as opposed to disempowers them."* It is clear from these two statements that the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts" is seen by Participant D as less desirable, as it can leave clients feeling disempowered and not understood. Thus it seems she would rather work in education to provide relevant educational experiences that are a fit for clients so that they feel understood and empowered. This is seen later on in Participant D's narratives where she writes: *"I will spend time with the client to make the knowledge I bring to them, more applicable to their own lives, and so make it more useful for them."*

Participant D also seems to see a safe and supportive environment where clients can be challenged as conducive to working as the "Empowerer". According to Participant D *"feeling supported and secure is highly conducive to learning. In saying this I don't intend that people remain in their comfort zones. Moving to the stretch zone is when a person grows, and their comfort zone becomes larger; but I will refrain from causing people to move into their panic zone, since moving into that environment can cause harm and damage to a person and impede their development."* From this statement, Participant D seems to understand her role as the "Empowerer" as being the "expert" in the process of education, but not in the life of each individual client. Thus, knowing when a client is moving into the panic zone is an essential aspect of working as the "Empowerer" to ensure that clients are not harmed.

Conclusion

It has been shown in this chapter how Participant D has constructed her preferred identity as the "Empowerer" through her adventure narratives. It has also been shown how Participant D has constructed her identity as the "Empowerer" in her work as a psychologist, within the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts".

CHAPTER 8
RESEARCH FINDINGS (PARTICIPANT E)

Introduction

Chapter Eight will present the research findings of Participant E, a 27-year-old female. This chapter will discuss how Participant E has constructed her preferred identity through her adventure narratives, and in terms of her work as a psychologist within the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology.

8.1 "RESPONSIBILITY GIVER"

The preferred identity constructed by Participant E through her adventure narratives seems to be that of the "Responsibility Giver". The identity of the "Responsibility Giver" seems to be understood by Participant E as coming from a position of having her own limitations and thus requiring the client to take charge of their own problems. Participant E also acknowledges in her narratives that she has multiple identities that are separate from her role as a psychologist, and thus would want clients to understand that, and be responsible for their progress in the therapeutic process. Participant E also argues for clients' choices to be respected, as she seems to believe that they are the "experts" in their own lives and thus have the responsibility to use their own resources to overcome their problems, which can be developed in the therapeutic process. Lastly, as the "Responsibility Giver" she argues that she can only support clients up to a certain point, but thereafter clients need to take charge of their own lives.

Participant E seems to have constructed an identity that is in contrast to the dominant cultural identity of psychologists as "experts". As an "expert" one would see therapeutic gains as coming from the privileged knowledge held by the "expert" psychologist. Instead, Participant E seems to understand her identity as a psychologist as giving clients the responsibility to make their own therapeutic gains through the facilitation of the therapeutic process.

Within the archery adventure narratives, Participant E constructs her "Responsibility Giver" identity through the following extract: *"I think a psychologist should be able to express their concerns and limitations and be honest with their client as I was with Paul… I allowed Paul to shoot by himself, I could have helped him by putting his hands in the position that they should be in but I preferred that he may remain independent and yet still receiving support."* This seems to show how Participant E acknowledges her own limitations and works as the "Responsibility Giver" by allowing the client the responsibility to decide what they want to do with what she brings to the therapeutic process. She does not assume the dominant cultural identity of psychologists as "experts", but shows how she will allow the client to control their own therapeutic process through providing support.

Participant E constructs how she will work as the "Responsibility Giver" by ensuring that she does not take too much responsibility for her clients problems, thus ensuring that she looks after her own welfare where she states: *"As a psychologist, after I have been there for my clients, heard their stories intervened and did all that I need to do, I want to be able to walk away from their stories without making them mine."* This statement from the sea rafting adventure metaphor shows how Participant E constructs her identity as a psychologist as being there for the client but giving them the responsibility in the end to ensure that she does not make her clients problems her own. Participant E justifies this by stating: *"By taking care of myself and fulfilling all other roles that are important to me, (it) is also beneficial for my client. My well being is important for them since that is when I will be able to help and support them to the best of my ability."* Again, Participant E does not understand her identity as an "expert" but rather as someone who does not have all the answers, who needs to take time to embrace other roles that are important to her, in order to fulfil her role as a psychologist in an optimal manner.

During the sea kayaking adventure metaphor, Participant E constructed her "Responsibility Giver" identity in the following extract: *"I struggled, and Craig wanted to help me but Vince refused but after a long time when I was ready to give up, I found my way of getting on the boat since I realized Vince's way was not working for me. I relate more to Vince's role, as a future psychologist… I want to be able to help my clients see how things are done but bearing in mind that, that is not the only way*

it can be done." Not only does this statement indicate that Participant E refutes the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts", but also shows how she understands her identity of the "Responsibility Giver". She does not want to control the process, but gives responsibility to the client to overcome their problems in a manner that they find most suitable.

In describing her role within the ropes course adventure metaphor, Participant E writes: *"I like what our instructors did whenever we tried to be dependent on them, they would throw the problem back at us, as a reminder that it is our problem and they are there to help not to take over. I think that the message was also that we as the group had the ability to solve our own problems and that on its own is a form of empowerment. As a future psychologist I want to empower my clients to be aware of abilities that they never thought they had so they could walk the journey on their own."* Here Participant E constructs her role as the "Responsibility Giver" in terms of giving her clients the opportunity to solve their own problems, and by allowing clients the responsibility to solve their problems she is empowering her clients through the development of their abilities. This will help clients to take responsibility for their problems in the future.

Within the abseiling adventure metaphor, Participant E acknowledges that in her work with clients she *"can only do so much and the rest is up to them."* She also states: *"I do not want to appear as their saviour, I want my role to be that of a collaborator and they take the role of being "experts" of their own lives, which they are. Certain clients would want me as the psychologist to go down with them but they need to be made aware that I can only do so much as a psychologist; the rest is up to them."* This is again congruent with the identity of the "Responsibility Giver" as Participant E sees her role as a limited one where she does not see herself as the "expert". She seems to understand her role as one of working with her clients up to the point where they need to take responsibility for their own progress, as they are the "experts" in their own lives.

8.2 PRACTICING AS THE "RESPONSIBILITY GIVER"

Participant E understands the "Responsibility Giver" identity through ensuring the client takes responsibility for their own progress as she acknowledges her own limitations and the fact that she can only do so much for her clients. She also sees the other identities that are separate from her work as a psychologist as important to ensuring she can work optimally as a psychologist. Lastly, Participant E acknowledges that her clients are the "experts" in their own lives, and thus she gives them the responsibility for overcoming their problems. I will now discuss how Participant E will practice as the "Responsibility Giver" in her work as a counselling psychologist.

8.2.1 Scope of Practice: Assessment

Participant E's understanding of how the "Responsibility Giver" identity will work during assessment can be seen in the following statement: *"I will respect the choices of my clients. If they chose not to use a certain assessment measure, for certain reasons, I will respect that. If certain assessments reveals certain options, for example, career assessment, and the client still chooses a certain career which was not included from the results list, I will respect the choice made by that particular client and will not dictate him/her on what I think is best for them."* From this statement we can see that Participant E will work as the "Responsibility Giver" by respecting the clients own knowledge about what is right for them, thus giving responsibility to the client while at the same time not acting in the dominant "expert" role.

This can be seen further where Participant E states: *"I will permit clients to make and implement the choices they prefer. I will allow my client to choose what 'fits' and works for them."* From the dominant "expert" identity in psychology, we would expect Participant E to want to control the process and make "expert" decisions and recommendations. Participant E however understands her role differently, as one of allowing the client the responsibility to choose what the best choice is for them during assessment.

Participant E seems to understand her identity as a psychologist as being one of supporting clients, but only up to a certain point where after she gives the client the responsibility to use what has been done up to that point to overcome a problem. Participant E argues that *"Administering assessments may be a form of taking a client's hand and helping them to overcome a problem or help them to make a decision. Recommendations may also be a form of taking a client's hand up to a certain point, while they will make their choice of what works for them and take the responsibility thereof."* This implies that her role is not that of the "expert", but one of support through assessment, that will ensure that clients can develop what is needed to overcome a problem or make a choice. Thereafter the client needs to take responsibility for what happens next by deciding what is best for them in their particular situation.

8.2.2 Scope of Practice: Counselling

The following two extracts show how Participant E sees her role as a psychologist within the counselling scope of practice as being limited to a certain point where she will establish boundaries and give the client the responsibility to take ownership of the problem. Participant E states: *"I will not take my clients problems and make them mine. I will let my clients carry out their responsibilities in managing or dealing with their own issues. I will play my part and help them where I can."* and *"I will let them know what my role as a psychologist is and what my limitations are. For example, if they need money the most, I cannot be able to provide them with money but maybe we can then explore ways of making money."* From this it seems important to Participant E to work as the "Responsibility Giver" within the counselling scope of practice, as this allows her to create necessary boundaries, and not to take ownership of her client's problems. Participant E does not see herself as having "expert" answers to her client's problems, but as the "Responsibility Giver" will work with the client to ensure that they take responsibility and ownership of what needs to be done to overcome a problem.

Participant E also seems to understand her identity as the "Responsibility Giver" through allowing the client to dictate how fast they would like to proceed during the counselling process. Participant E writes: *"During counselling, I will respect my*

clients' choices and allow them to live their lives as they see fit. At times for example during bereavement counselling, the psychologist might feel maybe it's time for the client to say goodbye to the deceased, while the client feels that they are not ready for such yet, thus I would respect the clients choices and still create a safe place for them to mourn." By working in this manner, Participant E is also disregarding the dominant cultural identity of psychologists as "experts", while at the same time taking a back seat dependent on the clients wishes thereby allowing the client the responsibility to decide what to do in their lives.

Not allowing her clients to be dependent on her is another aspect of the "Responsibility Giver" identity. Participant E argues that by empowering clients who feel they cannot cope will result in a client who is more able to take responsibility for their progress, and thus will not be dependent on her. This can be seen in the following statement: *"The reason clients consult is that they cannot cope or they need help in one way or the other, I want to be the kind of psychologist who has the best interest of her clients at heart, who plays her part well and is available. By empowering and supporting them, I'll also be helping them not to be dependent on me."*

8.2.3 Scope of Practice: Education

In applying her identity of the "Responsibility Giver" to the education scope of practice, Participant E sees her role as being limited to what the client is, and is not willing to do. She states: *"There are cases whereby I would psycho-educate individuals on certain issues for an example, it could be about HIV/AIDS, drugs and alcohol, health issues etc. If clients are not ready for example to quit alcohol even after educating them about the effects physically, financially, socially and emotionally, I cannot force them. I will respect their choices until they come to a realisation that they need help. It's important that clients should live out their preferred stories and be expert of their lives."* This implies that she does not see herself as the person who is responsible for a client's problem, or as the "expert" who possesses privileged knowledge that will solve a client's problem. Instead she seems to see her role as being limited by what the client will or won't do, thus she is

acting as the “Responsibility Giver” by respecting the clients choices, and not taking complete ownership of the process or the problem.

Conclusion

Chapter Eight has shown how Participant E has constructed her professional identity through her adventure narratives, and has disregarded the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as “experts” in favour of a preferred identity of the “Responsibility Giver”. It has also been shown how Participant E has constructed how this “Responsibility Giver” identity will work in her role as a psychologist.

With a discussion of the research findings complete, I will now conclude this research project by briefly providing conclusions of the different chapters and findings, and by critiquing and providing recommendations that could enhance similar research projects in the future.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I will look at the major elements that made up this research project, as well as at a summary of the findings. Lastly, I will present a critique of this research project and suggest some recommendations that could enhance future research on this topic.

9.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter Two, the literature presented showed how learning can take place. Traditional learning was shown to be a common form of learning that is used because of the logistical elements surrounding numbers of students and learning opportunities available in classrooms (Du Toit, 2002). Experiential learning was presented as an alternative method of teaching and learning that is characterised by facilitating meaningful experiences that can take place both inside and outside of the traditional classroom environment. Reflection on these meaningful experiences results in a learning experience that is more meaningful and appropriate for each individual student, as the learned experience is incorporated into each student's meaning system (Human, 2008).

Next, literature on adventure was presented that showed what adventure constitutes, and how it may be used. With this as a basis to move forwards, AREL was presented as a form of experiential learning where adventure is incorporated into the learning experience to assist learners to develop a greater understanding of themselves, and the world around them. The practical and theoretical basis for the adventure experience was also presented in order to give the reader a greater understanding as to how and why adventure is used within experiential education.

The literature review presented in Chapter Two of this research project showed how experiential education, and more specifically AREL has been used in professional development in a number of different fields, including in the training of psychologists

(Human, 2006, 2008; Martins, 2008; Wheeler, Goldie, & Hicks, 1998) and in the training of physical education students (Carlson & McKenna, 2000). This not only showed what research has been conducted in this field in the past, but also showed how adventure has been effective in supplementing professional training in the past, thus justifying the current research project.

9.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research Methodology that this research project followed was presented in Chapter Three. This chapter set the stage for how the research was conducted, who the participants of the research project were, and discussed my dual role as the "student participant" and "student researcher". Steps taken to ensure that the dual role did not interfere with the quality of the research were also presented here.

My research position was also discussed in Chapter Three, giving a brief discussion of quantitative and qualitative research, but more specifically explaining the branch of qualitative research from which this project was conducted – narrative research. During this discussion I made clear the fundamental cornerstone of my research position with the statement by Andrews (2000, pp. 77-78), where he writes:

> Stories are not only the way in which we come to ascribe significance to experiences…they are one of the primary means through which we constitute our very selves…We become who we are through telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell.

Next, I explained how the research material was obtained, analysed, and applied to the process of professional identity development of the participants of this research project. Lastly, I discussed how the quality and ethics of this research were maintained, as well as the relevance of this specific research project.

9.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings that were presented in this research report do not cover the full spectrum of possible identities that were constructed by the participants through their adventure narratives. The scope of a mini-dissertation did not allow for this, and thus the most frequent identity that was present in each of the adventure activities was reported on. As the researcher, I was fully aware that this was the case, and I have addressed this as a limitation and have provided recommendations for further research under further on in this report.

In Chapter Four, the research findings of Participant A were presented. In these findings, it became apparent how Participant A had constructed his professional identity as a “Collaborator”, and understood this identity as being possible through working together with his clients, allowing clients ultimate control, not being the “expert” on the life of his clients, giving responsibility to his clients to overcome their difficulties. This chapter also showed how Participant A understood this professional identity in terms of how it would be applied to his work in the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology.

The research findings of Participant B were presented in Chapter Five. Through Participant B’s adventure narratives, it became clear the she valued building trust, showing genuine interest, being congruent, respecting the client, and creating a partnership as important in her work as a psychologist, and thus constructed the identity of the “Relationship Builder”. It was also discussed how Participant B understood her identity of the “Relationship Builder” being applied to her work as a counselling psychologist.

Participant C constructed the identity of the “Role Negotiator” through his adventure narratives, and this was discussed in Chapter Six of this research project. Participant C showed how he felt it important that he and his clients could alternate between being the “expert” and the “non-expert” during the therapeutic process, which was how the identity of being the “Role Negotiator”

was constructed. Participant C's reflection on how this would be applied to his work as a counselling psychologist was also discussed in this chapter, which gave us an insight into how he understood the "Role Negotiator" as working within his daily practice.

Chapter Seven presented a discussion on how the "Empowerer" identity had been constructed by Participant D, and how Participant D understood this identity being applied to the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology. Participant D constructed this professional identity through themes that included the creation of an environment where the client has control, working with the clients to facilitate growth, working with the client to develop preferred identities, and creating a trusting relationship with the client.

Lastly, the research findings of Participant E were presented in Chapter Eight. This chapter discussed how the identity of the "Responsibility Giver" was constructed, and how Participant E understood this professional identity as it applied to her daily work as a counselling psychologist. Participant E constructed the "Responsibility Giver" identity as she discussed how she has her own limitations, and multiple identities that are separate from her role as a psychologist. Participant E also discussed her belief that clients choices, and abilities to overcome their problems must be respected, and that she could only support her clients up to a certain point, where after they would need to take control of their own progress through the therapeutic process.

From the research findings, it seems that all of the participants in this research project were able to construct preferred identities through adventure activities that gave them an opportunity to learn more about their interpersonal and intrapersonal selves. It also seems that the participants were able to construct preferred identities that were in contrast to the dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts". Through the writing of adventure narratives, the participants were able to become aware of these identities, and in the telling of these adventure narratives, were able to construct these preferred identities. The application of these adventure narratives to the different scopes of practice in counselling psychology also gave the participants an opportunity to

construct a better understanding of how these new identities would fit with their understanding of their work as psychologists.

9.4 GROUP REFLECTION SESSION

During the group reflection session, in which Ms. Adri Prinsloo (critical agent) was present, the participants had the opportunity to reflect on their own research findings chapter, as well as comment on their fellow participants research findings chapters.

During this reflection session, all participants agreed that their research findings chapters made sense to them in terms of how they understood their professional identity(ies). It also became apparent that participants did not only see themselves as having one professional identity, but as wanting to draw on all of the different identities that were constructed by each participant. Thus, this group reflection session gave the participants an opportunity to learn from each other, as well as to co-construct new identities and meaning in terms of their professional development.

Participants also discussed the value of being given the opportunity to reflect on their research findings. The participants agreed that this process made the findings more meaningful and empowering, allowed them to take ownership of these identities, and made the identities that had been constructed more real.

9.5 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major limitation of this research project is that the scope allowed for by this project meant that many meaningful identities that were constructed during the adventure activities went “unheard” in this research report. As the researcher, I had to read the analysis of the adventure narratives and the individual reflections with the goal of uncovering one main identity that was apparent throughout for each participant. As Freedman and Combs (1996) argue, there are no such things as essential selves, and people will have

multiple identities. Thus, a research project that provides a narrative in which its participants have only one identity is flawed.

Future studies on this subject should provide a scope in which the multitude of possibilities for identity is given voice, where participants have the opportunity to select from these many identities that may be apparent. A recommendation that could enhance future studies on this subject could involve allowing participants to analyse their own narratives, and then select from the multitude of possible identities within their narratives. Participants could then determine which identities uncovered are their preferred identities, as they see them. Thereafter, participants could be asked to further "thicken" these narratives as an ongoing process during practical training during the MA (Counselling Psychology) programme, by narrating the construction of these identities over time.

A second limitation of this research project concerns the amount of time between the conducting of the research, and the writing of the report. As the participants were undergoing training and completing practical work during this time period, it can be argued that many changes would have occurred in the construction of their identities as counselling psychologists. Thus, this research could have been enhanced by incorporating narratives regarding what might have changed or stayed the same for the participants from the conducting of the research project to the writing of the research report.

As previously discussed, dual role research can have limitations. These limitations were lessened in this research project by undergoing supervision, making use of a critical agent, maintaining transparency in the setting of ground rules for the research, and being clear regarding the responsibilities of the dual roles (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007; Krefting, 1991; Macphail, 2004). The role of the researcher in this process cannot however be completely overcome, and nor should it be as the researcher is part of the social world being studied. This research project could however have been enhanced had I provided the critical agent with a narrative regarding my experience of the research process. This would have

enhanced the research project by creating an understanding of the researcher's experience of the research project, and critically examining how this may have affected the research project.

The current study did not make sufficient use of the opportunities available from the group reflection session. As previously shown in this report, participants were able to see commonalities and overlaps in each other's professional identities during the group reflection session. The scope of this mini-dissertation did not allow for a thorough discussion and description of the commonalities and overlaps in each participants identified professional identity. Future research could therefore be conducted on the social construction of multiple and concurrent identities, that could be facilitated within a context such as a group reflection session, where participants co-construct their professional identities through discussion, and in relation to one another.

This finding during the group reflection session also led the participants, supervisor, critial agent and I to a conclusion that these different identities all form part of necessary aspects of any counselling relationship. It was discussed that relationship building, role negotiation, collaboration, empowerment, and giving of responsibility to the client are all important activites or roles in counselling psychology. Future research could be conducted into the use of these identities as a framework for training and developing students during post-graduate counselling psychology education.

Conclusion

This research project has shown how postgraduate counselling psychology students constructed their professional identities through an adventure experience. It was shown from the literature review how AREL can be valuable in this context, and how it has been utilised previously. The research findings chapters showed how preferred professional identities were constructed within a dominant cultural narrative of psychologists as "experts". From the group feedback session, it appears that this research project had value and meaning

for the participants as they continued through the development of their own professional identity. As the researcher, this research project was also very meaningful for me, as I developed my professional identity, while at the same time developing my ability to conduct research, and understanding of all the concepts present in this research project.

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