

**STUDENTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF UBUNTU AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN
AN AFRICAN DISTANCE SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMME**

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Psychology in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of
KwaZulu-Natal**

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Declaration

I, Courtney Rose Fowles, declare that

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Courtney Rose Fowles



Signature

22.10.18

Date

Dr Carol Mitchell



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Abstract

Ubuntu and social justice are both concepts that resonate with the pursuit of harmony, wellbeing, and reciprocity that service-learning encompasses. The concept of Ubuntu is African whilst the concept of social justice has global and often Eurocentric roots. The aftermath of colonisation in Africa has resulted in an imported pedagogical paradigm from the West that has suppressed an African pedagogy through the erasure of the African voice to date. The decolonisation of education in Africa in this study seeks to uncover Ubuntu as an epistemological underpinning and way forward in transforming education through service-learning in Africa. This qualitative research used social constructionism to frame the discourse analysis utilised in this study. Social constructionism explores how shared experiences and understandings between human beings constitute their reality. Discourse analysis further explores how the use of language and meaning-making systems can construct, position and constrain people. Service-learning students from several African countries that all had experience in a distance service-learning programme spoke of their understandings of Ubuntu and social justice within two focus groups. Exploration of the overarching discourses at play within the service-learning students' talk revealed dominant power relations and socio-cultural institutions embedded within the talk. The results explored the deployment of predominant discourses of 'holon-ness', moral philosophy and Africentricism in the construction of Ubuntu and positioned global culture as threat to its survival. The service-learning students actively engaged with Ubuntu and drew on indigenous knowledge to construct it as an African moral philosophy. The concept of social justice was passively placed in the expert field of the law and human rights by drawing on Eurocentric and United Statesian iterations to construct and make meaning of it. The construction of social justice in relation to Ubuntu were dualistic, as separate definitions of the terms were contradictory in isolation but when discussed together, social justice was re-territorialised to Africa by constructing it as a tenet of Ubuntu on the condition that it pursued harmony and community welfare.

Key words

Ubuntu, Social Justice, Service-learning, Holonistic, Africentric.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CHESP	Community Higher Education Service Partnership
REPSSI	Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative
SSDL	Situated Supported Distance Learning
CBWCY	Community Based Work with Children and Youth

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Contextualising the study

In the post-apartheid landscape of South Africa, Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) have core developmental outcomes of teaching/learning, research, and community engagement (Akhurst, Solomon, Mitchell, & van der Riet, 2016). The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) worked together to create a Situated Supported Distance Learning (SSDL) programme for students in various African countries (Killian, 2012). This partnership led to the development of the Community Based Work with Children and Youth (CBWCY) certificate (Killian, 2012). The certificate consisted of six modules; (1) Personal and Professional Development, (2) Human Rights and Child Protection, (3) Child and Youth Development, (4) Care and Support of Children at Risk, (5) Community Development, and (6) Service-learning Project. The last module involved the implementation of a service-learning project in the student's selected community. This contextualises the service-learning participants' experience.

This qualitative study is framed by a social constructionist perspective and explored through a discursive analysis. As "culture is an inextricable part of mental life" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012, p. 19) and one's identity, it is important to regard individual meaning-making as a social construct that is not solely dependent on individual thought or the subsequent action this may invoke. Rather it is derived through shared norms and understandings. The norms of cultural practice with regard to Ubuntu and the way social justice is spoken about through a service-learning perspective is further explored (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012). It is of particular interest in the field of psychology to study meaning-making as it constitutes daily activity derived from cultural processes. Therefore people become meaning-makers through social communication and the retelling of experiences (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012). Thus, it is necessary to locate participants in the context of service-learning through an Africentric perspective. This is done to draw focus to how participants drew on socially available discourses to construct meaning in relation to Ubuntu and social justice.

This inquiry aimed to explore how service-learning students, from various African countries, use language to construct notions of Ubuntu and social justice. The concepts of Ubuntu and social justice resonate with the practice of service-learning on levels of collective consciousness, social responsibility, and wellbeing (Cipolle, 2010). This inquiry could offer a glimpse at an Africentric view of service-learning, and call for further engagement in the relocation of African philosophical approaches in current literature (Mkabela, 2005). Apart from South Africa, there is a scarcity of research on service-learning in African contexts. Due to this gap, this research aimed to analyse how African students constructed or deconstructed, the interaction of Ubuntu and the goal of social justice within the context of service-learning. This analysis was based on pre-existing audio-recordings from focus groups with African service-learning students.

1.2 Research aim and questions

1.2.1 Objectives

This study aimed to explore the discourses students drew on when talking about service-learning, Ubuntu and social justice, and how these discourses interacted with one another. It investigated; the construction of Ubuntu in different African contexts through the 'talk' generated by African service-learning students; the way social justice was constructed by these African service-learning students; and whether social justice and Ubuntu can/do co-exist in the environment of service-learning.

1.2.2 Questions asked

1. How do service-learning students from different African countries construct their understandings of Ubuntu?
2. How do service-learning students from different African countries construct their concept of social justice?
3. How do these constructions of Ubuntu and social justice interact in the participant talk of service-learning students?

The study explored how the 25 service-learning students who participated in two separate focus groups, constructed these discursive objects (social justice and Ubuntu) by analysing

what they were 'doing' with their talk. Willig's (2013) method of discourse analysis provided six stages, (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) to explore the discourses drawn upon by the participants.

1.3 Relevance and importance

I would like to declare my positionality within this research. I am a white female South African, currently completing my Masters in Counselling Psychology. It may seem presumptuous to research and write on topics such as Ubuntu and an Africentric cosmology without rich insider knowledge. As a white woman I need to be cautious when entering the domain of African thinking to avoid ethnocentrism as Mogobe Ramose (2002a) is particularly circumspect about letting Africans speak for themselves as he states that "for centuries, discourse on Africa have been dominated by non-Africans" (p.1) which highlights the risk of ethnocentrism in this study and the post-colonial narrative attached to the researcher's white body.

The researcher does not wish to further a post-colonial narrative through ethnocentric tropes, but to generate research on a topic (Ubuntu in education) that could assist in destabilising colonised education as an invisible form of violence (erasure of the African voice) in South Africa. As colonised education maintains the silencing of an African voice in literature and epistemological disseminations. For too long, teaching in Africa has been fundamentally informed by Western philosophy and epistemology that is based on the predominant 'United-Statesian' or European experiences (Lomas, 2009; Fryer & Laing, 2008). Such Western experiences cannot be copy-pasted into an African pedagogical paradigm as it excludes African experience and identity which in itself institutionalises racism as the voice of the imperialist retains dominance.

My interest in this field is about garnering further research on the emergence of an African voice in a post-colonial landscape, which is discussed in this research through the context of service-learning, distance learning, social justice, and Ubuntu. I value indigenous knowledge systems and implore their revival in imperialist spaces that privilege Western ontology. I am limited in my understandings of the vast dialects and languages of Africa and take cognisance that there may be unintentional bias from my white privileged experience. In

saying this, I am determined to correct such prejudices and to respectfully reflect the rich cultural practices and traditions of Africa and its people to avoid ethnocentric tropes.

It is important for researchers to take cognisance of their interest in the research as readers may question a white female voice in literature that calls for an African voice. My interest is to understand and raise awareness of my stake and privilege as a white South African in Africa and how to use that privilege to counter talk that perpetuates oppression. This is an on-going process that involves investigation, listening to understand and generating research that hopefully moves further away from Eurocentric and United Statesian pedagogy and closer to an Africentric training and teaching.

Colonial education and its iterations largely exclude Africans from the discussion; this is most evident in the lack of African literature on service-learning and Ubuntu as an entry point for constructing an African pedagogy. The aim of this research was to highlight the discursive constructions of Ubuntu by African service-learning students and hopefully negate the dominance of what Oruka (2002) terms the 'master culture' or imperialist pedagogical underpinnings in Africa.

1.4 Terminology

There are terms within this study that clarification is useful for. Firstly, for the purpose of this inquiry, tropes of comparative racism (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) will be avoided at all costs. One such trope is the coining of African culture as collectivist and Western culture as individualistic, whilst elements of each culture may evidence such features; there are dynamic elements at play in either. This essentialist pursuit of providing a definition of African culture as collectivist denies individual agency and places boundaries on what being African entails, which Ubuntu does not purport (Chasi, 2014; Ramose, 2002a; Fanon, 1986).

The attachment of the term 'African' to philosophy or pedagogy and its iterations runs the risk of overgeneralisation, as there are over forty countries on the African continent that hold different cultures and beliefs within them. When this research speaks of an 'African philosophy' it is based on the results derived from individuals from only eight of these

African countries and does not assume homogeneity for the continent. Rather it offers a common world-view constructed and expressed by the African service-learning students within this study.

As Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2000) iterate, there is an inherent assumption and generalisation in postulating African ways of being or an African worldview due to the diversity of culture and geography within Africa. However, they ask (as does this study) that people tolerate this vagueness as an “intuitive understanding, a roughly acceptable meaning of the term ‘African’ as we go along” (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, as cited in Coetzee & Roux, 2002, p. 265). Furthermore Ramose (1999) offers Ubuntu as the way of understanding that there is a sense of family hood that links indigenous African persons together. If African philosophy was the family Ubuntu would be the blood that runs through African persons invisibly connecting one to the other and the whole. Ubuntu as an African philosophy extends beyond Bantu-speaking persons and the term African is heavily referenced throughout this paper.

The word ‘holon-ness’ and ‘holonistic’ is iterated throughout this study as Ramose (1999) proposed that this term be used in relation to Ubuntu and understanding the wholeness of being as it emphasized its philosophy more eloquently than its counterparts; holism or holistic. Terms such as United Statesian and rheomodic are explained within footnotes in Chapter 2.

1.5 Thesis structure

This dissertation consists of six chapters. This first chapter contextualises and conceptualises what the study is and why it is being done. The chapter to follow reviews the literature on topics of service-learning, social justice, and Ubuntu. Chapter three details the methods and research paradigm used within the study and accounts for the researchers position within the research. The following chapter explores the results of the focus groups, the iterative constructions within the talk and the discourses at play. Chapter five relates these discourses with the literature and addresses the aims of the inquiry. Chapter six provides a resolution through a conclusion, whilst acknowledging limitations of the study and offering

a way forward through implications of the study for Ubuntu in service-learning and African pedagogy.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a review of key theorists and literature on the topics of service-learning, social justice, and Ubuntu. It aims to facilitate an in depth understanding of the terms and definitions that are used throughout this inquiry and offer a glimpse into the iterative gap where this research found root.

2.2 Origin of service-learning

Service-learning terminology emerged in North America during the 1960's, with little clarity of who pioneered its conception or authored its theory (Jacoby, 2015). It is a concept that owes its origin to philosophy, democracy, pedagogy within higher education, and an immense array of authors who have made various contributions to a learning style grown from service. The following are notable contributors to its conception and movement towards a more succinct definition.

Service-learning as a concept and practice finds origin in the walls of North American Higher Education institutions (Jacoby, 2015). This can be dated back to the founding of Harvard College in 1636 that sought to prepare students for democratic citizenship through education (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle laid the theoretical groundwork to the notion of education producing good citizens (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). It is in the democratic society of the American education systems where the seeds of these theories were sewn and found root (Speck & Hoppe, 2004).

The notion that community service and good citizenship should follow from education can be found within the writings of Locke, Kant, and Mill (Cahn, 1997). What distinguishes service-learning from this notion is that community service and good citizenship are not results of completed studies but are integrated into the educational curriculum itself (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Thus the goals of service-learning and tenets of the theory that underpins it can be dated back to the earliest philosophers and find root in American democracy and

institutions of Higher Education. The origin of an educational curriculum that combines experiential learning with community service can be traced through the systematic theory of John Dewey's philosophy of education and Boyer's scholarship of engagement (Boyer, 1990; Dewey, 1913).

2.2.1 Boyer's scholarship of engagement

Boyer writes about enriching the quality of life through a scholarship of engagement which envisions the communication between academic and civic culture (Boyer, 1990). It can be done by connecting the resources of higher education with social communities in need of them to build a more just society. Boyer (1990) believed that the university is an icon of hope in necessitating this progress of intellect and civil society. In order to do this scholarship and the way students learn must be reconsidered. Boyer, thus proposed that there are four components that must be integrated into the curriculum. The first, being a scholarship of discovery, that involved the constant pursuit of expanding knowledge through constant research. The second, was a scholarship of integration, this involved situating the said research and accumulated knowledge in context to make it relevant and meaningful. A third priority was the scholarship of sharing knowledge, to avoid knowledge becoming elitist or secular to minority niches and academic disciplines. The last priority is the application of knowledge; this involves putting theory to practice, reflecting on it, developing on theory and practicing it and so on - the scholarship of engagement. This makes knowledge accessible, authentic and useful. Boyer (1990) eloquently portrays what negative effect academic circles can have on society as large as it is "simply impossible to have an island of excellence in a sea of community indifference" (p. 25).

2.2.2 Dewey's philosophy of education

Dewey believed that a person's lived experiences are shaped by their knowledge and that an intelligent experience of life is subject to practicing consistent reflections that apply such knowledge (Dewey, 1963). He critiqued the traditional model of education that involves the acquisition of facts and theories for the purpose of creating an educated person. This relied on a didactic relation of teacher to student that involves material to be rehearsed and memorised with very little practice (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Rather Dewey progressively

sought an education that could be instrumented through action. Where “[s]tudents who learn concepts through directly realising their useful application know them better and more genuinely than those who have simply memorized abstract theories and facts” (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p.5). This offers the student a meaningful experience of learning which engages their cognition, physical body, and emotions. Dewey saw this as more meaningful engagement than that of teaching a curriculum that was abstracted from real world experience and placed within the confines of the classroom. This reinforces a separation of academia from real-life contexts; rather Dewey called for an “education of, by and for experience (Dewey, 1963, p.29). This would then provide learners with the practical implementation of knowledge (Dewey, 1963). It is this conscious integration of a student’s experience with their academic curriculum that constitutes experiential education (Carver, 1997).

2.2.3 Experiential education theory

This theory of experiential education is the root of the service-learning discipline (Carver, 1997). It involves the premise that students interact with real-life experience in order to sustainably make use of what the community has and modify this to create a more beneficial outcome. It is thus a process of interacting with the learning environment and an outcome of the results of said actions (Carver, 1997). The traditional pedagogical model of education in North America is largely individualistic, privatised, and grade-based and learning is predetermined or controlled by the faculty’s stake in course structure (Howard, 1998). However there are selections of schools in North America that stray from the tradition. Kurt Hahn (1941) founded primary and secondary schools which have incorporated experience into their education since the middle of the 20th century (Howard, 1998). Such schools aim to advance students social responsibility and not their individual intellect, this experiential education encourages a low degree of structure that promotes active learning (Howard, 1998). These schools are working examples of experiential education in practice.

In the Latin and South Americas, service-learning has been part of the curriculum for the past few decades (Herbert, 2006). It is seen as a liberating pedagogy whereby critical

multiculturalism seeks to diffuse the hierarchical structure of knowledge in the pursuit of social justice, by circulating academic knowledge in communities and community knowledge in academia (Wehling, 2008). It is hoped that by placing students in community settings, cultural and socio-economic divides can be crossed (Wehling, 2008). Service-learning can thus be seen as a form of progressive education in the American landscape. Robert Sigmon (1979) details the first encounter with service-learning during the latter part of the 1960's when a service-learning internship model was created by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in 1967. The hyphenated term 'service-learning' emerged and was practiced through federal government endeavours such as the Peace Corps, and the National Centre for Service-Learning (Jacoby, 2015). The key characteristics of service-learning are reciprocity, mutual respect/benefit, communication and shared outcomes (Donahue, Bowyer, & Rosenberg, 2006).

Sigmon (1979) attempted to move towards a more precise definition of service-learning by proposing three principles where learning focuses on those serving and those being served. First, that the served persons have control over the services provided (Sigmon, 1979). Second that the served are able to better serve themselves through their own action after the service engagement (Sigmon, 1979). Third, those that serve are learners who have a substantial level of control over the expected outcomes (Sigmon, 1979). Service-learning is thus a form of experiential education that relates the discipline of a person's study to their wider socio-political context (Akhurst & Mitchell, 2012). Students earn academic credit through service-learning programmes, which attempt to combine their academic knowledge with that of communities' local knowledge in the hope of mutual benefit (Morton, 1995). It is not an extra year of community service added to the course of academic study, rather it is the integration of learning with said service (Howard, 1998; Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Carver (1997) outlined that experiential education aims to position the student as an agent of change that can achieve a sense of belonging in their community of practice. This requires the building of a bridge between systems of knowledge, from that of academic to the contextualised knowledge of the community, otherwise known as local knowledge (Howard, 1998). It is the student's role to bridge this divide between local and academic knowledge through meaningful and collaborative relationships with communities of practice

(Akhurst & Mitchell, 2012). This merge of academic and local communities aims to create a relationship of mutual benefit that addresses wider socio-political issues. This allows the student to engage with 'real-world' experiences that are usually not found in the confines of the classroom (Akhurst & Mitchell, 2012). Thus, the learning informs the service and vice versa (Howard, 1998). In order for students to avoid the disequilibrium that may result from such experience, it is imperative that reflection take place to create meaningful learning. This can be traced to Dewey's (1913) theory of knowledge being a reflexive practice.

2.3 Critique of service-learning

Egger (2008) critiques the implementation of service-learning by suggesting that the communitarian and anti-individualistic social agenda it pursues often ends up harming the student and the community of practice. This is to say the integration of community service into an educative curriculum is a noble pursuit theoretically and not practically (Egger, 2008). By making community service a prerequisite for course-credit, it can turn the intrinsic nature of altruism into an extrinsic pursuit that warrants inauthentic relationships between students and community members (Egger, 2008). This opposes the pursuit of beneficence in service-learning as Egger suggests that "student's self-improving learning often takes precedence over community needs" (Egger, 2008, p. 190). This exposes the academic agenda centred on the individualistic needs of the student and mirrors the traditional pedagogical model of education that experiential education seeks to dismantle (Ross, 2012). Thus, service-learning becomes an ameliorative and not transformative endeavour for the community which warrants no sustainable benefit, whilst further supporting the student's educational pursuits (Egger, 2008).

Furthermore, Reed and Butler (2015) seek to portray the harm incurred by community members during service-learning initiatives, as the students are depicted as the givers and the community members are the receivers. The services are often directed towards lower socio-economic or disenfranchised communities, which reinforces the narrative of learned helplessness and the didactic trope of us versus them, poor versus wealthy, educated versus uneducated, and givers versus receivers. Whilst the intention of service-learning is to redistribute power, the practice often reinforces tropes of servers as powerful and the served as disadvantaged (Dondue, Bowyer, & Rosenberg, 2006). It is imperative that power

balances are changed “if service-learning is not to mirror or reinforce the power of inequalities of schools and society, but instead contribute toward learning environments where differences and disagreements, as well as similarities and consensus, are valued and interrogated” (Dondue, Bowyer, & Rosenberg, 2006, p.15).

There has been debate as to whether service-learning is more of an act of charity than a pursuit for social justice (Morton, 1995). The problematic nature of opposing service-learning as one or the other is dualistic and conservative; rather it may exist on different levels of engagement (Mitchell & Humphries, 2007). Mahlomaholo and Matobako (2006) proposed that there are three levels of service-learning. The first being on the charitable level, this does not involve in-depth engagement and may reinforce power inequalities as communities are ‘needy’ and ‘poor’ receivers of student’s resources (Mahlomaholo & Matobako, 2006). This contradicts the goal of mutual benefit and dismantling of unequal power relations, rather it may serve as an ameliorative endeavour without substance or sustainability. The second level involves project engagement and is seen as the midway level between charity and service-learning (Mahlomaholo & Matobako, 2006). There is a higher level of preparation from the students and tutors in Higher Education, and often an intention to better the lives of the community of practice. This often involves the students’ experience of service-learning as working with and doing things for the community of practice (Mahlomaholo & Matobako, 2006). The third level involves the accomplishment of reciprocity by building service-learning into education with genuine engagement and high levels of critical reflection and introspection (Mahlomaholo & Matobako, 2006). This highlights the multifaceted constructions of community and how engagement with a community of practice can distinguish good from bad service-learning practices.

2.4 ‘Community’ in service-learning

Research has explored the narrative of the student in service-learning with the proposed benefits to education, civic responsibility, social justice and society at large (Sigmon, 1979; Howard, 1998; Carver 1997; Speck & Hoppe, 2004; & Jacoby, 2015). The literature in the service-learning field, in relation to student beneficence, is immense, whilst the understanding of community stake in service-learning is thinner (Ross, 2012). What of society at large, who are they? What community do they speak of? Is service-learning the

mutually beneficial endeavour it claims to be? Firstly, it is important to interrogate the concept of community and how it relates to service-learning.

Community is a concept in flux, the essentialist pursuit of providing a global definition for the term has been tackled by several authors, organisations, and professionals (Cruz, Giles, & Dwight, 2000; Everingham, 2003; Fryer & Laing, 2008; Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011). The difficulty in defining community is contextual as the concept is understood differently from culture to culture (Giles & Dwight, 2000). The predominant notion of community is bound in commonly used ¹United Statesian discourses that are in turn linked to the cultural and political power of the West (Lomas, 2009; Fryer & Laing, 2008). This is problematic, as the exportation of these community notions, ideologies, and practices into certain African cultures (such as the Nguni nation) that value a shared identity can create a form of “intellectual and cultural colonisation” (Fryer & Laing, 2008, p. 9). These embedded power practices have the potential to reinforce imperialist tropes of white superiority and white ‘saviourism’ when exported into different cultures (Hammersley, 2012). This, in turn, can aggravate a form of ‘cultural voyeurism’ within the cultures that place value on shared identity as seen in many parts of Asia and Africa (Akhurst & Mitchell, 2012, p. 404).

This is best captured in the South African context of the apartheid era where ‘community’ became synonymous with the legislated separation of persons through racial categorisation (Ramsaroop & Ramdhani, 2014). This portrayed community in terms of race and location, with the white community holding stake, resources, and socio-political power over black, coloured and Indian communities (Ramsaroop & Ramdhani, 2014). The aftermath of such disparity between races is still rife in a post-apartheid South Africa and more broadly a post-colonial Africa where the image of the community as black, impoverished and in need of charity has become a by-product of white imperialism. A similar trope emerged in recent

¹ This is an anti-imperialist referral to discourses that emerged predominantly from the country of the United States which comprises fifty states. The term is used to avoid confusion that it is an American discourse which would then include Mexico, Canada and South America, which the above excerpt is not referring to (Lomas, 2009).

empirical research in community based service-learning (CBSL) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa where CBSL has been integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate psychology modules. This qualitative study aimed to evaluate the effect that CBSL had on psychology students of the University. This research highlighted the problematic view of community as a collective of impoverished and under resourced persons (Akhurst, et al., 2016).

Community based service-learning (CBSL) attempts to integrate experiential and academic learning through organized services aimed at community benefit (Hammersley, 2012). Research has detailed how the needs of the community and not only the needs of academia are imperative to the service-learning process (Ross, 2012). The element of reciprocal learning is essential to dismantle power relations that create a learning environment for all vested parties in the interaction (Ross, 2012). Thus, good service-learning practice delineates that mutual benefit of both student and community is needed to create a meaningful service-learning engagement (Ross, 2012). This kind of practice moves beyond the charitable work of helping others or those impoverished towards a collaborative engagement that seeks to address community-identified problems (Jacoby, 2015).

It can thus be understood that the concept of community has both negative and positive connotations. For the purpose of this study, the key values of community psychology that Nel, Lazarus, and Daniels (2010) outline will be used to contextualise communities within a community-based service-learning programme. These assumptions address issues of discrimination, empowerment, prevention, embracing diversity, participation, and developing a sense of collectiveness that entails mutual benefit (Nel et al., 2010). The understanding of 'community' refers to a geographical, social or situational interest group that consists of interactions and relationships between group members (Ramsaroop & Ramdhani, 2014). This depicts a community of students resourced with academic knowledge, in conjunction with the community of practice that is resourced with local knowledge. Thus, it can be understood that the term community used in this research does not refer to a negative trope of impoverishment but views a collective of persons vested in addressing group-identified issues (Jacoby, 2015).

2.5 Service-learning in African and South African contexts

The above research has shown that definitions for 'service-learning' or 'community based service-learning' and 'community' are not global and often constituted through a United Statesian framework (Akhurst & Mitchell, 2012; Hammersley, 2012). However a governing principle of reciprocity is fundamental in all service-learning research which emphasizes the practice of giving and receiving in return (Cruz et al., 2000). This is achieved through mutually beneficial partnerships between universities, service providers, and communities, where service-learning is aimed at creating or enhancing sustainable community development (Mitchell & Rautenbach, 2005). In South Africa Ramsaroop and Ramdhani (2014) called for critical action to be taken with regard to service-learning, as they stated that education has the transformative power to create change, which should not be bound to the confines of the classroom. Therefore, social justice should be incorporated into the curriculum in order to ensure and create intellectual equity in society (Ramsaroop & Ramdhani, 2014). Dabysing (2014) further called for the cleansing and decolonisation of service-learning in the African context to disturb neo-colonial discourses of development and power by contextualising the philosophy of Ubuntu and the goal of social justice within African service-learning. Africa has received charity in the form international aid in the monetary value that equates to billions of dollars (Easterly, 2009). African countries are in need of more than charitable acts to create sustainable change, and movement towards service-learning could possibly be the key (Ramsaroop & Ramdhani, 2014).

The 'movement' Ramsaroop and Ramdhani (2014) refer to can be noted in the introduction of service-learning into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. In the democratic transition out of the apartheid regime there was a paramount impetus to transform and develop communities that had suffered discrimination in the past. This restoration reached HEIs in the form of a call to make them more inclusive and to aid the dissemination of knowledge (Fourie, 2003). This reawakened focus onto one of the three functions of the university - community engagement, and not solely as places for teaching/learning and research (Lazarus, 2007). The notion of community engagement in HEIs is to enhance the teaching/learning and research by contextualising its relevance for possible application (Lazarus, 2007). The 2008 report from the Department of Education on

Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, stated that HEIs are to situate importance of community needs within their educative practice. The predominant means of engaging with communities needs and integrating its practice into the curriculum has been through that of service-learning (Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna, & Slammat, 2008).

The Community Higher Education Service Partnership (CHESP) resulted as a national project that partnered with selected universities in South Africa to address HEI's social accountability for teaching/learning, research and community engagement (Joint Education Trust, 1999). The CHESP project model considered a three sector partnership between HEIs (universities and Department of Higher Education), the community, and the service sector (Mitchell & Rautenbach, 2005). This opened the door for the integration of service-learning into HEIs academic curriculum. In essence this re-territorialised service-learning in South Africa (Le Grange, 2007). HEI's aim of community engagement and development took shape through the implementation of service-learning. The practice of this service-learning took place through the triad partnership model of CHESP, and service-learning found its territory in South Africa. However, the implementation of such service-learning initiatives at HEIs were limited with a lack of evidence detailing community benefit (Nduna, 2007; Moutan & Wildschut, 2005). This research aims to address the implementation of service-learning through a triad partnership between a South African university, a service provider and various African communities of practice. Beyond the South African context, the service-learning research and literature in Africa is scarce, which this inquiry aims to address (Dabysing, 2014).

2.6 Distance-learning in an African context

There has been a growing need for wider access to education in African countries as the positive benefits of education have gained widespread awareness (Nyerere, Gravenir, & Mse, 2012). There are several factors that have often prevented those who wish to study further from pursuing this goal. Namely, there are family commitments that prevent members from leaving for long periods of study and there is the financial cost of travelling on a daily or monthly basis to access these studies (Nyerere et al., 2012). These logistical and economic constraints often deter or prevent people from furthering their education.

This is the perceived benefit of distance learning, as people are still capable of maintaining employment, or fulfilling family responsibilities whilst studying (Nyerere et al., 2012). This widens the access of education and increases participation in higher education; these economies of scale in turn benefit universities (Breetzke, 2007).

“On the African continent, where resources are scarce and higher education provision is poor” (Nyerere et al., 2012, p. 187) distance learning offers a cost effective accessibility to education that holds little cost for infrastructure. This being said the lack of infrastructure and internet connectivity outside major African cities is problematic, making distance learning technologies of teaching online a difficult feat (Nyerere et al., 2012). Distance learning increases the opportunity for education for those in remote locations at a reduced rate (Breetzke, 2007). In the context of developing nations, distance learning appeals to: high school graduates who were not admitted into university, uprooted students such as refugees, individuals with family responsibilities, and economically under-resourced communities of practice (Breetzke, 2007).

The 1700's saw the emergence of distance education through the means of correspondence study via print in the United States of America (Breetzke, 2007). Correspondence education was later traced in European learning during the 19th century and is known as the early version of distance learning (Makoe, Richardson, & Price, 2008; Breetzke, 2007). The evolution of distance education runs parallel to the technological advancements of television, telecommunication, internet and web-related tools. According to Breetzke (2007), African countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, and Zambia have made use of distance learning programmes since the 1960's. It is not a recent development in Africa, as an institutional form of distance learning in South Africa is the University of South Africa (UNISA) which has been facilitating online and remote education since 1946 (Breetzke, 2007).

2.7 Social justice

The concept of justice owes adage to the ancient Greeks and Western philosophers who aligned justice with ethical citizenship (Smith, 2015). The concept of a just society is not a new one in the literature but it is one that has struggled to reach a concise definition or

global application. Hayek (cited in Novak, 2000) critiques social justice as an illusory concept that has been repeatedly written about without a substantive definition or concept of what social justice actually is. Grant and Gibson (2013) attempt to 're-historise' social justice through a human rights perspective that envisions social justice as protecting and enacting fundamental human rights; access to healthcare, shelter, wages, education, and freedom to participate in a democratic society free of discrimination. It is the creation of a just society that tends to empowerment, advocacy and inequity strategies for marginalised members of society through collaborative initiatives (Singh & Salazar, 2010).

The world has undergone two world wars, the Great depression, colonisation and decolonisation, on-going conflicts over fossil fuels and power struggles between nations (Grant & Gibson, 2013). This is a mere iceberg tip of conflicts that occurred before the first half of the twentieth century. These clearly depict arenas where injustice, violence, and economic collapse occurred on the world platform. In the wake of such ethical crises and unrest, a global need for a moral code emerged with social justice being at the epicentre (Grant & Gibson, 2013). The establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 provided an international effort to use social justice as a tool for defending human dignity and equal rights. This pursuit was put to pen in the international bill of rights, known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which can in this context, be considered a social justice manifesto (Grant & Gibson, 2013). The UN delegates envisioned human rights as a path to social justice "by challenging unequal hierarchies of power, amplifying the voices of the weak, and by working to eliminate the root causes of conflict: poverty, discrimination, and exploitation" (Grant & Gibson, 2013, p. 84). The UDHR, thus honours fundamental freedom and equality of all humans without division of sex, gender, language, culture, class, religion, race or any other identity categorisation. It is the responsibility of governments to ensure that there is social, political, economic equality for their citizens (Grant & Gibson, 2013).

The UDHR has been critiqued as culturally imperialist with Westernised bias as individual rights supersede those of collective or group rights (Grant & Gibson, 2013). This begs the question, can Ubuntu and social justice function cohesively or are they opposing tools for honouring equality? This is only if one accepts the critiques of the UDHR as more

individually focused and the practice of Ubuntu as a more collectivist one. To answer this, it is important to critique the comparison between collectivist and individualist perspectives in relation to Ubuntu. For the purpose of this inquiry Collin Chasi's (2014) comment on comparative racism will be taken into account to avoid racial tropes;

Unfortunately, the fact that the Africans who value communing and cooperating are not homogeneous is often lost in a comparative analysis that racially pits mythical Africans against mythical Westerners, claiming that Blacks are collectivists and Westerners are individualists. (Chasi, 2014, p. 498)

Fanon (1986) writes of this comparative racialization as a further marginalisation of Black lives as literature attempts to narrowly understand Black experience when pitted against Whites. It is problematic to assume a homogenous view that all Black persons belong to a collectivist culture as it feeds into a polarisation between Africans and Westerners. African cultures are diverse and cloaking an imperial social collectivist blanket over them, denies the agency of all Africans and dilutes the embedded value of Ubuntu (Chasi, 2014). Brewer and Chen (2007) further claim that there is little empirical utility of labelling Ubuntu as a collectivist pursuit. As Chasi (2014) writes, "individualists are not less collectivistic than collectivists" (p. 499), which implores that Ubuntu describes personhood and way of being that promotes cooperation and goodwill, it is not a collectivist pursuit of Black persons.

Furthermore, a counterargument to the question evidences the multicultural membership of the UN and echoing of voices from Chinese, South African, and Indian delegates who argue that the language of human rights is not a derivative of Western discourse but fundamental to anti-colonial and anti-imperialist pursuits (Grant & Gibson, 2013). The UDHR and the movements of social justice pursuits in the 21st century are committed to cultural pluralism and oppose neo-liberal agenda that atomises the individual out of social context (Smith, 2015).

2.7.1 Social justice in education

Cipolle (2010) explains that "part of the reason we struggle to define such terms is that concepts can have different meanings to different people in different contexts" (p. 3). Within the context of service-learning, social justice becomes a pursuit for destabilising the

mass inequalities in society (Everingham, 2003). To pursue social justice is to pursue a society that offers equal access to resources, freedom from oppression, and safety, both physically and psychologically, to every person (Ramsaroop & Ramdhini, 2014). The UDHR necessitates that all people have a right to education and that the educative platform is where civic mindedness takes root (Grant & Gibson, 2013). Education should generate an understanding of rights and justice and how to practice them with civic mindedness (Grant & Gibson, 2013).

The thread of social justice can be woven through education through the use of service-learning, as it emphasises civic responsibility, the sharing of resources, and the destabilisation of inequities (Gale, 2000; Ottenritter, 2004). Mitchell (2008) has reframed this practice through the concept of critical service-learning, which places focus on the student's activism against tropes of oppression, privilege, and power (Megivern, 2010). This form of civic engagement aims to develop a critical consciousness in students, which seeks to have a ripple effect of change in communities' contexts (Cipolle, 2010).

2.7.2 African concept(s) of social justice

Social justice is fair access to resources and equal rights for all members of society (Hay & Beyers, 2011). It involves fair distribution of resources that benefit the least advantaged, also known as distributive justice (Rawls, 1971); physical and psychological safe-keeping of all persons; and independent (individual agency) and interdependent (social responsibility) accountability (Hay & Beyers, 2011). Social justice is contextual and can be seen as a social construct, demarcating how it is practiced in different societies and their contexts (Smith, 2015). Recognition of geographical and historical context is imperative to the practice and pursuit of social justice, on how resources can be feasibly distributed and what legacy or discriminations have occurred in the society (Smith, 2015). South Africa endured years of social injustice during the apartheid regime, where an imposed identity of race carried moral credit for white persons and penalty for black, coloured, and Indian persons (Smith, 2015).

The term 'African culture' should not assume homogeneity of one African culture, as there is a plethora of diverse African cultures that fill the African continent. However, there are similarities between cultures that have remained across African cultures despite colonisation or global influence (Elechi, Morris, & Schauer, 2010). Elechi et al. (2010) refer to justice in Africa as the "restoration of relationships, peace, and harmony within the community" (p. 74). This can be practiced through an African Indigenous Justice System (AIJS) that aims to restore wellbeing and social equilibrium post conflict. Elechi et al. (2010) note the oppressive, ineffective and corrupt current states of affairs in the vast majority of African states post colonisation. They also acknowledge the relatively low crime rates and degree of harmony that characterise many African communities. This contrasting dynamic is a backlash of colonial rule that imposed political, judicial, social and educational systems alien to the values of AIJS. As a by-product of colonisation a neoliberal system of social control emerged which led to a crisis of confidence in drawing upon AIJS in the running of countries (Elechi et al., 2010).

Smith (2015) poses the emergence of an African renaissance that embraces a return to traditional African values of solidarity and group identity, otherwise known as Ubuntu, in the conceptualisation and practice of social justice. This in essence attempts to re-territorialise social justice through an Africentric understanding, which departs from liberal egalitarianism. For the purpose of this inquiry. Social justice will be understood as the communal pursuit of African justice that restores harmony in society and is transformative through distributive justice (Rawls, 1971; Elechi et al., 2010). Ramose (2002b) reiterates how harmony within the cosmos and all spheres are life is essential and "peace through the realisation of justice is the fundamental law of ubuntu philosophy" (p. 279). This is the condition that Ubuntu attaches to social justice, which is that peace and harmony must always be restored and strived for.

2.8 Origin and Ubuntu

Akin to the terminology of service-learning and social justice, Ubuntu is yet another concept with inexhaustible interpretations or unfolding's that has no specific historical tie to time or location. Ramose (1999) insinuates that this uncertainty is fundamental to the nature of wholeness within Ubuntu. Ramose (1999) remarks on the metaphysics of Ubuntu by

demarcating three interrelating features of existence; (1) the visible living, (2) the living-dead 'abaphansi' who are immortal, and (3) the beings who are still to be born. This creates an onto-triadic edifice of being, however two of these dimensions cannot be seen or known which creates an ontology of the invisible that platforms the metaphysics of Ubuntu. This metaphysical realm is regarded with ineffability which demarcates why Ubuntu philosophy has no theology and why it can be a complex philosophy to unravel and define as it embraces this uncertainty.

Murove (2014) describes it as an African ethic that can be traced to the cosmology of African people as the word is of Nguni origin and is translated to mean 'people' through the Bantu languages. The aphorism of Ubuntu is 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (a person is a person through other persons) (Mbaya, 2010; Mkabela, 2005). Geographically the word can be located in southern Africa, but the value system of Ubuntu is continental and governs societies across Africa. Pinpointing an exact date for the origin of a term in African culture denotes a Western gaze of understanding history and terminology. It is in the oral tradition of African culture where the origin of Ubuntu rests, through story-telling, riddles, fables, myths, and proverbs (Dreyer, 2015). The first printing of the word traces back to 1846, but this does not hold true to the conception of the word when considering the marginalisation of African culture under colonial rule. Gade (2013) mentions that Ubuntu was practiced long before it reached print or popularity in the post-colonial rhetoric of independence (Dreyer, 2015).

Ubuntu became a popularised discourse in the 1990's during South Africa's political transition into democracy. The term gained widespread use through politics, theology, and mainstream media as a regenerative moral trope to ethically guide a fledgling democracy in a spirit of harmony (Dreyer, 2015). The Ubuntu rhetoric, an African voice, was used through political discourses of reconciliation, nation building, and the restoration of dignity for marginalised persons (Dreyer, 2015). Ubuntu can be considered an original ethic of African philosophy and Nguni origin, whilst the word may differ from culture to culture over the continent, there seems to be a shared understanding of the values of Ubuntu (Murithi, 2009). For example, in Rwanda an indigenous system of 'gacaca' implies the implementation

of restorative justice following the genocide, which seems to share a similar characteristic of reconciliation that Ubuntu infers (Murithi, 2009).

2.8.1 African philosophy is Ubuntu philosophy

According to Oruka (2002) African philosophy has undergone decades of debate about whether it exists and if it exists what does it ontologically and epistemologically entail. Oruka (2002) described four trends in African philosophy in a move towards responding to this and furthering the debate.

Oruka (2002) believes that the first trend is distinctly different from the individuality and rationale of European philosophy, as it appeals more to existential experience, abstract thought, communality and human emotion. African philosophy is assumed by an ideological and metaphysical realm that emphasises, and is embedded within, the traditional wisdom of African persons; this is what Oruka (2002) has termed ethnophilosophy. This aspect of ethnophilosophy is deemed to be un-critical as it is founded on customs, myths, idioms, and religions which he has said is always illogical or emotional (Oruka, 2002). The ethnophilosophical approach examines components of a culture such as language to reveal philosophical and epistemological constructions (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2000). Another trend in African philosophy that is not purely based in the un-critical realm of folklore and traditions is deemed philosophical sagacity (Oruka, 2002). This refers to African persons, “sages”, who have not formally encountered modern education but are seen as critical thinkers with invaluable philosophical insights (Oruka, 2002). The next trend is termed national-ideological philosophy which is linked to politics and reclaiming or restructuring an African identity in the post-colonial aftermath (Oruka, 2002). It is centred on mental emancipation from imperial rule and African humanism or family hood (Oruka, 2002). The last trend is professional philosophy which is attributed to the critical realm as it is espoused by academics and teachers of philosophy in Africa. This philosophy is logical and scientific, as opposed to ethnophilosophy. These various components, offer deeper insight into the nuanced and complex makeup of African philosophy but what could be a common thread binding these four trends together?

Ramose (1999) offers insight into this as he demarcates that “ubuntu is the root of African philosophy” (p. 271) - the binding thread. The philosophy expounds that there is affinity and family hood which shares a common ground for indigenous African persons. Whilst there will be nuances within this philosophy of kinship as any family has within its individual members, Ubuntu holds this together and offers a basis for an African philosophy. Ramose (2002a) elucidates that bound within the terminology of Ubuntu as a gerund (noun and verb, being and becoming human), is the process of not only being human but becoming a human being that abides by fundamental ways of proving that one is embodying Ubuntu through their conduct (social, legal, and ethical). The conundrum of being and becoming proposes a chaotic image of two states opposing one another irreconcilably. This posits traditional linguistic disequilibrium in be-ing which only finds stability in non-traditional or ²rheomodic linguistic logic that sees ‘be-ing’ as a wholeness – through a holistic view (Ramose, 2002a; Bohm, 1980). This holistic view is said to be fundamental to Ubuntu philosophy and an African world-view. Ramose (1999) named it ‘holon-ness’ or ‘holonistic’ as a preferred term to be used when describing the holistic, albeit holonistic nature of African philosophy as this term “speaks directly against the fragmentation of be-ing” (p.276) and conceptualises be-ing as wholeness. For the purpose of this thesis holon-ness is used in replace of holistic or holism.

As Ramose (2002a) has sought to explain Ubuntu through rheomodic thought, it in turn presupposes a rheomodic lens through which to view an African way of be-ing and philosophy (Bohm, 1980). This offering seeks to explore how one’s perceptions and actions can converge, which is to say that “[h]uman beings are not made by the truth. They are the makers of the truth” (Ramose, 2002a, p. 277). This captures the polarity between Eurocentric or United-Statesian philosophical tenets and African philosophy, as Ramose (1999) exemplifies how Europeans and United Statesian’s live according to the truth or the

² Rheomode moves language into a new mode of structure that allows for flow without fragmentation that conventional language attaches to gerundive words such as Ubuntu. Rather rheomodic language embraces Ubuntu as a gerund and constructs it as holonistic and in motion (Ramose, 2002a; Bohm, 1980).

time, as they diarise appointments and necessitate things that need doing within the bounds of time. In essence they live according to time, whereas Africans live time or live the truth, they are not made by it. It is part of an African way of being to live within and create the moment whilst continuously searching for harmony through a dynamic between rationality and emotionality that is fluid and elastic and not susceptible to fragmentation (Ramose, 1991). This is Ubuntu, a word that is active, complex, holonistic, and unfalteringly African.

2.8.2 Moving towards an Africentric understanding of Ubuntu

Mkabela (2005) wishes to create a communal ethic of wellbeing through an Africentric perspective. This representation of an African worldview is orientated towards the founding principles of Ubuntu. Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes of Ubuntu:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks to the very essence of being human. When you want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu”; he or she has ubuntu. This means that they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means that my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. (Tutu, 1999, p. 34)

This extract manages to capture characteristics associated with Ubuntu. Metz (2011) expands on these personifications to include cooperative behaviour, being sympathetic to others, committed and responsive to the needs of others, acting with trust and adopting common goals and ideals within the group. Dreyer (2015) moves towards a model of understanding Ubuntu as a holonistic approach to life that involves a ‘cosmivision’ – connectedness between environment and all living beings and a spiritual foundation for African cultures, this involves:

1. A philosophy of life and morality rooted in African context.
2. It is expressed through practices and aphorisms, as originating and generating through oral tradition.
3. It explains an interconnectedness of all humans that denotes the only possible way of becoming a person is through other persons. This concept of a relational self, starkly contrasts with an individualistic worldview. Metz (2011) expands upon this account of humanness as integral to one’s moral development of personhood. There is an

interactive dynamic between individual and community that involves a person being the sum of their community, where the wellbeing of the community is intertwined with the wellbeing of the individual and vice versa (Sarra & Berman, 2017). For example, humiliating another diminishes the group which in turn humiliates the individual. A person, therefore, is not merely the sum of their parts but the sum of their community, where one's wellbeing is situated in relation to the wellbeing of others (Dolamo, 2013). Whilst this philosophy owes its adage to Nguni origins, it is not solely an African ideal, but a way of being for humanity as a whole (Dolamo, 2013).

4. Forefronts the values of hospitality, compassion, solidarity and friendliness. It involves treating others with fairness and justice (Letseka, 2011).

For the purpose of this study the above explanation serves as a working explanation for understanding the moral theory of Ubuntu as a living African tradition and philosophy.

There are critiques of Ubuntu that label it as an idealised and romanticised way of being which holds potential drawbacks for the individual who is demanded to conform to the group (Mohale, 2013). This picturesque notion of a harmonious and purely altruistic society that allows no individual agency can be tied to Ubuntu when the nuances of the philosophy are not adequately accounted for. To compare Ubuntu to the traditions of African music may counter this notion and do it more justice. As Wilson (1999, as cited in Chasi 2014) describes African music as “giving voice to individuals who are organised with others in a kaleidoscope of sought and coordinated clashes that seek to produce a rich tapestry of rhythms” (p. 501). This heterogeneously contextualises the nuances of Ubuntu, as personhood or the individual developing in relation to the group. It is the practicing of altruism, compassion, and sharing that promotes a shared wellbeing and in turn enriches personhood (Chasi, 2014).

Okolo (1992) offers an understanding of the notion of the self in Africa as relational – a person exists through their connections with other persons, sentient beings, and extends to those in the spirit-world, it is akin to cosmic vision of the universe that relies on interconnectedness. However it is highlighted that the self is not purely defined by its external relation to others but also through its internal identity with the individual self. This

is noted as a double-status of selfhood within African philosophy (Okolo, 1992). This sheds light on the nuanced construction of Ubuntu as relational and autonomous which refutes Mohale's (2013) claim that Ubuntu compromises the individual at the expense of the whole.

Ubuntu is an ethical way of practicing goodwill insofar as it will benefit the shared identity among people (Metz, 2011; Chasi, 2014). Reversely, divisive actions run contrary to the values of Ubuntu when the shared identity of people suffers. This shared identity among people does not denote a sameness of each person or seek to suppress and deny individual differences. It involves a shared ethic and way of being that values goodwill and human dignity. Chasi (2014) remarks that whilst most African communities vary in their engagement with cultures and traditions and host an array of conflicting moral views, this does not prevent them from valuing or practicing Ubuntu. Therefore it can be seen that the individual is not demanded to conform to the group but rather shares and practices values that are to the betterment of self, group, and environment.

2.8.3 Ubuntu ethics

Ubuntu has been described as an ethical way of being which draws on moral philosophy. Morality, put simply, is the harmonious acclimation of rules and an adjustment of personal behaviours or beliefs that correspond with others in society (Wiredu, 2002). Furthermore morality in Africa ascribes a sense of duty that one's own interests may sometimes need to be compromised for the welfare of others. "This is not a demand for a supererogatory altruism. But a certain minimum of altruism is absolutely essential to the moral motivation" (Wiredu, 2002, p. 338). This account envisions an African morality of the self as dependent on their actions to benefit others through design and not coincidence (Wiredu, 2002). This is a communalistic ethos that offers a way of being that values kinship, moral identity as constituted through others, and reciprocity (Coetzee, 2002).

Ramose (2002b) identifies this morality in Africa as an ethics of Ubuntu which entails 'human-ness'. Whilst different African cultures purport diverse understandings and beliefs in morality, Ubuntu provides the moral foundation from which these stem. Ethics offers ways of being that uncovers what good or bad human behaviours constitute moral

character through its acts (Ramose, 2002b). It also focuses on the principles that underpin and govern this moral behaviour. Ubuntu ethics as Ramose (2002b) outlines, are bound in motion and 'do-ing' which is not separate from, but more important than the person or the 'do-er'. Therefore, Ubuntu as a moral philosophy prescribes ethics of having; respect, mutual recognition, mutual caring and sharing. The moral imperative is bound within 'do-ing' these virtuous acts to ensure harmony within the community.

2.8.4 Threats to Ubuntu

There is fragility to Ubuntu in the face of global culture and the colonial erasure of African identity. Kaphagawani and Malherbe, (2000) note that Ubuntu practices can be threatened by "the trappings of modern Western technological society" (p. 267) which may find a global culture superseding the practice, implementation and longevity of Ubuntu in Africa. What is a global culture and where did it come from?

Imperialism was the theory, colonialism the practice of changing the uselessly unoccupied territories of the world into useful new versions of the European metropolitan society. Everything in those territories that suggested waste, disorder, uncounted resources, was to be converted into productivity, order, taxable, potentially developed wealth. You get rid of most of the offending human and animal blight—whether because it simply sprawls untidily all over the place or because it roams around unproductively and uncounted—and you confine the rest to reservations, compounds, native homelands, where you can count, tax, use them profitably, and you build a new society on the vacated space. Thus was Europe reconstituted abroad, its 'multiplication in space' successfully projected and managed. The result was a widely varied group of little Europes scattered throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas, each reflecting the circumstances, the specific instrumentalities of the parent culture, its pioneers, its vanguard settlers. All of them were similar in one major respect—despite the differences, which were considerable—and that was that their life carried on with an air of normality. (Edward, 1980, p. 78)

This is Eurocentrism, a predominant bias towards European life as a superior form of human life encumbered by colonisation (Serequeberhan, 2002). When referring to global culture later in the discussion it is based on this understanding that European and United-Statesian narratives have dominated a discourse of normality for the human condition which has had global effects on culture as evidenced in post-colonial Africa. This global normative

discourse has erased and continues to threaten the erasure of African philosophy (Ubuntu), epistemology, pedagogy, and cultural practices on the continent.

Following from Marxist thought, and eloquently reflected upon by Serequeberhan (2002),

the dominant ideas of the ruling strata in a society are always, at any particular point in time, the dominant ideas of an age or historical period, Today – in our global society – the dominant ideas are the ideas through which Europe dominates the world” (p. 88). It is global because its effects are far reaching, not only does it offer ways of being for Europeans and United Statesian’s it affects all cultures within its grasp, African countries included. (Serequeberhan, 2002)

Prior to colonisation, land was intrinsically linked to life in Africa as it provided the necessary subsistence and sovereignty. Ramose (2002a) contextualises the predisposition of the colonial import of a money economy and land expropriation as a precipitator of widespread poverty in Africa, as African survival was violated (Ramose, 2002a). This post-colonial aftermath and its discourse of normativity threaten the survival and practice of Ubuntu as Eurocentric and United Statesian perspectives are pervasive within modern African culture. These perspectives of normality assume neo-liberal trends both visibly and invisibly across the globe which compromise survival of Ubuntu.

2.9 Ubuntu in education

Letseka (2011) illuminates that the educational policy of South Africa emphasises human dignity and promotes dispositions and attributes of Ubuntu amongst learners and teachers. Letseka (2011) calls for further integration of Ubuntu into the South African educational curriculum, as a means of emerging from post-apartheid oppression with humanness and interconnectedness. Oruka (2002) positions philosophical sagacity as a possible entrance point for reforming curricula, as this could harness indigenous knowledge through ‘sages’ to cultivate a more Africentric education. Ubuntu could be considered an alternative form of teaching values and exploring morality in education, which Etieyibo (2017) believes will nurture creativity, critical, collaborative and imaginative thinking. The current study seeks to address the gap in literature that explores Ubuntu in correlation with distance and service-learning.

The concept of Ubuntu, therefore, resonates with the pursuit of social justice and in turn marries well to the reciprocity of service-learning. Shutte (2001) explored the relationship of Ubuntu to practices that have been deemed 'individualistic', namely the concept of freedom which links to the pursuit of social justice. There could, therefore, be a possible interconnectedness or tension between Ubuntu and social justice, which is scarcely approached in African service-learning literature. Chasi (2014) addresses this concept of freedom in relation to Ubuntu and implores that in fact it can be viewed as an embedded value of Ubuntu. He identified that Ubuntu prizes the greatest possible freedom of persons as communal support and engagement enables a freedom of expression that in turn increases the shared identity of the group (Chasi, 2014). This is to say that freedom is consistent with Ubuntu so long as the freedom does not impinge upon the welling, opportunities and capabilities of others.

2.10 Chapter synopsis

The concept of Ubuntu in education has a small body of research (Etieyibo, 2017; Chasi, 2014; Shutte, 2001). However the research on service-learning in relation to Ubuntu within the African context demarcates an evident gap in the literature which this inquiry aims to address. There is a current lack in the literature concerning studies of Ubuntu, social justice and service-learning in the African context. This research aims to re-territorialise African social justice through an exploration of Ubuntu within a service-learning initiative (Elechi et al., 2010). This showcases African epistemology derived through cultural context of African service-learning students.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explicitly outline the methods, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis used in the study. It is important to consider the ethical aspects of the study as it involves human participants, and to consider the validity and reliability of the methods used, which will be discussed below.

3.2 Research design

A research design frames the way in which collection and analysis of data takes place (Bryman, 2012). A qualitative design aims to generate a rich description of a phenomenon (Smith, 2015). The paradigm of qualitative research is a significant form of inquiry within the field of community development, aligning it well to the context of service-learning in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Whereas quantitative research seeks to generalise results based on measurements, this research is qualitative in nature as it attempts to study human actions from the participants' perspectives (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) qualitative research is an inductive approach to generating new hypotheses and theories that uses qualitative research as the main instrument in the methodology of the study. This is predominantly concerned with creating a rich and in-depth description that attempts to understand social actors in their context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The benefit of using qualitative research is in its ability to decipher meaning from socially constructed discourses in a relatively small sample of participants with their unique worldviews (Smith, 2015). This qualitative study was conducted within a social constructionist paradigm using discourse analysis.

Social constructionism articulates that reality is created through the interrelation of human beings and their shared understandings of experience (Schwandt, 2014). This view subscribes to the belief that ontology and truth are subjective in their nature and that human agents are shaped explicitly by their reality (Schwandt, 2014). The way people

engage with their world is constructed through larger patterns of meaning which are encoded in language (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The constructionist sees this reality as constituted through language which can constrain a person, and offer a plethora of possible meanings. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) go beyond the view that language represents a collection of signs that make up a concept and view it as a system of meanings. Therefore social constructionist methods are inherently qualitative as they seek to interpret the discourses people draw on (thoughts, feelings, and experiences) from their systems of meaning on a social level (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The constructionist researcher highlights the way language is used by a particular group in constructing meaning. This inquiry focuses on the language that service-learning students used when talking about Ubuntu and social justice, to discover how service-learning and social justice were positioned through an Africentric perspective.

The possible constraints to social constructionism lie within idealism and relativism. There is an idealistic tendency for social constructionism to become reductive as ontology is narrowly reduced solely to language, which holds the potential of trivialising human experience to text which in itself is limiting (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Relativism refers to the belief that truth; morality and knowledge exist alongside society, culture, historical context and cannot be deemed inseparable. This makes it difficult to distinguish truth or a good text from a bad text when all is relative. However social science literature purports that social constructionist research can be both progressive and critical (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This study suits this approach as it sought to uncover the sub and focal discourses drawn at play in the talk of service-learning students in relation to Ubuntu and social justice.

The data collected was subjected to a discursive analysis. Discourse analysis seeks to understand the students' subjective constructions through the language they used, in order to socially relate and make meaning of Ubuntu and social justice (Wooffit, 2005). Discourse analysis is less concerned with the discernment of 'truths' and more motivated by understanding how varied versions of reality are represented by text (Willig, 2013). Thus, social constructionism provided a firm frame for this discursive analysis. Discourse analysis is discussed further in the data analysis section below. This research design was used to gain a better understanding of the way African service-learning students, who participated in the

CBWCY certificate, constructed notions of Ubuntu and social justice, within a focus group discussion.

3.3 Sampling

This section refers to the salient method of data collection that entails a selection of research participants suitable for the inquiry (Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, & McNeill, 2002). According to Ulin et al. (2002) sampling strategies are never perfect; their viability resides in the adequate attainment of information from the entire research milieu which consists of the place, persons, time, and organisations involved. This is to say that sampling is carefully considered in relation to the research goals and what resources are available that best suit these aims (Henry, 1998). This inquiry consisted of two focus groups that obtained qualitative saturation (Henry, 1998).

This study made use of mixed sampling methods as it drew on purposeful and volunteer sampling to gather the unit of analysis. Purposeful sampling is a commonly used technique in qualitative research as it involves the selection of a sample based on its theoretical appropriateness to the phenomenon of inquiry (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Therefore the sample is purposely chosen as it aligns with the specific purpose of the research. This research employed this technique as it sought to explore the constructions of Ubuntu and social justice within the context of service-learning, thus the participants were service-learning students. Secondly, the method of sampling was mixed as it used volunteer sampling. This type of sampling requests people to participate in the study (Dollinger & Leong, 1993). Therefore the sampling was purposeful as it selected a specific population of service-learning students and it was also voluntary as it requested participation in the study on a voluntary basis from those service-learning students who wished to participate.

The research participants met the inclusion criteria for the study (Bryman, 2012). This is to say that the sampling selection criteria for participation in the study were dependent on persons that were African and had theoretical and practical experience with service-learning. The selection of students from this programme that entailed explicit experience in service-learning and their participation in the study were representative of the intersection between service-learning with Ubuntu and social justice.

Forty REPSSI (Regional Partnership for Psychological Support) students, who had formerly completed their CBWCY certificate, were invited to meet in Johannesburg from 10-12 August, 2016, for a programme review to reflect on their learning experiences of the CBWCY certificate. These students travelled from several African countries to participate in this review process. Twenty-five certificate holding students volunteered to participate in the focus groups. The participants were from various African countries, namely: Malawi, Uganda, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

It was during this process that learners were invited to volunteer in two focus groups, one facilitated by Carol Mitchell, with a sample size of 12 students, and the other by Emeka Okonji with a sample size of 13 students. The focus group data generated from these 25 students formed the units of analysis. Ethical clearance and gatekeeper permission from REPSSI were obtained by Carol Mitchell and Emeka Okonji to conduct parallel focus groups with the students (Appendix 3). It was made clear to the participants that they were under no obligation to participate. Those that volunteered were given information sheets and consent forms which were explained, and signed at the commencement of the discussion (Appendices 1a & 1b). The focus group opened with participants stating a chosen pseudonym, age, and country.

It is important to note a potential for bias in the volunteer sampling procedure used, as the sample was self-selected (McBride, 2016). There were 25 students out of 40 who chose to participate and may have been more partial to the act of volunteering (Dollinger & Leong, 1993). The 15 students that refused to join either focus group may have had different service-learning experiences.

3.4 Data collection

It is paramount that the way data is collected and the quality of the collected data is sound in order for researchers to draw valid conclusions from it (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The technique for collecting data in this study was the use of two focus groups conducted in August, 2016. This is to say that the current study made use of secondary data collected by independent researchers. The discussion focused on the participants (service-learning students) experiences of the service-learning module, with particular reference to: their use

of local knowledge, the practice of Ubuntu, and their understanding of social justice. These audio-recordings were transcribed for this inquiry and for the purpose of this discourse analysis, to uncover the implicit and explicit ways in which participant's deployed language to construct the concepts of Ubuntu, and social justice in relation to service-learning (Willig, 2003).

3.4.1 Instrument: Focus groups

The focus groups gathered descriptive data with reference to these topics, through semi-structured questions that grouped the topics of inquiry together (Bryman, 2012) (Appendix 2). These semi-structured questions informed the focus group schedule and were the instrument used to facilitate data collection (Appendix 2). There was a funnelling approach to the sequence of questions and themes, as it started with a broad discussion of service-learning and the CBWCY certificate and then narrowed in on Ubuntu and social justice after group rapport had been established. This allowed for participants to ease into the focus group discussion and offer richer responses. Within the Africentric context of this study, the focus group can be seen as a key instrument in the construction of rich data, as the dialogical nature of African identity is nurtured in a focus group setting (Mkhize, 2004). Furthermore the focus group offered a space for various interpersonal interactions to take place through the use of social discourses that constructed ways of being in the room and in the world (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012). It is for these reasons that the instrument is relevant to the contextual nature of this inquiry. The focus groups held generated descriptive data with reference to these areas of inquiry, the transcription of the audio-recordings was selected from when the participants started to engage with the topics of Ubuntu and social justice which were relevant to the study. The data was transcribed verbatim to ensure that implicit and explicit constructs were accounted for within the analysis. The transcribed document was theoretically coded in order to analyse constructions within the text (Willig, 2003). This process involved highlighting salient material that held variability or tension that was used for analysis.

3.5 Analysis

In this study data was analysed using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis explores the way in which language constitutes social realities and how people use, and are constructed through these discourses (Hacking, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The work of Michel Foucault offered a critical way of researching the social world by investigating the discourses people drew on in their use of language to create or reproduce social institutions that can reveal embedded power relations (Seale, 2017; Wooffitt, 2005). Foucault wanted to expose the power certain discourses have in sustaining social meaning which appears to regulate or control people in seemingly natural ways (Seale, 2017). It was imperative that close attention was paid to the terminology, figures of speech, metaphors and stylistic features within the text as these construct the participants' meaning making patterns (Parker, 2002). These patterns within the talk highlight how people use discursive resources to manage issues of interest and stake (Parker, 2002). This is considered the action orientation of talk which uncovers how people position themselves in relation to discourses (Wetherell & Potter, 1998).

The researcher focused on what the participants' talk was 'doing' when constructing the discursive objects of social justice and Ubuntu. To facilitate this overarching objective Willig (2013) offers six stages that can guide a discourse analysis. This process allowed the researcher to chart the discursive resources that participants made use of through their talk and what subject positions these contained (Willig, 2013):

Stage 1: Discursive constructions

This explores the discursive objects that are constructed, with reference to social justice and Ubuntu. The researcher explored how participants identified with these objects through their use of talk (implicit and explicit references) by highlighting relevant sections of text.

Stage 2: Discourses

Once the highlighted sections of text that constructed the discursive objects (Ubuntu and social justice) had been extracted, the researcher focused on the varied ways that one

discursive object was constructed. The researcher then attempted to locate these constructions within wider discourses.

Stage 3: Action Orientation

This third stage required the researcher to take a closer look at the discursive context in which the object was tackled through talk. The researcher continuously asked of herself what the participants were attempting to achieve by constructing the discursive object in diverse ways.

Stage 4: Positionings

The researcher then examined how the discourses drawn on could serve the subject through the positioning offered. In other words; “by constructing particular versions of the world, and by positioning subjects within them in particular ways, discourses limit what can be said and done” (Willig, 2013, p. 388).

Stage 5: Practice

This stage looked at how the participants positioned themselves within the discourses and the consequences this had on allowing or forbidding them to engage in certain actions or practices.

Stage 6: Subjectivity

The final stage offers insight into what these discourses and positionings offer, namely; ways of seeing and being in the world.

These six stages were utilised in the chapters to follow on findings, and then discussion thereof. Whilst these are distinctly presented above it must be noted that the researcher found them to be vastly interwoven, and utilised each stage interchangeably within the analysis.

3.6 Validity, Reliability and Rigour

Qualitative research employs the researcher as the tool for analysis, from coding to contextualizing data the researcher makes the decisions (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Due to

the inherently subjective nature of this type of research, certain steps must be taken to ensure validity, reliability and rigour. There are alternative criteria for this evaluation in qualitative research, namely; trustworthiness and authenticity (Golafshani, 2013; Bryman, 2012).

Bryman (2012) outlined four key measures for ensuring trustworthiness. Firstly, there needs to be *credibility* of the researcher's practice and generation of knowledge to the social world. Often qualitative research can become anecdotal as researchers select their juiciest data for analysis, which creates bias in the results (Silverman, 2013). To avoid what Silverman (2013) refers to as 'anecdotalism', the vantage of triangulation was used in this study (Tindall, 2011). This study involved three researchers to date, namely Carol Mitchell (Focus Group A), Emeka Okonji (Focus Group B) and the researcher of this paper. By utilising two focus groups conducted on the same topic by separate persons, the researcher has been able to remain somewhat objective from the data collection process. This combination of research parties has added to the 'multivocality' of the study (Tracy, 2010). Secondly, *transferability* needs to be taken into account as qualitative research is often based on a small sampling of a population which makes the results difficult to generalise to other contexts (Bryman, 2012). To account for this the researcher used thick description throughout the process of research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Thirdly, *dependability* of findings measures whether the study could be duplicated and yield similar results; this can be related back to credibility which will be ensured through triangulation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Lastly, *confirmability* is concerned with the pursuit of objective practice by the researcher (Long & Johnson, 2000). The researcher takes cognisance of the 'self' within the research and kept a journal of process notes throughout the research as a reflexive practice, as well as submitting stages of research for consistent supervision (Tracy, 2010).

In addition to the aforementioned criterion, is the notion of *authenticity*, this is concerned with the impact of the research in the public domain (Bryman, 2012). With reference to the participants involved, the research aimed to fairly demonstrate their African worldviews and offer a space for reflection within the setting of the focus group (Bryman, 2012; Tracy, 2010). It is the hope of the researcher that this secondary analysis of the existing data will

make a contribution to furthering research in the area of service-learning in African contexts.

3.7 Ethical considerations

With regard to the ethical considerations of this inquiry, it is important to note the steps taken to protect the integrity and wellbeing of the research participants (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). There are several practical principles for ensuring non maleficence, beneficence, justice, autonomy and respect for participants throughout the research process (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). Firstly, through *collaborative partnership and social value* which aim to reduce exploitation of participants by ensuring the need for this research in the relevant communities. This study explored the practice of Ubuntu in relation to service-learning and the CBWCY certificate programme. It is the hope of the researcher that this research could generate knowledge that is beneficial to the curriculum and in turn the participants' communities.

The data collected passed an *independent ethics review*, where gatekeeper permission and ethical approval were obtained (Appendices 3 & 4) prior to sampling (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). A further independent ethics review was obtained for transcription of this data to take place to achieve the aims of this study (Appendix 4 & 5). In order to ensure *fair participant selection* participants were briefed on the research, and those willing to volunteer, took part in the focus groups (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). *Informed consent* was gathered as participant information sheets were disseminated at the focus group and informed consent forms were signed (Appendix 1a) (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). Furthermore, *respect for participants* was present as they were offered the chance to withdraw from the study at any given point, should they wish to (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). Confidentiality was accounted for with the confidentiality pledge, and where students provided personal pseudonyms at the start of the discussions (Appendix 1b). Lastly, for the purpose of *scientific validity and professional integrity* rigorous methods were used (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012).

3.8 Limitations

The researcher was aware of the limitations of the study, such as the use of focus groups that generate a vast amount of data in a short period of time (Bryman, 2012). This could have resulted in fatigue during transcription which would require prolonged periods for coding and analysis (Bryman, 2012). The researcher did take necessary breaks during transcription and proof read this on completion to avoid such a limitation. Furthermore there were elements of audio-recordings that were inaudible (Bryman, 2012). This inaudible content in the audio-recordings, was transcribed as such. The method of volunteer sampling has already been mentioned as it predominantly appeals to those open to volunteerism, whereas the experiences from the fifteen students who chose not to participate could have been different to those reported here (Dollinger & Leong, 1993). The focus groups were conducted in English which is not the first-language of the majority of participants and may have resulted in some talk getting lost in translation. This study made use of secondary data which provided a strength of triangulation and multivocality within the study (Tindal, 2011; Tracy, 2010). However the use of secondary data was also limiting factor within this study, as demographic information of participants was missing and the obtaining clarification of other areas of interest was not possible. Furthermore, the researcher took cognisance of her subjectivity within this qualitative inquiry, and accounted for it through constant self-monitoring and detailed recordkeeping during the research process (Noble & Smith, 2015).

3.9 Reflexivity

As is the nature of qualitative inquiries, “the researcher influences and shapes the research process both as a person (personal reflexivity) and as a theorist/thinker (epistemological reflexivity)” (Willig, 2013, p.95). In essence what appears in this thesis is filtered through the researcher’s relationship to the objects and subjects within the study (Finlay, 2002). The researcher is not a neutral instrument but a person with biases and positioning. It is important that these assumptions are acknowledged by the researcher as they make possible the discursive insights to follow (Willig, 2013; Fuhrman & Oehler 1986). Reflexivity thus is not the shedding of prejudice but the acknowledgement of it to reduce the risk of being misled by this.

With accuracy and insight Willig (2013) has compared the process of reflexivity in research to that of countertransference in psychotherapy. Much like the therapist that uses their emotional response to a client's behaviour in order to better understand the client, the researcher reflects on their implication within the research to gain more insight (Willig, 2013). According Ellsworth and Fuhrman (1986) it is important, as the researcher, to acknowledge personal limits, positioning, assumptions, biases and learnings that have occurred within the author.

The author of this study is a white, South African, cisgender, middle-class, able-bodied, female in her late twenties, who was not present at the time of the focus groups. The stake at this level of investment included academic objectives for completion of a dissertation within a Counselling Masters curriculum. The author of this study did not directly interact with the participants in the study as the data was collected from third party researchers and the author was only invested in the final stage of research which entailed the analysis of the data and the writing of this dissertation.

The first stage of reflexivity for the author was to acknowledge feelings whilst listening to the audio-recordings. The interest in the topic of Ubuntu was a predisposition towards furthering Africentric understanding and research in psychology in an effort of decolonising education in Africa. Upon reflection, the researcher realized that the talk of Ubuntu was powerful enough to draw her in and include her in its sense of oneness. This contrasted strongly with the sense of frustration that the researcher felt together with the participants in the talk around social justice. This identification with participants talk despite cultural differences showcased the power of Ubuntu and its discourses in creating oneness or 'holon'ness'. By conforming to this sense of oneness (feeling connected with the participants) the author contributed to the power of the holonistic discourse and was aware of its many discursive constructions within the talk. This allowed the researcher to take cognisance of her bias towards Ubuntu rather than social justice and an assumption that social justice did not align with it (which proved untrue).

The researcher was positioned as an author who assumed the collected data for transcription and analysis. One of the facilitators of the focus group discussions (Focus Group A) was also the supervisor for this dissertation and provided this collected data for analysis. The dual role of facilitator (focus groups) and supervisor (author) may have influenced the findings as she was an integral part of the iterative constructions within the chapter to follow, through feedback and discussion. Every attempt was made to remain reflexive about these multiple positionings and their influence on the process. The research has changed the way the researcher previously assumed collectivism to be African and individualism an import of the West. The researcher is aware that things are not as black and white as this and that Africentric ways of being in the world are more nuanced and complex. This influenced the analysis as nuances and complexities were embraced and explored to avoid ethnocentrism by attaching binaries and fragmenting constructions that Ramose (2002a) cautions people to avoid when dealing with the ineffable essence and nature of Ubuntu.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted what social constructionism is and how this framed the discourse analysis which followed Willig's (2013) guidelines of inquiry. It has detailed who was analysed, what was analysed (their talk), and the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity within the study. Furthermore it acknowledged limitations, ethical considerations and offered transparency through the researcher's reflexivity; as these are all facets that influence the process and results of the research. These findings and results are offered in the chapter to follow.

Chapter 4

Findings and Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the analysis of the data collected. The analysis aimed to explicate the interpretive repertoires generated from the service-learning student's talk in relation to Ubuntu and social justice. The discourses produce interpretive repertoires through terminology, metaphors, and lexicon which are drawn on in particular ways to describe and appraise actions and experiences (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2013). This stage of the discourse analysis looks at what the participants are doing with their talk and what interpretive repertoires result from this.

Willig (2013) recommends that once careful reading of the transcript has taken place, that the researcher must select the relevant material in relation to the inquiry to uncover the discursive constructions. This chapter draws on the various discursive constructions of Ubuntu and social justice from the service-learning student's talk. It looks at the constructions (what was talked about), the discursive strategies (how it was talked about), and the actions orientation (consequences of the talk) (Willig, 2013). There is an explicit limitation which is that English is a second language and talk generated is filled with linguistic variations that require the researcher to focus on understanding and context rather than focusing on the explicit text.

The demographics of the participants in the two focus groups are displayed below. A numerical value was designated to each participant from their order of talk. The focus group held by Carol Mitchell is Group A and the focus group held by Emeka Okonji is Group B in 2016. Therefore each participant is alphabetically assigned to their group alongside their designated number, as seen below:

Table 4.1
Participant demographics

Focus Group A

Carol Mitchell	Country	Gender	Age
A1	Namibia	Female	42
A2	Lesotho	Female	36
A3	South Africa	Female	20
A4	Not stated	Female	39
A5	Botswana	Male	30
A6	Uganda	Female	30
A7	Zimbabwe	Male	39
A8	Zimbabwe	Female	42
A9	Lesotho	Female	31
A10	Malawi	Female	16
A11	Botswana	Female	35
A12	Malawi	Male	31

Focus Group B

Emeka Okonji	Country	Gender	Age
B1	South Africa	Female	Not stated
B2	Not stated	Female	29
B3	Uganda	Male	27
B4	Uganda	Female	Not stated
B5	Malawi	Male	57
B6	Botswana	Female	Not stated
B7	Not stated	Female	48
B8	Tanzania	Female	Not stated
B9	Tanzania	Female	Not stated
B10	Namibia	Female	Not stated
B11	Lesotho	Male	34
B12	Zimbabwe	Female	57
B13	Zimbabwe	Female	Not stated

The focus groups consisted of talk between participants and the interviewer about what Ubuntu is, how it is done, what social justice is, and whether social justice and Ubuntu work together or against one another. In what follows various constructions, discursive strategies, and action orientations are discussed in order to generate insights into how African service-learning students construct Ubuntu and social justice and how these two concepts relate.

The interpretive repertoires are listed below and the discourses they draw upon will be discussed in the chapter that follows.

4.2 Constructions of Ubuntu

The focus groups generated a vast amount of talk on the concept of Ubuntu, indicating a familiarity with the practice. The service-learning students actively engaged with the topic by drawing on terminology such as “our” and “we” or personal experiences to position themselves within the practice of Ubuntu. The excerpts below provide evidence of Ubuntu as an African practice.

4.2.1 Embodied

The participants position themselves within the value system of Ubuntu as they construct it through personal experiences and self-disclosures. By positioning the subject within Ubuntu it becomes an embodied object that one can be in or out of. This is done through the frequent use of possessive pronouns such as ‘our’ ‘us’ and ‘we’ which are frequently used in the talk and permeates the extracts throughout this chapter of results. This language of belonging constructs Ubuntu as an African practice as it is placed within the subject’s world of experience. The extract below highlights the difficulty participants had with putting Ubuntu into words, revealing how they relied heavily on personal experiences or idioms to construct an understanding of what Ubuntu is. This shows how participants drew on an embodied discourse in constructing how one does Ubuntu by drawing upon real life experience through the act of story-telling or figurative talk.

B2: [...]The aspect of Ubuntu goes with sharing the resources. And, uh... I think that is that walking the walk, talking the talk, yes.

The above extract showcases how Ubuntu is not something easily put into words as the speaker (B2) pauses and deliberates when thinking about how to explain it. This is seen on several occasions in the talk as will be seen when a participant (B8) referred to harambe and Ubuntu as “hard to explain”. This constructs Ubuntu as a system that is understood through practice and not theory. The speaker (B2) then draws upon an idiom to explain Ubuntu. This refers to “walking the walk, talking the talk”. This phrase draws upon an embodied discourse as the speaker (B2) orientates the action of supporting what you say, not only

with one's words but through one's action as evidence of Ubuntu. It is positioned as an ethical practice of honesty and integrity as someone does what they say they will do. This constructs Ubuntu as metaphysical and orientates it to the action of 'doing' and 'being' in Ubuntu which highlights the rheomodic quality of Ubuntu.

The purpose of opening the Ubuntu section with this discursive construction is to open the reader's eyes to the personalised terminology they draw on in constructing Ubuntu in all the excerpts under this section and how this shows that participants identify with Ubuntu. This interlinks Ubuntu with indigenous knowledge and constructs it as an Africentric practice. Furthermore this metaphysical construction of Ubuntu is aided and abetted throughout the excerpts of talk through moments of uncertainty "hard to explain" (B8), identification with Ubuntu, and silences where participants struggle to put word to the abstract essence of Ubuntu.

4.2.2 Obligation

In the talk Ubuntu is constructed as a compulsory practice rather than a choice, as participants positioned themselves as being 'bound' to it through a language of obligation. Furthermore the action is orientated towards "others" in the talk. This constructs mandatory practices of; sharing, "respect", being 'culturally sensitive' and doing things together as key components of having or performing Ubuntu for others. The speakers use their talk in a persuasive manner to cultivate required practices that ensure people are practicing Ubuntu, which draws on a discourse of discipline. This can be seen through the extracts of talk below.

B1: [...] you have to share, in Africa we share.

The above excerpt uses the words "have to" in constructing the obligatory practice of sharing in Africa. This denotes an implicit social rule of what being African is, and what doing Ubuntu must encompass. By situating the action of sharing as a necessary component of being African, the participant (B1) draws on a discourse of African identity in relation to sharing. This territorialises Ubuntu and sharing as African, which indicates that when one does not share they are not doing Ubuntu and it is not part of the African way. This indicates that there is an African way of doing things which links Ubuntu to a philosophy of morality

that reveals its ethical practices such as sharing. The extract below further explores this obligatory discursive strategy through the requirement of togetherness.

B9: [...] You can't do it alone.

The above sentence from the participant (B9) delineates what “can’t” be done within the practice of Ubuntu. This positions doing things “alone” as being outside of Ubuntu as the participant (B9) implies that you are not able to do things “alone” when you are practicing Ubuntu. The binary of alone versus together offers the insight that Ubuntu is not a solitary practice and must be done in the spirit of togetherness. The next extract looks at another obligation of being in Ubuntu which requires cultural sensitivity.

The above sentence from the participant (B9) delineates what “can’t” be done within the practice of Ubuntu. This positions doing things “alone” as being outside of Ubuntu as the participant (B9) implies that you are not able to do things “alone” when you are practicing Ubuntu. The binary of alone versus together offers the insight that Ubuntu is not a solitary practice and must be done in the spirit of togetherness. The next extract looks at another obligation of being in Ubuntu which requires cultural sensitivity.

A5: [...] You have to be culturally sensitive to others.

This extract of talk (much like B1’s) uses “have to” as the language of obligation to construct Ubuntu as something that necessitates being “culturally sensitive to others”. This orientates the action of consideration and having sensitivity for others as a prerequisite to doing Ubuntu. This constructs Ubuntu as a sensitive practice that again is heavily involved with considering “others” and maintaining or restoring peace. The recurrent presence of “others” within the talk draws on a holonistic discourse that positions Ubuntu as a sum of its parts – dependent on each member of the community. This is within the terminology of the phrase that talks of being a person through “other” persons, and is strongly confirmed through the positioning of the participants talk in relation to the whole group. Furthermore by delineating right and wrong practices, and outlining cultural sensitivity as the right practice to be within Ubuntu, the speaker (A5) summons a discourse of morality that constructs Ubuntu as a moral philosophy. This is confirmed in the extract below.

A5: [...] you have to respect others.

The above excerpt highlights the frequent use of “have to” as a discursive strategy in constructing necessary values within the system of Ubuntu. Here the participant (A5) uses the language of obligation to position “respect” for “others” within the Ubuntu value system. This again, draws upon a holonistic discourse as it positions the person in relation to the whole; and that this consideration of others delineates that one must “respect others” in order to have Ubuntu. This rearticulates that Ubuntu is a system dependent upon other persons, which is now layered with the practice of respect in the above talk. This again recommends a right way of conduct that is tied to an ethical obligation of respect within African personhood. This draws on a discourse morality to construct Ubuntu.

The extract of dialogue below sees the interviewer asking the group to explore what Ubuntu looks like and how it is practiced (embodied). A participant (A5) answers this by drawing on cultural knowledge of how Ubuntu is practiced during the funeral ceremonies in Southern Africa. The African traditions concerning funeral ceremonies from Southern Africa are drawn on to symbolise elements of practice that demonstrate what the ‘doing’ of Ubuntu looks like and involves. These practices are linked with supporting each other and making contributions where possible. By drawing on an indigenous knowledge system, the participant positions himself within the practice of Ubuntu and locates it within an Africentric discourse.

Interviewer: So how would you know if someone was practicing Ubuntu?

A5: When you want to see someone is practicing Ubuntu in Africa, in Southern Africa. In funerals, so during funerals, we are expected as community members to attend, we must.. [...] That is where you will see the concept of Ubuntu. Where there's a funeral we are bound to those community members [...].

This extract refers to the recurrent repertoire of mandatory practices within Ubuntu as the speaker uses the phrases “we must” and “we are bound” when describing attendance at a funeral. The speaker uses this compulsory terminology as a discursive strategy in constructing how community members are “bound” to each other when they are practicing Ubuntu. This delineates a discourse of support for all persons in one’s community of practice. In essence this binds the practice of Ubuntu to the act of supporting others, as a discourse of shared identity is deployed again. Furthermore the speaker (A5) positions

“Ubuntu in Africa” and draws upon an Africentric discourse that territorialises Ubuntu as an African value system.

4.2.3 Success

This interpretive repertoire constructed practicing Ubuntu as linked with success. The extracts of participants’ talk below showcase how practicing Ubuntu can lead to success. These participants construct success as an integrative practice that is not solely based on individualistic pursuit. By doing this they are drawing on a discourse of shared identity to position success as a shared process and product.

B9: [...] for you to succeed you need others to help you. You can't do it alone.

This can be seen in the above extract as the participant (B9) juxtaposes how individual success is the result of group effort. In order for someone to “succeed” they “need” the help of others. The path to success is not walked “alone” according to this extract. This deploys a discourse of shared identity in constructing how Ubuntu and the practice of helping each other can result in success. This orientates success within the action of doing Ubuntu but makes this success conditional as it cannot be done alone and requires help from others.

The extract of dialogue below draws strongly on the act of ‘helping’ in the construction of success within Ubuntu. The talk below dispels the idea of Ubuntu as a purely altruistic practice that entails sacrificing the self to help others. It is a “win win situation” (A8) where the self and other/s reap rewards through the practice of helping. The speaker compares this to her experience of service-learning by explaining how helping others helped her to develop herself professionally by gaining experience.

A8: In my country's context Ubuntu is “I am because you are” so I help you to help yourself and also to help myself. So it's the win win situation. While I'm helping you also then I'm developing myself and I'm gaining experience etcetera.

Interviewer: So how did that relate to service-learning?

A8: Well the service-learning while I'm drawing these plans to see how I can help someone I'm also growing professionally.

This talk locates Ubuntu within the African context and finds cross-cultural applicability as the speaker (A8) refers to her “country’s context” of Ubuntu. The subject thus positions herself within Ubuntu, outside of the South African context, and by doing this locates Ubuntu as an African practice. The speaker (A8) then constructs how success is the result of people helping people. By drawing on this discourse of shared identity, success is constructed as something that results from people helping each other and is not an individualistic pursuit. This can also be seen in the previous extract of talk (B9), but the above dialogue adds another layer to the repertoire of success as the speaker (A8) personalises how helping is a mutually beneficial enterprise that holds individual gain. This “win win situation” allows an individual to develop themselves by “growing professionally” (A8) as they learn and gain experience from others.

The continuations of the dialogue below highlight the marriage between sharing and helping within the construction of Ubuntu. And seek to further reiterate the ideal that Ubuntu is an African term that can be related to other African terms such as “kabantu, meaning we share with others what we have”.

B9: With us, kabantu, meaning we share with others what we have...which means, we believe that for you to succeed you need others to help you.

The above extract details the notion of sharing and helping within a talk of ‘success’. This constructs success as a result of shared effort and eliminates individual or complete ownership of one’s success. The line “to succeed you need others to help you” (B9) encapsulates the nature of personal achievement as a product of shared effort and reiterates that “you can’t do it alone” (B9). This surmises the construction of Ubuntu as an African ideal that practices sharing and helping in the betterment of self and others by drawing on a discourse of shared identity. In summary the above iterations draw on Africentric and shared identity discourses to evoke an understanding of Ubuntu as a practice that shares “with others” (B9).

4.2.4 Pluralism

The talk also constructed Ubuntu in apparently contradictory ways. The most notable contrast was the construction of self-reliance as a practical value within the system of

Ubuntu. The participant A5 constructed a seemingly opposing and individualistic value within the practice of Ubuntu by drawing on a discourse of shared identity.

The excerpt below follows this recurrent theme of 'helping' in relation to Ubuntu and situates it within the geographical context of Botswana.

A5: I think in Botswana it's like we promote self-reliance, like if you help others then you help yourself. It is like the way we are socialised like when I help another person I should not belittle them maybe because of where they live their social background or because of their culture.

The emergence of self-reliance becomes a repertoire for nuanced interpretation as it evidences a plausible contradiction within the talk. The use of the term self-reliance indicates relying on one's own resources. This appears to be a contradiction to the constructions of Ubuntu which involves a sharing of resources for the betterment of others. This may appear as a binary between individualism and collectivism, or it may actually point to a more nuanced and holonistic interpretation of an Africentric way of being. A way of being that draws on a discourse of relational self, shared identity and pluralism in the construction of Ubuntu.

The speaker (A5) positions himself within the practice of Ubuntu by drawing on a personal experience of it in his country, territorialising it to Africa. By embodying Ubuntu within this talk, the speaker (A5) constructs Ubuntu as a complex system, a system that draws heavily on a holonistic and pluralistic discourse in its construction. The word holon-ness characterises how there are interconnected parts in the construction of the whole, whereas pluralistic offers an understanding of having differences within one system, of promoting self-reliance in an effort of shared identity. This constructs Ubuntu as something that has multiple and often complex parts that intimately interconnect to create an Africentric way of being in the world. This way of being involves a relational self that always involves sharing identity with the group or others in order to develop or grow the individual self.

The extract below talks about having respect for the young. This is not a widely circulated trope in several African cultures, as emphasis is predominantly placed on respecting ones elders, which highlights the pluralism of Ubuntu in the excerpt of conversation below. This

practice of respect then becomes hegemonic when doing Ubuntu as the speaker insinuates that it is not about agreeing with another's opinion but about respecting their opinion even when one may have an opposing opinion. It is therefore about showing respect for all and cultivating a climate of respect that allows people to feel heard and for children to learn responsibility.

A5: Through communication, an elder person has to respect the younger child because the way you speak to a younger child grooms them to be a responsible adult. So during the whole of this course like that was, it was in the back of mind...you have to respect others opinion regardless of your opinion.

The passage of talk above is a response to the interviewer asking how Ubuntu is practiced and what it looks like. The participant (A5) constructs it as social interaction that takes place between persons through their manner of communication. This communication is linked to the impact one has on others through their talk and suggests accountability for the elders to respect the young. However here the speaker (A5) says "the way to speak to a younger child grooms them to be a responsible adult" which creates an awareness of using one's words wisely in order to cultivate "responsible" persons through the teaching and utilisation of respect. It is the practicing of personhood.

This respect for the young is unexpected when referring to several instances of talk in the above excerpts that speak to respect for the elders. Furthermore respecting the elders is embedded within an Africentric way of being, but in this extract the speaker (A5) is turning the practice on its head and in essence constructing Ubuntu as a practice that calls for shared responsibility and identity. This phrase speaks to the cyclical nature of Ubuntu as it filters through constant interactions between people. Ubuntu is dependent on circulation between persons practicing it and germinating it in other persons.

The speaker (A5) then contextualises the way they practiced this respect in Ubuntu as a service-learning student by remaining conscious of it through the course as "it was in the back of my mind...you have to respect others opinion regardless of your opinion" (A5). By positioning themselves as mindful of this whilst doing the course, the participant relays how Ubuntu was organically used within the service-learning context. This speaks to the embodied and embedded nature of Ubuntu as a way of being in Africa, and highlights a

discourse of personhood in the construction of Ubuntu. Furthermore the speaker draws on a discourse of altruism as he sacrifices his opinion for the good of others. By using the talk to highlight his self-sacrifice as an ethical imperative within Ubuntu the speaker positions the practice within a system of moral philosophy.

4.2.5 An African ideal of oneness

The discussion below talks about the aspect of oneness from an African perspective. Participants draw parallels between a local practice in Namibia ('harambe') and the spirit of Ubuntu. Harambe is known as, and envisions, a sense of togetherness in its philosophy. The similarities between the systems highlight the cross-cultural applicability of Ubuntu in African practice and showcase the different names different cultures have for their versions of Ubuntu. The thread that weaves these practices together centres on the repertoire of oneness that recurrently emerges within the talk.

B6: I just want to say something...um, like back to our country, Namibia is this system that the new president bought about they call it harambe it's like holding together, holding our hands together. It goes hand in hand with Ubuntu. It's so good, I like it.

Interviewer: Tell us more about the concept?

B6: It...eh... help me there (giggles from everyone). It's like putting together, pulling things together, working together just to build the country.

B7: Whatever you plan you plan it as one. When you are going for success you go as one. If you are planning for failure you go as one. [...].When you fail this project it's not because of A or B but because of us. It's us.

B8: I'm very happy to hear of this harambe. (Inaudible giggles). It is hard to explain.

The above extract of dialogue discursively constructs Ubuntu as a practice that creates oneness amongst people. This talk sees Ubuntu in the eyes of another culture through another system known as "harambe" in Namibia. The speaker (B6) compares this system to that of Ubuntu; "it goes hand in hand with Ubuntu". It is therefore another cultural term for a similar practice that involves "holding together, holding our hands together" (B6). This sense of togetherness is an aspect that the speaker (B6) constructs in conjunction with

Ubuntu. It is further seen as a positive practice that is deemed enjoyable by the participant as it is referred to as “so good” (B6).

The interviewer then asks for further expansion on the concept in order to gain a deeper understanding of this term from Namibia that seems to generate a similar way of being to that of Ubuntu. The speaker (B6) pauses and attempts to respond, members of the focus group share some shy laughter with the speaker as she tries to search for the words in English to explain the term. The mutual laughter indicates a togetherness amongst group members as they feel the speaker’s hesitance in furthering the explanation and join with her in laughter to assuage her uncertainty and restore harmony within the group. This symbolic gesture of togetherness between group members constructs a tangible sense of Ubuntu in practice, as members share their laughter with the speaker. The speaker (B6) then tries to elaborate on the term and within one sentence the word “together” is mentioned three times. This repetitive use of the word “together” discursively constructs “harambe” as a system of togetherness that is used to help “build the country”. This “harambe” is a system used to foster a sense of closeness amongst people in order to unite people so that the country can be strong.

A member of the group (B7) then continues the talk about “harambe” with more examples of how this sense of togetherness and oneness is practiced. The speaker (B7) talks about when planning and “going for success” or “planning for failure” that “you go as one”. The speaker constructs it as one unit made of multiple persons. The speaker (B7) refers to success and failure as a joint endeavour that the whole unit is accountable for, as they reiterate that when a failure happens “it’s not because of A or B but because of us. It’s us”. This constructs “harambe” as a unified practice that values “us” and oneness and draws on a holonistic discourse and a discourse of shared identity.

A participant (B8) remarks how “happy to hear of this harambe” they are. This happiness coincides with the “good” feeling that the initial speaker (B6) had referred to when describing “harambe”. Again the group shares laughter and a sense of togetherness over this participant’s joy. This cultivates an atmosphere of harmony and joy in the group which coincides with their harmonious constructions of Ubuntu. It is then followed by “it is hard

to explain” (B8). This could indicate the language barrier or it could construct “harambe” as a difficult system to put word to due to its nature, much like Ubuntu, highlighting the metaphysical characteristic of the philosophy.

The extract below supports this Namibian discourse of oneness that has been constructed and draws parallels with the system of Ubuntu through the repertoire of oneness.

B13: In our country, Namibia our former president would say one Namibia one nation. Wherever you go you are one [...].

The above extract talks of this oneness in Namibia as it was brought in by the former president who would “say one Namibia one nation”. This engagement with oneness and unity within the nation is then constructed through a discourse of politics that is engaged with on a macro level. The speaker (B13) then constructs this oneness by talking about going places as one unit of persons as a community of members that create the “one”, by drawing on a discourse of shared identity.

The excerpt of talk below highlights how oneness is practiced when the discussion was centred on ‘doing’ or ‘showing’ Ubuntu.

B5: I just want to add to what I said about the funeral, with what she is saying about contributions... when we are doing the wake where people actually come and participate in showing this oneness. And then again when somebody is in trouble, let's say somebody has been hit by the car on the road but there are no relatives but people come to assist and take that person to the hospital. I think they are showing that we are one, yes.

The above passage talks of a funeral ceremony through an African perspective that symbolises Ubuntu as a practice that promotes oneness. The participant (B5) speaks of how people “participate in showing this oneness” at the wake where they gather together. This collective of people is constructed as a way of supporting others and showing solidarity. The speaker (B5) further exemplifies how this oneness can be shown even when there is no familial tie (as seen in the wake), or non-relatives assisting a stranger that was in an accident. This act of helping “take that person to the hospital” shows “that we are one”, as it creates a collective consciousness and responsibility amongst persons to help, support, and take care of one another and a bid to restore peace and harmony within the

community. This excerpt is further explored under the repertoire of shared responsibility that locates such an ethical act within a discourse of morality.

Ubuntu is constructed through in an intangible sense through the sharing of emotions and feelings which promote oneness, as found in the talk below.

B4: When you happy you share your happiness with others and then when you're sad you share your sadness with others, they come to you, you share that sadness, they help you. With a problem, you share that problem, in cases where it is money someone else can help. You come together and help, you be one in happiness and in sadness.

The above excerpt highlights the sharing of both positive and negative feelings with others. This talk generates the multifaceted nature of sharing joy and sorrow and constructs Ubuntu as a practice that is empathic which fosters a sense of oneness. This contrasts the nature of sharing resources and food to benefit all as mentioned in the preceding extracts. Rather this account looks to the sharing of both pain and joy to ensure wellbeing of an emotional self through social connection, by drawing on a compassionate discourse. It not only looks at helping others but explores how a person can help themselves through other persons; “you share that sadness, they help you” (B4). This talk constructs the practice of Ubuntu through a holonistic lens that sees wellness on a wheel which incorporates various spokes such as the self and others – to decreasing suffering through shared experience; “you be one in happiness and in sadness” (B4). This again resonates with the interconnectedness of persons within the system of Ubuntu by drawing strongly on a discourse of shared identity.

These interactions showcase how participants use their talk to locate a system of oneness and togetherness within Africa. They do this by drawing on personal experiences and relating them to their cultural context through an Africentric discourse. This positions oneness and a sense of togetherness within an African value system that Ubuntu encapsulates. Furthermore they continue to draw on a discourse of shared identity through their construction of oneness within Ubuntu.

4.2.6 Ubuntu is virtuous

The below passage of talk was extracted from a participant's response to how Ubuntu is practiced and exemplifies a personal experience of helping a child without parents. This excerpt talks of raising children without parents within the spirit of Ubuntu. This constructs high moral standards within Ubuntu through the participant's personal experience, as she assumes a sense of responsibility for the child's life. The participant constructs how practicing Ubuntu (helping others) can make one feel good about themselves and permeates goodness within others. This draws on a discourse of morality that constructs a virtuous way of being within Ubuntu.

B4: [...]Have I forgotten or not the child-headed households. We had a case that we identified doing our community meetings, it was a child-headed household but now she is no longer a child, she is a big girl. You know sometimes I smile at what I do, it was being funny, because what I was going to do was going to help this girl. Both parents passed away and the uncles also and then the aunties also. It was like the close relatives they are all gone it was just her and three siblings. We found them in that day-care, they did not have national documents. So I took her we went to get national documents. Because in our country the orphans they also get grants. So I took her to home affairs...Went to hospital, there the whole day trying to get the file, went back the next day until they found a mother's document... They really need this grant because otherwise this girl will get married and then be out of school so we really need this grant. Up to now they are still receiving the money [...].

This above talk constructs Ubuntu as a practice that considers the wellbeing of others. On the surface this appears to draw on a philanthropic discourse to make Ubuntu feel heart-warming as the participant (B4) says "I smile at what I do" which involves helping another. By sharing this experience the speaker uses her talk to generate good feelings. This positions the speaker within the practice of Ubuntu as she shares an experience of helping a young woman in a child-headed household, which she constitutes as doing Ubuntu. In order to help the woman the speaker (B4) had to sacrifice her time to benefit her by gathering the national documents needed. This draws on an ethical discourse that highlights virtue as a characteristic of Ubuntu and encourages the group to cultivate goodwill in their lives through the good feelings it generates for the self and the community.

The speaker then portrays a desperate scene of the young woman in an orphanage whom she helped which evokes the image of the “girl” as the victim and the speaker as the saviour. By doing this she constructs herself as a virtuous person as on two occasions she repeats “so I took her” (B4). In this section of the talk she uses “I” to position herself as the person who did the helping, the use of repetition in this statement reinforces that she was the one who helped. By doing this she highlights the main role she played and portrays herself in a favourable light. The speaker then mentions how applying for the grant is needed in order to better the life of the young woman “otherwise this girl will get married and then be out of school so we really need this grant” (B4). Here the speaker (B4) says that “we really need” the grant, which constructs the act of helping as not purely altruistic in the betterment of the young girl but also for the wellbeing of the community as “we” creates an impression that all can benefit from this act. This contrasting use of switching pronouns between “I” and “we” within the talk highlights how inextricably bound the self is in relation to the community. It demonstrates how one person’s virtuous act can generate goodness for the self (making herself feel good) and for the community. This draws on a discourse of morality that territorialises Ubuntu as an African moral philosophy.

The below sentence was extracted from the talk of the nutrition teacher in the group who was discussing the positive effect of sharing on her students and how it boosted their self-esteem.

B4: [...] The children would share whatever food they have, it actually boosted their self-esteem [...].

This excerpt was extracted from a conversation about how Ubuntu is being practiced. The speaker (B4) constructs the act of sharing that had a positive impact on the children as it “boosted their self-esteem”. This draws on a psychological discourse in the promotion of wellbeing as children’s self-esteems are boosted through efforts of sharing with one another. This positions the children who practice sharing their food within the practice of Ubuntu and constructs how doing this can generate good feelings which speak to the recurrent discourse on morality as a defining feature in African personhood.

The extract below details an account of sharing and showing compassion as a way of being in Ubuntu. This captures how sharing takes place within an educative context, as the

service-learning student recounts their experience as a teacher with children during break time - the sharing of food with one another. This positions Ubuntu as a practice that guarantees “I am because of the other” (B1) as one can only eat if all are able to eat.

B1: ...Ubuntu actually it's ah...In my understanding it's like who I am because of the other. Alright in that context, like me as a teacher, I like having these moments. Like break time, we are eating and I see oh you don't have this bread, okay who want to share [...].

The speaker uses her talk to position herself within the practice of Ubuntu that involves sharing food. By using “I” the speaker personalises the experience and shows how Ubuntu was directly practiced through her. The speaker (B1) says “I like having these moments” which shows how the act of sharing can make the person who is doing the sharing feel good about themselves. This reiterates how doing Ubuntu can make people feel good through moments of virtuous acts of sharing and helping others. It can be seen through these excerpts how virtue is by act and character a moral trait within the philosophy of Ubuntu.

4.2.7 Shared Responsibility

The extracts to follow construct Ubuntu as a practice that calls upon communities to share responsibility to promote the wellbeing of others through an ethos of family hood. This is exemplified through cultivating respect, assuming parental responsibilities for the youth, and sharing in each other's wins and losses. The excerpts of talk to follow show the speakers positioning themselves within Ubuntu through an embodied language, by referencing personal experiences and cultural practices. Through this talk the participants further the construction of Ubuntu as an African moral philosophy as discourses of; morality, Africentricism, and shared identity are deployed.

The extract below follows from the speaker's (B13) discussion about funeral practices. This speaker uses her talk to outline how members of a community share responsibility through their practice of Ubuntu. This shared responsibility is related to the community parenting an orphaned child.

B13: [...] If that child comes to your house you let her stay. If you find that child somewhere, in the farm, in the bush doing something naughty you bring her back home. We know that your daddy or your mommy passed on but you are still

our child. We regard every child in our area as our asset, there's no matter whether it's your child or my child that child is our asset because when that child grows up it will be an adult. One way or another he will also teach this, that's how we are practicing.

This extract exemplifies how the adult community shares responsibility for the youth especially those that are vulnerable. This responsibility can be practiced by opening one's home to such a child in need or parenting them in the absence of their parents; "we know that your daddy or your mommy passed away but you are still our child" (B13). This extends the notion of family beyond the boundary of blood through a discourse of kinship. This is also a moral approach to determining what is wrong or right for that child by the community. This collective ownership through the use of "we" shares responsibility for one another, constructs Ubuntu as something that is practiced by individuals within a broader social system or community of practice. By doing this the speaker positions the community as a family for the child by drawing on a holonistic discourse. The speaker (B13) explains how each contribution is also a lesson and for the child who is taken care of by the community, the lesson is to continue this practice of Ubuntu as "one way or another he will also teach this" (B13). The action of collectively raising this child is orientated to the interest of maintaining Ubuntu by passing it on through practice, reiterating the cyclical nature of Ubuntu

The sentence below was extracted from a participant's talk about how Ubuntu is practiced. This conversational offering again links Ubuntu to the system of 'harambe' which involves collective wins or losses.

B2: [...] When that project failed, like our harambe prosperity now we have failed [...].

In the above sentence the speaker (B2) links "harambe" to "prosperity" which is something that is positive and provides good fortune. This relates to previous constructions of "harambe" as a "good" (B6) practice that makes some "happy" (B8). Furthermore it talks of failing together and not alone as "we have failed" encapsulates a collective loss and shared responsibility.

The talk below is cut from a passage of talk within in the section on "oneness". However it further assists in the construction of shared responsibility within the practice of Ubuntu, as

the speaker creates a possible situation that would directly involve community members joining together to take care of another.

B5: [...] when somebody is in trouble, let's say somebody has been hit by the car on the road but there are no relatives but people come to assist and take that person to the hospital.

This example of people coming to the aid of others without familial ties speaks to the Africentric nature of community, which constructs a family beyond blood or familiarity but through personhood. This denotes a system of support for every individual as each is responsible for the other, each is family to the other, and each is a person through the other. This constructs Ubuntu as a practice that involves sharing responsibility within the community to ensure the wellbeing of others and highlights the moral imperative tantamount to Ubuntu philosophy.

4.2.8 Fragility of Ubuntu in the 21st Century

The pieces of talk below help highlight the challenges facing Ubuntu and how it is not a hegemonic practice in all African persons and contexts. These extracts detail how Ubuntu is not technological, entrenched in consumerism or egotistical, which implies that to embody these constructs would place someone outside of Ubuntu. It is important to view how Ubuntu is positioned against these constructs as it offers insight into what Ubuntu is, in contrast to what the students have constructed it as “not”.

In the extracts below, the participants reference the use of technology and the rise in materialism or consumer culture as practical examples that threaten the survival or practice of Ubuntu in modern day culture. By doing this they construct Ubuntu as fragile. This can be seen through participants recounting personal experiences of what traditional values entail, how they are not always practiced, and one participant's personal confession of failing to practice Ubuntu in the face of modern day culture. The use of the terms “they” versus “us” creates distance between those that practice Ubuntu and those that are not doing Ubuntu.

The extract below makes particular reference to the youth and technology which is constructed as a threat to the application of Ubuntu. By doing this the participant (B12) situates the use of technology in the youth as something that does not embody Ubuntu.

B12: I think it's kind of that concept, though it's there in some areas, it's kind of closing a bit. I don't know... maybe it's an issue of technology [...]. But I've realised when I get to Botswana, like she was saying, they don't talk to you if you don't greet them. So from this program, we, it's just that, it's not, it hasn't spread much in some areas. [...] I don't know I think again it has to do with the generation gap, I was taught to stand up if there is an adult I will walk despite if I have paid the bus fare. But even us now, like I said it's maybe the technology if I pay for my child I expect the child to be seated. And that which I was taught, I'm not implementing. I wonder how the program can help to realise the concept of Ubuntu that we've been talking about, it's continued.

The above extract details the fragility of Ubuntu in areas such as Botswana as the speaker (B12) reveals how Ubuntu is “closing” or that “it hasn’t spread much in some areas” which is said to possibly be due to “an issue of technology”. This constructs Ubuntu in opposition to the advent and advancement of technology, as the speaker (B12) indicates that technology is hampering real life social connections within communities. This constructs Ubuntu as a social practice that may be threatened by the new age of technology. Technology also allows access to a view of global culture which may create distance between the young generation and the elder generation as they are influenced by foreign practices which they may adopt. This is extrapolated by the speaker’s next comment concerning people in Botswana who “don’t talk to you if you don’t greet them” (B12) which is then followed by how Ubuntu is not being practiced in some areas. By drawing on a discourse of globalisation as an opposing force to Ubuntu the speaker highlights that Ubuntu is an African ideal that is being diluted by the importation of foreign practices. The speaker (B12) again mentions that the “generation gap” could be hampering with the practice of Ubuntu as the speaker (B12) says “I was taught to stand up if there is an adult I will walk despite if I have paid the bus fare” insinuating that this is not practiced anymore.

The speaker then positions herself outside of Ubuntu through a confession: “that which I was taught I’m not implementing” (B12). She explains that she was taught to stand up for her elders to take her seat but that she does not practice this anymore, and should a seat

for her child be paid for then the child is allowed to sit there. The speaker takes responsibility for her actions and creates awareness of the fragility of Ubuntu. This respect for elders that was constructed in relation to Ubuntu is threatened by money in this extract, as the participant mentions how paying for a seat then entitles that person to their seat, despite the custom to move for the elders out of respect. Ethics is relegated to the background as money trumps a culturally constructed moral imperative. This highlights how money could corrupt the ideals of Ubuntu as money creates a sense of ownership over something which Ubuntu purports to share and offer for the wellbeing of all and not one. By drawing on this neoliberal discourse the speaker argues that capitalist enterprise is not part of the Ubuntu value system and is not African. This demonstrates the effect of the postcolonial aftermath on the practice of an African value system such as Ubuntu. Furthermore by the participant stating their awareness and appreciation of the practice of Ubuntu, but admitting to still not practice it may suggest that Ubuntu can be idealistic in its pursuits.

4.2.9 Caring economics

The extract below further constructs the challenges that Ubuntu faces which demonstrate its scarcity in some cultures and communities through lack of practice. The speaker draws on a neoliberal discourse to discuss topics of capitalist and egocentric pursuits through “fancy cars, fancy clothes, fancy everything” (B11) and privatised wealth. This is juxtaposed to how Ubuntu is constructed by the participants, as something that involves sharing, self-sacrifice, respect, virtue, oneness and communal wellbeing. By saying that Ubuntu is not an egocentric enterprise the participant (B11) showcases the effect of colonisation and globalisation on African cultural practices and highlights what Ubuntu does entail by contrast, which is discussed below.

The speaker talks of the promotion of self-interest as something that is not within the system of Ubuntu. The counter construction to this would be a caring economics that exists to serve society as a whole. This positions any disproportionate economic inequity as a threat to Ubuntu and a healthy economy.

B11: I might be tampering with your flow. I'm just touched by the Ubuntu idea, um, something just struck my mind that we as REPSSI have a lot on our plate, there's a lot at stake, because now there's social media, there's civilisation. Now we have a lot to do in the community, because you see one wants cars, one wants twenty cars alone, one wants a mall alone, people want to have wealth alone. People want to be seen, fancy cars, fancy clothes, fancy everything. [...]...we have to go down to earth. [...]. So I think we as REPSSI, the problem itself need to look deep into it for bringing more into the subjects for the topics, strengthening it. So that we have a wider teaching the communities about the programme to go further. I think we are challenged, like we are talking Ubuntu is not happening but I've seen it. The Sotho, these people from other countries they are so nice. But we the locals, it's like we just fell from heaven we are not practicing Ubuntu. So I think we as REPSSI need to teach the locals more about Ubuntu.

The REPSSI representative (B11) opens the talk with “I might be tampering with your flow” as a cautionary excuse for his input due to his position as a representative listening to the focus group and not a service-learning student participating in it. However he remarks that the talk around Ubuntu has “touched” him and struck his mind which requires him to actively engage with the topic. This showcases the active way people engaged with Ubuntu as even the representative aligned with the participants and positioned himself within the constructions of the term. This highlights the infectious nature of Ubuntu and denotes an Africentric way of being in the world that “struck” (B11) a chord within the representative.

He then constructs Ubuntu by polarising it with things that show one is not practicing Ubuntu. It is reiterated again that “social media” like technology (previously mentioned) and “civilisation” are factors that interfere with the practice of Ubuntu. These concepts are associated with neoliberal economies and draw heavily from United Statesian and European discourses. By doing this the representative highlights how social media and civilisation have threatened the integrity and practice of African ideals such as Ubuntu.

The speaker (B11) expands on how these factors have resulted in a consumer culture that place more emphasis on status and wealth rather than sharing, respect, and communal wellbeing. This capitalistic endeavour, an exported culture of consumerism from neo-liberal economies, does not marry to the ideals of Ubuntu. For Ubuntu does not focus on pooling

resources for one person, but rather sharing those resources with those in need – a caring economics if you will. Such a person that owns “twenty cars” a “mall” and has “wealth alone” is therefore not practicing Ubuntu. In essence Ubuntu is constructed as a system that distributes wealth so that all may reap the benefits of a harmonious economy. The speaker (B11) refers to this through the idiom of going “down to earth”, a way of returning to the original teachings of Ubuntu that do not place value on concentrated financial and material wealth but rather on the quality of connections between people.

The speaker (B11) admits that this is a challenge because “Ubuntu is not happening but I’ve seen it”, which speaks to its existence but constructs it as something that is currently not taking place with the locals (South Africans) “but we the locals, it’s liken we just fell from heaven we are not practicing Ubuntu”. This statement constructs another antonym of Ubuntu as it compares falling from heaven or having a ‘god-like’ complex as the antithesis of Ubuntu. The speaker previously mentioned that accruing individual wealth en masse goes against Ubuntu ideology, and now is comparing people who have inflated egos or think they are better than others as people that do not practice Ubuntu. This then constructs Ubuntu as a practice that is not egocentric or based on rich consumption but modest, humble and in pursuit of promoting economic harmony, which draws on a discourse of sustainable development. Sustainable development speaks to a reduction in inequality through sharing, and maximising of resources which Ubuntu has been synonymously linked to in the talk.

Furthermore the below extract highlights a participant’s personal experience of caring economics as exemplified through the cultural practice of funerals in Namibia.

B13: The way it has been practiced where I come from (Namibia), you will see it like, my brother would say it especially at funerals in our areas you have a funeral you end up maybe contributing 500 to buy a coffin. The village, in the village this one will come will bring maize meal, this one will bring beans, this one will bring whatever that they have. Then those that are working, each one may contribute a certain amount to give to the family of the deceased. The person that is unemployed, we usually contribute money for us that are working, we contribute to the coffin we pay the funeral services and everything. And then on those students who have left, we still support.

This passage of talk reiterates the economics of care in the construction of Ubuntu. The speaker (B13), who is from Namibia, again indicates that Ubuntu involves contributions and financial support for those in need. B13 uses the example of the funeral process in Namibia to portray that “one will bring whatever they have” in order to help another through the sharing and gifting of food, money, or any means available to the person. This locates Ubuntu within an economy of harmony that involves sustainably sharing resources and finances to promote harmony and wellbeing within the community.

4.2.10 Preserving Ubuntu

The extracts of talk and dialogue below highlight the construct of respect within the practice of Ubuntu. This is an African perspective linked to the respect of elders, dress code, cultural sensitivity, and behaving in a respectful manner for the wellbeing of the community. The talk generated in the conversation is concerned with the implicit social rules within the practice of Ubuntu that include respect for the elders (A2) and the embodiment of inoffensive non-verbal (dress) and verbal (communication) behaviour. The participants use these implicit rules to discipline others into preserving the practice of Ubuntu. They share responsibility for the preservation of Ubuntu by highlighting ways people can monitor themselves to ensure that they are within Ubuntu or not. By doing this they highlight an ethical way of being and co-construct Ubuntu as an African moral philosophy.

Interviewer: [...] In your understanding how would you know if a person was practicing Ubuntu?

A1: You are not offending someone else.

Interviewer: How do we know when someone is doing Ubuntu?

A2: Maybe when someone is respecting the elders that is showing Ubuntu.

A3: And the way you respond, sometimes someone may offend you and you will respond as if you are not being offended.

A4: For us it is the way we are dressing.

Interviewer: What, that you have to consider others in the way you dress that you might cause offence?

A4: Mmmm.

The above extract of conversation involved many in the group participating in the talk, and building on what the previous speaker had said, in order to strengthen the construction of Ubuntu as a respectful practice. This awareness of others and monitoring oneself to decrease offense creates a way for people to take individual responsibility for how they behave in order to do Ubuntu. By using the talk to create an awareness of the self in relation to the other, the participants draw on discourse of shared identity as they list ways to share this identity. This shifts responsibility onto the shoulders of the individuals in the room as it denotes key ways of doing Ubuntu. By doing this the participants preserve the practice of Ubuntu through their talk. Furthermore within the act of conversing about Ubuntu they share responsibility for constructing Ubuntu. This sharing of responsibility takes place through the participant's conversational offerings as they collaborate to construct Ubuntu practices together. It is evidenced in the way A3 adds onto A2's constructions by starting the sentence with "and" as if joining in on an implicit listing of Ubuntu practices within the group. This response shows participants working together in an explicit portrayal of Ubuntu.

The above highlights how behaviour and dress code should not cause offense to others and even if one is offended by another to not show this offense out of respect, in the spirit and 'doing' of Ubuntu. The participants align their cultural practices (respect and dress code) with the doing of Ubuntu. By doing this they are positioning Ubuntu as an integrated system that involves cultural traditions by drawing on an Africentric discourse. They do this to highlight the ways of being in Ubuntu and in essence use their talk to spread the teachings of Ubuntu and preserve its practice.

4.3 Constructions of social justice

This section looks at how social justice is discursively constructed by African service-learning students across the two focus groups. It is significant to note that considerably less talk was generated on the topic of social justice as participants found it difficult to engage with the topic. Social justice was positioned outside of their personal experience by locating it within an expert field of the law. By doing this they used their talk to orientate social justice as a human rights pursuit linked with activism and ensuring equality.

4.3.1 A foreign concept

Social justice seems to be treated as a foreign term that is not positioned within the subject's world of experience. There are two extracts of dialogue below that detail the responses to what social justice is from either focus group. There is a similar silence following the question concerning what social justice is, in both groups which may indicate that the term is not local and easily understandable within an African context. The participants passively engage with the concept through their silences. This is discussed below.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me what you understand about social justice?

B1: Social justice?

Silence (18 sec)

(giggles)

B1: I wish I was speaking my language.

The above extract was taken from focus group A and is a response to the interviewer questioning what the group understands about social justice. The first speaker to respond (B1) repeats the words social justice and attaches an inflection at the end of the word to indicate a question. After this response there is a silence and long pause (18 seconds) as the discussion comes to a halt. Shy laughter is then heard from members of the group as they struggle to fill the silence with an answer to the question, indicating their discomfort with the topic. This silence indicates a hesitancy and unwillingness to verbalise a term they are struggling to comprehend. The initial speaker then remarks; "I wish I was speaking my own language". This response indicates that the term "social justice" may be foreign to the language of the group and their local knowledge. Furthermore it suggests that the focus group being held in English is limiting the expression of members as they struggle to translate their thoughts into English. It is apparent that the speaker (B1) wishes to engage in discussion but finds it difficult to do so, either because of the term social justice, or the limits of holding the discussion in English.

The extract from focus group A is much like the one discussed above. It evidences further silence and hesitancy from participants in coming forth with their understandings of social justice.

Interviewer: So the last set of questions are now about the issue of social justice and what, what, what do you understand when a person talks about social justice?

Silence (6 sec)

Interviewer: When we talk about social justice what are we talking about...(pause – 2 sec) don't google it. (Laughter from a few members of the group)

Silence (12 sec)

Interviewer: When we talk about social justice what are we talking about?

In the extract above the interviewer asks the group what their understanding is of social justice. This is followed by a long silence (6 seconds) in which the interviewer senses the confusion in the room and attempts the question again with some humour to help normalise their confusion and hopefully encourage conversation. However this tactic is not enough to facilitate participation and a longer silence ensues (12 seconds) before the interviewer attempts the question for a third time. The reiteration of the question and the participants' passive response are in stark contrast to the way that the participants actively interacted with the topic of Ubuntu. This again mirrors a similar response to that of focus group B which also hosted a silence following the question about social justice. This echoes the limited understanding of the term 'social justice' within an African context and speaks to the restricted nature of conducting a focus group in English.

The excerpt of dialogue below comes from focus group A's, understanding of social justice and offers terms such as "fairness", "community", and "equal access" in its discursive construction. This employs a discourse of equality in constructing what the participants "think" social justice is. Through the talk they distance themselves from the experience of social justice and place it within an objective realm of social services.

A9: You know I think that social justice is just fairness and respect in the community.

A10: Things that are socially accepted in the community.

Silence (7 seconds)

C: Any other comments from anybody?

A11: Social justice...um...I guess everyone having the same, equal access to social services in the community whether you poor or rich everyone has the same access to those social services.

A12: I think it's about fairness.

The tentativeness of the talk here indicates the participant's unfamiliarity with the term. The pauses the "I guesses" the "I thinks" are all indicative of the participants struggling to find responses. A9 appears to try and un-complicate the term with the word "just" in a bid to simplify social justice. By doing this the participant A9 is attempting to minimise confusion within the group and mitigate the lengthy silences. Although the participants work hard to construct the term through repertoires of equality, fairness and respect; it is apparent from the talk that this term is not something they identify with. Their talk creates a distance between themselves and social justice. Participants try to explain and understand the concept but it can be seen that social justice is out of their reach of experience. This places social justice outside of indigenous knowledge in Africa and highlights the imported nature of the term.

4.3.2 In the legal realm

The extract of dialogue below links social justice to a legal discourse. The participants do this by drawing on a discourse that positions social justice as a legal pursuit that "they" (people in the legal field) and "that system" (the law) deal with (B2). The participants further do this by explaining how they have seen it practiced through legal cases. This locates social justice within the legal system which draws on an expert discourse that is placed outside of them.

B2: I did my training at a community-based organisation. At this place victims of child abuse were reported. I saw people looking for justice and taking the cases to police or social welfare. I saw that system looking for social justice.

B3: We have lots of cases of teenage pregnancy at the school which we refer to social workers to take and see what they can help the child [...].

B4: I don't know if what I'm about to say is also linked to that, because um there's this other case that we had. The child was accused of a crime that they did not commit. They were referred to our offices with the social workers. They did their counselling and stuff to be represented in court. So the social worker have to speak on behalf of the child. When she did it, it was very good because justice was served for that child.

B5: I don't know if mine will be with social justice. But during the past we've had the interpretation committees, kids being raped. The perversion trial, if a teenager steals they are not taken to court for sentencing but referred to community centres so that they do not have a criminal record which will affect their life onwards.

This talk highlights the systematic construction of social justice within law and social work. The first speaker (B2) links social justice to legal matters that involve seeking justice for “victims of child abuse” through “police or social welfare”. The next participant (B3) builds on this systematic train of thought by exemplifying how social workers help in areas of teenage pregnancy - constructing social justice as a form of social work.

Participant B4 starts her talk with “I don't know” which indicates her unfamiliarity with the term. B4 further builds on the existing construction by referring to a “case” and a “crime”, “to be represented in court”, placing the talk within the legal realm. This system of intervention involving the law and social work is spoken about as “very good because justice was served for that child” (B4). This highlights how social justice is placed within an expert discourse that does not draw on participants' ways of being in the world as Ubuntu did.

Speaker B5 begins with “I don't know if mine will be social justice” which indicates uncertainty, that the speaker does not fully identify with the term. This speaker also talks of rape cases and community service, which again constructs social justice within a legal discourse. There is, thus a clear hesitancy with the use of the term social justice which echoes the previous discursive construction of social justice as an unfamiliar concept. The participants manage to approach social justice by locating it outside of their everyday experience through an expert discourse that locates it within the legal realm.

4.4 Ubuntu and social justice

This last section examines how the participants responded when the constructs of Ubuntu and social justice intersected.

4.4.1 Dialectical

The excerpts of dialogue below contain talk about the relationship between Ubuntu and social justice. It is predominantly taken from Focus Group A as the interviewer drove the discussion around Ubuntu and social justice in a more provocative manner than that of Focus Group B. From the perspectives of the participants, Ubuntu and social justice are not mutually exclusive systems but cooperate with one another for the purpose of the common good. The excerpts below occurred after the interviewer asked the participants about the relationship between social justice (as activism) and Ubuntu (as harmony). The interviewer from Focus Group A uses provocative questioning to unearth how there is a relationship between Ubuntu and social justice. This offers a dialectical discourse between participants and the interviewer as they both appear to hold different views (the interviewer as resistant against a harmonious relationship between Ubuntu and social justice, and the participant's as united in their efforts to showcase a harmony between the two systems). Through the dialogue generated, the participants constructed a symbiotic relationship between Ubuntu and social justice as they talked of the systems working together. This is in contrast to their previous talk where they actively constructed Ubuntu as an embodied practice. And social justice was constructed as foreign and elite as it was placed within the realm of law. Thus the participants draw on a discourse of dualism as they construct Ubuntu as subjective and social justice as objective.

A12: The way you go about to protest, maybe the government has failed to do something for you but the way you do is like with Ubuntu, you have to be respectful but which doesn't mean you don't have to speak out.

Interviewer: But what if the way you... it causes offence?

A12: That's why I said sometimes, because you have seen that something is wrong somewhere or maybe a service provider is failing to provide for a certain service. If you had to address some members of the community and then they understand it, you don't seem as if you are out of Ubuntu.

The first member to respond (A12) insinuates that protest can still occur whilst Ubuntu is being practiced as long as it is respectful. This is done with ‘instructions’ for how “you go about” protesting” and how “you have to be respectful” in order to for one to protest within Ubuntu. The interviewer challenges the participants by referencing earlier talk where inoffensiveness was linked to Ubuntu, and that the act of speaking out may cause offence. This is where the dialectic emerges. The speaker (A12) repeats the instruction “that’s why I said” defending his point on how social justice can remain in Ubuntu: it depends on the manner of protest. This speaker uses his talk to create conditions on how to protest and pursue social justice, indicating that if there is lack of understanding “you are out of Ubuntu”. This constructs a nuanced understanding of Ubuntu and social justice as it means you can practice social justice outside of Ubuntu but if you follow certain implicit rules you can also practice it within Ubuntu.

The dialogue continues below and looks at how activism and Ubuntu are discursively constructed as cooperative.

A7: There’s a practice we have in our country we call it genital mutilation sometimes you may want to talk about something or about it...

Interviewer: If you are that person, that activist, trying to create awareness about genital mutilation, are you practicing Ubuntu?

All: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

A12: Trying to protect the rights of others.

A11: For the interests of the community.

This above section of the discussion uses the topic of “genital mutilation” (introduced by A7) to engage with the practice of activism within Ubuntu or vice versa. By referring to practices in context the speaker adds impetus to the argument. The interviewer asks the group whether an activist against genital mutilation is practicing Ubuntu, to which members of the group respond “yes”. After the group mutually agrees that Ubuntu and activism is inclusionary, different participants join in the conversation to support and defend the speaker’s (A7) example. This activism is then said to be a practice of Ubuntu as it is “trying to protect the rights of others” (A12) which constructs acts that help benefit others by

protecting their rights as showcasing Ubuntu. Furthermore it is done “for the interests of the community” (A11) which further constructs acts done for the sake of the community as practicing of Ubuntu. Thus participants draw on a discourse of human rights to demonstrate that an activist can practice Ubuntu on the condition that it is done for the sake of the community.

The dialogue continues below as the interviewer questions the group about how fighting can coexist with harmony, which is bound within the practice of Ubuntu.

Interviewer: But when you fighting that doesn't mean harmony. Remember I asked you what it looks like when someone is doing Ubuntu? You said respect, not causing offence...uh...fairness, harm- I'm using the word harmony, you didn't use the word harmony but you were talking about that. Help me to understand this, because you say yes an activist is still practicing Ubuntu but how can they be practicing Ubuntu if they not being those things you were talking about?

A11: For the people that ah, for the example that (A7) has given for the people that are practicing the GFM (genital female mutilation) job its part of their culture it has been there since many years ago. And then for them to just realise that this practice is wrong or this practice is against human rights it will take time. So this activist it takes this activist to convince them first.

In the above extract the interviewer links harmony to Ubuntu and fighting to social justice in order to understand how two seemingly opposing practices can coexist. This is a challenge to the participants as the interviewer highlights contradictions from participants' earlier talk through a disrupting form of questioning. To answer this, the speaker (A11) refers back to the topic of genital mutilation and discusses how it holds “many years” of history as a cultural practice. By doing this the speaker (A11) supports the first speaker's (A7) reasoning. A11 furthers this reasoning by picking up the term activist from the interviewer to align with the interviewer and to extend the argument. A11 reiterates that activism can take place within Ubuntu if it is done to preserve the rights of people and done within a timely fashion. Therefore it is the activists duty to convince the community that such a “practice is wrong” as the speaker draws on a human rights discourse to support the argument.

The dialectic continues below as participants reinstate that social justice and Ubuntu can be practiced together on the condition that it is done with others, in order to help others.

Interviewer: Sometimes social justice means uncomfortable relationships.

A8: You form allies.

Interviewer: You need to form allies. Okay, let's say for example you've got your HIV+ child and the state is not providing antiretroviral for that child and now I want to fight the state and say it's not ethical it's unfair and say all children who are HIV+ should have access to antiretroviral. Am I practicing Ubuntu if I'm fighting someone?

Some: Yes.

A5: Yes you are in your own way.

A12: So Ubuntu's like I am a person because you are also there as other people. So if I take it personally, I just want to achieve my goals then it's out of the context of Ubuntu.

Interviewer: But when you fighting for common good?

A11: My problem becomes your problem.

Interviewer: So it's only a problem in my head it's not a problem in your lives? You're able to practice social justice and Ubuntu.

In the above extract the interviewer continues with troubling questions to provoke answers. She suggests that social justice can sometimes create “uncomfortable relationships”, to which a participant (A5) responds that allies are formed in a bid to mitigate the “uncomfortable relationships” that result from activism. The interviewer poses a scenario of fighting to gain healthcare for children in order to question whether this “fighting” can be considered a practice of Ubuntu. A few members of the group respond “yes” that it is a form of Ubuntu. Then a participant (A5) replies that it is “in your own way” which takes on a philosophical stance that adds subjectivity to the relationship. This way of doing Ubuntu with social justice is related to personhood that encourages an acceptance of self and of others. Furthermore by surmising it can be done “in your own way” shows effort to end the confrontational questioning in a bid to restore harmony and peace within the group. A participant (A12) then indicates, once again, as if warning the interviewer of their self-interest that you can pursue social justice “out of the context of Ubuntu” if you are fighting

for your sole interests. This adds to the nuanced relationship between social justice and Ubuntu that is based on implicit conditions for harmony between the two systems.

The participants forge together in acts of solidarity to solidify that “fighting for the common good” can be within the spirit of Ubuntu as A11 states that “my problem becomes your problem”. In this context the participant (A11) constructs Ubuntu through shared experience, therefore when one person wins everyone wins and when one person has a problem then that is the problem of everyone. This sense of togetherness is utilised to compare Ubuntu to social justice as Ubuntu uses the solidarity of the community to fight if needs be for the welfare of the community. As A12 encapsulates Ubuntu is not practiced when it is an individual pursuit or someone is fighting for their own goal which is not a shared goal, then this is not Ubuntu. However this is a contradiction as a goal of one should be the goal of many as A11 constructs “my problem” as “your problem”. This highlights an underlying tension in what constitutes shared experience within Ubuntu and speaks to its complexity. The above talk evidences the dialectic of how participants worked together in a collaborative effort to deal with the provocative questions posed and to persuade the interviewer of the conditional relationship between Ubuntu and social justice. By doing this the participants also demonstrate Ubuntu by engaging with challenges of the interviewer together. They try at all times to maintain harmony which can be summed up in the statement “in your own way” (A5) as it evokes a tone of acceptance. The interviewer eventually relents and the group restores the harmony they pursued as she concludes; “it’s only a problem in my head it’s not a problem in your lives? You’re able to practice social justice and Ubuntu”.

The piece of text below further constructs how unity amongst a group can often be necessary to help challenge or work for justice and change, in order to benefit the whole unit. This is seen as Ubuntu because it involves its basic tenets of togetherness and communal wellbeing.

B2: We have challenged the road authority because our main challenge was the road. But we have managed to work together and now the road is being built. So with Ubuntu the way I have applied it [...].

This above excerpt of talk is about a group of persons who saw a challenge in their community related to the road. This group “managed to work together” in order to get a road built for the betterment of the community, much like the participants did in the conversation above (Focus group A). The speaker (B2) discursively constructs this communal action as the application of Ubuntu. This extract evokes a sense of activism done within the practice of Ubuntu as the speaker (B2) refers to the way he has applied Ubuntu through collectively challenging the road authority as a community.

This highlights the symbiotic relationship between Ubuntu and social justice that sees the participants embodying both concepts through their talk. This relationship is conditional as it based on the betterment of the community which constructs social justice as a tool that Ubuntu can utilise to achieve communal wellbeing, This begs the question, whether Ubuntu and social justice are a relationship bound within utilitarianism (ensure wellbeing to the greatest number) which runs a risk of collateral damage for the individual voice that is drowned out by the choir.

The talk generated above speaks to the symbiotic relationship between Ubuntu and social justice but when the constructions of each concept are looked at throughout the text a discourse of dualism is apparent. This is seen under the first section that looks at the constructions of Ubuntu through an embodied discourse. This section highlights how participants place themselves within the world of Ubuntu and draw on an Africentric discourse to locate it as a local and indigenous practice. Participants generated a substantial amount of talk around the concept of Ubuntu and more students offered their thoughts and experiences in relation to it. Whereas the section on social justice involved less participant input and generated a small amount of talk with very little personal experience that deployed an expert discourse bound within the legal system. This constructed social justice as a concept that is not local or African in comparison to its counterpart – Ubuntu.

4.5 Conclusions

The participants are social actors that actively inhabit the space of the focus group through a generous number of contributions, where they make use of their indigenous knowledge and personal experiences to locate Ubuntu within their subjective experience. They embody

and play with the concept in the performance of talking which forefronts the holonistic and Africentric discourses and a discourse of shared identity that they deploy to construct Ubuntu through the kinship at play in the focus group. By doing this they construct Ubuntu as an African moral philosophy of personhood and community.

When social justice enters the stage they assume a more passive role as significant silences shroud the construction of this term, which distances the participants from it. They tentatively collaborate, within the spirit of Ubuntu, to clarify and unravel the term by drawing on a legal discourse that places social justice within an expert field. By placing social justice in a niche field that does not make use of linguistic terminology such as; idioms, personal experiences or the possessive pronouns that Ubuntu does, the participants' highlight the foreign nature of a term as not originating within an African indigenous system of knowledge. This is not to say that the concept does not belong within the system, rather that the term itself is a United Statesian or European export. What is interesting is that the tenets of social justice are uncovered through the participants' constructions of Ubuntu and not through the direct talk on social justice itself.

The intersection between social justice and Ubuntu is tentatively engaged with by participants who use their talk to construct a symbiotic relationship between the two systems. However a tension within their constructions of each term is highlighted through a discourse of dualism. These offerings construct a relationship; as if one could visualise that Ubuntu was a wheel with different spokes that form a holonistic way of being which promotes communal wellness. Then social justice could form one of these spokes. Social justice is located within Ubuntu as an Africentric pursuit for harmony, through the participants' constructions of both terms and the way they talk about the intersection.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The literature draws upon discourses of good citizenship and scholarship in constructing what service-learning is and what its students embody (Cahn, 1997). In the focus group the service-learning students actively perform the final tenet in Boyer's (1990) scholarship of engagement; as they reflect on their experiences of the CBWCY and offer a way forward for the programme. Education implemented through active engagement between service-learning students and community members can create a closing or narrowing of the gap between academia and real-life contexts as Dewey's (1963) philosophy of education supports. This study showcases the closing gap as it takes feedback from the real-life contexts of the service-learning students who engaged with community members, and puts it into the academic context of this study with the aim of generating a deeper understanding of Ubuntu in education. The previous chapter detailed several discourses that African service-learning students drew on in their talk of Ubuntu and social justice. This chapter seeks to address the objectives and questions of the study and how they relate to the overarching discourses reported in the results chapter.

- 1) How do service-learning students from different African countries construct their understanding of Ubuntu?
- 2) How do service-learning students from different African countries construct the concept of social justice?

And

- 3) How do these constructions of Ubuntu and social justice interact in the participant talk of service-learning students?

5.2 Context of the service-learning student participants

Firstly it is important to contextualise the participants and their stake in the study as African service-learning students and what this means for the results. The literature highlights the morality of a service-learning student by attaching characteristics of civic responsibility or

good citizenship to it (Sigmon, 1979; Howard, 1998; Carver, 1997; Speck & Hoppe, 2004; & Jacoby, 2015). This is done through acts that aim to diffuse hierarchical structures of knowledge, by creating a cyclical movement between academic and local knowledge systems (Wehling, 2008). The participants were distance service-learning students that engaged with both systems of knowledge (academic and local) and provided their understandings of Ubuntu and social justice, systems that hold similar aims as service-learning in restoring justice and promoting harmony. This research, offers the perspective constructions of African service-learning students.

5.3 Constructions of Ubuntu

Notions of what it is to be in or out of Ubuntu are pluralistic in their constructions, as Ubuntu is offered as the holonistic pursuit of communal welfare and harmony bound within a moral African philosophy. At times participants struggled to articulate what Ubuntu was and in doing this the talk highlighted notions emphasised in the literature. This appreciates that an aspect of Ubuntu is metaphysical, which predisposes it as a difficult topic to put word to as it is bound within essence, and language may not suffice or provide terminology to warrant a just explanation (Ramose, 2002a). Participants drew on personal experiences and cultural practices to construct Ubuntu, Oruka (2002) would warrant this as an ethnophilosophical trend.

The discussion starts with this first question (mentioned above) and centres on the key discourses drawn on in the constructions of Ubuntu; Africentric, holon-ness, and Moral philosophy.

5.3.1 An Africentric Discourse

The first question focuses on the construction of Ubuntu by service-learning students from an array of African countries. This question uses “their understanding” and with that it assumes that Ubuntu has continental roots by asking how these students construct it, even though it is an Nguni word located in South Africa and may not resonate with all the service-learning students (Mkabela, 2005; Ramose, 2002a). It was therefore important to problematize this assumption and ascertain whether it held true, and whether the

applicability of Ubuntu reached further than the Southern tip of Africa. The results provided ample evidence of this. The service-learning students may all have had different cultural backgrounds and hailed from different African countries but they resonated strongly with Ubuntu as the talk generated on this topic was lengthy and filled with active participation. The participants drew on an embodied discourse through personalised language of possessive pronouns (“our”, “we”, “us”), personal experiences, story-telling, references to similar systems in their countries by different names (e.g. Harambe as a system of oneness in Namibia) and idioms or cultural practices to locate themselves within the practice of Ubuntu. By doing this they positioned themselves within Ubuntu and constructed it as an African philosophy, a system that is applicable to African persons across cultures and geographic borders (Ramose, 2002a). They constructed an ownership over Ubuntu as an African philosophy that offers a way of being which pursues harmony and promotes unity or oneness. The participants territorialised Ubuntu as a philosophy embedded within African personhood. The literature supports this as Dreyer (2015) and Ramose (2002a) agree that Ubuntu provides a strong moral foundation for all African cultures which resonates with these results.

Dreyer (2015) pinpoints how Ubuntu lies in the oral tradition of African culture through story-telling, idioms, proverbs and suggests that it is best expressed through cultural practices. The participants showcase this best through their talk which drew on such story-telling traditions as personal experiences, cultural practices, and idioms were recounted throughout the conversation on Ubuntu. The participants relied heavily on this embodied discourse of personalised narratives to construct Ubuntu as African. The participant’s linguistic errors in English foregrounded the limiting aspect of constructing Ubuntu in a Western language. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) accurately explored this limitation as he claimed that “Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language” (p.34) because it is embedded within the human essence. This suggests that Ubuntu can be a puzzling linguistic concept to unravel because it is bound to the abstract.

Thus, an Africentric discourse is a main player in the construction of Ubuntu as it locates it within a continental system of indigenous knowledge and moral philosophy and offers an

African worldview throughout the discussion. Dreyer (2015) and Ramose (2002a) sum this up further by explaining that Ubuntu is a moral philosophy rooted in the African context.

Other discourses were also at play in the construction of Ubuntu by service-learning students. Several discourses were drawn on by the service-learning students in their construction of Ubuntu namely; embodied, pluralism, oneness, caring economics, collectivist, and neo-liberal threats to Ubuntu. However these are understood as sub-discourses in comparison to the 'main players' which are heavily referenced and evoked within the talk. These sub-discourses serve to co-construct the overarching discourses and are referenced as such below. The 'main players' or overarching discourses were the Africentric discourse described above, a holonistic discourse, and a discourse of morality.

5.3.2 Holonistic

Chasi (2014) critiques the attachment of collectivism to Africans as it segregates Africa from the west by "claiming that Blacks are collectivists and Westerners are individualists" (Chasi, 2014, p. 498). Brewer and Chen (2007) align with this critique as they report little utility in labelling Ubuntu as collectivist. However African participants within this study drew strongly on a collectivist discourse in their constructions of Ubuntu. This was seen as they used personal experiences of placing the collective needs above the needs of the individual on several occasions (e.g. as a participant mentions that it is necessary to sacrifice an opinion to not cause offence). Despite the frequent mentions of a more 'collectivist' approach in the talk, the term is not used here, given the critiques mentioned by Brewer and Chen (2007) and Chasi (2014). In order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the talk, Ubuntu is seen as an African philosophy that offers a more pluralist and holonistic way of being in the world which cannot be trivialised to 'collectivist' or fed into the binary trope of individualistic Westerners and collectivist Africans.

Ubuntu offers a way of being that dissolves binaries. For example, African tradition honours that the young respect the elderly, in this study the talk highlighted pluralism, as a participant called for the elders to respect the young, in a bid to teach the young an Ubuntu way of being (Mohale, 2013). The promotion of self-reliance within the talk was another

unexpected appearance and spoke to helping others as a route to helping yourself and relying on that self which identifies strongly with a discourse of shared identity. Chasi (2014) and Ramose (2002a) confirms that Ubuntu is nuanced and that the person develops in relation to the group (a relational self) which purports that the development of self-reliance through the group could be considered one of the nuances. This shows that as a philosophy Ubuntu can hold differences, or what appears as binaries within one way of being which then seeks to dissolve binaries by drawing on a holonistic discourse.

This holonistic discourse is used through a tapestry of nuanced constructions about Ubuntu that forge together to make up the whole. These may appear contradictory but offer a pluralist way of understanding Ubuntu. Persons are filled with contradictions and nuances which Ubuntu embraces as different parts that are interconnected in relation to the whole or others – the relational self (Metz, 2011). The individual self is constructed as relational through a discourse of shared identity – as Dreyer puts it (2015), the only way of becoming a person is developing through others. This can be seen in the participants' construction of success which is seen as something that cannot be reaped individually without the input and use of community resources to help that person achieve their goals. This is the philosophy of holon-ness underpinning Ubuntu which characterises how there are many different parts that connect in an intimate and inexplicable way to form the whole, to form the community. Furthermore Ramose (1999) offers Ubuntu as the way of understanding that there is a sense of family hood that links indigenous African persons together as Ubuntu is the blood that sustains and connects each African person together and to the whole.

5.3.3 Moral philosophy

Mkabela (2005) writes of Ubuntu as an ethic of communal wellbeing within Africa. This moral imperative of ensuring communal welfare and harmony is captured throughout the participants' talk that links Ubuntu to virtuous characteristics of goodwill within African personhood (Metz, 2011; Chasi, 2014). This constructs a moral philosophy within Ubuntu as an African tradition which the literature supports (Chasi, 2014; Dreyer, 2015; Ramose, 2002b). This moral theory is then practiced in Africa through Ubuntu by sharing values and practices that help better the self and group through kinship. The participants portrayed this

morality through their acts of sharing stories, laughing to assuage tension in the group, co-constructing what values make up Ubuntu and generating good feelings through personal testimonies of goodwill. This 'doing' of Ubuntu marries well to Ramose's (2002a) iterations that see Ubuntu as active and alive within people and not alongside them. Furthermore these tenets align with the ethics of Ubuntu that Ramose (2002a) discusses.

The participants tentatively came together in an act of preserving Ubuntu by highlighting what threatens its implementation and bring to light the implicit social rules that denote its practice and how this will generate goodwill. If one sees Ubuntu as a moral imperative that holds ethics and right ways of being in the world it also constructs ways of being in the world that may threaten these ethics and in essence may make Ubuntu fragile. If these neoliberal threats take root, and the influence of global culture which values the self above the whole, continues to grow in Africa it has the potential to uproot Ubuntu. This is to say, as Fryer and Laing (2008) agree that the export of foreign practices, ideologies, or beliefs (that do not value shared identity) into African cultures have the potential of reinforcing colonialist agendas and dismantling indigenous systems of knowledge in Africa and practices such as Ubuntu.

There are critiques of Ubuntu in the literature that find its applicability lacking in reality and construct it as an idealistic and romantic philosophy (Chasi, 2014; Mohale, 2013). This critique was not evident in this study as Ubuntu was embodied through the students' personal experiences and actions of togetherness noted within the focus groups. However this critique does highlight that Ubuntu may seem idealistic in the face of modern day culture that offers global trends centred on individual's egos such as looks, interest, and concentrated wealth or the advancements in technology that no longer involve real-life communication that Ubuntu encompasses. Ubuntu is a system under threat as the participants highlighted the fragility of its practice within post-colonial Africa and the introduction of a neoliberal economy (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2000). The talk positioned globalisation as a threat to the practice of Ubuntu in modern day culture, as it has allowed for foreign systems of beliefs and cultural practice to spread to Africa (Fryer & Laing, 2008; Lomas, 2009). These are systems of capitalism and consumerism which safeguard and value the economic wellbeing of the individual self above the other/s.

This system of concentrated material wealth and egotistical pursuits is pitted against the philosophy of Ubuntu that seeks to share resources in ethically creating wellbeing for the community (Mkabela, 2005). Ramose (2002b) outlines how colonisation reconstructed sovereignty for Africans as it replaced land with money. In doing this money supersedes ethical duty and the imperialist triumphs. When money relegates ethical and moral duty or even worse a conscious awareness of choosing money over harmony, the practice of Ubuntu is compromised. For example a participant noted that she no longer offers her bus seat to elders because she has paid for it, despite her awareness of the custom to move for the elders. The participants made reference to technology (social media) and material aspirations as ways of being out of Ubuntu. They drew upon a neoliberal discourse to show how capitalist enterprise in the postcolonial African economy may override the value system and existence of Ubuntu in modern African culture (Serequebehan, 2002). This reveals that Ubuntu can be constructed as a caring economics based on distributive justice and sharing of resources within a community of practice, to benefit vulnerable or disadvantaged community members (Rawls, 1971). However this moral way of being is now bound within a fragile value system in need of preserving.

5.4 Social Justice

The second question addresses how African service-learning students construct social justice. The literature (Hayek: 1978; Novak, 2000) appraises how puzzling a term social justice is, in search of a definition without a concise or global one to be found. This could not ring more true with the participants' constructions of social justice in the current study.

The literature that speaks to the African concepts of social justice highlights how distributive justice is relevant in the African economy through the dissemination of resources to benefit the least advantaged (Rawls, 1971). What is interesting is that the talk concerned about distributive justice was generated in the discussion about Ubuntu and not social justice. This indicates how participants relocated their understanding of social justice by positioning it as a construct of Ubuntu which further highlighted the pluralistic nature of Ubuntu as it assumes social justice within its philosophy. The consequence of this was that placing social justice as a stand-alone term out of the context of Ubuntu seemed to puzzle the students

and highlighted the foreign nature of the term in Africa and the texture of it as a Western import (Smith, 2015). The students drew largely on a legal and human rights discourse to tentatively construct social justice.

5.4.1 In the legal realm

The sparse amount of talk generated about social justice and the lengthy silences that surrounded it showcase that it is not a term that is discursively available within the African context. The participants relocated the term in Africa by positioning it within a legal discourse. When constructing social justice the participants conjured Sing and Salazar's (2010) suggestions of creating a just society, as participants drew on examples of legal cases that necessitated advocacy or empowerment through collaborative efforts within their relative communities.

Their talk drew on discourses of equality and fundamental human rights; access to education, legal access, healthcare, and participating in a society that is free of discrimination. This is synonymous with Grant and Gibson's (2013) definition of social justice that attempts to 're-historise' the concept through the lens of human rights. Furthermore it aligns with the UN's definition as encapsulated in the UDHR which sees social justice as a weapon that fights for equality and human dignity (Grant & Gibson, 2013). This showcases how the participants' drew on global and often Westernised language or neo-colonial discourses in the construction of social justice which further highlights how social justice does not feature as a stand-alone term within their system of indigenous knowledge. It is interesting to note that whilst the participants initially struggled to identify with the term and constructed it as something that was foreign, once they started engaging with the topic they offered constructions that were in line with the definitions in the literature.

5.5 Ubuntu and Social Justice

The last question queried how the participants constructed the interaction between social justice and Ubuntu. The participants constructed Ubuntu with an active voice and subjective positioning which contrasted with their passive construction of social justice and objective positioning. These differing constructions highlight how the students connected and

identified with Ubuntu as a system of local knowledge embedded within an African way of being. On the other hand, social justice was located outside of their day to day experience and placed within expert knowledge through the legal realm. This isolated it from African indigenous knowledge, as it is not seen as African but as something that occurs within the context of the law and bound strongly to a discourse of human rights. This highlights the differences between the two concepts that view social justice as a Western import and Ubuntu as inherently African (Grant & Gibson, 2013; Murove, 2014). However, when the interviewer questioned the participants on how two seemingly opposing constructions could relate by making tensions visible - a dialectic emerges as they both search for the answer and the participants make use of a discourse of dualism to do so.

5.5.1 Dualism

The participants tentatively group together (in the talk) to restore harmony in the ethos of Ubuntu as they explained how these two systems (social justice and Ubuntu) meet through a shared common ground of promoting wellbeing and reducing harm for others. They stipulate that to practice social justice and still be in Ubuntu the activism or protest must be for community benefit. In doing this the participants drew on a discourse of dualism as their separate constructions of the two concepts in previous talk did not coincide with their symbiotic construction of Ubuntu and social justice later within the talk. This highlights the tension in the talk and showcases a tension that the interviewer interrogated through a dialect that pits the interviewer against the participants. However the participants forged together to reinforce that Ubuntu and social justice are not mutually exclusive systems and the interviewer conceded; *“So it’s only a problem in my head it’s not a problem in your lives? You’re able to practice social justice and Ubuntu”*. In doing this they transformed social justice by relocating it within Ubuntu and within an African justice based on conditions of holon-ness (Elechi et al., 2010; Rawls, 1971).

Elechi et al. (2010) construct social justice in Africa as the harmonious pursuit of restoring peace within a community, and explore how this can be practiced through an African Indigenous Justice System (AIJS) that ensures this peace. The construction of Ubuntu within the talk purports a caring economics and the construction of social justice is something that

ensures human rights are safeguarded through the law. Whilst the participants constructed Ubuntu and social justice from different positions within the talk, there seemed to be a relationship evident between the two systems that aimed to transfer social justice into the system of Ubuntu. As Smith (2015) proposed; Ubuntu offers a way of re-territorialising social justice through an Africentric understanding, and this is exactly what the participants worked so hard to do through their dualistic construction of Ubuntu and social justice and the subsequent relationship. The participants offered a symbiotic and harmonious relationship between the two systems that sees Ubuntu assume social justice as part of it and in doing so relocates social justice to Africa. However they also attached conditions to the relationship by echoing Ramose (2002a) and honouring the attachment of social justice to Ubuntu only in the pursuit of harmony and communal welfare.

5.6 Conclusion

It can be surmised that Ubuntu is, much like Dreyer (2015); Murithi (2009); and Ramose (2002a) put it, an original African moral philosophy that has Nguni origin which offers a shared understanding of select homogenous African ethics. Ubuntu is a practice that has certain obligations or implicit social rules within it that must be abided to in order to be 'doing' Ubuntu. This features, respect for old and young, caring for others, restoring harmony, self-sacrifice, sharing wealth or resources or emotions or responsibility, promoting oneness, kinship, being virtuous, being compassionate and treating others fairly to promote a shared identity and wellbeing in the community (Ramose, 2002a). These are all covered within the literature by the various authors (Ramose, 2002a; Letseka, 2011; Dolamo, 2013; Chasi, 2014; Mkabela, 2005) and reinforced through the discursive iterations of the participants. An Africentric discourse highlights an offering of local knowledge within the service-learning engagement and meets Wehling's (2008) aim of circulating academic knowledge (CBWCY) and local knowledge to dismantle unequal binaries and pursue social justice, or in the language of Ubuntu to pursue a communal wellbeing and harmony.

What of Ubuntu and its link to education? The generous amount of talk generated on Ubuntu by the service-learning students and the way they predominantly positioned themselves within Ubuntu, highlights the applicability of Ubuntu within distance service-

learning education as participants drew on experiences from the CBWCY to frame their constructions of Ubuntu. This links Ubuntu to education.

Wehling (2008) speaks of service-learning as a liberating pedagogy that diffuses the hierarchy of knowledge in its pursuit of social justice. From the results of this study it seems that this pursuit of social justice within an African context is more nuanced and holonistic as Ubuntu inhabits the territory of social justice and then expands on it by adding a moral way of being in the world that is in pursuit of communal wellbeing and harmony. Within this philosophy a way of being for teachers and students is highlighted that offers insight into a redefined understanding of African pedagogy through the embodiment of Ubuntu within education. If service-learning aims to facilitate mutual respect, shared resources, communal benefit, reciprocity, and communication (Donahue et al., 2006; Ottenritter, 2004) and Ubuntu offers a way of being that aligns with these aims. It is not a stretch to then see how service-learning marries well to the philosophy of Ubuntu which could inform the reclaiming of an African pedagogical practice.

Ramsaroop and Randhani (2014) call for the integration of social justice within the South African curriculum of education and Dabysing (2014) highlights how Ubuntu can decolonise service-learning in Africa. This research seeks to harmonise these authors' insights and calls for a reshaping of service-learning and education in Africa through the introduction of Ubuntu into the curriculum. Ubuntu offers a holonistic approach to education that necessitates service-learning as a scholarship of reciprocity. Ubuntu provides a way of teaching and learning that is embedded in indigenous knowledge and African philosophy which offers a way of decolonising education in Africa and reducing the neo-liberal threats to the survival of Ubuntu.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings

This research aimed to generate an understanding of how African service-learning students constructed Ubuntu and social justice, in the field of African pedagogy. It can be surmised that service-learning students from various African countries identified with the ethos of Ubuntu through their active engagement with the topic. This was in contrast to the distance they placed between themselves and social justice as they confined it to the expert field of the law. What is interesting is how the service-learning students used their talk to then construct a harmonious relationship between Ubuntu and social justice based on the condition that social justice was done for the welfare of the community.

6.1.1 Ubuntu

The construction of African philosophy is dependent upon cultural construction. Ubuntu is constructed by participant's drawing on such cultural experiences that have an embedded moral fabric within them. This moral domain provides conditions for doing and being in Ubuntu. Ubuntu entails a communal ethic of implicit and established practices (respect, sharing, compassion, solidarity) - an ethnophilosophical approach if you will. The implicit components of Ubuntu speak to its abstract and metaphysical nature that is embedded within the human essence, and language struggles to harness or define this ineffability. The participants in this study constructed economic pursuit as a factor that interferes with morality when it is not done for the welfare of the community and is for individual gain. This highlighted the global threat to Ubuntu and constructed it as a philosophy prone to fragility. Ubuntu was thus, constructed as a holonistic African moral philosophy, which was embodied by participants through their talk and within their service-learning experiences.

6.1.2 Social Justice

Social Justice was positioned outside of the participant's indigenous knowledge systems when grappled with in isolation through an expert discourse of the law. It was further

constructed using Eurocentric and United Statesian terminology which highlighted the imported quality of the term.

6.1.3 Social Justice and Ubuntu

When social justice was related to Ubuntu, participants were able to construct social justice as a part of Ubuntu philosophy and in essence re-territorialised social justice in Africa. The intersection between Ubuntu and social justice seems to construct social justice as a tenet of Ubuntu philosophy and ethics, which pursues peace and harmony for the community.

6.2 Strengths

The study generated a rich understanding of the complex nature of Ubuntu and offers an interpretation of social justice as bound within the moral philosophy of Ubuntu. This could provide a brick to paving the foundation of an African pedagogy in an effort of decolonising education through service-learning and Ubuntu.

6.3 Weaknesses

The researcher's aim is to pursue the decolonisation of education by understanding an African pedagogy that could possibly be underpinned by Ubuntu philosophy. The irony is that the research and writing of the paper have been done through the researcher's educational formation and training through a predominantly colonised medium. The weakness is that the insights and iterations offered here are side effects of this heritage. Furthermore the researcher's position as a white South African who may live alongside Ubuntu but not in it may compromise a complex understanding of the philosophy.

6.4 Limitations

A limitation in the study was the language of medium that it was conducted and subsequently written up in. The focus groups were held in English which members from different African countries shared a common understanding of. However by conducting a discussion in a language other than one's home language holds the potential of restricting a person's expression. This was clearly evidenced in the talk where a participant expressed her wish to be speaking in her own language in order to participate in the discussion. This

example shows how language can confine, restrain, and position a person as the participant only had English discursive strategies to navigate and make meaning within the group.

It must be noted that this study offers a single narrative from the author's perspective which only offers one way of analysing the participants talk. There are several sub-discourses and others discourses drawn upon by the participants which are not analysed in depth or accounted for. Furthermore the iterations that highlight the intersection between Ubuntu and social justice were predominantly based on the results of one focus group, as the other focus group did not generate as much talk on the relationship between Ubuntu and social justice.

6.5 Unanticipated difficulties

A difficulty was attempting to avoid ethnocentrism through researcher reflexivity and avoiding the cultural assimilation of all African cultures to Bantu culture through Ubuntu. However findings from the study uncovered Ubuntu has applicability in various African cultures through different names but similar tenets of ethnophilosophy.

6.6 Implications for future research

The literature iterated the sparse amount of research generated on Ubuntu in education, but the most evident gap in the literature concerned research on Ubuntu and social justice within service-learning in Africa which this research aimed to address. However this has been done from the perspective of the service-learner but what of community members' perspectives in this interaction? How do community members view service-learning? How do they construct Ubuntu, social justice and its subsequent interaction? This is necessary research that needs to be conducted to reduce the silencing that surrounds the community voice within the service-learning literature both globally and in South African and across Africa. Further research into how Ubuntu and social justice could be incorporated into African service-learning could offer ways of teaching that decolonise education in Africa.

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APPENDIX 1A

Information sheet and informed consent form

Request for your participation in a study: Student experiences of Ubuntu, social justice and local knowledge in a distance service-learning programme.

Dear alumnus,

Our names are Carol Mitchell and Zamo Hlela. As you know we are lecturers at the University of KwaZulu Natal and are the module coordinators for Module 6: Service-learning. We are interested in what you learned through your service-learning project for Module 6. We would like to request your participation in this study.

Your participation in this study will involve agreeing to participate in a focus group where you will talk about your experiences of service-learning.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. This means that you are free to not participate and this will not affect you in any way. You can withdraw your consent at any time, and there will be no repercussions. If you choose to participate in this study we cannot unfortunately offer any direct benefits to you for participating. We do not think there are any risks to your participating in this study.

Confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring that signed informed consent forms are stored by ourselves and are not accessible to anyone else. These consent forms will be kept for a period of five years in a locked drawer and will then be destroyed via shredder. The recorded data and transcript will also be kept in a secure location and destroyed after the mandatory five year period. This data will be available to the UKZN and REPSSI research team. When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Information from this study could be used for further research or published in journal articles in the future.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions about this study or if you would like to be made aware of the findings of this study, feel free to contact us by email at mitchellc@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 6054), or Hlela@ukzn.ac.za (Tel: 033 260 5849). If you have any concerns about the nature of the study at any point, you may also contact UKZN's Human Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Tel: 031 260 3587).

Please sign and return the following if you choose to take part in this study:

CONSENT:

I (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in a focus group exploring my experiences of service-learning. I understand that I am not forced to participate in this study, and that I can withdraw at any point should I no longer wish to take part.

Signature

Date

CONSENT TO AUDIO RECORD:

I _____, voluntarily agree to the audio recording of the focus group for the purpose of capturing information accurately in the transcription. I understand that the recording will only be heard by the researcher team. I understand that my identity will be concealed by using a pseudonym.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX 1B**Confidentiality pledge****Confidentiality Pledge**

As a member of this Focus Group, I promise not to repeat what was discussed in this focus group with any person outside of the focus group. This means that I will not tell anyone what was said in this group.

By doing this I am promising to keep the comments made by the other focus group members confidential.

Signed _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 2

Focus group interview schedule

Please can you provide some basic information about yourself by way of introduction:

- Age
- Gender
- Do you live where you did your service-learning? If no, where are you from?

Please can you give a brief explanation of what you did for your service-learning project.

- Have you ever done this kind of community work before?

Local knowledge

- We are interested in what you learnt through service-learning. You probably learned from the certificate materials and theories, what else did you draw on or learn from? Probe for local knowledge.

African philosophy

- In South Africa we use the term Ubuntu to describe a philosophy of thinking and being. What do you call this in your context?
- How would you know if someone was practicing Ubuntu (or other term)?
- Did you think about this at all when you were doing your service learning? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Social justice

- Please can you explain what you understand by the term “social justice”?
- Did you see any evidence of this in your service-learning? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Other comments welcomed...

APPENDIX 4

Ethical clearance for focus groups



4 August 2016

Ms Carol Mitchell 215359
Mr Zamo Hlela 22164
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Mitchell & Mr Hlela

Protocol reference number: **HSS/1211/016CA**

Project Title: **Student experiences of Ubuntu, social justice and local knowledge in a distance service-learning programme.**

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 4 August 2016, 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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Ms Carol Mitchell & Mr Zamo Hlela
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

APPENDIX 5

Ethical clearance for study



6 November 2017

Ms Courtney Rose Fowles 217040288
School of Applied Human Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Fowles

Protocol reference number: HSS/1616/017M LINKED TO HSS/1211/016CA
Project title: Students' constructions of Ubuntu and social justice in an African distance service-learning programme

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 25 August 2017, 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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shamila Naldoo (Deputy Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Ms Carol Mitchell
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
cc. School Administrator: Ms Nondumiso Khanyile

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville