

Exploring transformative learning within the context of healing and reconciliation: An action research project.

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Submitted in full fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education in the Faculty of Education,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
2011

As the candidate's Supervisor I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

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Abstract

Churches have long been important sites of non-formal and informal learning and places of refuge and renewal during times of social upheaval in South Africa. They continue to provide a safe space in which people can be challenged to grow, to change and to heal from past experiences. This qualitative Living Theory action research study sought to examine my own learnings as a Healing of Memories workshop facilitator in a new process, held in a worship community, that foregrounded the spiritual dimensions of participant learnings.

Situated within the paradigm of Critical Social Theory, the research draws primarily on Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning in order to examine healing and reconciliation initiatives that enable shifts in thinking and opportunities for action through individual perspective transformation. In order to address critique of Mezirow's tendency to restrict learning to its cognitive dimension, the study draws on Tisdell and Dirkx for a more holistic conceptualisation of transformative learning that incorporates the affective, somatic, spiritual and cultural aspects of human experience. Learnings were structured in action and reflection phases involving myself initially and then co-facilitators and participants, by means of in-depth individual interviews.

The workshops of the Institute for Healing of Memories are an experiential, non-formal adult education initiative that seeks to provide a space in which personal stories can be told and acknowledged. Situating this Healing of Memories workshop within an existing church community from which all participants were drawn and holding it during the spiritually significant Easter season of renewal enabled their deeper learning through its spiritual dimensions. Viewing this Healing of Memories workshop as a transformative learning process deepened my understanding of it as a curriculum structured to enable perspective transformation through the ten steps identified by Mezirow. A respectful and compassionate listening space allowed participants to explore options for new roles, relationships and action. Learning to listen actively and to understand emotion and the choices to be made in response to it provided participants with new knowledge and skills. By participating in this process with a holistic understanding of transformative learning and as a practitioner researching my own practice I have grown as an educator, with greater authenticity and humanity in my practice.

Declaration of own work

I, Ingrid Andersen, declare that

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed:

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people and institutions for their contributions to this research:

- My supervisor, Dr Vaughn John, for opening the world of transformative adult education to me, encouraging me to undertake this research and for his thoughtful criticism of my work.
- The staff of the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal - for their invaluable support without which this research would not have been possible.
- The Institute for Healing of Memories, for its support for this research.
- Mpendulo Nyembe and Naomi Anthony, fellow-Healing of Memories facilitators, for their friendship and partnership.
- Prof Steve de Gruchy, mentor and critical friend, who is greatly missed.
- The participants of this Healing of Memories workshop for their involvement, especially those who offered to be interviewed: Alison, Paul, Sarah, Bobby and Pastor Patrick, who gave of themselves so generously.
- My family and sister-friends - especially to my son Michael and my parents - for their faithful support of me during this process of learning, transformation and fulfillment.
- To my mother, Dr Mitzi Andersen, for her expert editing.

Abbreviations

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Project
CCR	Centre for Conflict Resolution
CSVr	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
HoM	Healing of Memories
HoMaR	Healing of Memories and Reconciliation Consortium
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
PACSA	Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SORAT	School of Religion and Theology, UKZN
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

Referencing Note: In line with APA 6th guidelines for the referencing of electronic books and online articles without page numbers, quotation locations may take the following format: (Chapter, Section, para.).

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Chapter One – Introduction

The Healing of Memories workshop is one of a variety of South African adult education initiatives that seek to provide a listening, respectful space in which stories can be told and acknowledged so that the process of individual healing and empowerment can begin (Institute for Healing of Memories, 2005). The purpose of this study is to explore how a community of faith, while participating in such a workshop, engages in contextually meaningful transformative learning. In addition, this study seeks to improve the practice of facilitators of existing healing and reconciliation methodologies through enhancing the inherently spiritual aspects of the processes, providing a holistic approach to transformative learning processes.

As an action research project, this study seeks to examine the transformative learning experiences of individuals who were given an opportunity for perspective transformation by means of participation in a Healing of Memories workshop. The workshop was situated within an existing, supportive community of faith and within the context of traditional Christian narratives of healing and restoration.

Background

The motivation for this study comes out of my experiences over many years as an Anglican priest, working in informal adult education for community development in South Africa. In 2007, a colleague reported to me that at a gathering of South African development practitioners in partnership with the German Church Development Service EED (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst), a discussion was held around the challenges faced by national development, after so many years and so much donor investment. The limited success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was raised, and the opinion expressed that there was a need for healing and reconciliation to take place before development could succeed. As I put it at the time:

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This...echoes my own experience as a person of faith working for transformation: that initiatives, even those evolved along the lines of best development practice, can often fail if the participants are not emotionally healed enough to face growth and change. Community development workers themselves often carry their own brokenness into projects. Out of this recognition emerges the idea that the key to engaged and committed participants and to growth beyond anger, hatred and violence in this country appears to be a healing from past indignity, fear, trauma and dehumanisation. (Andersen & de Gruchy, 2009, p. 367)

How can faith leaders and communities of faith respond to this need through non-formal education programmes?

Churches and other places of faith have long been places of solace and refuge, hope and renewal during times of social upheaval and oppression in South Africa. Church communities were a force for resistance and belonging during the years of apartheid. They continue to provide a safe space in which people can be challenged to grow, to heal and to change. Churches are thus important sites of non-formal and informal learning. The HSRC records (2008) that at 82%, churches hold by far the highest level of confidence of all public institutions in the country. Confidence and trust in churches has remained at about that level for nearly ten years.

The methodologies I have encountered that enable learning, empowerment and healing have tended to be secular in nature. I found, however, as I facilitated these workshops that the participants themselves would often surface the spiritual during the workshops. They would attribute personal talents or abilities to God or reference their own spiritual beliefs, even when the curriculum had not contained such references. This seemed to be an important part of the process of meaning-making, part of an enabling shift in thinking for them.

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One particular event stands out: some years ago I was facilitating a session in an Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) conflict-resolution skills-training workshop. Group discussion moved into stories of how participants had hurt others in the past, and after each person had told his or her story, there was a silence – an emotionally-charged space, in which participants glanced at each other, seeking more. As a priest, and knowing that the participants were all Christians, I knew that taking a few minutes for some kind of prayer or ceremony of self-forgiveness would have completed the pedagogical (and healing) process. Such a step, however, was precluded from the curriculum as it was, and had not been negotiated from the outset with the other facilitators and with the participants.

My first encounter with Jack Mezirow’s theory of Transformative Learning helped me better to understand the change processes facilitated by the different workshops I had led over the years – to put a name to the “aha” moments I saw happen for participants time and again. I knew from my facilitation experience, though, that there was more to adult education than the cognitive, and discovered with delight the writings of Elizabeth Tisdell and John Dirkx and other theorists who foreground the importance of the affective, the cultural, the somatic and the spiritual in adult education. There is very little written on either transformative learning or holistic learning from within our African context. I decided to begin reading for this research to gain a deeper understanding of the processes I had been facilitating and to develop a voice with which to share my learnings.

In conceptualizing this Masters research, I decided to examine the effect of foregrounding the spiritual aspect of the adult learning process within an existing adult education process, the Healing of Memories workshop. I wanted to see what would happen for participants if I enhanced their healing journey by situating the workshop within the broader spiritual context of Christian narratives of healing and restoration, such as the healing journey of Christ over the Easter weekend, and how it would affect the transformative learning process for participants. The story of the Passion, the path to crucifixion, starts with betrayal and trauma on Maundy Thursday and ends in triumphant restoration and resurrection on Easter Sunday morning. This is a deeply-felt narrative of restoration for Christians.

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Healing of Memories workshops are run by facilitators of the Healing of Memories Institute, begun by Father Michael Lapsley, who lost both his hands and an eye to a letter-bomb sent by the apartheid government. The aim of the workshops is to provide a safe space for participants to tell their stories of past suffering and pain. The workshops started before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, and to some extent, go beyond their function of learning, validation and healing as the TRC. They are run throughout the world (Institute for Healing of Memories, 2005). The process of the articulation of each person's story within a respectful space as well as the hearing of the stories of others provides an opportunity for learning of the type described by Mezirow as perspective transformation. Healing and empowerment in this context can thus be seen as a critical learning event - as the result of the transformative learning process.

Context of this research

According to statistics, violent victimisation has become a part of “normal life” for South Africans – whether urban or rural. A 1996 study cited in Hamber and Lewis (1997) shows that over a period of five years, 70 % of urban South Africans had been victimized. In *Traumatic Stress in South Africa*, Kaminer and Eagle state that fully three-quarters of South Africans have experienced some form of trauma over their lifetimes. South Africa “is one of the few countries in the world that has endured protracted political violence as well as high rates of criminal violence, domestic abuse and accidental injury” (2010, p. 8).

What do South Africans believe has caused such violence? Desmond Tutu, the international icon of the TRC, in an interview with *Die Burger*, voices the feeling of many

Something happened to us... I don't want to make apartheid the scapegoat, but it might be that we are unaware of the damage that was caused. To all of us South Africans. The damage to people who implemented such an inhuman policy, as well as the damage done to the victims (La Vita, 2010).

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Hamber and Lewis (1997) in a paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) suggest, however, that the causes of the violence go further back – that South Africa has experienced traumatic violence since the time it was colonized. This trauma has been compounded by the apartheid violence in the 1980s and 1990s. They suggest that, in addition to this trauma, poverty and the vast levels of social inequity are significant contributing factors.

Similar views were echoed recently in a press release by the CSV (2010) summarizing the outcomes of its controversial and much-commented-on government-commissioned study on the violent nature of crime in South Africa. It suggested that our history of colonization and apartheid is the reason for the normalization of the use of force and suggested that, in addition, “poverty, a weak criminal justice system, the availability of firearms and poor socialisation of the youth [are] factors that sustain a culture of violence”.

[The report] does not imply that a group of people or the nation as a whole is inherently violent. What it wants to say is that, given our history, given our experience of violence ... we have begun to see violence as normative. We see it as acceptable to use violence ... we see it as legitimate.

Widespread reactions of anger and disappointment to the report indicated that the research was expected to reveal more than what was already generally known. The fact is that South Africans carry a long history of trauma and this trauma is largely responsible for the violent society in which we find ourselves.

Trauma and the psychological effects of violence

Hamber and Lewis (1997) suggest that trauma destroys essential, healthy beliefs about oneself and the world, affecting the way one relates to oneself and to others, leaving one feeling “vulnerable, helpless, and out of control in a world that is no longer predictable” (Section 5, para. 1). They draw on Janoff-Bulman’s assertions:

the belief in personal invulnerability ("it won't happen to me"); the view of the self as positive; and the belief that the world is a meaningful and orderly place and that events happen for a reason. Violence, or trauma that is inflicted by a fellow human being, shatters a fourth belief: the trust that other human beings are fundamentally benign. (author’s brackets and inverted commas)

Relationship and other emotional difficulties as well as the possibility of substance-abuse are experienced and, in severe cases, victims can experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Hamber & Lewis, 1997; Kaminer & Eagle, 2010), which requires both medical and psychological intervention.

Perhaps equally destructive is the secondary trauma that is transmitted to those with whom the victim has contact. This effect has been seen to be transmitted to the next generation, and is documented in communities affected by apartheid, the Holocaust and veterans of Vietnam. Their symptoms are similar to those of victims (Hamber & Lewis, 1997, Section 7, para. 1)

Hamber and Lewis draw a clear correlation between the pervasive effects of trauma in South Africa not only with its high levels of violence but also with its ability to thrive:

few, if any, South Africans can remain unaffected. Vast numbers of South Africans are likely to struggle to relate to other individuals due to shattered trust, and feelings of grief and loss; to have difficulty in the workplace due to intrusive trauma symptoms;

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and to be left with an overwhelming sense of anxiety, anger and vulnerability. This leaves many South Africans with raised levels of fear, suspicion and aggression - all of which deleteriously affect their daily functioning. (Conclusion, para.1)

How has this psycho-social need been addressed? Over the years, a significant and long-standing part of the response to the emotional damage of the injustices of colonisation and apartheid and the ongoing need for healing has been from local and international religious bodies. Not only have denominations run schools, counselling and health services and other community projects that over generations have provided vital resources but churches were an active part of the struggle resistance, drawing inspiration from liberation theology and financial support from international church organisations. The churches have played a similar role in the human rights struggle of African Americans, and still play an empowering role today (Isaac, Guy, & Valentine, 2001).

This is not surprising, given that for most South Africans, Christianity is an inextricably intertwined aspect of their spiritual and cultural existence. For struggle icon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu,

spirituality for an African is as much a part of existence as breathing. It was one of his aphorisms that “African communist” was a contradiction in terms, if communism was defined as atheistic and materialistic (Allen, 2007, p. 66).

South Africans are predominantly a people of belief. Of those of faith, 81% of South Africans are Christian (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2009). The HSRC (2008) records that, at 82%, churches hold by far the highest level of confidence of all public institutions in the country. Confidence and trust in churches has remained at about that level for nearly ten years.

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In Religion and Spirituality in South Africa: New Perspectives, Brown, while acknowledging the complexities of defining terms such as ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’¹, asserts that religion and spirituality are core and essential to South African existence. They are

integral to individual and collective life, and issues ranging from the most publicly political to the most personally intimate are often discussed, legislated and performed in spiritual or religious terms (2009, p. 3).

Churches as sites of learning and as agents of change during the struggle

Apart from the high-profile Archbishops Hurley and Tutu, as well as church leaders Buthelezi and Naude and those on the SA Council of Churches, there were many other clergy who served their communities in the cause of the struggle, providing emotional support, practical assistance and the use of their venues for political meetings as well as a voice of witness to the world and to those who were under surveillance by the security police.

One striking example of the activities of the church to support its people through the trauma of apartheid can be found in the autobiography of Father Patrick Noonan, who was based at a parish in Sebokeng and was a witness to the massacre on 3 September 1984. Forty people had died over a period of five days and many more were still in hiding. His response went beyond pastoral care and was integrated into the very fabric of the liturgy and worship on that Sunday, in order to meet the need of his traumatized community:

The liturgy that morning was full of suppressed communal energy finding an outlet in worship and fellowship. It was mixed with anxiety, confusion and anger. People searched for hope in the celebration. They shared their hearts publicly like never before at the prayers of the faithful which were extended to allow as many as possible to

¹ A more detailed discussion of this terminology can be found later in this chapter.

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express their pent-up feelings. It was people's therapy. They listened to one another expectantly, revived their weary spirits, and found new solidarity in being together. (Noonan, 2003, p. 67)

A further healing through liturgy was provided in January the following year, at what was called "The Mass of the Rubber Bullet" by the press, in which symbols of heartbreak and of oppression such as rent demands, information on police brutality, a tear-gas canister and a rubber bullet were brought to the altar after a procession through the township streets (which was technically against the law of that time). Noonan also tells how, during the struggle, many clergy deliberately played a role in political conscientisation in an education process he linked to liberation theology and to the example of Christ:

It was in this context that priests and pastoral sisters... were challenged to proclaim the Good News of liberating salvation, often in locally rooted stories or parables as Jesus had done. These stories raised spiritual awareness and challenged listeners to think new thoughts and ask new questions about the social, spiritual and political circumstances governing their daily lives (p.128).

In this way, these parables or stories provided challenging opportunities for transformation in the meaning perspectives of the members of the congregations. I will explore similar initiatives further on in this chapter with the lens of Transformative Learning, framing them as adult learning.

It is important to note that South African churches were not united in their stand against apartheid. While some churches provided support for the struggle, others, such as the Dutch Reformed Church, endorsed the status quo from the pulpit, quoting the Bible to support the policies of apartheid. The Kairos Document, a significant theological statement rejecting apartheid, was signed by 150 church representatives in 1985 (de Gruchy, 1986; Nolan, 1994).

The role of the churches in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The churches played a crucial role in the TRC, primarily that of advocacy for justice, healing and reconciliation – and not only at the spiritual leadership level of Desmond Tutu and others (Abebe, 2008; Brown, 2009; Masengwe, 2010; Van Der Merwe, 2003). Young points out the religious discourse inherent in the TRC:

In his opening address the Archbishop establishes the religious element explicitly, and its nationwide embrace: “We will be engaging in what should be a corporate nationwide process of healing . . . through contrition, confession and forgiveness” (Chicester, cited in Young, 2004, p. 148).

The Religious Response to the TRC, launched in 1994, involved NGOs, CBOs and religious structures in submissions to parliament during the legal and structural process of setting up the TRC. Churches became increasingly involved, assisting with hearings and with the means of ensuring community involvement. Limited counselling support was available to those who testified. In the Religious Sector Hearing, the churches themselves made submission about how their human rights had been violated. The Religious Response to the TRC was asked to provide alternative means for young children to tell their stories rather than making formal testimony.

Religion, however, had its greatest impact on the TRC through shaping its ethos and its approach. As van der Merwe puts it:

The strong religious influence of numerous Commissioners and key staff directed the TRC's activities in a particular way. While the TRC's activities were clearly circumscribed by the legislation, the interpretation of the mandate was given a very particular form, and the tone of its proceedings were fundamentally altered. (Van Der Merwe, 2003, p. 3).

Limitations of the TRC

In retrospect, one can see that there were largely unrealistic expectations of the TRC as a once-off, small scale initiative to address the massive scale of the psychological needs of hundreds of thousands of people. This was tantamount to a relative abdication of responsibility by both Church and State (Hamber & Lewis, 1997; Kaminer & Eagle, 2010; Young, 2004).

The problem arises when this particular memorializing institution is understood to have offered the final word, when “the nation” is encouraged by anxious politicians to find closure and to lull itself into an orientation towards the future which demands that reconciliation and progress be the normative principles in a society that is still reeling in the wake of apartheid (Young, 2004, p. 160).

Clearly, some sustainable intervention needed to take place, and the Church recognised the need for intervention.

After the TRC, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) met to map a way forward. The proceedings of the 1998 National Conference of the SACC give us insight into their decision-making processes (SACC 1998, quoted in Abebe, 2008, p. 141, italics mine):

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is coming to the end of its term of office. The reconciliation process in this country has barely begun – the legacy of apartheid is still so entrenched in most facets of society in general and the church in particular that:

- This Conference move that member churches of the South African Council of Churches organize opportunities where members of these denominations will have time to share their own stories.
- This Conference move that congregations and parishes should create an environment where members share their stories in the context of worship in order to help people unburden, receive repentance and come to terms with the sinful nature of their past thus enabling them to begin the process of healing of memories and live reconciled lives in the future.

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- The Church should rehabilitate the observance of December 16 (Day of Reconciliation) in order to facilitate national confession, healing and reconciliation as necessary for our fledgling democracy.
- That we establish a National Campaign on Reconciliation and Healing and Provincial Councils be encouraged to establish Provincial Structures to work on these issues.

Thirteen years later, how has the Church implemented this call?

I turn now to the existing field of healing and reconciliation initiatives. Many of the current Church-run initiatives operate in the way that NGO projects are run. There is little systemic response to the SACC's call for "congregations and parishes... [to] create an environment where members share their stories in the context of worship".

The following list purposes to give an overview of the types of healing and reconciliation programmes available but is not intended to be exhaustive. This information is drawn from organisation websites as listed in the resources section.

Within Africa, there is considerable church-initiated peace-building work by many Western-financed international faith-based organisations, such as Scandinavian, German and Netherlands Church organisations, Catholic organisations Caritas and the Damietta Peace Initiative in Africa or by the Historic Peace Churches, such as the Quakers or the Mennonite Central Committee. While there has been extensive relief work with displaced peoples by these organisations and others, some of the ecumenical church work has also supported more than seven truth/truth and reconciliation commissions in Africa, along with tribunals and traditional mechanisms of reconciliation, particularly in Mozambique and South Africa (Sriram & Pillay, 2009).

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Initiatives such as those listed below tend to work at the mediation and conflict-resolution level, with handbooks providing resources for communities to encourage peaceful co-existence in conflict-ridden countries. Largely, this work is not integrated into the worship or liturgy life of the church communities themselves.

Reconciliation can be seen as a spectrum, with a focus on national or group policy at one end and intra- and inter-personal reconciliation at the other. The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Cape Town and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) in Durban both work throughout Africa, building capacity as well as producing research. Similarly, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) in Johannesburg is an organisation that provides both academic input as well as programmatic interventions. It has done a lot of work around the TRC and subsequent reconciliation initiatives. Land restoration work could be seen as part of this grouping.

In KwaZulu-Natal, Sinani, the Vuleka Trust, the KZN AVP Network, the Institute for Healing of Memories and Diakonia all belong to the Healing of Memories and Reconciliation Consortium (HoMaR) and work together for similar goals. The Institute for Healing of Memories runs transforming and healing workshops in which participants are encouraged to share their stories within a safe and enabling facilitated space. This is discussed in more detail later. The Diakonia Council of Churches in Durban builds capacity through Stress and Trauma Healing workshops and programmes that support survivors of violence, as well as making these manuals freely available. After beginning the process of working through their own trauma, participants go on to engage with healing and reconciliation in their own communities. As with Healing of Memories, storytelling is a key component in the process. Sinani runs the same programmes.

Similarly, the courses in the Managing Diversity Programme run by the Vuleka Trust address intolerance and bias on a personal and group/social level, aiming for reconciliation and greater tolerance. AVP is a volunteer-driven process initiated and supported by the Quakers that has been used worldwide for 35 years. It builds skills in communication, co-operation, team-work, tolerance

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of diversity and constructive conflict-resolution, providing opportunities to pre-empt violence. In KwaZulu-Natal, AVP is run by the KZN AVP Network, based in Pietermaritzburg; in Cape Town, by the Quaker Peace Centre; and in Gauteng by Phaphama Initiatives.

There are other organisations in South Africa that provide equivalent offerings. The Mennonite Central Committee, an international organisation that works with refugees and for peacekeeping, provides similar support. Until recently, The Spirals Trust in Grahamstown ran a participatory process that facilitated deeper identity awareness, healing and transformation. The National Peace Accord Trust has used Ecotherapy, a spiritual and physical healing process through a hiking trail over several days into the wilderness. This has taken place for many years with ex-combatants as participants. Khulumani has been very vocal in its critique of the lack of progress after the TRC. In addition to its advocacy for justice and reparation, it specialises in healing, memory and education programmes.

The Dependable Strengths Articulation process, brought to South Africa by the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg and run by the Dependable Strengths Foundation there, is a largely church-based workshop process that works towards empowerment and a strengthened sense of personal worth through providing opportunity for greater knowledge of personal talents and abilities.

Throughout Africa, faith-based organisations work to alleviate poverty and the results of war and conflict. Church publications such as *Healing the wounds of trauma – How the church can help* (Hill, 2007) focus on practical outreach-type interventions and traditional pastoral counselling methods.

While there are many FBOs and NGOs in South Africa running healing, reconciliation or peace-building courses, some of them faith-based, there is little to no evidence of large-scale, systematic, institutionally-prioritised denominational or church organisation-wide work of this nature.

Review of related literature

When Mezirow first outlined the thoughts of an emergent theory of adult development and learning with its roots in cognitive psychology/psychotherapy and critical social theory (Elias & Merriam, 1995), he stated that he wanted to change the fact that “we are caught in our own history and are reliving it” (Cranton, 1994, p.22). Healing and reconciliation initiatives attempt to break those cycles through enabling shifts in thinking and action.

Healing and reconciliation processes such as the Healing of Memories workshop provide the opportunity for people to heal through telling their stories in a safe, supportive, listening environment – to become what Rogers calls a “fully functioning individual” (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.124). There is enormous importance in working through trauma and loss by means of sharing one’s story in a safe and supportive environment as a first step towards healing (Gheith, 2007; Hamber, 1998). This study explores the significance of the role of the worshipping community, where people experience care, nurture and support from others, and it examines the safe space it creates for the telling of stories as adult education for healing and reconciliation.

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

This qualitative action research project seeks to provide opportunities for perspective transformation for individuals -- to redefine themselves within society: to shed an identity of victimhood and a learned helplessness. It seeks to impact on social systems and so it is appropriately situated within the paradigm of Critical Social Theory. For Critical Social Theorists, knowledge is the production of people within a social context. The action research process (McNiff, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009) was used to create this knowledge through ongoing phases of action and reflection.

Critical Social Theory evolved out of Marxist theory and purposes not only to describe, but to transform society for the better -- with the ultimate goal of emancipation, justice, equality and democracy (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This is accomplished by raising awareness of the

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operation of dominant and oppressive power within society and the vested interests and the false consciousness that disempower people – an awareness that Paulo Freire (1970) called “critical consciousness”.

This Healing of Memories workshop was run in a Christian worshipping community – one that was engaged in a weekend of liturgy, prayer, reading of scripture and song that was integrated into the process with what Michael Lerner (2000, quoted in Tisdell, 2006) calls an “emancipatory spirituality” that empowers, liberates and unites people for justice, exhibiting aspects of both transformative and holistic learning.

The primary theoretical base for examining the pedagogies at work in the reflection and conscientisation processes of the Healing of Memories workshop is Mezirow’s theory of Transformative Learning. Mezirow (1997b) defines transformative learning as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference”, that is; the “structures of assumptions” (p.5) we have accumulated through making meaning of experiences and interpreting them. We understand life by means of these frames of reference, which sometimes feel natural or invisible to us, and are often formed “uncritically” in childhood. Frames of reference are made up of aspects of both affective and cognitive habits of thought, and can be challenged (1997b).

Mezirow has been critiqued (E. W. Taylor, 1997, 2007) for the way in which transformative learning tends to restrict learning to its cognitive dimension and its need to address the impact of emotion. The broader definition of transformative learning by the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003), as well as Tisdell (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2001) and Dirkx (1997, 2001) emphasises the way in which people learn holistically by constructing knowledge through images, symbols, stories and ritual. These texts capture elements of the spiritual and emotional (what Dirkx calls “the soul”) and enhance learning in ways that are often ignored in purely cognitive teaching methods.

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By exploring the use of narrative as an organising construct for the creation of meaning in what is both a psychological and a learning process, I attempt to maintain my focus on the discipline of adult education, while touching on narrative as pedagogy and narrative psychology, in particular the work of Michele Crossley.

This research, therefore, explores a more holistic learning experience, encompassing the affective, spiritual, cultural and somatic dimensions of learning. While the action research itself is situated firmly in Critical Theory, in many ways the Healing of Memories process incorporates elements of constructivism in making meaning of life and life-events by means of narration.

Key research questions

How do I design and implement a new learning process within the Healing of Memories workshop that foregrounds the spiritual dimension of the learning?

- i. What can I learn about this new process from action and reflection phases involving myself initially and then those of participants and fellow-facilitators?
- ii. How can I improve my practice as a workshop facilitator by the exploring and theorizing of this process with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning?

Research design and methodology

I have worked in the field of community development for over a decade, so the action and reflection cycles of action research are already deeply ingrained in my practice. This makes action research a logical choice as a methodology. I engaged in this research with the intention of a contribution to social change. Action research aims to improve a situation through action, to generate theory for that action research and to communicate the significance of both. A systematic process of action and reflection cycles is used to generate learning (McNiff, 2002; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009).

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A Healing of Memories workshop was run within the context of a Christian worshipping community, framed by the narratives of healing and restoration such as the healing journey of Christ over the Easter weekend.

I have reflected on my own practice as a facilitator of Healing of Memories. Data for this process include my journal and notes from my experience of running the workshop. After the workshop, the other two facilitators as well as the workshop participants were invited into the research process to inform my understanding of the process.

In-depth interviewing has been described as a “conversation with a purpose”(Kahn and Cannell, in Marshall & Rossman, 1989) used to obtain rich, reliable data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006; Wengraf, 2001). Semi-structured, in-depth interviewing was used to obtain additional research data on facilitator and participant perspectives of their experience and learnings of this Healing of Memories workshop. The interviews three weeks and two months after the workshop were used to generate data from participants.

Data analysis

At every stage of the research I reflected on my learnings within the process and adapting my actions, in phases of reflection and action, recorded in a journal (Cohen, et al., 2007; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). In addition to a helpful, ongoing, critical conversation with my supervisor, I met with my co-facilitators in order to obtain social validation of my action research process and data.

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In re-reading my journal, as well as during the interviews, and in listening to and transcribing the interviews, I became familiar with and immersed myself in the data. In this process, themes emerged and data, organised within these themes, was analysed by means of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning.

Positionality and design limitations

As one of the facilitators, I was situated as a participant-as-observer (Cohen, et al., 2007). I was mindful of and deliberately set aside my future identity as researcher as much as I possibly could in order to ensure the authenticity of the workshop process. I was aware that this was not fully possible.

Potential limitations and threats to the study could have arisen with the level of participation of parishioners within the Christian worshipping community. Members of the community were invited to participate in the workshop but not all would have chosen to do so. Of those who participated in the workshop, not all would choose to be part of the research interviews. This could have resulted in my having a smaller research cohort than I had hoped for. On the other hand, if I had a greater response than the five or six people I required for interviews, I would then have had to select purposively for diversity and representivity.

It was important for the integrity of the process that participation at every point was fully voluntary, and that the workshop was run as usual, within the bracketing of the spiritual context and at the familiar, safe venue of their church buildings.

Ethical issues

The action research event was held with a community that, to the best of the knowledge of the community leadership and the researcher, was not subject to any trauma or damaging psychological event – any more than any South Africans have been. It was chosen as representative of any ordinary worshipping community. The Healing of Memories Institute has recognised that, while the process was begun to care for victims of apartheid, “we are all in need of healing... individuals, communities and nations” (their brochure entitled ‘Every Story Needs a Listener’ (nd)).

Outline of chapters

Chapter Two comprises an overview of the literature of both Transformative Learning and holistic learning theory. It describes the context of healing and reconciliation in South Africa – examining the historical and theoretical background as well as surveying the field of healing and reconciliation initiatives in which this research is situated, including the Healing of Memories methodology.

Chapter Three examines the research paradigm of Critical Social Theory and the methodology of Action Research, in particular that of Living Theory -- action research used by teacher practitioners, with reference to the work of Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead. The interview methodology used and the subsequent data analysis by means of Transformative Learning Theory are outlined. The challenges I faced as a researcher to resolve the conflict between the need to capture the participant learnings from the research event while maintaining the emotional and procedural integrity of the workshop event are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four describes the action research process of this project – the action and reflection phases involved in the research decisions and the formulation of the research questions and the choice of

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research site. My self-study research process can be seen as three such phases. The first phase is the conceptualisation of the workshop research process and the negotiation of a research site. The second phase comprises my learnings as a facilitator during the workshop process and the validation of those learnings by the team of facilitators. The third phase is made up of the learnings from the first and second interviews with workshop participants. During the second and third phases of the research, I examined my learnings with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning. I identified and analysed issues and challenges faced by participants during the workshop, together with the enabling and empowering elements of the workshop process.

Chapter Five provides a conclusion to the study and summarises its findings with regard to the design of the new learning process, my action and reflection processes as a practitioner and the validation of these findings with co-facilitators. It gives an overview of the learnings from inviting the workshop participants into the action and reflection process and explores how I improved my practice as a facilitator by using the lens of Mezirow. It concludes with recommendations and outlines possible areas for further research.

Chapter Two – Literature Review, Background and Initiatives

This chapter aims to outline the literature on transformative and holistic learning used in this research, while providing a historical and theoretical background to the context of healing and reconciliation in South Africa. Thereafter, it examines the existing field of healing and reconciliation initiatives, including the Healing of Memories workshop. I have chosen, within the broader emergent areas of Transformative Learning, to focus primarily on Mezirow's theory, on holistic expressions of learning, as well as to touch briefly on the educational and psychological aspects of narrative. It would be helpful, however, to begin with a broader discussion of the ranges and types of adult learning.

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Most of the adult education initiatives discussed in this chapter do not fall into the category of formal adult education. I pause at this juncture to look at the types of adult education.

Adult education is typically divided into formal, non-formal and informal types of learning (English, 1999; Jarvis, 1987; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Mundel & Schugurensky, 2008; E. W. Taylor, 2008a). Formal learning tends to take place within institutions of learning and to have a curricular basis (Mundel & Schugurensky, 2008) and it works towards recognised qualifications.

A methodology such as Healing of Memories falls under non-formal learning – this comprises shorter organised learning activities (Merriam, et al., 2007) outside of formal systems. It can

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complement systems of teaching and learning but usually does not lead to formal qualifications. It tends to take place at the workplace, at places of worship, or within voluntary groups, political or trade unions or cultural or other organisations.

Nonformal education is typically described as more focused on the present, learner centred, less structured and responsive to localized needs, and there is an assumed nonhierarchical relationship between the learner and the non-formal educator (E. W. Taylor, 2008a, p. 81).

Informal or incidental learning can be seen as a ‘catch-all’ category for other learning activities

to include self-directed learning, incidental learning, and socialization. Self-directed learning is intentional and conscious; incidental learning is unintentional but conscious; learning acquired through socialization (usually values, attitudes, and dispositions) is often unintentional and unconscious (Mundel & Schugurensky, 2008, p. 50).

Informal learning can include the learning of new skills and happens in everyday life - for example, learning to use a new cell-phone or to use a new computer programme. It is an activity that at the time is not even necessarily intended or recognised as learning.

These categories should be seen more as a continuum, rather than as three distinct areas of learning. There is some cross-over: formal institutions can run short courses that are not for credit, and learnings at community organisations, for example, can count towards a formal qualification (Merriam, et al., 2007).

The processes of which I am trained as a facilitator, including Healing of Memories, fall under the category of non-formal learning.

Experiential learning

The workshops I facilitate are also of an experiential nature. Experiential learning involves a process of learning by an individual through his or her direct involvement in an activity, observation and reflection on that activity. This is as opposed to more passive, purely cognitive or didactic styles of learning.

Adult education theorists such as Knowles, Dewey, Kolb, Jarvis and Boud have emphasised the importance of experience in adult learning. Kolb has written that “Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience. Knowledge is continuously derived and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (in Merriam, et al., 2007, p. 161).

For Kolb, experiential learning requires the willing involvement, reflection on and analysis of the experience by the learner as well as initiative in order to solve problems and apply learning. Kolb’s theory is most usually typified as a cycle or wheel of learning depicting the progress from theory, through concrete experience and reflective observation, back to abstract conceptualisation/ revisiting of theory and experimental planning/action (Jarvis, 1987).

The challenges of experiential-learning methodology are that skilled experiential facilitators are needed in order to assist learners to engage fully with the learning on offer. A critique of Kolb’s model of experiential learning is that it does not take into account the effect of the context in which the learning takes place (Merriam, et al., 2007). Experiential workshops of a voluntary nature held in non-formal and unpredictable community settings such those in which Healing of Memories workshops are offered, for example, can therefore present facilitators with additional challenges. Houghton and John point out that these challenges require very experienced, well-prepared facilitators (2007).

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In many ways, action research itself follows the process of learning as outlined above, so as I reflect, write these words and engage in my action research on the Healing of Memories workshops, I myself am engaged in an experiential learning process.

My interaction with the literature for this research, with its action/reflection phases of learning, has been characterized by intense moments of transformative learning for me. After decades of experience in community-workshop facilitation, I began to search for relevant literature with which to examine my facilitation experience by means of the lens of theory. What I initially read in the fields of community development and theology of development did not resonate with the real-life experience of the change I saw taking place within workshop participants or the holistic nature of the learning that took place.

When I began to read in the field of adult education, in particular the work of Mezirow and other Transformative Learning theorists, it was like coming home. Engaging with the thinking was a transformative learning process in itself. But it was only a start. I also needed to understand more about the way in which participants themselves surfaced elements of the emotional and the spiritual in the workshops. It seemed clearly important to their process. I found answers in the work of Elizabeth Tisdell, John Dirkx and others.

A significant learning moment for me in the literature review was reading a case study of a non-formal narrative peace-building education initiative in Kenya that offered new insights into the story-telling Healing of Memories workshop processes that I facilitate, and on which I decided to focus for my research. I will go into more detail about this later.

Transformative Learning

It is important from the outset to differentiate between current theories of transformative learning. The theory of Transformative Learning was first articulated by US adult educationist Jack Mezirow some thirty years ago. Taylor (2008b) points out that Mezirow's conception of transformative learning is neither uncontested, nor is it the only theoretical conception of its kind. Current theories complement and overlap each other, providing more focus on areas that were under-represented in Mezirow's earlier, more rational/cognitive expressions of Transformative Learning Theory. Current Transformative Learning theories fall into two broad groupings. The cultural, spiritual, affective, relational and somatic aspects of transformative learning as a more holistic approach have been picked up by psychoanalytic and psychodevelopmental Transformative Learning theorists who look at learning in the individual (Mezirow, Cranton, Daloz, Dirkx, Kegan and others), while the social-emancipatory approach examines the social dimensions of transformative learning on the individual (Freire, Tisdell, Johnson-Bailey, Alfred and others) (E. W. Taylor, 2008b).

In addition to Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning, which has evolved in response to vigorous debate, I will be focusing on some of the theorists whose theories of holistic adult learning complement that of Mezirow.

It is also helpful at this point to make a differentiation between the different senses of the word "transformative". A workshop process or an experience may effect transformation within its participants and so in this sense be transformative. The purpose of this study is to examine the transformation caused by a workshop by means of the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning. That is, to examine the changes in the meaning perspectives of participants and to correlate the process to the ten stages described by Mezirow.

Why Transformative Learning?

I had, over many years, experienced the visible and almost tangible changes in participants in the experiential workshops I facilitated. Sullen, insecure and, sometimes, angry participants -- some

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emotionally wounded, many homeless -- often seemed afraid to hope for change in their lives. One could see the “aha” or light-bulb moments as they “got it”, and gradually over the two or three days of the workshop process, they sat up straighter, walked taller, interacted more and left as confident individuals who seemed to have been transformed in complex ways that went beyond cognitive processes to encompass physical and emotional dimensions. One unemployed, homeless workshop-participant stated to me at the feedback session on the second day of a workshop in the 1990s: “Yesterday I thought I was rubbish. Today I *know* I am special.” This resonates with the kind of consciousness for which Freire strove : “I now realize I am a person” (Shaul, introduction to Freire, 1970).

They seemed able to move on, as if they had been able to some degree to overcome what had been holding them back. It was the closest thing to a miracle that I had encountered in my ministry as a community activist. I would hear back from them: some of them had had the confidence to search for and find work. Others themselves became facilitators, or had become actively engaged in their communities. It happened, dependably, again and again. I wanted to know why. What was this process of change?

I found answers in the work of Mezirow. When Mezirow first outlined the thoughts of an emergent theory of adult development and learning with its roots in cognitive psychology/psychotherapy and critical social theory (Elias & Merriam, 1995), he stated that he wanted to change the fact that “we are caught in our own history and are reliving it” (Cranton, 1994, p.22). Healing and reconciliation initiatives attempt to break those cycles through enabling shifts in thinking and action.

Mezirow suggests that “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (1996, p.162), while transformative learning is “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference”; that is, the “structures of assumptions” we have accumulated through making meaning of experiences and interpreting them (1997b, p. 5). We understand life by means of these frames of reference – Mezirow calls them “meaning perspectives” - which sometimes feel natural or

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invisible to us, and are often formed “uncritically” in childhood. We learn to apply “habits of expectation” to our experiences from what we have learned previously (Mezirow, 1990, p.2). Frames of reference are made up of aspects of both affective and cognitive habits of thought, and can be challenged, Mezirow says, either by a single decision based on critique through critical reflection, or by the accumulation of critical reflections (1997b).

Mezirow suggested that those involved in a process of transformative learning typically went through ten stages (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, Chapter 2, Section 1, para. 3). These are:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition of a connection between one’s discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.

Taylor suggests that traumatic experiences can trigger a perspective transformation, which can be both painful and stressful and

often occurs either through a series of cumulative transformed meaning schemes or as the result of an acute personal or social crisis (2008b, p. 6).

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Indeed, it has been suggested that these cumulative transformations can take place over extended periods of time (Courtenay, Merriam, Reeves, & Baumgartner, 2000). For Mezirow, critical reflection

is a process by which we attempt to justify our beliefs, either by rationally examining assumptions, often in response to intuitively becoming aware that something is wrong with the result of our thought, or challenging its validity through discourse with others of differing viewpoints and arriving at the best informed judgment (ibid).

For participants, the sharing of these assumptions with others (such as in workshop small groups) leads to new interpretation, renewed thought and new actions and roles. New ways of relating to others are tried out. These new thoughts are integrated into one's life, in line with the new perspective. Part of the process involves reflective "dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief (Mezirow, cited in Merriam & Ntseane, 2008, p.189). Learning becomes a social process (Mezirow, 1997b). The processes of an examination of the origins and impact of one's basic assumptions and creating new interpretations through constructing narrative, engaging in dialogue with group members who tell their stories, as well as of ongoing reflection are core to the Healing of Memories workshop pedagogy. There is some historical background to narratives used in this transformative way in South Africa.

The positive and transformative dimension of creating meaning through life narratives -- those of individuals and, indeed, the life of the nation -- was a powerful discourse in the understanding of the work of the TRC. Young (2004) shows that analysis of the TRC and the 3500-page *Final Report* of the Commission itself.

The messages and learnings from these experiences can have negative long-term effects and need ideally to be revisited in an opportunity for critical reflection: an event held in a safe space with

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ongoing support, such as a Healing of Memories workshop held in a worshipping community. The TRC

is replete with metaphors that establish its orientation towards life narrative—the life of the nation. Official documents, marked with the state’s validation, are particularly explicit about this, but it has been true of much of the discussion around the TRC. (Young, 2004, p. 146)

Mezirow (1997a) describes the transformative learning process as

A significant personal transformation involving subjective reframing, that is, transforming one’s own frame of reference [that] often occurs in response to a disorienting dilemma through a three part process; critical reflection on one’s assumptions, discourse to validate the critically reflective insight, and action....The outcome often involves a reintegration with society, but...on the transformative learner’s own terms (p. 60).

But this was only part of the answer I was seeking in relation to the change I had observed in workshop participants, as it focused only on the cognitive dimensions of learning. I had seen change, as I have mentioned, that encompassed learning elements of the cultural, somatic, emotional and spiritual. Indeed, much of adult learning theory and practice focuses on cognitive or analytical process, thus “marginalizing emotions and elevating rationality to a supreme position” (Dirkx, 2001, p. 67).

Mezirow has been critiqued (E. W. Taylor, 1997, 2007) for his Western individualistic focus which fails to take not only the learning context but differing global contexts into greater account. He also tends to restrict learning to its cognitive dimension and needs to address the impact of emotion. I found helpful the broader definition of transformative learning by the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (in Kovan & Dirkx, 2003, p. 102).

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While lengthy, it is worth quoting in its entirety, as it offers a more holistic understanding of transformative learning as

a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions...a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

I felt particular resonance with the work of Tisdell and Dirkx, who emphasise the way in which people learn holistically by constructing knowledge through images, symbols, stories and ritual. These texts capture elements of the spiritual and emotional (what Dirkx calls “the soul”) and enhance learning in ways that are often ignored in purely cognitive learning models. I have found that, even when a workshop operates purely on the cognitive and affective levels, participants will surface the spiritual themselves. Tisdell (2003) has had similar experiences.

Too often, we can limit our thinking of learning as an abstract, intangible cognitive process and neglect its physical or somatic aspects. Tisdell, Dirkx et al remind us to view the learner in his or her entirety. In addition to the affective and the spiritual, one needs to take into account the strong impact of the somatic in the ways in which people learn or fail to learn. We know that on a purely physiological level some adults, say in an act of fear or road rage, can act before they have a chance to think things through: fight or flight responses are triggered when the amygdala in the brain bypass cognitive thought by the cerebral cortex. Cognitive thought was never engaged.

Learning happens in different ways, depending on the physical, emotional and cognitive makeup of each individual learner. We cannot assume that all adults possess equal ability to assess and make

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decisions objectively. Taylor and Lamoreaux (2008) cite Kegan: “Unfortunately these capacities – for objective analysis of both situation and self – are not evenly developed among adults” (p 51).

As a result of advances in brain-imaging techniques such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), we have greater understanding of the physical activity of the brain during learning. Taylor and Lamoreaux (ibid) point out that brain activity for the conscious creation of new meaning is physically different from that for accessing meaning created and stored previously. We are reminded that memories are retrieved and assembled from different parts of the brain used for sight, smell and hearing processes, for example – and that in that process other associated information previously and subsequently stored is also surfaced. Memories cannot be separated into clinical, discrete units of information. Learning is not merely cognitive. Sometimes the creative and the symbolic are required to be engaged in the learning process.

Learning and visual language

In her Fine Arts thesis, Louise Hall explores the work of DWEBA, an organisation named after the Zulu word ‘to draw’, with a participatory approach that successfully uses drawing as a transformational tool, along with discussion to enhance the ability of participants, as individuals, or within groups, to

recognise and reflect on their own conscious and subconscious thoughts, emotions and motives as a starting point for personal and group change and development (Hall, 2007, p. 27).

Drawing on Edwards, she speaks of the complementary nature of the working of the left-brain verbal, analytical and symbolic function together with the relational and intuitive right-brain function, particularly the ability of the right brain to “tap into emotional and subconscious experience more readily” (ibid). Sometimes visual language is needed as an essential precursor to verbal language. “As a right brain hemisphere function, visual language can access thinking skills that have the potential to assist with reflection” (DWEBA, 2001, p. 10).

Holistic adult learning

Dirkx, amongst other theorists, contests the Cartesian concept of emotion as a “barrier to reason and knowledge...[suggesting] a more integral, central and holistic role of emotion in reason, rationality, learning and meaning making” (2008, p. 8). He suggests that while emotion is experienced somatically, it is mediated within a context:

[it is] a neurophysiological response to an external or internal stimulus occurring within and rendered meaningful through a particular sociocultural context and discourse, and integral to one’s sense of self (p.13).

Further, he states that emotion is “constitutive of the very learning processes themselves, integral to the meaning making in which the learners and teachers are engaged” (p.8), and that for Jungian scholars, “emotions represent expressions and ways of coming to know one’s unconscious self, the fundamental source of meaning and creativity in our lives” (p.15).

Similarly, Tisdell examines holistic means of learning through people’s culture, spirituality and life experiences in adult learning that goes beyond the tendency to focus on the rational. This moves into complex territory. While there is neither scope nor space in this study to go into an exploration of the nature of spirituality, it is helpful at this point to distinguish between the formalised structures of religion and the more intangible experiences of spirituality. In explaining what she means by *spirituality*, Tisdell admits that a definition is

a somewhat elusive task; it means different things to different people, and there is often some confusion between “spirituality” and “religion”. Generally, in contemporary literature spirituality is about an *individual’s* personal experience with the sacred, which can be experienced anywhere. Religion, on the other hand, is about an *organised community of faith*, with an official creed, and codes of regulatory behaviour (Tisdell, 2008, p. 28, author's italics)

In her thought-provoking book *Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education*, Tisdell defines culture as “the shared beliefs, values, behaviors, language, and ways of

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communicating and making meaning among a particular social group” (2003, p. xi). She argues that for education to be relevant and transformative in relation to culture, it has to engage holistically, with “the cognitive or rational, the affective, the sociocultural, and the symbolic or spiritual” (ibid p. xiii).

As implied earlier, there is, she suggests, an imaginative, creative and symbolic aspect to learning that can be ignored in education. Knowledge is thus created not only cognitively and analytically, but also through the spiritual, the artistic and through the unconscious and symbolic. Significant learning happens in the moments when ideas connect with emotions, with the relational or with personal experience.

When all of these areas of learning are encompassed into a holistic experience, there is a greater chance that the learning will be transformative. In fact, it may also be socially transformative for those that belong to marginalised cultures. Creating an enabling environment in which people can interact in their entirety requires acknowledging that the spiritual is an integral part of learning (Dirkx, 1997) along with the cognitive, the symbolic and cultural. This results in richer learning, suggests Tisdell, who cites Parks (2000):

spiritual experiences that facilitate a new understanding of the wholeness and interconnectedness of all things often arise by surprise as a result of a new experience or an internal conflict (intellectual, emotional, or spiritual). Such an experience is given new meaning after a *pause* and is restructured in some way through the power of imagination, thereby creating a new wholeness or a map of a new reality. (Tisdell, 2003, p. 65, my italics).

The way in which Healing of Memories workshops allow time for this restructuring by participants overnight is part of its effectiveness. In fact, that “pause” is, over time, part of a learning process of revisiting past experiences with newly-gained present knowledge that Tisdell suggests is a movement of

spiraling back to explore significant events and spiritual experiences that shaped both one's spiritual journey and life journey and identity thus far in order to move forward to the future. Part of what spiritual development is about is the ongoing development of identity (2003, p. 94).

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In spiralling back in a reflective cycle, in recalling important or powerful memories, we are given, Tisdell suggests, the chance to examine them as our present selves with our present understanding, and, in revisiting them, to “reframe” and revise our understandings of them. The impetus, then, in making that reflective backward cycle, drives us on to understand ourselves better.

Narrative learning

This spiralling movement is essential in the process of healing from the past. One of the ways in which to provide opportunities for those in need of healing is to experience a learning or transformative event that prompts a spiral back within a space in which people can tell their stories. In fact, narrative perspectives to learning and development provide depth and complexity that could be overlooked in other theories, suggests Tisdell, who draws on discussions of narrative by Clark, Rossiter and others:

Narrative perspectives, in contrast, tend to foreground and make visible the particular contextual factors in which that development takes place, factors such as gender, culture, historical period, religion and educational background (Tisdell, 2003, p. 136).

A recently emergent area of learning theory is that of Narrative Learning, which has a constructive approach to learning. For as long as human beings have spoken, they have made sense of their lives and of experiences through stories. Clark and Rossiter suggest that humans make meaning through narratives, by “storying” them – making connections and associations, with, for example, cultural narratives (2008, p. 61). We create for ourselves our complex narrative of identity, in layered and often contradictory ways. We can be both victim and victor within our story of a traumatic experience. We re-write our life narratives on an ongoing basis as we experience new things; we learn and we grow. We draw on the myth typologies that surround us to do this, accessing the stories of our culture, social norms and discourses.

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A shift in perception caused by a disorienting dilemma or by an opportunity presented to revisit one's stories (such as a Healing of Memories workshop) can cause a re-storying by participants: a re-remembering of their narratives and thus their identities. Clark and Rossiter cite Randall who "describes transformative learning as a process of restorying" (2008, p. 62). I would add that in that restorying lies the potential for *restoration* of self and relationships with others.

Clark and Rossiter suggest that in the articulation of experience, in the storying or "linguaging" process (2008, p. 64), meaning is created.

Before we can teach anything, it must first make sense to us in some way, but putting our understanding in words that make sense to someone else - in other words, narrating it - furthers our own understanding of the subject (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, p. 67).

They suggest a three-part narrative learning model, that involves the *hearing* of stories: their reception and interpretation from outside the learner; the *telling* of stories: learning through the linking of the learner's own experience to a concept; and the *recognition* of stories: a more objective comparison and critique of narrative patterns – for example, awareness of social discourses could lead to emancipatory thinking (ibid. P. 66).

Learning and healing through storytelling

As we have seen earlier with the discussion of the narrative methodologies of the TRC, healing and reconciliation processes (such as a Healing of Memories workshop) that provide the opportunity for people to heal through telling their stories in a safe, supportive, listening environment allow people to become what Rogers calls a "fully functioning individual" (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.124). There is enormous importance in working through trauma and loss by means of sharing one's story in a safe and supportive environment as a first step towards healing (Gheith, 2007; Hamber, 1998). The Healing of Memories workshop provides the opportunity for structured and facilitated story-telling to serve the cognitive function of re-shaping the event for the survivor, providing new meaning and

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sense of self and leading to re-integration with the community (Brison, 1999; Crossley, 2000; Hamber, 1998).

One of the critiques of the process of the TRC was that for many, expressing emotion was not always the same as healing: this expression was just the beginning of the process. Further intervention was needed (Hamber, 1998; Hayes, 1998). Haitch and Miller (2006) suggest that the telling of personal stories of trauma and the process of critical reflection are not sufficient to break established cycles of violence, emphasizing, in addition, the importance of the role of worshipping community, where people experience care, nurture and support from others. Kayser (2001) stresses the importance of the developmental, material and social justice support needed in addition to this kind of intervention. These are often provided by church communities. This study explores the role of these communities and the safe space they create for the telling of stories as adult learning for healing and reconciliation.

While searching for literature on transformative learning for adults in the context of worship, I came across an extraordinary case study by Russell Haitch and Donald Miller (2006), describing an adult education initiative in Nairobi. Their methodology and findings resonated strongly with my own experience as a facilitator. For that reason, I will examine it in some depth, as it is directly relevant to my action research process based on a Healing of Memories workshop.

In *Storytelling as a means of peacemaking: A case study of Christian Education in Africa*, Haitch and Miller explore the use of storytelling as transformative learning at a conference in the context of an African peacemaking initiative. Representatives of the historic peace churches came from around the world to Kenya to the Watu Wa Amani (People of Peace) conference to

hear why people make war and do violence. They came to learn how to make peace and do justice. Largely they came to tell and hear stories (2006, p.390).

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Three-quarters of the delegates were from Africa. Stories were heard in the cultural context of a worshipful Quaker, Mennonite and Brethren community of Christian singing, praying and reading of scripture.

Haitch and Miller, through their case study, show how storytelling was the means of “forming a community of common values at the conference and a network of relationships that continued thereafter.” The open space created by telling stories became the means to break the bonds created by violence and to “form new identities, recall old wisdom and transform conflict by imaging alternative endings to familiar patterns” (p.391).

This resonates with what Tyler (in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009) suggests in her valuable contribution to narrative transformative learning by applying Mezirow’s seven conditions for critical discourse and adult learning, which are (she says, quoting Mezirow):

essential components in the validating process of rational discourse through which we move toward meaning perspectives that are more developmentally advanced, that is, more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative of experience. These conditions connect significantly to the construction of storytelling and, perhaps more significant, “story listening” spaces that are both liberating and generative (Chapter 12, Section 3, para. 1).

Mezirow lists these conditions for critical discourse: participants will “have accurate and complete information”; “be free from coercion and distorting self-deception”; have the ability “to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively”; “be open to alternative perspectives”; become “critically reflective upon presuppositions and their consequences”; have “equal opportunity to participate, including the chance to challenge, question, refute, and reflect and to hear others do the same” and have the ability “to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77 -78).

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I will expand on Tyler's discussion in the following chapter. At the Nairobi conference, leaders facilitated the creation of trust through the safe climate conducive to personal growth and self-awareness, allowing the learners to reach their full potential. In its cognitive, emotional and spiritual nature, the learning at the conference was holistic. The work of the conference was done in groups through active problem-solving, cooperation and consensus.

Haitch and Miller (2006) themselves place the educational methodology of the conference within Transformative Learning Theory. They suggest five factors in creating space for educative storytelling, for storytelling for transformative learning, for personal growth as well as for peace and justice (p.400).

For Haitch and Miller, storytelling is used as an educational methodology in order to create a familiar *learning space* - participants learned from each other's stories in a way that is suggestive of Mezirow's dialogue (Mezirow, 1997b); a *safe space* - with what Haitch and Miller call "starting places [of] a premise of safety and an assumption of sharing" (p.397); to create a *communal space* and to create an *empowering space*. In telling stories of violence, there is newfound strength and power for the teller and a restoration to the community. The last element is that of *the imaginative space*: storytelling frees the mind to be able to imagine alternatives – other endings to the story: ways of changing "familiar but destructive patterns" (ibid, p. 398) These spaces will be expanded in the following chapter.

Haitch and Miller comment that the story of the *Watu Wa Amani* experience is partly about how the context of the Christian story of the triumph over oppression (manifest in the Christian songs, readings and prayers) heightened critical awareness of their own stories for participants (2006, p.399). More important, however, was the creation of space, an invitation to tell stories - that most familiar form of communication - not in "a vacuum, but within a worshipping community" (p.400) Tisdell suggests that "activities that draw on image, symbol, music, or an art form ... grounded in spirituality, seem to help groups to move beyond conflict" (Tisdell, 2003, p. xii).

Gheith speaks of the difficulty of healing when the opportunity to tell one's story is forbidden – as in the case of the Gulags or of apartheid's "culture of silence". There is healing in the telling of the story, however, in having the opportunity, as Brandon Hamber, a psychologist, puts it, to "break the silence of shame" (1998, p.16).

Structured and facilitated story-telling can serve the cognitive function of re-shaping the event for the survivor and allowing the essentially abnormal event to be integrated into the cognitive and emotional matrix of his or her life (ibid, p.17).

By exploring the use of narrative as an organising construct for the creation of meaning in what is both a psychological and a learning process, I found that, while focused within the discipline of adult education, I needed to address narrative as pedagogy and also to touch on the work of narrative psychologist Crossley (2000, 2003), who works with healing trauma through narrative.

Crossley (2003) suggests that we write our own life stories on an ongoing basis. Narrative constitutes what she calls an "organising principle for human action and life" (p.291), in which we select, organize and present information in ongoing autobiography.

Meaning and stories do not just "emerge" from "within" the isolated individual; rather, they develop in the context of specific interactive episodes and contexts. This point is particularly important when we consider the way in which meaning is constructed in the therapeutic encounter (Crossley, 2000, p. 59).

Trauma often disrupts this personal narrative, leading to "a radical sense of disorientation and the breakdown of a coherent life story" (p. 57). The stories need to be re-told, re-membered:

To undo this entrapment...a therapeutic process - a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of re-externalizing the event – has to be set in motion. This ...can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and transmit the story (Felman & Laub, quoted in Gheith, 2007, p. 165).

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Brison (1999) shows how the storytelling is part of a learning process - that this “bearing witness” to trauma through the creation of a narrative allows this to be “integrated into the survivor’s sense of self and view of the world” (p.39).

Krog (2008) tells the story of how for one man during the TRC, describing his wife’s fatal wound enabled him to begin the healing process. The hard work in the process of telling their stories has given some survivors new meaning, the dignity of acknowledgement, catharsis and relief. Many, like one of the women whose story was told at the Nairobi conference, are able over time, to articulate their stories and, through this transformative learning process, develop new, stronger identities and go on to assume positions of leadership in empowerment and peacekeeping initiatives in the community (p. 394).

This is, however, more than a personal, individual process. Hayes (1998) suggests that the stories, once given the social, political and safe emotional space to be told, become part of a social collective, a new legitimate history. Trauma can tear a person from his/her community. Kobia points out that for Africans, storytelling is a key part in creating “a communitarian ethic” and “communitarian spirit” (quoted in Haitch & Miller, 2006, p.393).

Simply telling one’s story is not enough. One of the critiques of the TRC has been that, for many, expressing emotion is not always the same as healing. Surfacing stories, sometimes for the first time, can evoke powerful emotion. Storytelling must be the beginning of a long process and there needs to be further intervention and the support of community (Hamber, 1998; Hayes, 1998).

Without this follow-up, many victims have described feelings of initial relief following the hearings and then, weeks or months later, feelings of despondency and a re-emergence of the trauma (Hamber, 1998, p.19).

It is for this reason that I chose to situate my workshop in the participants’ own community of worship: a familiar, safe space that could provide ongoing support. The expression of emotion and

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the telling of stories is just a beginning, and, without supportive follow-through, can cause unresolved emotions to resurface and inflict damage. Haitch and Miller address this:

The stories at *Watu Wa Amani* were not just about making peace, whether by averting impending violence or addressing its systemic causes. Many stories told of violence suffered and injustice not remedied. These were not “success” stories in any simple sense. Here peace-making meant simply truth-telling, and success lay in the refusal to allow violence to have the last word...rather, telling and listening to personal stories was a way to move toward communal healing (Haitch & Miller, 2006, p.395).

The key concept there is that of *community*. Haitch and Miller ask if critical reflection is “enough to transcend entrenched patterns of violence and destruction”, and they conclude that often it is not. As Freire reminds us, the thinking needs to be accompanied by *doing*:

human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis, it requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action. (Freire, 1970, p. 106).

If healing does not take place, the community is affected by its consequences. The community needs to be involved and invested in the healing process. Haitch and Miller comment:

The sense of worshiping community was central to storytelling – this was the larger frame of reference. “Community” meant people experienced care, nurture, and support from others. For people who have been traumatized by violence such community is usually an essential precondition for being able to speak their stories. The community’s ability to listen precedes the person’s ability to speak. Here heightened consciousness is not just an ability to reflect critically upon a situation, but an awareness of God being in the thick of it (2006, p.400).

The Nairobi conference took place within a very specific community – the worshipful community of the historic peace churches of Africa. There are more Nigerian Brethren, Kenyan Quakers and Mennonites in the Democratic Republic of Congo than in the United States (p. 392). The

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participants of this conference belonged to a linked, supportive church environment – a community of worship, of churches that crossed borders - with shared beliefs - not only those of their faith but also in the felt importance of peace and peace-building. Violence and its destruction of community and community resources is a major impediment to community development. The church can be seen as a rallying point to address community needs. Tisdell (2003) quotes an African American professor, an activist and adult educator:

I always saw the church as being, in the black community at any rate, sort of a vanguard. It was a vanguard that provided inspiration to continue to do civil rights and other social justice work (p. 5)

For people who have been traumatized by violence, a safe, supportive listening community is usually an essential precondition for being able to speak their stories and to become what Rogers calls a “fully functioning individual” (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.124). Freire speaks of the trust in humanity or “faith” required for enabling dialogue, which:

requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (Freire, 1970, p. 71).

Relationships are of great importance in successful transformative experiences (E. W. Taylor, 1997, 2007). Mezirow himself suggests that “solidarity, empathy, and trust are requisite to the learners' commitment to a transformative learning group” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, Preface, para. 6). The community's ability to listen precedes the person's ability to speak. Awareness, therefore, goes beyond the ability to reflect critically upon a situation, to include an awareness of God's being in the midst of the reflection (Haitch & Miller, 2006).

The learnings in healing and reconciliation processes could be described in terms of what Burkey (1993) calls “Development from Below”. Rather than working at macro-economic or social levels, he suggests that meaningful development needs to begin intrapersonally, within programme participants – in the growth of self-confidence, tolerance and respect for self through interaction

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with others: interpersonally. Any progress in community economic, political and social development, therefore, is predicated upon personal development through relationship.

The developmental and transformative learning outcomes of storytelling initiatives might also be seen in terms of a benefit to the community, more than being restricted merely to the learning of an individual. Unless motivation comes from within, efforts to promote change will not be sustainable (Burkey, 1993, p. 35) This is described as a process in which

an individual develops self-respect, and becomes more self-confident, self-reliant, cooperative and tolerant of others through becoming aware of his/her shortcomings as well as his/her potential for positive change (ibid).

Thus, rather than only Mezirow's desired goal of autonomy (1997b), it is therefore possible for the transformative learning process also to enhance the connectedness and interdependence between participants (Merriam & Ntseane, 2008), as an essential precursor to community development. This therefore directly addresses critique of Mezirow's theory as being socially unresponsive in its focus on internal, individual transformation (Inglis, 1997; Newman, 1994).

Adult education initiatives such as the Nairobi conference can thus be seen as integral to the ongoing development of a continent so often torn by poverty and violence. In relation to our own country, Hamber warns that the consequences of unresolved trauma could result in the "development of revenge cycles and the general undermining of the human potential available in South Africa" (1998, p.25). Hayes reminds us that one cannot separate the personal stories of suffering from the cycles of history that Mezirow speaks of (in Cranton, 1994), and from the public and the political:

We need to find ways of remembering that free us to forget the past, so that we can stop suffering our forgetting, and as political beings ...start to act in the present (1998, p.49).

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The purpose of this study is to explore how a community of faith, while participating in a Healing of Memories workshop, engages in contextually meaningful transformative learning. In addition, this study seeks to improve the practice of facilitators of existing healing and reconciliation methodologies through enhancing the inherently spiritual aspects of the processes, providing a holistic approach to transformative learning processes.

As an action research project, this study seeks to examine the transformative learning experiences of individuals who were given an opportunity for perspective transformation by means of participation in a Healing of Memories workshop. The workshop was situated within an existing, supportive community of faith and within the context of traditional Christian narratives of healing and restoration.

Key research questions

How do I design and implement a new learning process within the Healing of Memories workshop that foregrounds the spiritual dimension of the learning?

- i. What can I learn about this new process from action and reflection phases involving myself initially and then those of participants and fellow-facilitators?
- ii. How can I improve my practice as a workshop facilitator by the exploring and theorizing of this process with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning?

Qualitative research

I have chosen a qualitative approach to this study, as I needed the kind of rich, broad and detailed data (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004; Terre Blanche, et al., 2006) that come with the narratives of transformative journeys. The Institute for Healing of Memories (2007) has published research on the effectiveness of a workshop that was predominantly quantitative in nature. Their end-of-workshop multiple-choice questionnaires still follow much the same format. I needed a greater depth of information, not only to be able to understand my own practice as a facilitator as I explored the spiritual and transformative nature of the Healing of Memories workshop as an adult learning process, but also to enrich it with learnings from the experiences of my co-facilitators and some of the workshop participants. I then needed to be able to analyse the data qualitatively with the “kinds of open-ended, inductive exploration made possible by qualitative research” (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006, p. 272).

Paradigm – Critical Social Theory

As a social activist, I had no motivation for engaging in a solely intellectual exercise that would have no impact on the work I did within the Church and within communities. I was already doing the work. I wished, rather, to examine my experience and my practice in order to produce knowledge that would contribute to making positive change happen in my context. Because this project seeks, therefore, to impact on social systems, it is appropriately situated within the paradigm of Critical Social Theory. For Critical Social Theorists, knowledge is produced by people -- people who live and work and learn within a social context which affects all of these processes. The flaw in interpretive social science research, says Habermas, whose thinking underpins Critical Social Theory, is that meaning is not merely subjective – it is influenced by the world in which it is situated, and that world “limits both the scope of individuals’ intentions and the possibility of their realization” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 135).

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Critical Social Theory evolved out of Marxist theory and purposes not only to describe and to comprehend but to transform society for the better - with the ultimate goal of emancipation, justice, equality and democracy (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003; Henning, et al., 2004).

Its purpose is not merely to understand situations and phenomena but to change them. In particular it seeks to emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms (ibid, p.26).

An emancipatory approach offers people an awareness of the operation of vested, dominant and oppressive powers and structures within society and to challenge the false consciousness that disempowers – an awareness that Freire (1970) called “critical consciousness”. It offers people a chance to problematise the status quo, to engage in discourse to see how their “aims and purposes may have become distorted or repressed” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 136). Critical Social Theory critiques – it exposes the ideologies, agendas and the political bias inherent in what is taken as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ in society in all its aspects. Often concerned with small scale and specifics, it emphasises participatory and collaborative research process.

Critique of Critical Social Theory focuses on its deliberate political agenda, and holds up, as an ideal, the researcher as objective, disinterested and neutral (Cohen, et al., 2007). It is naïve to believe that an educator or researcher can exist in a clinical, neutral space outside of a political and social context. Habermas stresses that “knowledge and its selection is neither neutral nor innocent” (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 31). The selection of what goes into the curriculum, for example, is a political act. And it was with the curriculum that I intended to engage in order to create a holistic healing process.

Approach: action research

The term “action research” was first used by Kurt Lewin, who, with colleagues, created a means of cyclical, reflective research through activity to address the challenges faced by minorities in the

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1930s and 1940s. He was influenced by the participative model of research used by Collier in his groundbreaking work with Indians. Corey and others built on this work during the 1940s and 1950s, with a focus on education and curriculum (McNiff, 2002). The 1970s brought renewed interest in research methods and teacher and curriculum development. Perhaps the most well known action research methodology in community-development circles, which is where I experienced its use as a practitioner, is Participatory Action Research (PAR), which uses research for emancipatory purposes (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). With a strong emphasis on ideology and awareness of power and social structures, PAR has its roots in Latin America, reflecting the work of Freire. It is as much about politics as it is about education or learning, and so works on a communal and participatory basis with research participants.

While my study has strong elements of a participatory nature, my research cannot be seen in terms of typical PAR. The origins of my research methodology can rather be traced back to Lawrence Stenhouse, who was responsible for the term “teacher-as-researcher” and the Humanities Curriculum Project. His work was developed by Elliot, Adelman and others at the Ford Teaching project in the early 1970s, with a focus on the teacher as researcher and developing professional (McNiff, 2002). Kemmis and others, who were drawn to Stenhouse, further built on the concept of action research as a means of examining teaching practice within its social and political contexts. Whitehead and McNiff are more recent proponents of *practitioner* action research, which they entitle “Living Theory” and which will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

I have worked in the field of community development for over fifteen years, so the action and reflection cycles of action research are already deeply ingrained in my practice. This makes action research a logical choice as a methodology for this study. I have engaged in this research with the intention of a contribution to social change in and through the teaching and learning role of the Anglican Church. Action research

...has a reflective rationality underpinning its practices. This is the assumption that complex practical problems demand specific solutions. These solutions can be developed only inside the context in which the problem arises and in which the practitioner is a crucial and determining element. The solutions cannot be applied

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successfully to other contexts, but they can be made accessible to other practitioners as hypotheses to be tested (Altricher, Posch & Somekh in Henning, et al., 2004, p. 24).

Action research therefore aims to improve a situation through a carefully planned, small-scale, specific action, to generate theory for that action (research) and to communicate the significance of both (Cohen, et al., 2007). Operating on the micro-scale, it also has the macro in mind. While engaged in research, it is also a process of practice – it connects the two:

Action research is concerned equally with changing individuals, on the one hand, and, on the other, the culture of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong (Kemmis and McTaggart in Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 298).

Action research is characterized by two aims: improvement and involvement. It has an ethos of co-operation between researcher and participants with the aim of change and emancipation (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Henning, et al., 2004). While these characteristics and a participatory approach are most commonly associated with PAR, they are not exclusive to Participatory Action Research. I intend to show that the participatory nature of the Healing of Memories workshop-- in particular the workshop held for my research event -- my action research approach of Living Theory and my subsequent interviews had a strongly participatory ethos.

Over time, Kemmis (as seen) asserts, action research began to separate into two camps that make a distinction in their interpretation of action research (in Cohen, et al., 2007). Those who support critical action research as a way to change systems (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) and those who work, primarily with curriculum and teacher as self-reflexive practitioner, with the aim of self-improvement. Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead (McNiff, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead, 2009) are the primary theorists of the latter model. McNiff, interestingly, identifies three trends – interpretive and critical theoretic, that observe and describe, as opposed to the third, Living Theory (2002), which focuses on the internal, lived learning experience of the educator.

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While I am interested in improving my own practice as both workshop facilitator and priest-as-change-agent, I also want to contribute to changes within the Church as social system – and so see myself in many ways as situated in both of those ‘camps’. In fact, a lot of my practice has found me in that liminal zone between two defined states or roles; between theory and practice, between the roles of pastor and social activist. It is a very fruitful and fecund place in which to make change happen.

Carr and Kemmis identify three conditions necessary for action research, whether participatory or otherwise:

Firstly, a project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible of improvement; secondly, the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflection, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; thirdly, the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 165)

The research process: Living Theory

Over more than a decade, I have been a community workshop facilitator, operating with the values of co-operation, of shared learning, egalitarian power-structures and respectful listening. McNiff and Whitehead’s conceptualisation of action research therefore resonated with me. For McNiff, self-reflection and collaborative learning are central to action research:

In traditional (empirical) forms of research researchers do research on other people. In action research researchers do research on themselves in company with other people, and those others are doing the same. No distinction is made between who is a researcher and who is a practitioner (McNiff, 2002, p. 15).

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Action researchers, she says, “believe that people are able to create their own identities and allow other people to create theirs” (ibid, p 16). The questions action researchers ask themselves, say McNiff and Whitehead (McNiff, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead, 2009), are:

- How do I do this better?
- How do I improve my practice as an educator?
- How do we understand?

The answers to these lie in reflection -- a cyclical process of action and reflection, in dialogue with others who are in the same process. McNiff, drawing on Chomsky, differentiates between knowledge or theories known externally to a researcher, as opposed to theory that is internal – an individual’s belief system -- theories that she calls E-theories and I-theories. E-theories result from the analysis of external objects by behaviourist forms of social scientific analysis. I-theories result from a practitioner’s personal belief systems and “tacit forms of knowing”, and are dialectic in nature. These theories “emerge in practice as personal forms of acting and knowing” (McNiff, 2002, p. 22).

Living Theory engages with and studies the (potentially) contradictory self, Whitehead’s “living I”, which is located at the “centre of enquiries” (McNiff, 2002, p. 22). Data about our practice are gathered and tested for validity. Are our claims valid? The depth, layering and complexity of such a study of personal change, they suggest, outweigh that possible by descriptive E-approaches.

My action plan

I have drawn my action plan from Whitehead. He has developed the following plan of action (McNiff, 2002):

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What do I think I can do about it?
- What will I do about it?
- How will I gather evidence to show that I am influencing the situation?
- How will I ensure that any judgements I make are reasonably fair and accurate?
- What will I do then?

My own concern was how to explore the positive impact of spirituality and Christian culture on adult learning processes within the Church. I was concerned because, as a priest and an adult education practitioner, I would like to see the Church with a greater role in healing and reconciliation in South Africa. I thought I could run a workshop as a transformative adult education event at a church. I ran a modified Healing of Memories workshop highlighting the spiritual aspects of the learning process at a church and captured my learnings in a journal. In order to ensure that my judgements were reasonably fair and accurate, I met with my fellow practitioners to gauge their assessment of the modified learning process. I also interviewed five participants to check if my observations were accurate. The findings will be reported back to the Bishop of the Diocese of Natal and the Anglican Archbishop, as well as to the Institute for Healing of Memories.

On commencing the action research project process, I began to keep a reflective journal (Kember, 2000) in which I recorded not only the decisions and plans I made and the actions that I took from them, but the realisations I came to and the thinking and re-thinking processes I made along the way – the observations and notes from meetings and discussions and my reflections on these. I had successes and setbacks. I did a lot of my pondering on those pages, as well as making notes of findings in literature, on the Internet and in my work and research. Looking back over the journal shows some interesting growth, learnings and changes in thinking and practice over my journey.

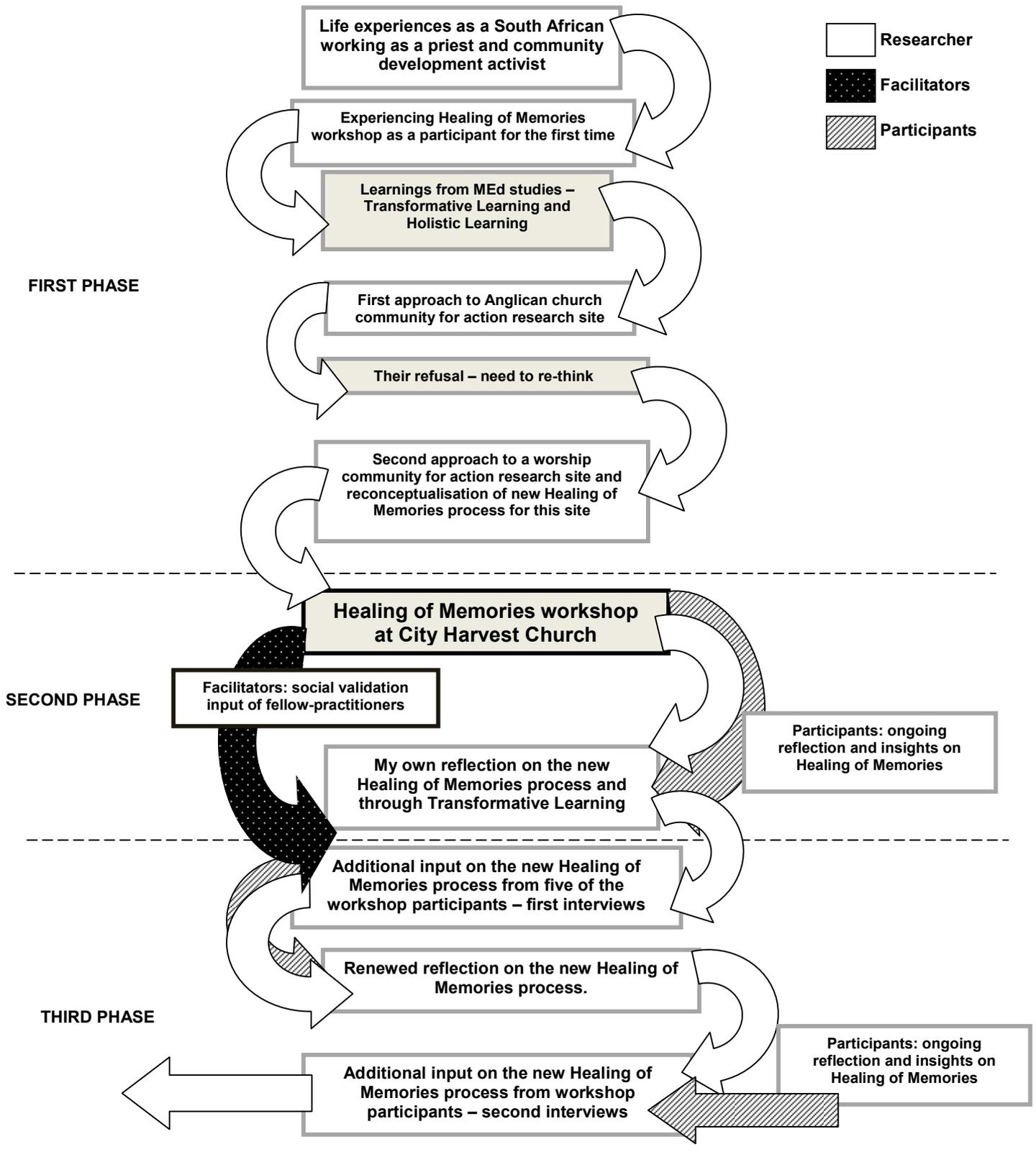
The process

The aim of the action in **action** research is to improve a personal or social situation; the aim of the **research** is to offer explanations (generate theory) for the action; and the aim of the **story** is to communicate the significance of the action research for public legitimation....The theory is in the action (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p. 17, bold in original).

Throughout the action research process – during the workshop and the interviews – I learned by means of phases of action and reflection, as shown in the figure on the following page. My research fell broadly into three such phases. The first is the conceptualisation of the workshop research process and the negotiation of a research site. The second phase comprises my learnings as a facilitator during the workshop process and the validation of those learnings by the team of facilitators. The third phase is made up of the learnings from the first and second interviews with workshop participants.

I identified issues and challenges faced by participants during the workshop and analysed them, together with the enabling and empowering elements of the workshop process. During the second and third phases of the research, I examined my learnings with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning. In addition, I have gained in understanding by the use of a holistic emphasis on the different aspects inherent in the learning process – the cognitive, the affective, the symbolic, cultural, spiritual and the somatic (see Chapter 2).

Figure 3.1 This Action Research Process



Healing of Memories methodology

Michael Lapsley, a priest and an anti-apartheid activist who, as mentioned earlier, was physically disabled by a retaliatory letter-bomb sent by the apartheid government, works for reconciliation. He believes that the stories of the victims of apartheid must be “reverenced, acknowledged and recognized” (quoted in Worsnip, 1996, p. 160). This belief in the need to tell stories led to the creation of the Healing of Memories Institute. Worsnip draws a parallel with the TRC process: “If there is to be reconciliation, if there is to be forgiveness, if there is to be healing and wholeness in this wounded land, there must be full disclosure” (p 161).

This is very similar to the statement by Dullah Omar of the TRC, and then Minister of Justice: “If the wounds of the past are to be healed, disclosure of the truth and its acknowledgment are essential” (in Young, 2004, p. 145).

The Healing of Memories workshop

As an Anglican priest, Lapsley has imbued the Healing of Memories workshop process with an inherent, rather than an overt, spirituality that enables the process to be run as a secular one. It is often run successfully for people of no faith or of other faiths. While it is not required that facilitators be practicing Christians and indeed the workshops are run mostly in secular contexts and often with people of other beliefs, those facilitators I have encountered have a deeply-felt Christian faith. The workshops run by the Institute typically begin early on a Friday evening. After a welcome, discussion and explanation about the workshop, followed by supper, participants experience either a short drama or a video excerpt, which serves as a catalyst or “Trigger”² (Institute for Healing of Memories, 2005; Kayser, 2000) for discussion. Its subject matter is based on the needs of the community or the specific purpose of the workshop. In open discussion afterwards, participants are encouraged to discuss their emotions and response to the Trigger. A sheet of questions is given to participants to read and consider as preparation for the following day’s activities.

² Names for Workshop processes such as the Trigger or the Reunion are capitalised in line with Healing of Memories Institute documentation.

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Saturday begins with a creative drawing exercise. For forty-five minutes, participants are asked to use crayons on newsprint to express their life stories – with the focus on expression, not artistic merit. The group is then divided into smaller groups of four to six participants each, with one or two facilitators per group, allowing for a good group mix with diversity of gender, race and experience. The rest of the day is spent in the small groups, where a safe, respectful, confidential and non-judgmental space is provided for each participant in turn to share his or her story, uninterrupted, with the group. The newsprint picture and the questions from the night before may provide a resource for this process. Facilitators tell their stories last. At the end of the day, which is often exhausting, a plenary session is held where participants' experiences, emotions and questions are discussed and captured on a flipchart. This is an exercise in which emotions are reframed as being valid, and in which choice is involved in using emotion for life-affirming or life-destroying purposes.

This session holds the potential for conflict, and must be very skillfully facilitated. Representatives from the entire group are chosen to use these themes and notes as the basis for the creation of a celebration or liturgy the following day and they consult with the larger group as to the form this celebration should take. Roles are allocated. In the workshops in which I participated, Bible readings and choruses/hymns were also chosen. The day ends with the organisation of a party as a cathartic event for that evening – usually involving snacks, drinks and music. There is a decided feeling of relief at the end of the day's hard process.

The Sunday morning begins with another creative exercise, in which participants are asked to represent their wishes for the future by shaping a lump of clay into a model that they may take home. They are also given a small candle (Institute for Healing of Memories, 2005). They are to present this in a ceremony that celebrates the positive nature of the experience.

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At this point, the participants write down on a slip of paper the things they would like to leave behind. This slip is ceremonially burned outside before participants process inside to the liturgy, which culminates in the offering and explanation of the clay artworks by each participant, together with the lighting of the candle. This liturgy/celebration brings the workshop to a sense of closure. A follow-up meeting, the Reunion, held three to four weeks later, is arranged for participants.

For ease of reference, the Healing of Memories workshop programme is attached as Appendix 1.

That Healing of Memories journey, that metaphoric story of suffering and of triumph over adversity, is for Christians best expressed in the Passion narrative of Easter.

The significance of the Easter narrative in Christian spiritual culture

The reason I chose to foreground the spiritual element of the Healing of Memories workshop and run it during the weekend before Easter was in order to make a conscious link for participants with the Easter narrative – what, in Christian theological terminology, is called the Passion narrative. For Christians, celebration of Easter involves the mindful, prayerful re-enactment of the life of Jesus from Maundy Thursday (his betrayal) to Easter Sunday (his resurrection and restoration). The betrayal theme is very powerful, and I chose to play a scene from the DVD “Jesus of Nazareth” showing the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. I wanted to create a link to the common human pain of betrayal and to the dimension of trauma from the betrayal of assumptions of safety and normality, as suggested by Janoff-Bulman (in Hamber & Lewis, 1997).

Tisdell speaks of the triumphant spiritual meaning of Easter for one of her research participants:

Greta discusses the significance of the metaphor of resurrection to her current spirituality and worldview. In reflecting back, she notes, “I just LOVED Easter. I think that has really profoundly affected me. ... [At] Easter, there's always some resurrection. You go to hell, you die and you're really at the bottom of mystery, but then you get

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resurrected. Often I think about that when I'm in bad shape, that resurrection” (2003, p. 105).

In *Psychological trauma, Christ's Passion, and the African American faith tradition*, Noel and Johnson emphasise the powerful significance of the Easter narrative for the poor and the marginalized:

Christ's Passion does not signify in the African American religious imagination the justification of either despair or resignation in the face of evil and oppression but rather the possibility of ultimate triumph and victory over their seeming invincibility (2005, p. 368).

Higgins summarises the radical concept of Easter as expressed by South American Gustavo Gutiérrez, the originator of liberation theology:

Christian hope, therefore, is grounded in the assurance that the Lord of history raised from the dead a victim of injustice who suffered death on a cross at the hands of the politically powerful (2003, p. 47).

Desmond Tutu, who is seen as representing the “miraculous” South African TRC phenomenon, visited Rwanda a year after the genocide of 1994. After a visit to Ntarama, where he had seen a church filled with bodies which remained, decaying where they had fallen, he went to visit the Nelson Mandela Village nearby. He was moved by the indomitable spirit of the women, who had begun to build their lives again. He, too, draws on the Easter narrative:

Over at Ntarama, we might say, there was Calvary, death and crucifixion. Here in the Nelson Mandela Village was Resurrection, new life, new beginning, new hope (1999, p. 258).

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The ability of these women to move beyond the trauma of violence, death and destruction implies a radical and transformative shift in the way in which they viewed the world. How do people move beyond the experiences of the Holocaust, the Gulag, Bosnia, Serbia and Rwanda? We can seek the beginnings of understanding in the thinking of theorists such as Mezirow, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Methods of data collection and sources of data

A Healing of Memories workshop was run by three facilitators (of which I was one) over the weekend before Easter within the context of a predominantly Indian and Coloured inner-city Christian worshipping community, framed by the narratives of healing and restoration, such as the healing and restoration Easter narrative. The workshop, rather than being held at a conference or retreat venue, was held within the church buildings of that community. While the Healing of Memories workshop is often run with participants from different cultural or racial backgrounds, in order to break down barriers this workshop was homogeneous – all participants were from the same worship community and the same racial and cultural groups. One of the participants was their pastor.

Throughout this action research process, I have reflected on my own practice as a facilitator of Healing of Memories and as a priest/pastor. Data for this process are drawn from my journal. After the workshop, the other two facilitators as well as the workshop participants were invited into the research process by means of interviews to inform my understanding of the process.

In order to obtain valid, fully-rounded data, the existing rich information from the action and reflection phases of the research process within my journal and the notes of my experience of running the workshop were combined with that from interviews with co-facilitators and participants, who were invited into the research process in order to establish their experience of the

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workshop. A digital recorder was used to record the interviews. Issues of validity are discussed further on in this chapter.

The interviews with five participants, the first held three weeks after the workshop and the second ten weeks after that, were used to generate data. Facilitators were interviewed once, three weeks after the workshop.

As is common, the nature of qualitative research -- particularly action research -- requires that the researcher remain aware of the emergence of new lines of enquiry suggested by the data. I pursued these as they emerged through the action/reflection process. Data presentation consists of narrative - rich description of the stages in the action research and interviews.

In-depth interviewing has been described as a “conversation with a purpose” (Kahn and Cannell in Marshall & Rossman, 1989), and used to obtain rich, reliable data (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006; Wengraf, 2001).

Semi-structured, in-depth interviewing was used to obtain additional research data on facilitator and participant perspectives of their experience of and learnings from this Healing of Memories workshop. Open questions allowed participants to raise aspects and explore elements of the workshop as they needed (Cohen, et al., 2007; Kember, 2000). In line with Kvale’s guidelines (Cohen, et al., 2007), participants were given the time and space to answer fully, and the interviews were carried out in a sympathetic and sensitive manner – in line with the approach of the Healing of Memories workshop facilitator. Answers were carefully followed up for clarity or confirmation, where needed. “The order of the interview [was] controlled, while still giving space for spontaneity, and the interviewer [pressed] not only for complete answers but also for responses about complex and deep issues” (ibid, p. 349).

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Interviews can be seen from an interpretive and a constructionist approach. The former sees interviews as a means to find out ‘facts’ -- authentic opinions -- and to get information about, in this case, workshop participant experiences. The latter holds that meaning in the interview cannot be neutral but is constructed in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, within a larger social context (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). Two interviews were held with five of the workshop participants. I found that, as I was a facilitator, the interviews were seen by interviewees as a continuation of the workshop process. Trust had already been established through my former role as facilitator, and events in the workshop were referred to regularly in the interviews. This provided constraints in that sometimes in the interviews participants would refer to confidential matters that had been revealed in the workshops. They revealed these to me as a facilitator who had made a life-changing journey with them. They asked, however, that these details not be captured in the interviews. I had to maintain the tension between my privileged pastoral role as a facilitator and adult educator, on the one hand, and, on the other, my role as researcher, ensuring the integrity and ethics of the research process.

I tried, not only as interviewer, but also in the dual role of facilitator, to enable and to guide the process only when necessary. I left the process to the participants as they discussed the workshop, their life stories, the changes they had experienced and their emotions. This approach allowed participants to focus on what Henning et al call their “burning issues” (2004, p. 67), while still ensuring that the interviews remained on track with regard to the research questions. In many ways, the interview data was indeed constructed by both interviewer and interviewee. The interview process could therefore not be seen a ‘neutral’ process of data collection, and was more a “site for knowledge making and ...a discursive event” (Henning, et al., 2004, p. 54). As this was a continuation of the workshop process, it was entirely appropriate. In Chapter Four, where I reflect on this process, I will go into more detail.

Sampling

At the beginning of the Healing of Memories workshop, it was announced that one of the facilitators would be following up the workshop with research and that, at the end participants would be given the opportunity to volunteer for the research. At the end of the workshop, a statement was made by Mpendulo, one of the facilitators, that I would be undertaking research in order to see if there was value in doing more of this kind of workshop within the churches. The research would be confidential. If interested, participants should fill in the “request for participation section” added to the end of the standard end-of-workshop questionnaire always issued by the Institute for Healing of Memories.

There were 11 workshop participants. Of the eight who responded positively, on the questionnaire, to the request for an interview and who gave their contact details, I purposively selected five “desirable participants” with whom to “wander...’ on the research journey” (Henning, et al., 2004, p. 71), ensuring both diversity and representivity of race and gender. Workshop participants selected were both male and female and belonged to the Indian and coloured race groups. One person interviewed had parents in both racial groups. His racial identity became part of his workshop journey and surfaced in the interview (see Chapter Four). The richness and depth of the responses on the questionnaire were also a determining factor in the choice of those to be interviewed.

Quality issues

There are two accepted processes of evaluation and validation within practitioner action research: personal (or self-) validation and social validation (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). I have been

Generating [my] own theories of practice from within the practice, and ... the process of theorising is an ongoing dialectical engagement with inherently volatile problematics (McNiff, 2002, p. 104).

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How have I shown that my judgements are reasonably fair and accurate (McNiff, 2002)? I am a practiced facilitator and adult educator. Part of the practitioner ethos in this case is to operate according to the values of the Healing of Memories workshop process (Institute for Healing of Memories, 2005) with a level of self-critical and self-conscious awareness (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Those reflections were captured in my reflective journal. My own learnings and findings during the action research process have found resonance not only with those of the workshop participants interviewed but also with those of the other two (more experienced) facilitators whom I invited into the research process in a group interview.

In terms of social validation, the group interview between all three facilitators functioned as a validation group, a democratic means of assessing the validity of my claims to knowledge (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). That process of group validation exists already within the Healing of Memories workshop methodology – a feedback and assessment session is held at the end of each day. A final assessment took place on the final day of the workshop, as usual.

The group research interview functioned in many ways as a further feedback session, as well as a frank evaluation of the new learning process created for the Healing of Memories workshop. My discussions with my supervisor have also functioned as external or social validation.

During each interview, I started out by asking the same questions in the same order, although in many of the cases, the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that topics were covered in the course of the responses of the participants to the first few questions. I kept track of the topics on my interview schedule and probed sometimes for further information if necessary. With regard to the issue of the inherent power of the interviewer, my continued perceived role as that of facilitator meant that the trust and equality carefully established during the workshop were continued during the interviews. I was aware that no matter how I asked questions, no matter how carefully they were formulated, the process could not be a clinical and precise gathering of data because of the variability of human nature in both interviewer and interviewee (Cohen, et al., 2007). In any case, rigidity of interview style has diminishing returns, as pointed out by Kitwood:

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In proportion to the extent to which ‘reliability’ is enhanced by rationalization, ‘validity’ would decrease....

The more the interviewer becomes rational, calculating, and detached, the less likely the interview is to be perceived a friendly transaction, and the more calculated the response is also likely to be (in Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 153).

During the analysis of the interviews, I read and re-read in order to minimize bias and to increase accuracy, using the participants’ words themselves for the labelling of themes where possible.

Ultimately, in dealing with human beings and in the process of action research, the clean, clear reliability and validity of positivist empirical research are impossible. McNiff points out that “replicability and generalisability are no longer seen as appropriate criteria for action research”, while suggesting that “living, demonstrable criteria” would be more appropriate in this case (McNiff, 2002, p. 107). She concludes:

I would say that the process of validating claims to knowledge is moving beyond autocratic activities such as checking whether traditional elements of report writing are accurately executed, towards new dialogical forms of engaging with the report as an authentic representation of a life lived in an educational way.... Validation is not the summative point in a programme that has led to closure, but a formative engagement in an experience which contains emergent property for the realisation of new potentialities.

I have attempted to capture the living, changing nature of transformative learning that emerged in the data of my own experience and those of fellow facilitators and of participants. I am aware of the limitations of communication and of interpretation in human experience.

Data Analysis

At every stage of the research process, I recorded in a journal my reflections on my learnings and my adaptation of my actions in phases of reflection and action (Cohen, et al., 2007; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). I found an ongoing critical conversation with my supervisor helpful in assisting me in the reflection process.

In re-reading my reflective journal, as well as during the interviews, and in listening to and transcribing them, I became familiar with and immersed myself in the data. In this process, themes began to emerge from the data. The themes were labelled, using the language of the participants themselves (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006) by means of open coding as I worked through the data. Ongoing notes and comparisons were made.

Once clearer units of meaning emerged as codes, I used the research programme NVivo to make the coding process easier. The linear narratives of the participants' interviews were thus broken up into units of meaning and brought together with those of other participants in a thematic manner for "new understanding" (ibid, p.493) that foregrounded sub-issues and linked themes that could be categorised. This process of coding emergent themes was continued until I was able to "sample to redundancy" (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006, p. 326) and reached saturation "when no insights, codes or categories are produced even when new data are added" (ibid, p 494). Out of this saturation, theory was crystallized – to use a metaphor from chemistry. The data, grouped within these themes, was analysed by means of the lens of Transformative Learning Theory.

Positionality

I was very definitely a participant-as-observer (Cohen, et al., 2007) throughout the workshop and the interviewing phases of this action research process.

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Healing of Memories workshop facilitators always take part fully in the workshop alongside the participants. During the workshop, as one of the facilitators, I was mindful of my own practice as a Healing of Memories facilitator and, at the end of each day, recorded my learnings about my own practice in the action and reflection process, while ensuring the authenticity of the workshop methodology. The input of the other two facilitators and the participants was drawn on afterwards in interviews in a later phase of the action research process.

My role as a facilitator turned out to be significant during the interviews. Healing of Memories have an ethos of mindful self-critique for growth and learning, so the joint interview with the facilitators was undertaken in that ethos, as a continuation of the workshop process.

Likewise, during the interviews with the five participants, trust had already been established, and I was seen as a trusted, caring workshop facilitator with an established egalitarian position who had journeyed with the participants, and was trusted more than an outsider would have been. I was aware, however, that as interviewer I still retained a position of power. Reference was made to workshop events (sometimes to sensitive matters that I was asked to exclude from the interview transcripts) which were important for them to explore during the interview in order to rejoice in the journey that they had made.

Ethics

The action research event was held with a community that, to the best of the knowledge of the community leadership and the researcher, had not been subject to any trauma or damaging psychological event – any more than any South Africans have. It was chosen as representative of any ordinary worshipping community. In fact, the Healing of Memories Institute has recognised that, while the process was begun in order to care for victims of apartheid, “we are all in need of healing... individuals, communities and nations” (‘Every Story Needs a Listener’ (nd)).

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The Healing of Memories workshop facilitators are well-trained to provide a safe, supportive environment for participants. Workshop attendance is always on a voluntary basis. Any kind of coercion or activity that would cause distress was specifically prevented. We were prepared, should a serious emotional issue surface during the workshop, to refer participants promptly for professional intervention. Participants, as always, were not subjected to anything traumatic or humiliating.

This particular Healing of Memories workshop needed to be run exactly as all workshops are run but within the Christian context, which was highlighted by the venue of the workshop and in a few sections of the workshop methodology where choices of teaching material can be made. The challenge I faced throughout, as a researcher examining my own experience of the new Healing of Memories process, was to be aware of my own experience of the participant learnings during the research event while maintaining the professional conduct of a facilitator and the emotional and procedural integrity of the workshop itself. I needed, then, as participant-as-observer, to set aside my consciousness as a researcher as much as possible and to run the workshop as I would any other, within the framework of the context changes I effected for the research.

Those who were fully informed and chose afterwards to contribute to the research then did so. A letter of informed consent was filled in by all research participants and permission was obtained to record the interview sessions. All information from the interviews has been kept confidential, and names and revealing details changed. The interview schedules are attached as Appendix 3.

The research was granted ethical clearance by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The letter of informed consent and the ethical clearance certificate are attached as Appendix 2 and Appendix 4, respectively.

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Chapter Four – Account of Research and Findings

In this chapter, following Whitehead and McNiff (2002; 2009; 2006), I seek to examine my own practice and my development as an educator in conceptualising, organising and implementing a new Healing of Memories learning process as an action research event. Throughout the phases of action and reflection, I have had to remind myself that it “is tempting only to observe and describe what other people are doing”, and that as a researcher in a Living Theory self-study, my focus needs to be on myself, my learning and my interaction with others (McNiff, 2002, p. 89). This therefore becomes a personal story, *my* story of action and the making of meaning:

Because you are alive, and your practice is living, this becomes your living theory of practice. You are living theory in action. (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p. 20)

As stated in Chapters One and Three, themes and issues that surfaced as I observed my practice as a facilitator in the workshop were validated and enhanced in a process of action and reflection. This research process can be seen as three such phases (See Chapter 3, page 59). The first phase is the conceptualisation of the workshop research process and the negotiation of a research site. The second phase comprises my learnings as a facilitator during the workshop process and the validation of those learnings by the team of facilitators. The third phase is made up of the learnings from the first and second interviews with workshop participants. During the second and third phases of the research, I examined my learnings with the lens of Mezirow’s theory of Transformative Learning. I identified issues and challenges faced by participants during the workshop and analysed them, together with the enabling and empowering elements of the workshop process.

I have structured this chapter by addressing those three phases of research. I have also divided the chapter into three sections, directly addressing each of the key research questions of this study:

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How do I design and implement a new learning process within the Healing of Memories workshop that foregrounds the spiritual dimension of the learning?

- i. What can I learn about this new process from action and reflection phases involving myself initially and then those of participants and fellow-facilitators?
- ii. How can I improve my practice as a workshop facilitator by the exploring and theorizing of this process with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning?

How do I design and implement a new learning process within the Healing of Memories workshop that foregrounds the spiritual dimension of the learning?

This section describes the phases of action and reflection that have led to greater understanding in designing a new Healing of Memories learning process, how best to set about the research process, and the integration of my identity as a researcher with the many other roles in my life. I set these out here in more detail than in Chapter Three, as these phases are integral to the action research process and it is necessary to expand them in this space. During this research process, themes that surfaced again and again were the issues of risk, vulnerability, identity and voice, centring on the image of a mask, which was used by the workshop participants. These themes will be explored in more depth in various ways in this chapter.

Phase One: Issues of risk and of identity in telling my story as researcher

It seems important, therefore, as an educator engaged in Living Theory research and as a facilitator, an observer-as-participant, to establish from the outset my own sense of vulnerability and the risk involved in telling the story of my research. This chapter is the most personal section of this Masters dissertation, in which, as required, I expose myself in all my roles as researcher, social

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activist, priest, poet and woman. In doing so, I am mindful that, in writing this, it would be easier for me to hide behind an anonymous mask of theory and of cognitive legerdemain than to provide an authentic description of the research process in personal terms. This means the risk in talking about what matters to me: my faith, my emotions and the ways in which facilitating workshops *matters*. One forms pastoral relationships with participants. In many ways, like many of the workshop participants, I am telling my story, *this story*, for the first time, having newly found my academic voice.

Research, my life and Living Theory

An early research journal entry describes an important moment for me – an intense moment of reflection about Living Theory, where I was able to integrate the different facets and roles of my life:

I'm stepping back out of the process to look at big pictures again. It's that constant moving in the cycle – learning, reconfiguring the plans, then learning again.

I'm reading McNiff, and it feels as if she's in the room with me. All the deeply-felt, unarticulated concerns that I had about turning into some kind of reductionist, jargon-spouting academic have been surfaced and resolved. I love the metaphor she uses of the landscape, the topography (which she shares from beautiful Schön) – the idea of the mountain top high priests, who are so far removed from those of us who choose to struggle and live in the quagmire of uncertainty, working and learning. Being real.

As with Mezirow, I feel a shock of recognition as I read her work, as if she is in my mind, has lived my experiences. She brings her whole lived experience into her thinking, and speaks of her death. Here I don't need to separate my life into compartments: that of being a priest, a poet, a mother, a community activist, a healer – they are all part of who I am. Research is not a separate component, but is part of all I am and all I do. It's a huge relief. It's a sudden rushing together of all of the elements that make up my life – an integration for which I feel intensely grateful.

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McNiff asks key questions which really resonated with me and which I recorded in my journal, along with my response to them:

- What do I know?
- How have I come to know it?
- How do I validate my knowledge?
- How can I share my knowledge?
- What will I use my knowledge for?

I realize that over the last eleven years of work in adult education – in development in different contexts– I have been acting and reflecting in that quagmire, growing more and more certain of the need for uncertainty, for humility and openness to growth (stages one and two in her list of questions). Then I got to the point of needing to understand the patterns and to share what I knew, to benefit others (the last three questions) which is why I began the Masters (Journal, 25 September 2010).

My thinking on action research became even clearer the following day:

I realized that the concept I had of research was based on a limited knowledge of only empirical, positivist research – and that I had clung tenaciously to this understanding despite my decision to do action research. In my head, I held two conflicting concepts – that of wanting to improve my practice as a priest/social activist within the church as well as a concept of an empirical study of ‘before and after’ effects of an intervention on a Healing of Memories group of participants. I realize now that authenticity and integration are key to this whole process: especially as those are the characteristics I believe are needed in our country, and for which I work. Also thoughts around lenses: through a lens one sees in more detail – it’s more as if I am seeing through the details to see the patterns, or as if I am in the process of learning a language – I know what I see, it has meaning to me, but I need the words to express it. (Journal 26 September 2010)

Resolving the tensions between my identities as researcher and facilitator

Once I had decided on the desired outcomes of my research and the way in which I was going to adapt the Healing of Memories process, I had important research design decisions about the integrity of the workshop process and research ethics; and to make those decisions would affect the way I would structure the action research event. In order to be able to gain an understanding of the impact of the new process, I had initially thought to duplicate an earlier study done by the Institute for Healing of Memories (2007). I summarised my thinking at this stage in an email to Father Michael Lapsley, the founder of the Institute for Healing of Memories. In reflecting now, I can see how I had an almost positivist conceptualisation of the research process:

What this comes down to is the need to measure the impact of enhancing the (already existing) spiritual component of Healing of Memories by setting it within this spiritually significant context. Alphonse and Stephen have provided a wealth of existing data on the impact of Healing of Memories in the published conference proceedings. What seems logical, then, is to repeat the questionnaires and interviews with this new workshop over Easter, to see how this added dimension affects the outcome. It seems, Alphonse, that you did the questionnaires immediately following the workshop and again some months later. Do I understand this correctly? It is important that I do not introduce a variable by changing methodology (Journal, 17 August 2010).

I continued in dialogue with Michael Lapsley and his staff to ask advice on how to capture the data of the transformation taking place within participants without affecting the Healing of Memories workshop methodology by the act of observation, and without crossing ethical boundaries with participants. I had thought at this point that the best way to capture how participants underwent transformation would have been to have a small digital recorder to capture each of the small group sessions, as well as to capture the plenary group feedback. I had hesitated to do this, as it might make people feel self-conscious and hold back from opening up in the groups. I thought it might be better to ask them to capture, in a journal, their feelings about the process. I was aware of the ethics of researching people in a vulnerable and trusting space. It was a struggle to maintain the integrity of the Healing of Memories process: if the participants knew it was research, their participation might have been altered.

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The outcome of the discussions with the Institute was a better understanding that in order to affect only the spiritual aspect of the workshop process, I needed to discuss the research component only at the end of the workshop as the Institute for Healing of Memories has done in its research in the past. It was disappointing for me, as I had wanted participants to journal throughout, so there was a meta-narrative to the process. Mpendulo and Sister Jacinta, the most experienced Healing of Memories facilitators, explained, however, that making people think and assess their reactions by journaling would detach them from the unthinking/emotive process of the workshop, and would impact on the process for participants. I had to capture my narratives in another way, after the workshop. Consultation, and thus reflection, could begin only with the questionnaires at the end of the workshop; perhaps in interviews at the participant Reunion three weeks afterwards and again later. That raised issues of whether the research would still be consultative, in terms of the participatory model of action research. If I were to speak with the facilitators, then it would be more in line with Living Theory, with practitioner research, as desired.

I was also experiencing challenges in finding a congregation with which to run the Healing of Memories workshop. I began looking within my own community of Anglican churches in Pietermaritzburg. The process of approaching potential research-partners proved to be a significant learning process.

Identifying a possible partner-site

My proposed action research event was to run a Healing of Memories workshop over an Easter weekend within an existing church community in Pietermaritzburg – in their church buildings – alongside and as part of the Easter liturgy. I had conceptualised it as beginning on Good Friday and ending after the Easter morning service. This was in order to contextualise the Healing of Memories journey, setting each individual healing-narrative within the greater account of Christ's Easter narrative of betrayal, trauma and restoration. I spent a fruitful, creative and rewarding weekend

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creating this adaptation of the Anglican Easter liturgy with Rev. Susan van Niekerk, a fellow Anglican priest, who also has a love of the creation of liturgy (services for church and worship).

I decided to approach an Anglican Church with predominantly Indian members, whose Rector (priest in charge) was supportive of the idea of a Healing of Memories workshop. At this point, before the church leadership, the Parish Council, was approached, discussions with the Rector were on the level of the practical logistics of running a workshop over Easter. It was a busy, committed weekend, and she was concerned that running the workshop over Easter might reduce the response by parishioners. We talked about the possibility of the workshop participants' being drawn from the parish leadership - we both felt that the learnings of this group would spread out from them to the parish. She would herself also be a participant, and I would be a facilitator. She suggested that I get to know the parish a little better beforehand, to build trust. I had visited twice before and, in addition to that, I had done a service some months before when she was on leave. I agreed to do a service there while she was away on mission.

On my arrival at the monthly meeting of the Parish Council, I was warmly received. When I started to discuss the possibility of running a Healing of Memories workshop over the Easter weekend, I was aware, from the comments made, that one or two people could immediately see the need for a workshop in the parish. However, I could see the emotional shutters go down for most of the Council members and the temperature in the room dropped. The discussion was diverted into details of cost, etc. I left so that they could continue their discussion. The Rector told me the following morning that my offer had been turned down, as Easter worship traditions at the church are held to very firmly. But this was not the major reason.

1. The Rector explained that there is little congregation participation in the church activities, and that it would be the same people (the Parish Council members) attending the workshop and they felt over-extended.
2. She had been told by her congregation that, culturally, they hold their feelings and hurts closely and do not want to express them or to show weakness in public.

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3. One of the members had experienced a “TRC” experience at his work and, while initially he thought it was helpful, the later fall-out was bad, as people later used against him what had been shared.

The last two reasons might have explained the defensive reaction I had seen. My learnings from this experienced focussed on the developmental principle that a community has to be ready for an intervention and should initiate that intervention. The Rector had felt initially that the parish would welcome the workshop but told me afterwards me that people suffer stoically on their own and maintain the facade of being “OK”. That facade, or mask, of being OK, would surface again during my action research event.

Every now and again, one has a “benchmarking” experience of reflection that allows one a sense of progress in one’s growth as an educator. My journal records:

I attended a “Community building workshop” in Durban that was supposed to be “new, exciting and groundbreaking”. Run by an NGO, it worked ostensibly to build community dialogue and understanding. In many ways, it helped me to see how far I’ve come in the journey over the past year. The methodology involved getting people to sit in groups of four with their knees close together, and being asked to discuss questions that involved people becoming “real” – uncomfortably real and involving vulnerability, e.g. “what crossroads are you at right now”? I thought of the people I work, and have worked, with – and of how their insecurities and their unresolved issues and inter-group and inter-personal tensions would have prevented any kind of dialogue happening with this method (Journal 31 March 2011).

I went on to comment:

My biggest learning through this process is one of understanding the limitations of healing and reconciliation processes. One cannot simply solve these things by cognitive or once-off processes, no matter how good the processes or how well-intentioned one is. Something deeper and more sustainable is needed. If one is not emotionally strong

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enough to face one's trauma, one is not ready for the more cognitive aspects of conflict resolution methodology/reconciliation. One cannot progress.

As a Christian, I believe that a very important part of the healing process is one's faith and healing through one's relationship with one's Creator – the healing that comes with knowing one is loved unconditionally. Whatever we do for healing and reconciliation within the Church needs to be subtle, sustained and part of everyday worship and business within the Church – steady ongoing healing, not a once-off specialised workshop which could be too threatening for people to face. (Ibid)

Reconceptualising the action research event and negotiating another site

I decided to approach a friend and fellow-pastor, John van Niekerk, the pastor of City Harvest, a large inner-city evangelical church. Pastor John shares the same sense of spirituality as mine: a sense of a close, lived presence of God in life and a calling to socially responsive ministry. I met with him at the beginning of December and shared my vision for the Church as a means for the healing and reconciliation of South Africa's people through adult education. I discussed the action research. John was very supportive and offered to host the event at his church.

The issue of which of the participants should be chosen came up in discussion. John offered me any number of differently traumatized people from his large congregation. I explained that I did not want specially traumatized people. All people in South Africa have been traumatized in one way or another. I was really looking for people who were in some form of leadership within the church so that the healing could spread from them in ripples, as from a stone in a pond. That way they would be selected on a different basis. At the time, I recorded in my journal that it might be useful to interview someone like Pastor John to be able to get a sense, afterwards, of the impact of the workshop within the church. It turned out that Patrick, the other pastor at City Harvest Church, was part of the workshop. His interviews were very helpful.

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I underwent a shift in my thinking and recorded that change in my journal entry of 24 January 2011. The fact that I was intending to conceal the research/interview component of the workshop from the participants in order to keep the nature of the workshop intact was worrying me – it felt unethical. The fact that I would be doing so, in order to prevent the participants from feeling self-conscious or feeling observed during the workshop, was to their benefit but it still felt unethical. I had got to the point where I realized that it was best to play open cards with participants and to trust the Healing of Memories process to get people involved and relaxed quickly. I decided, therefore, to mention the interviews in the ‘housekeeping’ notices at the beginning, just to say that people would be invited at the end of the workshop to participate in an interview with one of the facilitators about their experiences of the weekend, and that it would be, of course, completely voluntary. We would name the researcher only at the end of the workshop.

Meetings with Pastor John were very positive and resulted in concrete plans to run the workshop with fifteen members of his church leadership on the weekend before Easter, and as a preparation for the City Harvest’s Easter Conference the following weekend. We would use the church’s premises: the hall and the library/classrooms were adequate for the purposes. The workshop would be non-residential. Participants would be invited from the leadership at the church, so that they could have ongoing support from their own community of worship. I stressed the importance of the voluntary nature of the process, and asked if they could make the group as diverse as possible in terms of gender and race – not, as previously indicated, to pick people specifically because they had been traumatized but that everyone needs to process their trauma in order to function as a human being and in leadership. I told him about the ongoing support available to participants by the Institute for Healing of Memories.

Mpendulo, local co-ordinator for the Institute for Healing of Memories, was, in turn, drawing on its most experienced facilitators. In fact, plans for the workshop altered at the last moment: with eleven participants, we needed only three, rather than four facilitators. Mpendulo Nyembe and Naomi Anthony, two of the Institute for Healing of Memories’ most experienced educators, formed a team with me. There was a very positive feeling about the workshop. All felt excited at its possibilities.

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Summary of new learning process

Subtle changes were made in order to create this new process to foreground the spiritual dimension of learning inherent in the Healing of Memories workshop. Logistically, the participants were drawn from the same church community (and not from a diverse group as is customary) and the workshop was held in their own church building, rather than away in a retreat venue. I endeavoured to keep the methodology and the process of the workshop unchanged, with two small contextual modifications. To highlight the deliberate timing of the workshop at Easter, one element of the workshop was marginally altered, and the other was carefully chosen. The word “Easter” was included in the heading of the usual page of questions for reflection. A DVD excerpt, chosen as Trigger to spark discussion, was the scene from the movie *Jesus of Nazareth* in which Jesus is betrayed, his disciples scattered and Judas is paid his 30 pieces of silver (see Appendix 1).

What did I learn from this new process through the action and reflection phases of action research?

Phase Two: The Healing of Memories workshop

City Harvest Church, Pietermaritzburg 15th to 17 April 2011, weekend before Easter.

Note: Other than that of Pastor Patrick, the names and details of the interview participants referred to in this description of the workshop are pseudonyms chosen by participants themselves – Alison, Sarah, Bobby and Paul. The workshop methodology is described in more detail in Chapter Two, p.26, and is attached as Appendix 1.

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Day One

Facilitating this workshop was an intriguing experience for me not only because it was the first time I was facilitating a Healing of Memories workshop – and was now thinking as an educator as well as a participant – but also because I was now looking at the workshop through the lens of Transformative Theory, with a holistic learning approach. The most visible transformation throughout the workshop process was the way in which participants opened up. Their expressions became less guarded and closed, their body language changed and they became more outgoing as the workshop progressed.

The effects of drawing all the participants from one church community presented themselves from the beginning of the workshop. The difference in holding a workshop with an existing community (in this case, a church community) rather than with a group of strangers drawn from a wide geographical spread was that to a large degree, participants were already more at ease with each other. The disadvantage, however, was that there was anxiety about revealing information or opening up within that community in case that information was not kept confidential. This had been the experience of the Parish Council of the church community I had first approached. These were issues, for participants, of trust, risk and vulnerability.

I began with an icebreaker exercise and asked a “fun” question that is often used in workshops: “tell the group something different that no-one knows about you”. I had not anticipated the response that many gave: “I am an open book – there is nothing that people in this church do not know about me”. While I know that this response was disingenuous and defensive and that there is always some quirky, silly little bit of information that others don’t know, I also realized that this was an important dynamic of working in a church community. There was expressed an expectation that one does not hide anything. Being open was the anticipated Christian response. As the workshop unfolded over the weekend and people shared, there were, of course, things that were revealed for the first time. The participants began in this session to describe, as wearing “masks”, the need to hide one’s vulnerability or weakness.

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The issue of confidentiality was raised by a woman after the discussion of the workshop's ground-rules. She expressed concern about the difficulty of things being kept confidential in a church context, and said that, even in legal contexts, where signed agreements of confidentiality were in place, nothing was guaranteed. The intense way in which she expressed her anxiety, and the hints she dropped about her past, seemed to indicate that she had had a bad experience with this. She revisited the issue after the Trigger, which was, appropriately, centred on the issue of betrayal. I led the session of the Trigger and the discussion afterwards.

As indicated, the Trigger I had chosen in order to prompt discussion was a (20-minute) scene from the film *Jesus of Nazareth*. It depicted the scenes from the last days of Jesus. I chose these scenes not only because of the context of Easter, which I highlighted in the introduction, but for the themes of betrayal, grief and loss that came through strongly. Trauma theorists speak of trauma as being a betrayal of those things we take for granted: safety, trust and predictability (Hamber & Lewis, 1997). I wanted to pick up on those issues.

During the showing of the video, some participants wept. It was hard to get discussion going afterwards: there was a definite feeling of heaviness in the room. The woman who had spoken about the betrayal of confidences earlier was the first to speak in anger about Judas' betrayal of Jesus. "If they had been together all those years, who can you trust?" she asked. I asked her if her feelings were linked to what she had spoken of earlier, linked to a betrayal. She agreed but gave no further details. At the beginning of the second day, she and her husband made their apologies and left the workshop to attend a family event. I suspect that this level of disclosure was too hard for them.

Participants were given the standard questions as usual to take home for reflection – with the word "Easter" in the heading of the sheet to provide a context.

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Day Two

So many things I now saw with the lens of adult education – how a drawing exercise at the beginning of the day provided a non-verbal means of language or discourse: an heuristic device that participants used as a prompt or visual aid for the telling of their stories in the small groups. The participants initially seemed hesitant about undertaking the exercise – often people are awkward about drawing but they settled in time into the quiet space and became absorbed. They returned with looks of pride, satisfaction and excitement. The drawing seemed to have been a transformative experience for them. In the next session in my small group, I was to find out how transformative an experience it had been for participants.

After the workshop, I understood more about the mechanism of the transformative drawing exercise when I met with Louise Hall. A fine artist, Hall has worked with drawing as a transformational tool in development and she explored this in her Master's thesis (Hall, 2007). Hall enabled me to understand that what I was seeing was the work of visual language as an essential step, before verbal language, that allowed participants, as individuals or within groups, to

recognise and reflect on their own conscious and subconscious thoughts, emotions and motives as a starting point for personal and group change and development (2007, p. 27).

The participant interviews later referenced the silent, solitary drawing exercise as a key element in their learning.

In the next session, in the small groups, each participant told his or her story by explaining the images in their drawing, with the facilitator prompting or asking questions, if necessary. Often, the images carried symbolic meaning, created at a subconscious level by the participant. This related to what I had learned about symbolic and creative learning from Tisdell, who makes a strong case for the importance of these dimensions of learning:

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the ability to create, imagine, and come to further insight through symbol, metaphor, and art is part of the experience of being human that is so often ignored in education (2003, p. 34).

In the case of Sarah, I was able, as one of the facilitators in the group, to suggest to her the possibility of an image of hope inherent in her drawings, represented by a red heart. She had not set out to depict that intentionally. The drawings, both of her alone and of her children, each had a red broken heart in them. Her last image – that of her hope for her future; her hope for a home, a husband and a family – had a large red heart, featured prominently like a sun in the sky, with the word “God” in the centre of it. It was possible that this recurring red heart might have been a representation of her resilience in the midst of her heartache and pain, and that she saw God as being the source of the hope she cherished. Sarah’s transformation during the workshop was more marked than that of other participants, moving from silence and a guarded expression of scepticism to a bubbly, outgoing woman exclaiming “I’m Alive!” That transformation continued – it was visible at the participants’ Reunion and during the first and second interviews.

In the case of Paul, he had not thought of his relationship with his father at all before the questions we handed out at the end of Day One. As he started the drawing exercise, he did not think he would be able to express those feelings but he found the drawing exercise very helpful. He was able to express himself and, in discussion in groups after hearing the stories of others, he found the courage to tell his story and learned in the telling that he did not want his son to have the same relationship as he had had with his father. He had been echoing the relationship he himself had experienced. He found he was ready to tell his story to his son and to hear his son’s story. He wanted to hear the feelings of his son, rather than assuming that he knew what the son was feeling – and to hear how close they were to his own feelings of many years ago. His interview went into this learning process in greater detail, and will be explored later.

The creative/symbolic exercise seemed to me to be a powerful learning experience for participants. I looked forward to hearing from them during the interviews.

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In the group, again and again we were told how, for each participant, hearing the stories of other participants helped to put into perspective, to ‘normalise’, feelings of hurt and anger. Participants felt able to learn from each of the stories – especially Sarah, who had felt that she was unable to share her story as it would be too traumatic for her. In fact, before her turn, she had asked the facilitators to ask the men to leave the group. With reassurance by the facilitator, Naomi, that she did not need to share any more than she felt comfortable with, she was able to tell her complete story. She felt empowered by the non-judgmental, caring ethos of the group, and by the affirmation that she had received. She said that, even though she had been to a psychologist and had been counselled by two pastors, she had not been able to open up that much before. For her, it was the caring acceptance and mutual sharing of her peer group that had allowed her to do so. (Her pastor, Patrick, happened to be in the small group but this did not hinder her storytelling. He himself shared before she did – perhaps that was helpful for her.) It seemed that the hearing of the stories of others was not only an enabling element for the learning but also a transformative learning component of the process.

That process of normalising both positive and negative emotion was continued in the plenary session at the end of the day. Most of the participants were tired, as I was, and had been on the previous two sessions of the Healing of Memories workshops in which I had participated. Participants were asked to identify the emotions they had felt that day and then to designate them as good or bad emotions, culminating in a discussion about what one chooses to do with emotions. Would one make a life-affirming choice or a life-destroying choice? Perhaps my observations were clouded by my own exhaustion and the fact that this information was not new to me as a priest, counsellor and a facilitator. The participant responses seemed to be unenthusiastic and flat, which echoed my own previous experiences. I had not seen this as a particularly important session. After a long, emotional day, all one wanted was to get to the fellowship meeting afterwards and unwind.

Yet, the interviews showed that, with the exception of Pastor Patrick, for whom this was probably also not a new concept, this session providing cognitive reframing of emotion and our responses to

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it were significant for participants and provided tools for them to use on an ongoing basis in their relationships with others. I will go into more detail further on in this chapter.

Day Three

In my journal for Day Three, I commented on the emotions of people arriving that morning:

People are even more open, excited, happy. More and more I see how the methodology takes people out of the cognitive (as Mpendulo keeps reminding us) into the affective (Journal 17 April 2011).

Whereas there had been anxiety about issues of trust and vulnerability on Day One, the workshop had by now formed a more cohesive, trusting group of participants.

A clay exercise at the beginning of Day Three seemed to be a significant experience for participants, taking them from the cognitive to the level of both the symbolic and the affective. People were asked to create, using clay, a symbol that represented their journey thus far, as well as representing their hope for the future. Several participants spontaneously commented after the exercise that they found they were learning while they were creating the symbol. They were learning while trying to find ways to express their workshop journey and their hope for their future, as well as by trying to find ways to work with clay - which they had not done since childhood, regardless of race or class.

Again, an opportunity for symbolic encounter was used when participants had to write down the things they wanted to leave behind. Those slips of paper were burned in a fire before we began the liturgy of celebration. For me, as participant in previous workshops, I had found that moment with the flames very powerful – in fact, they were the most powerful of the workshop for me. I experienced that emotion as a facilitator as well, although the workshop participants did not seem as deeply affected by the process as I.

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When participants had to present their clay symbols and to light a candle for someone during the group liturgy and celebration at the end of the workshop, emotions re-surfaced. This time, the participants were more open. The emotion was cathartic and positive and expressed without a sense of fear or shame, as before. Some participants commented that they were crying - not out of grief but rather for joy. A very strong sense of community was built between participants, evidenced in the fellowship in the meal after the workshop. People lingered and joked. I learned later from the interviews that participants have kept in touch with one another after the workshop.

For me as a facilitator, the greatest difference I experienced in this new workshop process lay in its open spiritual ethos, which I expressed in my journal on Day 3:

it was wonderful to be able to speak freely about the healing power of God and to pray, without having to hold back in order to be sensitive for a multi-faith workshop. Being within a worshipping Christian culture freed me to acknowledge the power of the spiritual in the healing process (Journal 17 April 2011).

I also commented in my journal on the fact that, based on visible changes in participants and on the way in which they interacted with each other, the process seemed to have been transformative for them. Participants seemed to have learned to see themselves and their relationship with others differently within the space of a weekend. These changes were still apparent at the Reunion. I needed to deepen my understanding of these changes with them in the interviews.

Summary of my learnings as facilitator of this new process

Participants articulated the challenge they experienced at the outset to set aside their vulnerability and their ‘masks’ and to reveal themselves amongst people they knew in their own church community. By the end of the Second Day, however, trust had developed to the point that caring community and new relationships had developed.

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Key to this shift seemed to be the Healing of Memories small-group ethos of respectful, compassionate listening, and the fact that the story of each participant was heard in its entirety, sometimes for the first time. The ability to develop the voice to tell that story despite the risk involved seemed to have emanated from the reflective, creative-drawing exercise, which provided significant impetus, as well as from hearing the stories of others. I had some initial ideas of how these workshop elements could be interpreted with the lens of Transformative Learning. I will go into these learnings in more detail after the next section of this chapter.

I was not at this point able to get a full sense of the significance for participants of the Easter context or the spiritual framing of the workshop. I was very aware of its impact on me and how it empowered me as a facilitator of this healing process. I was aware of that effect on my co-facilitators - it formed a powerful team-connection for us.

Social Validation of my learnings in interviews with my two co-facilitators.

In order to validate my learnings as a facilitator regarding this new process of Healing of Memories in line with Whitehead and McNiff (2006), I arranged a group interview with my co-facilitators, Mpendulo and Naomi. Rather than a rigid question and answer session, the planned questions for the interview prompted a comfortable and lively discussion by three practitioners, in spirit much like the usual feedback and self-assessment facilitator sessions of the Healing of Memories methodology. Before summarising and reflecting on these, I intend here to set out the findings from this interview, as well as the findings from my own experience of facilitation.

I wished to confirm with the other two facilitators that I had succeeded in retaining the integrity of the workshop process, despite the changes I had made to in order to create a new process for this research - that the core of the workshop methodology had remained authentic and intact. This had been a concern for the leadership of the Institute for Healing of Memories. Both (very experienced) facilitators felt that the workshop had retained its integrity. Mpendulo commented:

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We can often get lost when things are a bit changed in the way that they've been done, and we also get lost and do our own thing. But we managed to stick to the core of the methodology and bring everybody to focus.

The use of the City Harvest buildings as the workshop venue was felt by all facilitators, both during and after the workshop, to have provided logistical challenges, with a high level of noise and constant interruptions, particularly for Pastor Patrick and his wife, who were called out often to assist with administrative matters.

Spiritual impact of Easter

Naomi and Mpendulo felt that in fact the spiritual context represented by the Easter period and the story of the Passion had a more powerful effect in highlighting the spirituality of the process for participants than the venue did. Both Mpendulo and Naomi had felt that there was a deeper connection and impact with the workshop for participants because of the Christian cultural significance of that time of year. Mpendulo commented:

because of the nature of the workshop being done in a particular religious community, and in particular to a very special time of the Christian religious community, it had a significant impact. It was a week before Easter and the Holy Week. It had ... a meaning that we got to journey through what the community's also journeying through. In terms of their faith and belief.

Facilitators are also always full participants in each Healing of Memories workshop process, so Mpendulo himself experienced the significance of the time of year, particularly in feeling the significance of the Easter narrative of the suffering and restoration of Christ, saying that "... it was also a time for self-introspection and reflection about Easter ... I was already emotionally ready". Both he and Naomi observed the sense of anticipation in the participants on their arrival on the first day. Naomi commented on the meaning of Easter culturally for this group of people drawn entirely from one Christian community, and she spoke of the sense of freedom to facilitate as a Christian amongst Christians:

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It felt like people were anticipating Easter, and they're in this really special kind of time and anticipating the [Easter] Convention I think it was a significant time of year to have it. And one of the few times in a workshop, where it's such a homogeneous group. In terms of they're a Christian community. They're all from one congregation. So there was a lot more freedom to really make the most of the fact that this is leading up to Easter, and what does this mean for us as a community of believers? And to be able to express that more overtly throughout the workshop. It was a really liberating thing for me.

They felt that the new process highlighting the spiritual aspect of the workshop had indeed impacted on the learnings of the participants in allowing them to connect with their spirituality. It had deepened the existing methodology. Naomi commented:

it kind of gave even more permission, in a sense, to be able to make those connections, draw those connections for people? ... And so I think ... I think in that sense it just allowed a lot more freedom to connect with things that are implicit within the methodology, but are never made overt.

Mpendulo felt the context was liberative in terms of learning:

In terms of the freedom as well, the freedom was there to journey with Christ, at that particular time. And people had been reflecting, maybe upon various things in their own lives. And it was not like a forced or gently pushed thing – it was something that was natural.

Spiritual impact of the Trigger

Naomi and Mpendulo saw the Easter-focussed Trigger as positive, without affecting the authenticity of the Healing of Memories workshop. Mpendulo saw it as contextually relevant to the culture of the community in which the workshop was held:

The Trigger was something that was carefully chosen for that particular time and in relation to the context that we're going to have a workshop around For these people,

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it played a significant role. It made a certain significant contribution towards people reflecting upon their own life journeys as they looked at Christ's story of betrayal.

Community, vulnerability and masks

This, then, brought to the surface the situation of the woman who had had issues of trust and betrayal and had not felt able to stay for the whole workshop. On the workshop, she had shared how for her, the Trigger had raised stories in her life – stories of betrayal within her church community. Naomi commented, however, that the familiarity of the story of Christ's betrayal was helpful for the other participants:

... there was the familiar, but ... putting it then in the context of the questions for reflection, and reflecting on their own lives and stories, it enabled them to connect ... at a much deeper level. And so seeing their own pain and the hurt and then seeing that in the context of the Cross. And in the context of the betrayal. I think it was initially a familiar thing that helped people access it. But then they were able to connect at a deeper level with it, because they put it in context with their own stories.

Mpendulo spoke of the image of the mask that the group had used throughout the workshop to describe the ways in which one hides one's weaknesses within an existing Christian community, and how he specifically dealt with that vulnerability when he began this workshop. He expressed how taking the risk and overcoming the fear allowed deeper relationships to develop:

At the back of the mind, is that people realise that even though I might have fear for these people, but these are the people that ... I journey with them, or I've been with them for many, many, many years ... but here I am opening myself ... and I have dealt with that part and I can trust that even though there might have been issues, but I'm willing to continue opening up ... And they don't see each other as these people who just worship and pray together, but as human beings as ... fellow brothers and sisters in a real way, you know? You start opening up avenues of relationships that have never been opened.

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Mezirow stresses the importance of group relationship to the transformative learning process: “solidarity, empathy, and trust are requisite to the learners' commitment to a transformative learning group” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, Preface, para. 6). Naomi saw both positive and negative aspects to having the workshop participants drawn from one worship community. Often Healing of Memories is used as a safe space to bring people from very diverse backgrounds together to hear each other's stories. She felt that this strength of the methodology was not utilised here. She picked up, however, on deepened relationships and a continuity of care after the workshop:

The fact is that even in that community where it's in their church, their physical space, and with people that they're familiar with and they know ... even in our small groups; people were saying even that they learned things about each other that they never knew before. So they were able to connect with each other at a deeper level, and share pain and I think then, particularly in the follow-up, it's in where the real strength comes out. Because they're there now, they're together and it's much easier to follow up and for them to be able to create some sort of sustainable continued growth and healing.

The impact of the Christian community context

In discussing the role of spirituality in the learning experience of participants in the workshop, Mpendulo spoke of the permission, to acknowledge their spirituality, given to participants by the circumstances created by this research process:

it gives them that power to also ... or that energy to want to reach out to that inner strength that they might have often, maybe, downplayed because of our own human condition. I can do this. But at times, surrendering, because I think part of the methodology supports surrendering certain things, letting go certain things and letting God take control. So, we give them permission to surrender to their spiritual being to take control.

Naomi and Mpendulo voiced the feeling that in holding the workshop with an all-Christian group of participants, with facilitators who were people of great faith, we all had greater freedom to access the transformative power of Christian spirituality and the healing power of God. Naomi felt that this made a difference to the facilitators “praying people” who were “praying for the participants and

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the workshop process”, as it was an empowering and cohesive dimension that had a “real impact” on the workshop.

Healing of Memories and Holistic learning

The Healing of Memories workshops are holistic in the way they provide opportunities for learning. Naomi, who, like Mpendulo and me, has a deeply-felt faith, spoke of the holistic nature of the learning that the Healing of Memories workshop methodology provides – of the spiritual and the emotional that went beyond the cognitive expectations people have of a workshop:

I think the spirituality is intrinsic to the whole process. And how aware people are of it is another issue, but I think it is central, and I think from the very beginning, often people are a bit shocked because they hear the word workshop and seminar and so they have in their minds, it’s an intellectual exercise and they’re going to take notes and you’re going to learn things and take things away from this. And so from the very outset, they realise that this is a very different kind of experience it’s going to involve more of themselves. At every level. Emotionally, spiritually, in every way. But I think the beauty of a workshop like this one, which was in a homogenous Christian community, was that we were able to actually verbalise all of that stuff a bit more than is usually said.

The workshops provide a space for participants to express and identify their emotions – and then to learn how best to choose to respond to those emotions. This was the cognitive reframing session that had impacted greatly on the participants, an impact which I had not anticipated. Naomi spoke about a dual nature of learning:

we as ordinary human beings, we often or always operate on the head level ... as we operate on our cognitive level, we also get hurt. But we also want to deal with that hurt in a cognitive kind of way. And we often forget that the whole human is made of two elements – that is, the cognitive and the emotional. ... it’s in assisting people to connect with their emotions about themselves, their journeys, their lives, what’s happened to them, and the way forward. So, more than having to justify, rationalise, understand what’s happened to them, it’s more a call to be connected emotionally with what’s

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happened to them and that's the starting point of the journey. Rather than trying to understand it, find answers, find solutions ... To connect with the emotions and then, OK, then what do we do with the emotions, once we've connected with them?

Respectful listening

One of the aspects of the workshop that I had felt effected powerful change for participants was the way in which the small groups provided a space in which participants experienced respectful, non-judgemental listening by their peers. Some participants said that they felt they had been listened to for the first time, despite having gone before for pastoral counselling or having used the services of psychologists and counsellors. Mpendulo described the egalitarian nature of the process and the power inherent in counselling processes:

The fact that we are not giving remedies or solutions to problems - it's an enabling thing. To just listen and listen with compassion. People have never felt it. Because even pastoral counselling: I sit there and you sit there and I look at you as an expert. There's a power play going on. [In the Healing of Memories workshop, the] manner that we sit, we sit ... we all are level, we're all going to say something about our own experiences, until the facilitator ... I may be controlling the group, and the movement of the group ... but I don't have the power to say, I know it all.

Summary of co-facilitator responses

As facilitators, we had all felt that, logistically, the venue was problematic. Its positive role, however, as the home of a homogeneous group of participants – in that they were drawn from one worship community – was noted. While I had not been able, as a new facilitator, to comment on the impact of the timing of the workshop at Easter and the Easter-themed Trigger compared to the facilitating of other workshops, Mpendulo and Naomi noted that, along with the all-Christian group of participants, the Easter timing and theme had been highly impactful in the enhancing of the spiritual nature of the workshop.

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Both facilitators identified the anxiety and the fear of participants in opening up, and commented on how this was addressed. The holistic nature of the Healing of Memories learning experience was discussed as were the way in which emotion was dealt with; the egalitarian nature of the small groups and the respectful, compassionate listening.

How did I improve my practice as a workshop facilitator by the exploring and theorising of the process with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning?

While I was facilitating, I began to see how the growth experienced by participants during the Healing of Memories workshop could possibly be understood in terms of Mezirow's ten phases of Transformative Learning. After the participants had been invited into my learning process by means of interviews, I was able to see this alignment more clearly at an individual level. It is helpful at this point to look at the general structure of the Healing of Memories workshop as Transformative Learning. Mezirow suggested that those involved in a process of transformative learning typically went through ten stages (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, Chapter 2, Section 1, para. 3). To recap, these are:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

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One could suggest that the Trigger on the evening of Day One provided the disorienting dilemma for participants, while the questions for reflection at home overnight and the creative-drawing exercise both provided an opportunity for self-examination. That process would have continued during the telling and the listening to stories during the small groups. The storytelling process and the small-group environment would have provided an opportunity for critical assessment of assumptions as well as the recognition of connections between discontent and a transformative process. Most participants went as far as being able to explore options for new roles, relationships and action on Day Two – not only during small-group encounters, but particularly in the session for the cognitive reframing of emotion. The making of the clay model at the beginning of Day Three functioned in much the same manner. The cognitive reframing session and hearing and listening to stories in small groups also provided an opportunity for the application of the knowledge and skills for implementing the plans: as we will see, participants found invaluable the listening skills and the ways of dealing with emotion as learned in those sessions. Paul, for example, got as far as step six during the small groups, making concrete plans to build a new relationship with his son. Sarah made plans for action on the day following the workshop. Participants found new confidence and selfhood, as well as an ability to relate to others during the workshop, trying out new roles with each other over the weekend. Those interviewed progressed through the last three steps in phases of action and reflection after the workshop, which was discussed in the first and second interviews. This will be focussed on in the next section.

It seems that the workshop process has much in common with the stages of Transformative Learning. How did the Healing of Memories storytelling, or narrative, experience fit with Mezirow's seven conditions for participation in critical discourse? The next section explores this, as well as highlighting ways in which the process provided opportunities for holistic learning. I will be drawing on Jo Tyler's superb examination of storytelling as critical discourse in *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace, and higher education* (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Phase Three: Learnings from interviews with workshop participants

I was aware, throughout, of my positionality as researcher, facilitator and priest, particularly in the interviews with my co-facilitators and with Pastor Patrick, where I found myself as a participant in meaning-making. They were not the question-and-answer sessions that I had in the other interviews, but more of a dialogue of fellow-practitioners. I interviewed five workshop participants twice, four of whom, as seen, chose the names Alison, Paul, Sarah and Bobby for themselves, while Pastor Patrick was comfortable to be known by his own name. The selection process was discussed in Chapter Three, p. 62. Note that I have used italics in order to capture significant tonal emphasis in the participant interview quotations that follow.

In the interviewing of participants, there was an added dimension that I had not anticipated: rather than being regarded as a possibly threatening questioner, those interviewed continued to see me as their facilitator, and continued that pastoral/healing space in the interviews, which made the interviews a way of continuing the reflection begun in the Healing of Memories workshop. Of those interviewed, Sarah, Paul and Pastor Patrick had been in my small group. I did not observe the stories of either Bobby or Alison during the workshop.

By the first interviews four weeks after the workshop, participants expressed significant growth in the processing of ideas and issues. That growth was sustained, as I was able to tell by the responses in the second interviews ten weeks after the workshop. There were definite phases of action and reflection evident in the post-workshop lives of the participants, with growth in learnings between the two interviews. The interview process itself seemed to have become part of the action-and-reflection phases begun by the Healing of Memories workshop.

While the facilitators (including myself) had felt that using the City Harvest church buildings as a venue was a considerable hindrance to the success of the workshop, I was interested to learn that the venue was not an important issue for participants, and the nature of their responses – tone, for instance - reflected a lack of interest, either conveying that it didn't matter or that they supposed

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that they felt more comfortable and at home there. The fact that they did the workshop with other Christians from the same congregation was more important to them. Paul felt strongly that, “if you’re sitting in a room with people that you haven’t met before, I don’t think I will be able to say my story properly”. This kind of being in community, though, also provided challenges for participants.

Community, vulnerability and masks

Risk was involved in holding the workshop in a Christian context with participants from one’s own worship community. The symbol used by participants, the mask, referenced their issues of anxiety, risk and the need for trust in telling one’s story. These had surfaced at the beginning of the workshop. While there was anxiety about this on the first evening, these feelings were addressed and trust grew during the small-group activities on the second day. Alison discovered that, in self-acceptance, she was able to shed her mask:

The most important thing for me is that in myself, I have come to a place of better self-acceptance. I was always the person who worried so intensely about what other people think about me and how other people perceive me and whether I was good enough for other people and I’ve come to a place where I’m accepting of myself, and I may not be perfect and there’s nobody who’s perfect, and I’ll never be perfect The reason is that I put this mask up. This wall. And my face would say: Don’t talk to me. Don’t approach me I always used to say ... I don’t want people to know me. Cos then I’m unsafe, when people know me. I want to be safe. And the less people know about me and they see this wall, the better it is for me, I can deal with that. And that’s changed because I’m slowly starting to peel off this mask

Pastor Patrick spoke of masks and of the difficulties that people hide from each other

when you hear others talking, you realise: “Sjoe. I didn’t know that that person was ... they may put a smile on their face, wear this mask, but really on the inside, they ... we’re the same, we’re hurting.

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It was hard for some to tell their stories. Even Alison, who had told her story many times before to pastors, counsellors and psychologists, left at the end of the first day feeling she had no need to tell the story again, to “dig up all this hurt and stuff”. Once she was home and had reflected, she changed her mind: “I lay in my bed that night, and I thought, no, I have to go back, because maybe there are things that I need to deal with”.

Pastor Patrick had been confident, as he had told his story many times as a testimony. Both Sarah and Paul found that listening to the stories of others gave them the courage to tell their own stories for the first time. Bobby, however, had feelings of deep shame and was unable to share his story in a group setting during the workshop, although he did share it on a one-on-one basis over the weekend. His learning journey took longer. By the end of the second interview, he felt he was able to share his story with a group. The Healing of Memories workshop seemed to have enabled an ongoing process of growth and reflection for him. For those who felt they were being heard for the first time, they reported that the main enabling factor was, as I had observed during facilitation, the perceived safety of the small groups – an affective aspect that enabled learning.

The workshop “facilitate[d] a sense of community” in which participants together were “invited to validate each other’s experience” in a trusting, safe space, challenging their meaning schemes or even their habits of mind (Merriam, et al., 2007) - thus exploring new ways of thinking and acting. For some participants, that trust, affirmation and openness is in itself a new and challenging learning experience (Kilgore & Bloom, 2002).

The Christian context and the acknowledged power of God in the process

As I had experienced along with Mpendulo and Naomi, this new process had allowed a strong spiritual dimension to the workshop. Being part of a worshipping community was significant for participants. Alison commented:

In a number of ways, I think just being around people who were spiritually strong themselves, and in our group discussions, the issue of Christ, the issue of the cross, the

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issue of our relationship with Christ was very, very, very prevalent, and I think throughout the workshop, one is reminded that through the grace of God we can do this. That we are not alone.

Participants repeatedly raised issues of faith, the support of God, the power of God in the healing process and a sense that all had suffered or had made mistakes. For Sarah, her release was made possible by the power of God:

I couldn't have break through. Not even to the point of allowing God to help me and heal me. I was dealing with it on my own For me, the whole workshop was God-orchestrated. It really was. It was hard at first. But being able to tell it was like a *weight* being taken off me. Because for so long, I carried it with me, it's been ... most of it has been my own secret, my own personal pain, my wounds that I've been carrying. For the first time ... they were opened out to air ... So that it could heal I was able to forgive myself for some of the things that I've been through, and also, in turn, [been] able to forgive others for the things that they've done to me.

Because there was no-one sitting in judgement, no expert offering advice, she felt liberation and validation in terms of her peers and in terms of her relationship with God. Like Alison, she had an encouraging sense that everyone bears wounds:

So I now know and I've now received His love for me. And it doesn't matter what I've done or what I've said and what I'm going to do in the future. There's nothing that can separate us from His love for us I got to share my story and not have anyone look down on me. To know that we *all* have issues, we *all* have baggage, we've *all* done something in our past that we're not proud of.

The spiritual impact of Easter

For all of the participants, as for the facilitators including myself, the Easter context, as highlighted by the Trigger and the timing of the workshop, was deeply meaningful in terms of drawing parallels between their own suffering and their restorative journey (which was the meaning most accessible for me), as well as in seeing Easter in terms of their redemption and salvation and the ability to

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begin again, to leave the past behind. It was a good application of the spiritual, cultural, symbolic and affective aspects of holistic learning spoken of by Tisdell (2002, 2003, 2008), Dirkx (1997, 2008) et al. The Christian culture of the community was an essential functioning element of the workshop, expressed in its shared history, symbols and practices and its “shared beliefs, values, behaviors, language, and ways of communicating and making meaning” Tisdell (2003, p. xi). Sarah found significant the fact that the workshop was held “so close to Easter ... a recollection of the fact that He died for each and every sin. From my past to the one that we’re going to commit tomorrow.” Alison saw her workshop catharsis in terms of her own suffering and redemption and of the Easter narrative:

Through pain and suffering, there is restoration, through pain and suffering, there is redemption. ... I was able to leave there with those two parallels so stark in my mind. The Easter parallel that you drew for us, and Jesus’ suffering and betrayal and resurrection. And also, the suffering and illness of my father and his death and my kind of resurrection. It was a life-changing experience for me.

Her process of transformative learning was deeply spiritual, a voluntary surrender, an

opening yourself to Christ, to opening yourself to the power of God, and realising that there is this greater power that is out there. And I look back and I think to myself, “there must have been somebody holding my hand”. There must have been something greater, to have brought me from where I was to where I am now. And that was the big realisation for me.

For Pastor Patrick, experiencing the workshop was a stark reminder of his own journey of redemption:

... it was very, very significant for me, that week. Building up to the crucifixion, because if it wasn’t for that, Jesus gave his life, died, and I say this openly with no fear, no reservations, I would have been dead. I don’t think I would have been alive today. And be where you guys are, right now, because I don’t know what my life would have been like.

Bobby saw Easter in a new light, through the parallels drawn during the workshop, and felt that holding the workshop on the weekend before Easter was God’s perfect timing:

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... you showed me and taught me to look at it from a different point of view, put yourself in there when I think about the Easter resurrection - that we all go through pain, we all can overcome. And it's like, it puts yourself in Christ, in the sense of eh, the man *suffered*.

Sacred, silent and prayerful space

As I had observed during the workshop, for participants - based on their comments and reactions - the opportunities for silence, meditation and prayerful contemplation were, indeed, significant events that had seemed to provide opportunities for transformation. For them, this opportunity to create in a sacred, faith-filled space, with time for thought, surfaced as a significant spiritual and emotional element of the workshop. Many of those attending the workshop had not experienced that kind of sacred space before. Alison went on to find ways for herself to recreate that peaceful, prayerful experience she had had when working with clay and drawing during the Healing of Memories workshop:

I've spent more time in quiet time, more time in prayer. That was the other tool that I took away we had to do all these things on our own, and spend time, and, oh, goodness! ... It was a new experience and at first, it was so daunting.

For participants, as for facilitators, that sacred space was saturated with the powerful working of God in and through the workshop process. Paul made a conscious decision to speak: "I decided then to let God be God. And let it come out."

The first two of Mezirow's seven ideal conditions for participation in critical discourse - that participants "**have accurate and complete information**" and that they "**be free from coercion and distorting self-deception**" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77) - are partially fulfilled by the participants' telling their own stories and being free to share as much or as little as they choose. The storytelling process, following the drawing exercise and the questions for reflection, helps to work against self-deception. The act of articulating the story creates clarity and meaning through the process of storying or "linguaging", suggest Narrative Learning theorists Clark and Rossiter. (2008, p. 64):

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Before we can teach anything, it must first make sense to us in some way, but putting our understanding in words that make sense to someone else - in other words, narrating it - furthers our own understanding of the subject (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, p. 67).

The small groups enabled participants to feel safe enough to tell their stories without coercion.

Caring, safe small space of small groups

The caring, compassionate and non-judgmental care in the small groups meant that for Alison and Sarah, who had told their stories many times before, this occasion was different. Sarah explained that she had felt unable to share fully with her two pastors before the workshop:

I couldn't bring myself to *tell* them. I just felt like I didn't want to be judged, and, you know, these are my *pastors*. I don't know, it's like I didn't want their view of me changed. They know Sarah this way, and I didn't want them to know ... to know ... to look at me and see what I was capable of doing, or what I could have done and judged on that.

Yet she was able to share her whole story with her small group, which included one of those pastors. By her second interview, Sarah was able to look at the experience more objectively and express it in terms of liberation. The drawings, which seemed to have been a transformative event for so many, were the key to her experience. They are a daily reminder on her bedroom wall of the change in her life.

... and I think about, you know, so many things I've come through. Things I couldn't speak about. I would never ever, because I was so humiliated. And so *ashamed* of myself. You know? And the fact that I said them, and I never had the need to mention it again ... I'd dealt with it.

Alison was also able, despite many years of therapy and pastoral intervention, to engage more deeply with her story:

I've been in and out of psychologists' chairs and priests and pastors and ... so many times in my life since I was eighteen, and I mean, so, I've really worked long and hard,

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also on myself, and really tried to really work on myself and I've worked with other people and therapists and so on. So it wasn't *painful* in the sense of heart-wrenching for me, but at the same time, it was kind of a cathartic experience ... it just felt like I'd released all this Stuff, you know, and I've let it go, and some of the things I've pushed so far back in my memory from childhood, to speak about it for me was a very therapeutic process.

Dialogue leading to perspective transformation through being able to tell their stories in a compassionate listening-environment and to assess them in the light of the narratives of other participants provide the third and fourth conditions of rational discourse, **“to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively”** and to **“be open to alternative perspectives”** (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77).

Compassionate, respectful listening

The two most powerful aspects of the Healing of Memories workshop surfaced by participants were the modelling of respectful, compassionate and non-judgemental listening within the small groups and the learnings from the session that showed how to reframe and reconceptualise emotion. Both of these elements of the workshop provided participants with an opportunity to transform the way in which they saw themselves, as well as providing them with the skills to transform the way in which they interacted with others. I shall examine first the participants' experiences of respectful listening provided by the Healing of Memories workshop. The participants' responses to their learnings about emotion will be dealt with towards the end of this chapter.

Alison has a degree in psychology. She experienced respectful, caring, empowering listening during the workshop in a way that she had not before. It allowed her to open up more. She compared this kind of listening to her years of pastoral counselling and therapy:

to listen to other people share their stories and see the emotion that they went through ...
the care with which they were treated and the kindness with which they were treated

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and also to see people reach so deep down into their souls, made me confident to share my story with people, and also brought me to that realisation that actually, there are certain things which I had forgotten about, which I had chosen to forget about it was a ... *moving* experience and very gentle ... encouraging and also *building* of one, as opposed to going and sitting in a therapist's chair and then you tell him or her what is wrong with you, and then ... they give you some tools to go out and apply and tell you about this theory and that theory But the kind of care and *concern* that is shown and expressed in the workshop and also going further than that in trying to help *you* to deal with the pain, the trauma or the emotion or the guilt or whatever the emotion might be that you might be feeling.

While Alison had good theoretical knowledge of the subject, she found that she learned a great deal experientially. She transferred those learnings to her dealings with others in the workplace, which has been commented on by them:

... she said to me “you’re ... more considerate and the way you speak about things and the way you’re attentive and listen to people is very different.” And that’s one of the things I learned on that workshop was listening to people, and listening to people with all that I am. Because ... I work in an environment where I have to listen to people all the time, and I must say I can’t be perfect, or I’ll be, like, half listening, you know, and I’m already concluding ... actually, what I learned on that workshop was the discipline to listen to people and to listen to people with all that I am.

Sarah also learned how to listen to people respectfully

... people want to tell you their story. You want to add your story to their story. I learned that you need to sit back and also give people time ... in your listening to what they are saying, you are truly hearing ... you are able to give, to give back to them ... to be able to help them fully.

For Pastor Patrick, this kind of listening made him reassess his own counselling practice as a pastor, and he spoke of respectful listening as providing people with a platform:

I asked myself the question – “where did I fall short? Where did I go wrong? What didn’t I do?” What do I need to do to create this platform because there’s obviously

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many others out there, you know, and so I had those thoughts flood my mind And hence I thought to myself, “I would listen more”. And hopefully that the Lord would help me and just allow me to allow people to be drawn to me ... just to be able to talk and to share.

In his second interview, he talked about how learning about listening has increased his empathy as a pastor. He spoke of how he felt that pastors, despite their well-intentioned need to intervene, need to learn to be silent and to listen in a non-judgemental way:

Sometimes I think that ministers ... I talk about myself. You can quote from the scriptures, you can talk to people, and you have that ability to talk *through* people.... I think the group dynamic is very powerful. And I also think that the secret that we can use as ministers, is ... you really want to just shhh And it's out of your enthusiasm to help people, but I think we need to, in our enthusiasm ... is just be *quiet*. And allow the person to really share their heart And I think that was one of the strengths in the group thing, is where, you know, we made it clear ... you know, like the scripture says, “all of us have sinned and come short of the glory” ... create a platform for them to share their hearts, knowing that they have the confidence that we don't look upon them in any way judgementally.

Perhaps Bobby, himself a lay-counsellor at City Harvest, had had negative counselling experiences. He told me he felt he had not needed counselling:

I think that's the best thing that the workshop did for me, in that regard. It's not that I needed counselling, just I needed someone to hear, to listen, to express, and just to know that there's nothing wrong the way you go through and what happens to you in your life you could see people were attentive, and they were willing to listen. And there was genuine love, genuine *caring*.

Like Pastor Patrick, he could see how he could improve his practice by learning from the Healing of Memories group-listening methodology:

Because ... this ministry is totally different from a counselling ministry ... like a counsellor wants to get to the point. And he wants to complete the job. Which he can't. ... He hasn't got the answer I truly believe that healing of emotions is such an

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important step in our ministry. You're just there to listen you're not there to give a right or wrong answer.

Learning to tell your story by hearing the stories of others

Bobby felt able to tell his story after hearing those of others before him,

talking about the hurt and the pain that they come from and they spoke so sincerely about it. And I realised that I need to be open as well. I don't want it to be a facade; I don't want to put on a front. If you come into a meeting where the healing of memories, then I firmly believe the only time you can get healed is transparency.

Others found hearing the stories of others a learning experience. Alison, who thought she had dealt with all her 'stuff', found she did have a story to tell:

I was stirred up in my group, to tell my story, and I must say, as I started to tell my story, I realised that there were certain things in my life that I had forgotten about ... which had happened to me, which I had pushed so far into the back of my mind that um, as I started to share my story, so they started to emerge. It was quite a realisation for me, because I had said to myself, I don't need to do this, you know. I've dealt with my life and I don't need to go and tell people my life – I'm 40 now, what am I going to be telling people my life story for?

The fifth condition, the ability “**to become critically reflective upon presuppositions and their consequences**”, and the sixth, engaging in dialogue by having the “**equal opportunity to participate, including the chance to challenge, question, refute, and reflect and to hear others do the same**” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 78), are inherent in the egalitarian process of hearing stories, telling stories and responding to queries and to probing questions. As can be seen in the following passages, participants were challenged to reflect critically and they changed, often dramatically:

Growth in sense of self, in identity and in relationship with others

Participants grew in their trust of one another over the three days of the workshop. This development in trust (Sloane, 2002) enables a shift in participants, who can experience the discomfort of Mezirow's disorienting dilemma during the storytelling process (Merriam, et al., 2007), but, because of the supportive environment, are able to continue nonetheless. All of those interviewed reported growth in their relationships, not only with fellow-workshop participants, but also with family, friends and colleagues. The growth in the relationships within the workshop could well have contributed to perspective transformation within participants (E. W. Taylor, 1997).

Paul told a story from childhood about his emotionally distant father, who had had a change of heart and begun to build a relationship with his children. A holiday together had been planned, to which Paul had been looking forward, when his father had suddenly died. Paul was shocked to realise, as he related his story, that he was repeating the pattern of his father's relationship with him that had been so hurtful:

I honestly didn't realise it. Until I sat there on that day and I'm thinking, I said, God, I can't believe I did that. I just can't believe that I used to do that And then I thought about it ... seriously about it ... but that's what my Dad put *me* through. ... So, then I realised, Eh! You've done exactly ... this was like somebody was playing back a movie. My childhood, my youth, my young days. It's like somebody's playing the whole movie for me for the past couple of years.

He was made intensely aware of a 'frame of reference' (Mezirow, 1997a, 1997b) that needed challenging. Challenge it he did. Paul finished his story with a strongly expressed decision that he would change things with his son, which he did. By the time of his second interview, his relationship with his wife, son and daughter had changed, and their relationships with each other had altered, too. Change for Paul had affected the relationship dynamics in his whole family. Alison was astonished when she discovered in her small group how other people were intimidated by her. This proved to be a significant learning experience for her:

it changed me, you know, and also my relationships with other people The way I feel, intrinsically, I am still who I am. But the way I relate to people, I'm more

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conscious of the way I relate to people, and I was unaware that I give off that *~vibe~* to people, that Alison is so sorted out and she's a no-nonsense person and you don't just talk any nonsense to her, and she knows what she's doing with her life, and she's so together. And people think ... thought ... that I don't have issues. My life is perfect. And it's not the case, and that *bothered* me.

By her second interview, she was able to speak of newfound confidence and noticeable changes in her relationships with people:

And people have noticed a difference ... my boss was saying to me – Hey, you know, you've *really* changed. It's like you've just changed overnight. You know, and not before that I wasn't good at what I did or worked hard or whatever the case might be But as a *person*, and how I relate to people, and the fact that I'm not afraid to stand up and say what I want to say, for fear that people are going to judge me and think something else, you know?

Likewise, Sarah grew in confidence and in relationship skills, as she formed new friendships with fellow workshop-participants:

... if it wasn't for the workshop, I wouldn't have gotten to know people on a more intimate level ... we shared, something so personal. Something you wouldn't normally share with anybody else. Or you wouldn't know about that person. From just that workshop, I've seen myself change, especially my attitude towards other people, you know, in my work environment, in my relationship with my Dad, even my daughter, my relationship with my friends, it's not where it was before.

Sarah's growth in confidence and effervescence was the most outwardly visible of the changes in all the participants. That physical and emotional change was commented on:

I have not seen Sister Penny [a nursing sister at her work] since February I've never spoken to her about my issues, but I cried a lot. She knew something was wrong with me, because she suggested in February that I go and see [a psychologist]. And I went for two sessions with him. And then I stopped. ... So I saw her now. And she said to me, 'Something's changed'. I told her about Healing of Memories. And she says, I can see it in your face, you're different. And you've even put on weight.

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Alison, in turn, spoke of the close bonds formed between her, Sarah and a third participant. In particular, she and Sarah had developed a friendship. When Sarah decided the day after the workshop to explore volunteering at Esther House, a shelter for abused women, as an expression of her newfound identity, Alison agreed to go with her. Baumgartner (2002) identified this need after transformation to have a purpose for life and to make a meaningful contribution in learners with HIV/Aids. Alison commented on the change she saw in her fellow-participants:

... how it's made them reach out to other people and I was just watching this in amazement, you know? And people like Sarah, I'm going with her on Saturday to Esther House. How she's come out – she's going to Esther House ... she *smsed* me and said "let's go together, Alison" "... it's propelled something within her.

As Paul grew in relationship with participants on the workshop, he discovered that assumptions he had made about them before the workshop were incorrect:

You know, it's like something happened that day. Really, something happened. The young lady at the end who shared the story [mentions Sarah's story], every Sunday she looks for me.... in my opinion, she's a snob. I used to tell my wife, I would say, 'In my opinion, she's a snob' because she never used to greet, nothing, walk past us. But ever since that, she waits for me Sunday. Eh! How're you doing? When are we meeting?

For him, the final meal of the workshop, where there was good-spirited fellowship and camaraderie was the highlight. Those relationships continue:

I never ever had a relationship with those people in our group prior to that day. Now, every Sunday we're sort of looking for one another.

Bobby expressed well the way in which people, casual acquaintances from Sunday services, had formed closer relationships on the workshop:

if you look in the congregation setup, unfortunately, I won't use the word 'clique', but you get, like, groups of people always that congregate

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we come to know them in the small group, we've come to know them and enjoy them. And you feel relaxed. You look at them in a different light. You come to know them more personal.

While Pastor Patrick had dealt with many of his issues over the years and had told his story many times, he, too, was able to identify growth in himself – both in confidence and in greater self-knowledge as a pastor:

I think one of the changes in my personal life has been for you to sit and talk to me like this is a miracle. I would never, never talk to a stranger. I would withdraw immediately and you wouldn't get a word out of me ... Now I can relate to the lecturers, I can relate more to the guys who were on the workshop with me. ... I'm kind of more outspoken, and you know, able to have more confidence ... and so I would attribute it to also the Healing of Memories. Sometimes you can say you've dealt with stuff, but you really didn't. You know?

Issues of identity and selfhood were explored by participants. For Pastor Patrick, he was able to begin to deal with the conflict he felt about his interracial identity and his being adopted:

I think one of the things was the fact that my growing up and being adopted was a real issue for me in the coloured community, you get people that because of inter-racial relations, you got people that look like white guys, but they're coloured. You got people that look like black guys, but they're coloured. Then you've got people that look like me – Indian, but we are coloured. And so, when I would go to the Indian community, they would say to me: 'hey, *bruinou*, what are you doing here?' When I go to the coloured community, and relate to the coloured guys, they would say to me: '*wat doen jy*, you must go to Northdale' [Indian township created under apartheid].

After the workshop, he said he was able to laugh in awkward situations about racial issues which would have offended him in the past. For Sarah, her growth in her sense of self was literally marked with her taking on of new names. She had felt she had lost her sense of self as the child of God. This identity was restored to her by the workshop.

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The true value of me as in: who God sees me as, and I am His child. And He loves me to bits, you know? So once you start seeing yourself, accepting yourself, *knowing* yourself, and it's so important to know who you are, and to know *Whose* you are. And I'm the child of Him, so ... I think it is so important for me, that was sort of my stepping stone, was just knowing who I am, accepting who I am. Because for so long, as much as I can say I was born again, I can't really say I had an intimate relationship with God. Somewhere it fell by the wayside, it really did.

By the end of the workshop, she had earned herself a new name, by excitedly proclaiming "I'm Alive!" "Alive!" is still her nickname in that community. Interestingly, her pseudonym for herself changed by the second interview from the biblical woman, Rahab, the prostitute who helped the Israelites, to Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who represents to her an example of a faithful and powerful woman who respected her husband and God. Her self-image had shifted dramatically during the ten weeks after the workshop.

Paul saw himself as a new person and he changed the way he interacted with his son:

I'm not the same person ... after we came out from the workshop, I realised that I *have* to make adjustments in my life. I *have* to. You cannot learn something about yourself and still stay the same. Then I feel I've wasted my time being at the workshop.

For some, learnings on the workshop included seeing other people differently. Alison was moved by what she heard:

it was a realisation also that you know, life is so difficult for us and we take so much for granted and we take each other for granted, and also I realised that you know, you look at people and we all do it: 'this person looks moody and this person looks this and this person looks like they're having a bad day', but we don't actually don't know what goes on in people's lives.

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Learning to recognise and respond to emotion

In addition to the new experience of respectful and compassionate listening, the other significant element of the workshop for the participants I spoke to was the session which provided a cognitive reframing of emotion at the end of Day Two. Sarah emphasised the choices to be made regarding emotion and the consequences of those choices:

I think that the main thing that I took with me from that is that when I'm hurting, when I'm sad, those emotions are OK to feel. But how I use them or respond or react, has got to be life-giving. So destruction is not even an option for me. For me, it's ... is it going to be about giving? You know, I step back and I think about before I say anything ... I think I really learned a lot about the choices that I need to make as well, for myself ... Because there are people around me that are also affected by the choices that I make ...

She related her response to emotion to the Passion narrative – to the DVD of the betrayal of Jesus and to his response and his choices:

And at some point, we all are betrayed. He experienced people judging Him, saying things about Him, speaking bad things about Him and stuff, but He came out shining I guess we all have to go through that. But it's also how we handle it, once again, life-giving.

This session was empowering for Alison, providing her with the tools and resources to deal with an emotional crisis:

I would *allow* things to really work on my mind. And work on me, and I would really internalise them, and worry ... and then I'm back on antidepressants. Whereas now I have the tools to be able to say to myself: You know, let's think about this am I really going to allow myself to be affected by this thing, what has happened? I can't change that person's behaviour, but I can control my own. And I'm NOT going to act in a life-destructive way. *This* is the behaviour I choose. I choose to act in a life-affirming way.

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Symbolic and creative learning

As we have heard in Chapter Two, Tisdell and Dirkx speak of the power in the affective, somatic, symbolic and cultural aspects of transformative learning. Knowledge is created not only cognitively and analytically but also through the spiritual and the artistic, and through the unconscious and the symbolic. Significant learning happens in the moments when ideas connect with emotions, with the relational or with personal experience:

There is power in trying to engage people in spiral learning opportunities that draw on multiple realms of being, including the rational, the affective; and the symbolic, imaginal, and spiritual domains (Tisdell, 2003, p. 34).

Symbolic images of his learnings about himself surfaced in Bobby's description of his liberation as being unshackled. His clay symbol reflected this: "at the end of the day, you're not scared, like, eh, more free, like the chains have been broken". For Sarah, it was a realisation of adult responsibility; at the same time, it was experiencing the breaking of chains:

I've blamed my father and my mother for whatever happened to me And I realised it was wrong for me to blame them, because I'm adult enough to make decisions on my own, you know? And I also learned, most importantly, that as much [as] our past has a bit to do with shaping us, where we are right now is the most important thing. And the choices that we make going forward ... So for me that was the time where God had said: This is your moment, it's your time to be set free. It's like Paul [the New Testament character] that had chains that were broken. It was, and it really was, the breaking of chains. It really was.

Those chains were an image for several participants of the limiting frames of reference from which they had been set free. Paul's namesake, the workshop participant, also spoke of liberation from a burden:

I just couldn't believe that it's ... like this burden has just been lifted off you. ... That burden has just been ... off you. You know that, and you're feeling different now.

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Except now, you're not afraid to tell anybody about it. You know what I mean?
Because you're ... you *spoke* about it and it's *out* now. It's over.

The creation of objects using visual language – the clay and the drawing - provided significant learning experiences for most participants. Sarah still has her clay model. She explained, using the imagery of creation and recreation inherent in the Biblical metaphor of clay:

it's on the side of my bed now, and my picture is on the wall. But it just made me see that I *am* alive, I *have* life in me. God is the one who is moulding and shaping me. Providing I'm going to stay in His hands, that's my choice, to be in His hands. And He'll pick me up, even when I drop off the potter's wheel or however it is He's going to pick me up and put me back together again.

For Alison, doing her drawing was a challenging learning experience that demanded both cognitive and symbolic skills:

... it's amazing what you can think of. Because when you first said to draw that picture, I thought to myself – I've got nothing to draw, actually. You know, I've dealt with this thing. ... But when I started to actually draw, and things I thought I had dealt with, I had *not* dealt with. You know? And they all started to come up and come to the fore. ... And just then the thinking, the thinking!

Alison continued to make a very astute analysis of the thinking process and the visual language needed to create the drawing – and how it assists the storytelling process:

when you put one drawing down, you start to make an association with something else. When you put another drawing down, and then you start to associate with something else. And then you draw a sun, that says happiness, maybe, and then you start to think about happy events ... it forces you to really go through each one. Whereas if I was just thinking about it, and said, Ja, some good things happened to me in my life, and I'd just have glossed over them. But this actually forces you to really apply your mind, and put things down. And once you put pictures down, you start to form associations with those pictures. And start to read into those pictures and really think about things, as opposed to when you're just processing information in your mind.

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And when you talk *to* your picture, it actually forces you to go through each and every picture, and people in the group, if you haven't gone through a specific picture, they're going to question you and say, 'What about this picture over here, Alison?', whereas if I'm relating my story from no picture, they don't have a base from which to work.

In creating her picture and in telling her story, Alison was in dialogue with herself. For Sarah, it was also a great challenge, resulting in her telling her story fully for the first time, by means of the drawing as an heuristic device. She also learned by means of the gentle questioning of the facilitator. For her, God was part of the process:

I can remember Naomi explaining to us we'd have twenty-five minutes to sit and draw out ... on this sheet of paper. And I really started getting emotional. Cos I thought now what am I going to draw, and Lord, what have you brought me to now, and you know? And when I went and I sat there, I was fighting back the tears, and if someone had said to me, Friday I'm going to do drawings, I wouldn't never have imagined the drawings I would have done In my mind, I just was ... 'if you ask a question, I'm not going to answer'. Because you did say, 'If you're not comfortable, you don't need to speak'. But I mean, by the end of ... sjoe, I told the *whole story*.

... I didn't need to draw those facts. Because I mean, someone was going to ask – 'OK, who's this and who's this', you know what I'm saying? And I also didn't need to answer. I could have just kept quiet and chosen not to. It's like God saying, 'You've come this far, you've put it there. Now tell the rest of the story'.

In his new understanding of himself and his family relationships, the drawing exercise was for Paul a moment of dramatic transformation that surprised him. He hadn't known what to draw, and found what he called a "theme point" in his written, desired personal workshop-outcome at the start of the workshop:

I said the relationship must mature between my son and I. That was my point, my theme point And then, we came out and they said, OK, we're going to do the picture, so I'm trying to figure out *how* is this picture going to help me with my relationship with my son? And I took a turn to ponder. I'm not going to be super-spiritual and say, God told me this, and whatever But I had this thought of my Dad at the moment. And I just couldn't believe it, because we're dealing with one thing and

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we haven't even gotten into the programme as to what it's all about. And I'm thinking about my *Dad*. I was ... I couldn't ... and when I had that thought, I said, OK, let me just draw this picture, because that's the picture that's in my mind. And I drew it. I hadn't realised that in explaining the picture - that drawing - the whole thing was all about that.

He really understood the full meaning of the picture only when he started telling his story, which was a very emotive experience for him:

And then I realised that when I started speaking, relating to the picture that I drew, it got a little bit easier for me. It wasn't too difficult. It's just that I never thought that after so many years it'll have that reaction on me. I didn't think ... you know like that emotional side of it. I didn't think it would grip me, I mean, we ... I look at myself as a strong person, as a strong male. So to actually have that kind of reaction ... it was something new to me My Dad is late now, well over thirty-somewhat years. So this happened a *long* time ago. To have that impact on me now, hey, it was just like *unreal*. But then, I realised that, you know what, I've got it *out*. It's not trapped inside anymore. I shared it with my wife - it was simple for me to say it now. Just what happened.

The last requirement for full participation in critical discourse could be said to be fulfilled in the closing moments of the workshop, which culminate in a final celebration, where the clay models are explained to the whole group and put down in a circle in the middle of the floor. In the open sharing of learnings and transformation, participants are able “**to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity**” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 78). Each participant lit a candle and explained his or her model briefly. For Pastor Patrick, this ceremony was a very powerful indication of the transformation that the participants had undergone:

... it was a defining moment, because I realised the guys are now taking their masks off. ... Because they were kind of like looking really into themselves, and defining who they are and where they come from and what they've been grappling with, and could actually put it down. Even though it was a bit difficult ... but the Lord was kind of like saying to me, “they're starting to deal with those things”. I'm prepared to take my mask off. And allow people to see me for what I am, and just lighting those candles, and putting it out there ... was saying to me, I'm exposing myself to you guys.

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For Bobby, it was also a vulnerable, symbolic moment of realisation and progress.

You know what ... I think the best moment where you've come to the end, to say: you *can* go forward. And I think that was what was really important for me. Because you're laying yourself down, you know what I mean, and you're putting the thing on the floor, the thing that symbolised ... you're laying down your heart.

Spirals and pauses in the learning process

For participants, the learning begun during the workshop continued afterwards, with progressive growth in the spaces between the workshop and the first and the second interviews. This is evocative of the reflective phases of a learning process of revisiting past experiences with newly-gained present knowledge. It recalls Tisdell's reference to a

spiraling back to explore significant events and spiritual experiences that shaped both one's spiritual journey and life journey and identity thus far in order to move forward to the future. Part of what spiritual development is about is the ongoing development of identity (2003, p. 94).

Tisdell suggests we have the chance to examine those memories as our present selves with our present comprehension, and, in revisiting the memories, to “reframe” and revise our understanding of them. It may have been that, with my established role as a facilitator, the reflection needed in answering my questions enabled further learning. Bobby, who found it difficult to tell his story in the group context, had, by the second interview, progressed to the point of being able to do so:

I am able to forgive myself. I'm able to move forward I don't regret that I haven't shared that in our small group I felt at that time it wasn't a good thing to say or share. I think if they want me to share now, I'll share.

Alison refers to these ongoing phases of action and reflection. She has learned to manage her response to the past:

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I'm still working through issues, I haven't worked through all of them, and after the workshop, I realised that I didn't *get* through everything in the time that I spoke and that there were more things that I could have spoken about. But one of the things I've realised is that ... those things that happened to me, OK, now I've been through those experiences and this is how I felt about them. But I'm able to say to myself, it's actually not happening to me now. It has *happened* to me already. And *now* I'm in a much better place to be able to process that.

Revisiting Haitch and Miller's five spaces

In providing an overview of my learnings from my interaction with the participants during the workshop and in the interviews, it may be helpful to revisit the model provided by Haitch and Miller (2006), as discussed in Chapter Two, p.42. Their model suggests five factors in creating space for educative storytelling. Here, storytelling is used as an educational methodology:

To create a *familiar learning space*: traditionally, in Africa, elders tell stories to children both as education and entertainment. Young men learn about their roles as men from stories told during their traditional time of initiation. During the workshop process, participants learned from each other's stories in a way that is also suggestive of Mezirow's dialogue (Mezirow, 1997b). They learned about themselves and grew in a sense of self, of identity and in relationship with others. They learned to identify, normalize and choose their responses to emotion. Many learned how to listen effectively and compassionately for the first time.

To create a *safe space*: through the familiarity of the storytelling technique, as well as the safe context of the trusted community of faith (HSRC, 2008) and its purpose of seeking a common understanding - with what Haitch and Miller call "starting places [of] a premise of safety and an assumption of sharing" (2006, p.397). The small groups, particularly, were safe spaces for people to tell their stories, sometimes for the first time, secure in the fact that they would be listened to

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compassionately and respectfully. They felt safe to face their vulnerability, drop their masks and be real with one another.

To create *a communal space*: like neighbours standing on a common border, “storytelling can be a way to return to a common narrative without being dismissive about differences People do not need to abandon their own narrative to hear another” (ibid). The small groups provided a means for community to be built between the workshop participants during the Healing of Memories workshop that endured afterwards. Relationships were built or deepened.

To create *an empowering space*: in telling stories of violence, there is newfound strength and power for the teller and a restoration to the community. Participants found the courage to deal with issues, to decide to speak to family members and to change the way they lived their lives. The almost tangible, empowering presence of God enhanced the workshop process for both participants and facilitators and it enabled greater healing. This presence was evoked by the Christian community in which the workshop was held within the context of Easter, which resonated with participants’ personal stories of resilience in the face of adversity and with their stories of salvation.

To create *an imaginative space*: storytelling frees the mind to be able to imagine alternatives – other endings to a story: ways of changing “familiar but destructive patterns” (ibid, p. 398). Paul, for example, could see how he was going to change the dynamics within his family relationships. Sarah decided the day after the workshop to volunteer at a woman’s shelter.

Based on my experience of the Healing of Memories action-research event and the experiences of the other facilitators and the participants I interviewed, I would like to suggest an addition of four more spaces to those of Haitch and Miller: transformative learning spaces – a *sacred space*, an *egalitarian space*, a *challenging space* and a *liberating space*.

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Participants found that the quiet, solitary and meditative work that they did in the *sacred space* enabled them to connect with the enabling spiritual aspects of their learning. Some of the participants had not experienced this kind of space before. Alison was making space for more silent contemplation in her life. This space was also facilitated by the holding of the workshop before Easter, within a worshipping Christian community, with Christian facilitators.

The *egalitarian space* created within the small groups, where participants experienced respectful, compassionate listening. Everyone in the group, including the facilitators, had a turn to tell his or her story, which proved to be a powerful learning experience. No advice was given or judgement handed down. Almost all the participants and the facilitators spoke of how encouraging and enlightening it was to hear how everybody had suffered or had made mistakes.

The drawing of the pictures and the telling of the stories also created a *challenging space* for participants, where seeing their own stories in the context of those of others, as well as answering the questions of facilitators, enabled incorrect assumptions to be challenged (Tyler in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). The cognitive reframing exercise challenged participants to identify their emotions and to make positive choices in response to them and was one of the most powerful aspects of the workshop for participants. Most of all, participants were challenged to see themselves differently and to re-think the way they saw others and the way they engaged in relationship. Challenging, therefore, led to transformation in identity and sense of self.

The telling of stories was also a *liberating space* – where people were set free from the past. In the symbolic and creative-learning language of the participants, there was catharsis, burdens were lifted, weights removed and chains were broken. This lightness was visible in the change in the physical bearing of participants as the workshop progressed.

Re-membering, re-storying and restoration

As has been noted, Clark and Rossiter suggest that humans make meaning through narratives, by “storying” them – making connections and associations, with, for example, cultural narratives (2008, p. 61). We create for ourselves our complex narrative of identity, in layered and often contradictory ways. We can be both victim and victor within our story of a traumatic experience. We can re-write our life-narratives on an ongoing basis as we experience new things; we are offered opportunities where we can choose to learn and to grow.

Being part of the story and of the transformative re-storying of the lives of these participants was a restoration for me. It seems most fitting to conclude this chapter with the words of one of the workshop participants. Paul puts it better than I can:

I didn't realise that your life is tied up to all this in the past, really. You just live life ... but it all has some ties. Everybody's free now. I've actually sat there and I watched transformation take place in two and a half days. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it.

Chapter Five - Conclusion

When I started this research process, I came as a Healing of Memories facilitator and as an activist priest, wishing to see how healing and reconciliation work could be implemented in churches. As Healing of Memories is the flagship healing and reconciliation project in SA and worldwide, it made sense to use this for my research. In conducting this research, I set out to answer the following question and the two that emerge from it:

How do I design and implement a new learning process within the Healing of Memories workshop that foregrounds the spiritual dimension of the learning?

- i. What can I learn about this new process from action and reflection phases involving myself initially and then those of participants and fellow-facilitators?
- ii. How can I improve my practice as a workshop facilitator by the exploring and theorizing of this process with the lens of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning?

My research fell broadly into three phases of action and reflection. The first is the conceptualisation of the workshop research process and the negotiation of a research site. The second phase comprised my learnings as a facilitator during the workshop process and the validation of those learnings by the team of facilitators. The third phase was made up of the learnings from the first and second interviews with workshop participants. I identified issues and challenges faced by participants during the workshop and I analysed them, together with the enabling and empowering elements of the workshop process. During the second and third phases of the research, I examined my learnings with the lens of Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning. In addition, I gained understanding by the use of a holistic emphasis on the different aspects inherent in the learning process – the cognitive, the affective, the symbolic, cultural, spiritual and the somatic.

Designing a Healing of Memories learning process that foregrounded the spiritual

As has been shown, a decision was made early in the research process to hold a Healing of Memories workshop at Easter for a Christian worship community. Healing of Memories utilises a storytelling methodology for healing and reconciliation. Easter has strong spiritual associations of restoration and exultation for Christians in its narrative of crucifixion and resurrection. I endeavoured to keep the methodology and the process of the workshop unchanged as far as possible in creating the new learning process. After a period of consultation and dialogue with the leadership of the Institute for Healing of memories, therefore, I effected subtle changes in the Healing of Memories workshop methodology in order to foreground its spiritual dimensions of learning. Two small modifications were made that referenced the context in which the workshop was held. To highlight the timing of the workshop, the word “Easter” was included in the heading of the usual page of questions for reflection issued at the end of Day One. A DVD excerpt, chosen as a Trigger to spark discussion, was the scene described in Chapter 4, from the movie *Jesus of Nazareth* (see Appendix 1).

In terms of changes to the logistics that framed the methodology, the participants were drawn from the same church community, rather than from an intentionally diverse group as customary. It was hoped that this would provide a continuity of emotional support for the phases of learning after the workshop. With the intention of providing a safe, familiar space in which to face the challenges of the workshop, it was held in their community’s own church building, rather than away in a retreat venue. In the process of identifying a worship community with which to partner in this research, the issues of confidentiality, risk and participant vulnerability were surfaced. One church community felt these challenges were insurmountable and chose not to participate in the research. Another, while experiencing the same challenges, allowed the workshop process to address them. The details of that process follow.

Action and reflection: initial learnings as a practitioner and validation of these findings with my co-facilitators

Participants articulated the challenge they experienced at the outset to set aside their vulnerability and their ‘masks’ and to reveal themselves amongst people they knew in their own church community. By the end of the Second Day, however, trust had developed to the point that caring community and new relationships had developed. Both my co-facilitators had identified the anxiety and the fear of participants in opening up, and commented on how this was addressed. The holistic nature of the Healing of Memories learning experience was discussed, as were the way in which emotion was dealt with, the egalitarian nature of the small groups and the respectful, compassionate quality of the listening. Indeed, key to this shift seemed to be the egalitarian nature of the Healing of Memories small group and their ethos of respectful, compassionate listening. The story of each participant was heard in its entirety, sometimes for the first time. The ability for participants to develop the voice to tell that story despite the risk involved seemed to have emanated from the reflective, creative-drawing exercise, which provided significant impetus, as well as from hearing the stories of others.

While the venue, surprisingly, was not experienced as a significantly spiritual or safe space, the highlighting of the crucifixion and resurrection story was a stronger spiritual component of the workshop for participants. This was not so much in relation to the resurrection, which is traditionally seen as the overcoming of adversity or renewal but, for most, it was the understanding of the crucifixion as Jesus’ suffering, which enabled personal redemption for the participants – and thus re-creation in their own lives.

While I had not been able, as a new facilitator, to quantify the impact of the timing of the workshop at Easter and the Easter-themed Trigger compared to the facilitating of other workshops, Mpendulo and Naomi noted that, along with the all-Christian group of participants, the Easter timing and theme had been highly impactful in the enhancing of the spiritual nature of the workshop. Most significant of all was the fact that the group was homogeneous – the fact that the participants, while strangers, were all from the same church/organisation and were successful in building relationships – was the strongest factor experienced in the way this workshop was run. For the facilitators,

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including myself, who were all Christians, having an all-Christian group allowed access to discourse of faith as well as to a spiritual dimension of the curriculum. I was aware of the fact that being within the homogeneous group of Christian believers had enabled us to access the powerful dimensions of spirituality; and discussions with my co-facilitators confirmed that it had formed a powerful team connection for us.

Having been a workshop participant twice, I had thought that the moments of participant learning would be in the storytelling, at the ceremonial burning and at the final liturgy. While I knew that the workshop healing process is only a first step on the journey, I thought that the learning would take place primarily within the curricular space of the workshop itself. What I found, and which I understood in terms of Mezirow's dialogue, was that the learning did, indeed, take place in the telling of the stories – but also in the hearing of the other people's stories. The enabling, non-judgmental space itself was a powerful enabler of learning. The contemplative activities of drawing the life story and the making of a clay model were also powerful catalysts to learning. I had anticipated that the physical work of creation would provide a learning space but the quiet itself also was a means of learning and it provided tools for future growth.

Learnings from inviting workshop participants into the action and reflection process

There was an added dimension to the interviews that I had not anticipated. Rather than being an unfamiliar questioner, those interviewed saw me as their facilitator, which maintained a pastoral/healing space in the interviews. This made the interviews a way of continuing the reflection begun in the Healing of Memories workshop. By the time the first interviews took place four weeks after the workshop, participants had shown significant growth in the processing of ideas and issues. That growth was sustained, as I was able to tell by the responses in the second interviews ten weeks after the workshop. There were definite phases of action and reflection evident in the post-workshop lives of the participants, with growth in learnings between the two interviews. The interview process itself seemed to have become part of the action-and-reflection phases begun by the Healing of Memories workshop.

The risk and vulnerability involved in sharing with others they knew were a challenge that had to be overcome. Participants grew in their relationships with themselves, with those on the workshop and with others at work and at home. Their spirituality was enhanced and deepened by the process. For those interviewed, the session which provided cognitive reframing of emotion turned out to be a highly significant learning moment, which I had not anticipated at all. For some participants, being given permission to experience emotion and then to choose how to react to that emotion was not only a very powerful transformative moment, but also provided tools for how to deal with emotion in the future.

How did I improve my practice as a facilitator by using the lens of Mezirow?

In this section, I intend to summarise my learnings by means of the application of Transformative Learning Theory. I will also draw on key points from Tisdell and Hatcher and Miller, before describing how I intend to improve my practice as a Healing of Memories facilitator.

Being aware of how certain steps in the Healing of Memories workshop-process can be theorized as, and aligned with, the stages of Transformative Learning has enabled me to prepare for and focus on those elements when I facilitate in future. It has also enabled me to change my perceptions of what I had originally seen as a primarily psychological storytelling process. I have learned that Healing of Memories is a carefully structured adult education curriculum that enables transformative learning in its participants. I will be able to share these learnings with other Healing of Memories practitioners. I now understand better the reasoning behind the Healing of Memories Institute's recommendation of strict adherence to the methodology.

How did I establish that the Healing of Memories workshop was indeed an instance of transformative learning? In Chapter 4, I showed how the Healing of Memories storytelling

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experience met Mezirow's seven conditions for participation in critical discourse, drawing on Tyler (in Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). In Chapter Four, I explored in some detail how, from the disorienting dilemma provided by a Trigger on Day One, the learning process is advanced by self-examination with the questions for reflection and the drawing exercise. That process of self-examination is continued during the telling and the listening to stories in the small group environment, providing an opportunity for critical assessment of assumptions as well as the recognition of connections between discontent and a transformative process.

I found that most participants were able to explore options for new roles, relationships and action on Day Two – not only during small-group encounters but particularly in the session for the cognitive reframing of emotion as well as the making of the clay model at the beginning of Day Three. The cognitive reframing session, as well as the hearing and listening to stories in small groups provided an opportunity for the application of the knowledge and skills for implementing those ideas. Participants found new confidence and selfhood, as well as an ability to relate to others during the workshop, trying out new roles with each other over the weekend.

The workshop also provided spaces, or pauses, overnight for the growth of understanding. Tisdell suggests we have the chance to examine memories as our present selves with our present comprehension and, in revisiting the memories in “spirals” of learning, to “reframe” and revise our understanding of them (2003, p. 93). The workshop was only the beginning of their learning process – and an extension of mine, as facilitator. There was progressive personal growth and learning in the spaces between the workshop and the first and the second interviews. These reflective phases of the learning process involve the revisiting of past experiences with newly-gained present knowledge. It may have been that, with my established role as a facilitator, the reflection needed in answering my questions enabled further learning to all participants, myself included.

The essential and integral role of the spiritual, somatic, affective and cultural dimensions of learning seen on this workshop indeed challenged the emphasis on cognitive learning, for which Mezirow has been critiqued, as discussed in Chapter Two.

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For Haitch and Miller (2006), storytelling is used as an educational methodology in order to create a familiar *learning space*; a *safe space*; a *communal space* and an *empowering space*. The *imaginative space* allows the tellers of stories to be able to imagine other endings to their stories. In Chapter 4, based on my research learnings, I suggested an addition of four transformative learning spaces – a *sacred space*, an *egalitarian space*, a *challenging space* and a *liberating space*.

The remaining question is: How can I improve my practice as a facilitator of Healing of Memories, a transformative adult learning process? As a priest and a facilitator of adult education workshops, I will definitely choose to run workshops within church communities in future. I would like to explore how these learnings can be shared with worship communities of other faiths. The learning processes are enhanced and deepened by the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the workshop in that context, and the potential for continuity of relationship adds to ongoing learnings. My greater insight into the period of the transformative learning process by means of Tisdell's 'spirals' have provided me with a deepened understanding of the need for the Reunion and for the need to create more such post-workshop gatherings. I would suggest, however, that these should be in the safe space of the small groups, rather than the large plenary group, to enable the learnings from those small-group relationships to continue.

I have grown as a person and as a facilitator through this new theorized perception of the learnings of the workshop participants. Often my understandings of the workshop process were challenged. Participant understandings of emotion and of listening skills, for example, have made me more aware of my own and my development of those skills. By participating in this process with a holistic understanding of learning and as a practitioner researching my own practice, I have been able to integrate the different aspects of myself as priest, activist, educator, researcher, writer and mother. I had kept those dimensions of myself artificially separated. As a whole, complex and growing person, I can be authentic in my practice, meeting each participant in the vulnerable learning space as a learner myself, part of a learning journey together. As McNiff puts it, "I have become certain of the need for uncertainty. I live easily with the paradox." (2002, p. 5). Telling my

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learning story in this dissertation has been the first step on this learning journey, the articulation of my learnings in a different voice, an academic voice.

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Recommendations

Storytelling is a powerful tool for healing and reconciliation, even more so when it is used holistically, mindful of its cultural, symbolic, affective, somatic and, in particular, the spiritual dimensions. It is recommended that churches further explore ways in which they can utilise healing worship and pastoral processes like Healing of Memories in order to provide an enabling, safe space for people to tell their stories, thus turning churches into potential spaces for transformation. The two most powerfully transformative learnings for participants were, as we have seen, how they learned to listen and how they thought of and responded to emotion. It is suggested that it be a focus for churches to provide training in these areas for community leadership as well as members. While worship communities of other faiths were not a part of this study, this recommendation would apply to them as well.

It had been hoped that by holding the Healing of Memories workshop within an existing worship community, that the clergy and lay leadership would have provided ongoing support for all of the participants as they went through the continuing phases of learning after the workshop. Only one of the participants was provided with counselling by Pastor Patrick to work through some issues after the workshop. (She was not one of those who were interviewed.) Most of the participants expressed a wish for ongoing meetings of the workshop groups, which the church leadership has been too busy to organise. It is recommended that, before workshops within a church or similar organisation, some form of training and preparation be offered to the community leadership to ensure that they are able to plan for and implement ongoing relationships with, and support and building of, their community.

Areas for further research

Areas for further research that fell beyond the scope of this study would include an examination of the roles of narrative psychology and, in more detail, of narrative learning in the Healing of Memories workshop methodology. It would be enlightening to get an overview of and to examine healing and reconciliation initiatives run by NGOs in South Africa and across the continent by means of the lens of Transformative Learning Theory. A longitudinal study or life history of

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Healing of Memories participants over several years would be a useful way to examine long-term changes and learnings. The running of Healing of Memories in existing worship communities has many benefits in terms of long-term support to participants. Ways in which institutional capacity could be enhanced to provide the structures for a sustainable support system should be explored. I found that Transformative Learning Theory with a holistic approach, encompassing the learner in his or her entirety, was extremely helpful as a means of examining such initiatives.

Our new nation faces a new struggle against poverty, crime, anger, hatred and violence. It is not possible to build on the broken foundations of its people. The spirit of South Africa needs to be whole in order for it to arise. Who but its people in its places of faith are called to bring healing from the past? Healing from traumatic memories of indignity, horror and dehumanisation?

We need opportunities to re-member by telling our stories. In our re-storying lies our restoration.

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The Healing of Memories workshop

Friday night

- Welcome & Introduction.
- Getting to know one another.
- Supper
- Trigger (contextually relevant) - short excerpt of DVD, to spark discussion. * (Easter)
- Discussion
- Questions for reflection for the following day* (word “Easter” included in heading)

Saturday

- Creative exercise: drawing one’s own story on flipchart. (Silent, individual exercise)
- Storytelling and listening using picture in small groups
- Lunch
- Storytelling and listening using picture in small groups
- Plenary – a discussion about emotions and responses to them.
- Planning of service for Sunday – group decision on themes, format.
- Party/social evening (Catharsis).

Sunday

- Creative exercise: clay – symbol of future and hope.
- Celebration of hope:
 - Burning of pieces of paper: what is to be left behind
 - Procession and Service
 - Placing of clay models in circle, lighting of candles
- Close

Reunion of participants – 3 to 4 weeks later

Adaptation of Healing of Memories methodology for this new learning process:

Workshop held with participants from one community in their church building, at Easter.
Other changes in methodology indicated with * (see Chapter 4)

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
Faculty of Education



Consent Letter

I agree to participate in this study by Ms. Ingrid Andersen of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (student Reg. No. 210554674) titled *“Exploring transformative learning within the context of healing and reconciliation: an action research project.”*

I do understand that;

1. The information I give will be used as part of the data needed for Ms Andersen’s Master of Education research.
2. The data will be kept with the highest degree of confidentiality and that the right to remain anonymous in the course of reporting the findings of the study will be observed.
3. My participation in the study is voluntary
4. I have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime of my choice
5. I am entitled to question anything that is not clear to me in the course of the interview, discussion or any other form of participation
6. I will be given time to understand and where necessary consult other people about certain points expressed in this document
7. I will be given a chance to cross-check the resultant information before the final report on findings is written; and
8. In the event of wanting more clarification concerning my participation in this study, I can refer to the supervisor, Dr. Vaughn M. John of the University of KwaZulu-Natal on Tel. +27 33 260 5069 and Fax. +27 33 260 5756

On the basis of the above points, I hereby give my informed consent to take part in this study that will generate information required for which it is meant.

Signed.....Date.....

Ingrid Andersen – Interview Schedule

I will be probing for understanding in the interview of curriculum, learning processes, reflection, participatory methodology, learner centredness, pedagogy, emotional intelligence, learning environment, facilitator, knowledge, dialogue and critical reflection. Semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews using open-ended questions and follow-up questions, if necessary, are couched in language appropriate to the context and the participants and facilitators.

Participants will be directed into reflection on their learnings and transformation during the interviews.

Participants: Open-ended questions to start the interview:

1. What was it like to tell your story in the Healing of Memories workshop?
2. What have you learned about yourself over the workshop?
3. How did participating in the workshop make you feel?

If these issues are not touched on, then the following questions may be asked:

1. Tell me about the significant moments of reflection that happened for you while you were telling your story.
2. What changed for you? Tell me about it. (may use the following 3 questions)
 - a. Are there changes now in the way you perceive yourself?
 - b. Are there changes in the way you think of your life story?
 - c. Has being part of the workshop changed the way you relate to others?
3. Describe how it was for you to hear the stories of the others in your group. What did you learn from this?
4. How it was it for you as a person of faith to experience this Healing of Memories Journey in the context of the coming Easter weekend?
5. How did this influence your learning about yourself?
6. Will this change the way you do things in the future?
7. What difference do you think it makes to experience this workshop at City Harvest, with people from your own worship community?
8. Was there anything that was particularly meaningful for you over the workshop weekend?

Facilitators: Open-ended question to start the interview:

- How was it different to run this Healing of Memories workshop in the context of Easter and the story of the Passion, rather than any other weekend?
- How was it different to run this Healing of Memories workshop at City Harvest in a worship community, rather than away at a retreat venue?
- How did these changes impact on the teaching methodology?
- How did these changes impact on the learning processes?

If these issues don't come up, then the following questions may be asked:

1. In what ways did the context of the Easter story (in the trigger and the questions for contemplation overnight) impact on the workshop experience, learnings and outcomes for participants?
2. In what ways did the context of the Easter story impact on you?
3. What was your experience of the role of spirituality in the learning experience of the participants on this workshop?
4. What was your experience of the role of emotion in the learning experience of the participants on this workshop?
5. Do you see long-term benefits for participants in holding the workshop within an existing Christian community?



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28 June 2011

Ms I Andersen (210554674)
School of Education & Development
Faculty of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Andersen

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0404/0111M

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring transformative learning within the context of healing and reconciliation: An action research project

In response to your application dated 23 June 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Dr V John
cc. Mr N Momo/Ma T Molai