LEARNING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING:

AN EXPLORATION OF LITERACY VOLUNTEERS'EXPERIENCES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

KAITLIN AMY YENDALL

Supervisor

PROFESSOR JACQUELINE AKHURST

April 2019

ABSTRACT

After almost 25 years of democracy in South Africa, not everyone has access to the same quality education. The responsibility of creating a literate society however cannot rely on the national government and schools alone, but instead needs to fall on the shoulders of various stakeholders. Volunteers in particular have an important role to play in remedying the current literacy crisis experienced in South Africa.

This study takes the form of a case study approach and examines the experiences of *Project Read* literacy volunteers. A telephonic survey and two focus group discussions were conducted in order to determine who it is that volunteers for the programme; what prompts these particular individuals to volunteer; the perceived benefits of volunteering; and how volunteers report on their volunteering experiences. Although the *Project Read* programme is focused on the early literacy development of learners, volunteers seemed to undergo a developmental process themselves – something they had not anticipated at the start of their volunteering journey.

This study illustrates the power of meaningful relationships in breaking down artificial categories and in bringing about important change with regards to the perceptions and attitudes of individuals towards community engagement. It is hoped that the data generated through this study will assist in recruiting and retaining more literacy volunteers through feedback to the NGO. In this way more children will be assisted to enhance their literacy competencies, from which they can build and achieve.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table   1:   Telephonic Survey Participants

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

CSL   Community Service Learning

ELP   Early Literacy Programme

LAG   Learning Achievement Gap

MLT   Mediation Learning Theory

NPOs   Non Profit Organisations

PIRLS   Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

RPERC   Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee

VAS   Volunteer Activities Survey

ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

DECLARATION

I, Kaitlin Amy Yendall, declare that this research is a result of my own work, except where otherwise stated. I have given the full acknowledgement of the sources referred to in the text. This study has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

Kaitlin Amy Yendall

(April 2019)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

"Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of

individuals can have far-reaching effects."

~ Dalai Lama ~

I wish to dedicate this research paper to the past, present, and future *Project Read* volunteers. You will never truly know the extent of the difference that you can/have made in so many children's lives. I hope that through volunteering with this programme you experience a similarly profound difference in your own lives.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY

After almost 25 years of democracy in South Africa not everyone has access to the same basic, quality education. Baatjes (2003) refers to literacy as being the most important element of high quality education. If people are unable to read they are denied access to important information about health, social, cultural and political issues. Illiteracy therefore reinforces poverty since those who are illiterate continue to suffer from disease, hunger, high mortality rates, unemployment and inadequate shelter (Baatjes, 2003). It is important to realise that the responsibility for creating a literate society is a broad one and cannot rely on the national government alone. Various stakeholders such as parents, family members, libraries, non-profit organisations (NPOs), members of the community and the mass media need to share in this responsibility (Baatjes, 2003). Volunteers also have an important role to play.

1.2 LITERACY RATES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assesses reading comprehension and monitors trends in reading literacy across various countries at five year intervals (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & McLeod, 2017). The 2016 South African sample consisted of 12 810 Grade 4 learners who were sourced from 293 schools. The sample was representative of the 11 official languages as learners were drawn from the various provinces in South Africa. According to the PIRLS 2016 report South Africa was placed last out of the 50 countries who participated in the study. South Africa's performance was similar to that of Egypt. The results indicated that 78% of South African Grade 4 learners do not have basic reading skills (even when they read in their own language) by the end of their Grade 4 school year, in contrast to only 4% of other learners internationally. According to Howie et al., (2017) the report further revealed that three-quarters of the South African

Grade 4 learners come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. There was a marked difference in these learners' reading performance compared to learners who came from more affluent backgrounds. Various factors such as resource shortages as well as large class sizes impacted on the learners' reading ability. Compared to the 2011 PIRLS results there was no statistical difference noted in South Africa's literacy performance in 2016, indicating that perhaps more interventions to promote literacy development are required.

1.3   EARLY INTERVENTION IS CRUCIAL

Research has shown the importance of nurturing literacy in early childhood years, when children are the most susceptible to learning new concepts (Okeyo, 2015). According to Methula (n.d.), the ability of a child to learn a new language fully develops between the ages of five and seven. However, in order for this to happen, the foundations for literacy aptitude should be laid early on in a child's life, as the window of opportunity begins to taper off as the child approaches his/her eighth birthday (Methula, n.d.). Unfortunately, this is not always possible, particularly in disadvantaged communities where poverty is one of the main issues that tend to lead to poor early literacy development in children (Wilson, Dickinson, & Rowe, 2013). In order to ameliorate this problem, early intervention is crucial. Heckman and Masterov (2007) identify the importance of investing in young children - particularly those who have come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and believe that without some type of intervention, these children are put at high risk "for social and economic failure" (p. 446).

1.4   INTRODUCING WORDWORKS

Wordworks is a South African non-profit organisation that focuses on the early language and literacy development in the first eight years of children's lives (Okeyo, 2015). Dr Shelley O'Carroll, the founding director of *Wordworks*, has spent much of her time developing an

Early Literacy Programme (ELP) in order to support young children as they learn to read and write. According to Okeyo (2015) the *Wordworks* ELP was inspired and is based on the Learning Achievement Gap (LAG). The LAG describes the high incidence rates of certain demographic groups under-performing in literacy and numeracy in comparison to other groups (Rodgers, Wang, & Gómez-Bellengé, 2004). Sanacore and Palumbo (2009) note that there is often a significant achievement gap between learners from low income and middle income families. Social, familial, and economic factors interact in various ways resulting in children entering school with different experiences. This means that some children are 'less' prepared for school compared to others (Rodgers et al., 2004). These children are then disadvantaged and are at risk of falling within the LAG. The *Wordworks* ELP known as *Ready Steady Read Write* recognises the importance of early intervention and aims to equip learners with the literacy skills they need, in order to lay a solid foundation that will begin to close this gap (Okeyo, 2015).

1.5   PROJECT READ

The Lebone Centre is a non-profit organisation located within Makhanda (Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape. The centre aims to work in partnership with relevant communities to address the effects of poverty and assisting children to maximize their individual potential (Lebone Literacy Programme - ICDP Trust, n.d.). One of the ways in which the Centre achieves this is through various literacy outreach programmes such as *Project Read* (Lebone Literacy Programme - ICDP Trust, n.d.). *Project Read* was established in 2011 and replicates the *Wordworks* ELP known as *Ready Steady Read Write*. Both programmes rely heavily on volunteers.

1.6　THE CENTRAL ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS

O'Carroll (2018) states that the literacy crisis in South Africa cannot be solved by the government and schools alone – but that this problem should concern every South African citizen. One way in which South Africans can assist with this crisis is through volunteering with early literacy programmes. Volunteering in the *Wordworks* ELP is characterised by two main activities, (1) the training of volunteers, and (2) the delivery of structured lessons to selected learners (Okeyo, 2015). Volunteers begin their journey with the literacy programme by attending a three hour training session. Here volunteers are taught the various steps of the *Wordworks* programme and how to implement these within the lessons. The volunteers are also provided with a 'volunteer reading pack', which consists of the various teaching aids that they will require (Okeyo, 2015).

The first part of each lesson is known as *"Talking and Doing"*. The volunteer selects either a book or picture sequence cards. The learners are then encouraged to talk about what they see in the book or the pictures that they are exposed to. This is then followed by the second part of the lesson, *"Reading"*. During this section of the lesson, volunteers assist the learner/s with sounding out words and reading sentences. The third part of the lesson is known as *"Writing and Drawing"*. Volunteers ask the learners to write about or draw something that they have read in the book. The last part of the lesson is *"Games with sounds, letters and words"*. Here the volunteers facilitate various games to assist the learners in developing their knowledge of letters, sounds, and words (Okeyo, 2015). After volunteers have undergone training they are randomly assigned to two learners in one school class who have been selected for the programme. Once a week volunteers will assist the same two learners with their reading and writing skills in either English or Afrikaans. Volunteers continue to work with the same two children throughout the year in order to promote

consistency and routine. This also ensures that a personal bond is formed between the volunteers and their learners (Okeyo, 2015).

1.7 THE ROLE OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGISTS

Counselling psychologists within the South African context are generally focused on the 'typical' difficulties of living. These problems can include "educational problems, relationship difficulties, divorce, bereavement, crime, accidents, substance use, retirement, unemployment, physical illness and disability" (Bantjes, Kagee, & Young, 2016, p.5). In a broader sense these problems refer to social problems such as poverty, unemployment and social inequality. One of the core values of counselling psychologists is social justice and as a profession counselling psychology has worked towards creating a just society. This has been done through challenging injustice, discrimination, and inequality (Young, Bantjes, & Kagee, 2016). The poor literacy rate in South Africa speaks to the far-reaching effects of the Apartheid regime and how individuals are still not afforded that same basic quality education. This is therefore an issue of inequality and as such should be a concern for counselling psychologists. In addressing the poor literacy rates in South Africa, counselling psychologists can adopt advocacy roles where they actively work to disrupt and change social and economic structures that continue to oppress and maintain inequality. This can be done through engaging in, developing, and maintaining community interventions; conducting research; and becoming involved in policy formation.

1.8 MOTIVATION FOR ENGAGING WITH THIS STUDY

Having personally been involved with the *Project Read* literacy programme (as a volunteer and later as a site coordinator), I have witnessed the tremendous benefits that this programme can offer to both learners and volunteers. Through various interactions with teachers and

parents I have become acutely aware of the desperate need for assistance with learners' early literacy development. I have also seen the far reaching effects of learners not receiving a solid literacy foundation. I was often approached by teachers and parents in the hope that their learners/children (from various grades) could be a part of the *Project Read* programme. These children were not always in their early years of schooling, alerting me to the harsh reality of the LAG and how this can widen over time. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the programme and the limited number of volunteers available, this was not always a possibility.

1.9   AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore and make sense of the *Project Read* volunteers' experiences in order to determine the reasons for them volunteering and choosing to stay with the programme. It is hoped that the data generated from this study will assist in recruiting and retaining more *Project Read* volunteers in the future so that more children can be assisted with their early literacy development.

1.10   DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

1.10.1 Literacy

Literacy can be defined as "the collective abilities of word recognition, writing and spelling skills, and language skills, which include comprehension and vocabulary. Essentially, literacy is composed of two equally important elements; namely, reading and reading-related activities, and secondly, writing" (Okeyo, 2015, p. 20).

1.10.2 Volunteer

A South African definition of a volunteer is as follows: "A volunteer is a person aged 15 and over who did any unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to

activities performed either through an organisation or directly for others outside their own household…" (Govinden, 2014, p. iv).

1.11   OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH STRUCTURE

Including the introductory chapter, this research study is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of selected literature related to the research topic: with a particular focus on literacy interventions, mediated learning theory, and various aspects of volunteerism. The rationale for this study as well as the research questions are presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological basis of the research process. This chapter includes the chosen research design, sampling technique, data collection methods, data organization techniques, and data analysis. Ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are also presented.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research study in relation to the research questions. Part A focuses on the telephonic survey data, whilst Part B presents the data generated from the focus group discussions.

Chapter 5 is an analysis and discussion of the telephonic survey and focus group discussions in light of the existing literature.

Chapter 6 provides concluding reflections and a summary of the main findings in relation to the research questions. Recommendations as well as possible options for future research are also discussed within this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will focus on selected literature that is related to the research topic. As the researcher's theoretical basis is located in constructivism (in particular the work of Vygotsky), Mediation Learning Theory will be discussed. Three theories regarding the motivations of volunteers will also be explored in detail. The rationale for this study as well as the research questions can be located towards the end of this chapter.

2.1   MEDIATION LEARNING THEORY

Lev Seminovich Vygotsky famously stated that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). Through this statement Vygotsky underscores the important social aspect of learning. In the same way, the constructivism paradigm adopted in this study posits that learning is a social activity, and that meaning is socially constructed through interacting with others (Swan, 2005).

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is described by Vygotsky as the "discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he/she is able to reach in solving problems with assistance" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 103). Therefore a child is able to reach a certain level of problem solving independently, but with assistance he/she may be able to attain a higher level. It is the gap between these two levels of attainment that is known as the ZPD (Akhurst, 2000). This concept highlights the importance of learning with assistance. Mercer (1994) states that the difference between an individual's actual and potential levels of development are "never just a reflection of an individual's cognitive potential and learning strategies, but are always a measure of the strength of the cultural framework which supports

that learning" (p. 103, as cited in Akhurst 2000). This signifies the importance of others assisting leaners, when developing an important skill such as reading.

Mediation Learning Theory (MLT) is based on the assumption that children learn when adults or more competent peers place themselves between the environment and the child. The adult or more competent peer then acts as a mediator who "selects, changes, amplifies, and interprets various objects and processes for the child" (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995, p.67). For example, a child will generally not learn about harmful stimuli through direct exposure. Instead a parent/caregiver will purposefully insert themselves between the potentially harmful stimuli and the child and mediate the learning experience. It is the parent/caregiver who indicates to the child which objects/situations are harmful or dangerous. Through various mediated learning experiences the child then develops the notion of dangerous objects/situations and how he/she might respond to these. The concepts that a child learns through social interaction and mediation are then internalised and consolidated (Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2012).

When adults assist learners with regards to their literacy development they speak about letter names and the sounds that they make. This helps learners to understand that each letter can be named, they are associated with a particular sound, and they can be combined in different ways to produce words that have meaning (Justice & Ezell, 2004). For example, in response to a child's request for assistance in writing the word 'mat', an adult may "scaffold" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) for the learner by asking him/her to point out the letter 'm' on an alphabet chart. The adult might then ask the learner to give other examples of words that start with 'm'. Through this process of scaffolding, the adult is able to provide the learner with feedback and questions that will promote further learning. This scaffolding is seen as a critical mechanism for facilitating a child's language and literacy development (Girolametto et al., 2012).

2.2 THE IMPACT OF LITERACY INTERVENTIONS

Vaughn, et al., (2003) conducted a study in the United States where second-grade students at risk of reading difficulties were randomly assigned to one of three grouping conditions: one teacher with one student (1:1), one teacher with three students (1:3), or one teacher with ten students (1:10). The reading intervention was approximately 30 minutes daily and lasted for a total of 58 sessions. All students received the same reading intervention treatment for the same length of time. The findings from this particular study indicated that there was no significant difference between the outcomes of students in the (1:1) and (1:3) conditions. Effect sizes indicated that students in all three groups made remarkable progress in reading comprehension, but that these effects were weaker for the (1:10) condition compared to the other two groups. Therefore, it appears that the smaller the group size the better the outcomes.

In February 2008, a study was conducted at an impoverished English medium school in Cape Town (O'Carroll, 2011). The majority of the learners at this school spoke English as a second language. Fourteen learners from Grade R were selected to participate in an intervention programme. The selected children worked in pairs with the same volunteer once a week for thirty to forty minutes. On average, each child participated in fourteen lessons during the year (either in the first half or the second half of the year). The sessions were aimed at improving learners' literacy and language skills. Assessments at the start of Grade one indicated that the intervention group mean was significantly higher than those who had only received classroom teaching. O'Carroll (2011) states that this particular intervention worked because the ratio of one adult to two learners provides an optimal context for learners. This intervention was also cost effective as it was delivered by volunteers.

Okeyo (2015) conducted a study in order to determine whether the volunteer-run *Wordworks* ELP improves literacy and language skills of young children from communities

in the Cape Town Metro South Educational District. The study consisted of three different sample groups of learners. The first group was run over a 12 month period during 2014 and consisted of 121 learners selected from 8 schools. The second group of the study consisted of 137 learners selected from 7 schools. This group participated in a 6 month programme during 2014. Lastly, with the third group, a 6 month programme was implemented and run with 253 learners selected from 13 schools during 2015. As the third group was specifically designed to determine the effects of programme dosage on the learner's performance, there were two subgroups. The results from the first group indicated a significant improvement in sentence construction and reading ability scores by the end of the programme. In terms of the second group, the learner's letter knowledge had improved after the 6 months programme was complete. There was a significant improvement in known letter scores in both subgroups from Group 3 with greater improvement in learners who attended more lessons. All of the above examples highlight the effectiveness of early literacy interventions on a child's learning development. One of the reasons for this success could be attributed to the mediation role that the teachers and/or volunteers played during these interventions.

2.3   VOLUNTEERISM

Eckstein (2001) states that volunteerism is a way in which people can be instrumental in bringing about positive change. This change is not only for themselves but for other people, their respective communities and society at large. Volunteering involves a person committing time and energy to provide a service that benefits an individual, society or community (Akintola, 2011). Volunteer work is generally understood as being unpaid work with the intent of assisting others (Van Willigen, 2000), but volunteers are not precluded from benefiting from their work (Wilson, 2000).

Past research has shown that volunteering improves the physical and psychological

well-being of persons, particularly older persons (Van Willigen, 2000). In contrast, a recent study has suggested that volunteering may do little or nothing for a person's well-being. If true, this is surprising given that volunteering includes a number of activities and experiences that are known to make humans happier (Whillans et al., 2017). There are numerous theories regarding the motivations of volunteers. Below are some of the theories and approaches to understanding why individuals choose to volunteer.

2.3.1 The three model approach

Roy and Ziemek (2000) identify three theoretical models of motivation that examine why people choose to volunteer. In the Public Goods Model, it is assumed that people are motivated to give and to volunteer in order to increase the greater "public good", purely for the benefit of others without receiving anything in return. Volunteers who fit within this particular model would be described as being altruistic (Ziemek, 2003). In contrast the Private Consumption Model is where a volunteer derives his or her utility from "the act of giving itself" (Ziemek, 2003, p. 5). It is the process of volunteering as well as the rewards associated with carrying out a particular activity (such as receiving status and praise) that motivates these particular individuals to give. Thirdly, the Investment Model consists of individuals who use volunteering in order to learn new skills and knowledge, ultimately making themselves more employable. Those who fit within this model are focused on investing in their future.

2.3.2 The functional approach

Clary et al., (1998) use a functional approach for understanding why people are motivated to volunteer. According to this approach, people volunteer in order to fulfil important underlying social and psychological functions, which are referred to as motive functions. Different people can and do perform the same volunteering activities but often to satisfy

different functions. These motive functions are viewed as critical in order to initiate and sustain volunteering behaviour. Clary et al. (1998) identify a set of six different motivational functions which are served by volunteerism. These functions are (1) values function (the opportunity to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others), (2) understanding function (increasing knowledge about a particular area or learning new skills), (3) enhancement function (enhancing one's confidence and self-worth), (4) career function (to expand on ones experiences in order to assist in career development), (5) social function (to be amongst friends or to engage in an activity that is viewed favourably by others), and (6) protective function (to protect the ego from negative features of the self and perhaps in the case of volunteerism reduce guilt over being more fortunate than others). Overlaps seem to exist between a number of these motivating functions and Roy and Ziemek's three model approach (discussed in the previous section).

2.3.3   Human resources

The term human resources is used by Wilson (2012) to describe "the individual 'assets' that enable people to volunteer or condition their interest in doing volunteer work" (p. 183). Demographic characteristics such as class, race, and gender intersect in various ways, which in turn impact on an individual's ability to gain access to these resources. According to Wilson (2012) human resources can include one's educational level, occupational status, income bracket, and available time. It is a lack of resources that people often mention as a reason for not volunteering. Other factors that seem to impact on volunteering include one's age or developmental life stage, as well as one's social context.

2.4   LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

In a study conducted by Wymer Jr. (2003) a group of 1,016 volunteers from various NPOs in the United States completed questionnaires about their motivations for volunteering. There

were 86 literacy volunteers and 851 volunteers from other types of organisations. The average age of the literacy volunteers was 54 with volunteers ranging from 21 to 84 years of age. The majority of the literacy volunteers tended to be female (72%). Volunteers were asked to (1) describe the events leading up to volunteering, (2) to describe why they choose to continue to volunteer, and lastly (3) to describe the benefits/rewards that they receive as a result of their volunteer work. Many of the volunteers stated that retirement, widowhood, a relocation, or children moving out had been instrumental in their decisions to volunteer in literacy programmes. Several of the literacy volunteers explained that prior to retirement they had been teachers and felt competent to assist with helping another person to read, and would be likely to derive satisfaction from assisting in an educational setting. There were two main reasons for literacy volunteers continuing to volunteer. The first reason was that volunteers felt that there was a great need for their help. Secondly, literacy volunteers seemed to obtain the benefits of satisfaction and achievement when they witnessed the progress of the individuals with whom they worked. In terms of benefits/rewards all literacy volunteers reported social or psychological benefits.

Tracey et al., (2014) conducted a study with 26 volunteers serving as reading mentors at two primary schools in Sydney, Australia. During the focus group discussions the volunteers were asked about their motivations for volunteering as a reading mentor, as well as the perceived impact of their mentoring on themselves and the learners with whom they worked. The research participants identified two primary reasons for volunteering as reading mentors. The first reason was a desire to provide direct assistance to a child in need, whilst the second reason was to make a contribution to the community by 'giving back'. When the volunteers were asked to reflect on the benefits they experienced as reading mentors, this resulted in three main clusters of responses. These included (1) personal development, (2) personal insight, and (3) a sense of satisfaction. In terms of personal development, volunteers

reported that they had learnt how to work with children, had become more patient, experienced more confidence in themselves, and had also noticed an improvement in their communication skills. Over and above these acquired skills, volunteers reported that that their volunteering experiences had added to their lives and had assisted them in developing their personal insight. The sense of satisfaction that volunteers spoke about seemed to stem primarily from watching their mentee/learner developing in terms of his/her reading skills. Volunteers also seemed to find satisfaction through the relationships that they had formed with their respective learners. The volunteers reported the following perceived benefits of the learners on the programme: (1) enhanced reading skills, (2) improved self-confidence, (3) an increased interest and enjoyment of reading, and (4) feeling special through the mentoring relationship which provided learners with the opportunity to receive individual attention.

2.5   SOUTH AFRICAN VOLUNTEERS

In 2014, South Africa's second Volunteer Activities Survey (VAS) was carried out by the national government. Of the 2,2 million people who volunteered in 2014, 60,7% (1,3 million) were women while 39,3% (866 000) were men (Govinden, 2014). In both the 2010 and 2014 surveys, women were more likely to volunteer compared to men. Probably as a result of more privileged positions with access to financial and other resources, the white population group had a volunteer rate that was higher than the national average of 5,8%, indicating that white persons were more likely to be involved in volunteer activities compared to other population groups. In both 2010 and 2014, adults (particularly those aged between 45-54 years of age) were more likely to volunteer than members of the youth. Studies have shown that a major life event often precipitates volunteering (Wymer Jr., 2003). According to the 2014 VAS rates, divorced/separated women (8,3%) and men (8,8%) were more likely to be involved in volunteer work, while women who were never married (5,2%) and men who were never

married (3,6%) were least likely to be involved in volunteering activities (Govinden, 2014). In 2014, respondents with a tertiary education reported higher volunteer rates (10,6%) compared to those with lower levels of education. Although these statistics are useful, Wymer Jr. (2003) argues that we need to avoid treating volunteers as a homogenous population. It is important to be aware that there are various sub-groups of volunteers who differ from other sub-groups (depending on where they volunteer and why they choose to volunteer). It is therefore valuable to consider a specific group of volunteers within a specific context.

2.6   STUDY RATIONALE

Although there is good evidence of volunteerism in South Africa, there is little qualitative research exploring this phenomenon. It is important to understand who volunteers are and why they are motivated to do so (Wymer Jr., 2003). By understanding the motivations of *Project Read's* volunteers, insights can be gained to assist with targeting and recruiting new volunteers, whilst sustaining the involvement of current volunteers.

2.7   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With regard to *Project Read*, the main questions in this study are as follows:

- What prompts a person to volunteer?
- What are the perceived benefits of volunteering?
- How do volunteers report on their volunteering experience?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

According to Babbie and Mouton, (2001, p. 75) "research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used". The methodology used in a study is established by the purpose of the study. The focus of this study is to attempt to understand the motivations for the behaviour of the literacy volunteers and to make sense of their volunteering experiences. As such, a constructivist / interpretivist approach has been adopted. This particular paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as others experience it (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). Constructivists or interpretivists view reality as being socially constructed and hold that there are multiple realities. As such, there can be multiple experiences/realities of volunteering with the *Project Read* literacy programme. Although quantitative research may identify some aspects of volunteerism, it is not able to provide the rich data that qualitative research generates in order to attribute meaning to this complex human phenomenon. Due to the nature of the study, a qualitative approach was decided upon.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a bounded system (or case) using multiple sources of information (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). The bounded system (or case) in this research study is the *Project Read* literacy programme. The literacy programme was chosen for the following reasons: (1) the researcher had formed working relationships with the *Project Read* literacy volunteers and the Lebone Centre staff, (2) the researcher had already witnessed numerous benefits that the literacy programme offered, and (3) in order to add to the growing research on the various programmes offered by the Lebone Centre. Case studies can offer a rich picture with many

kinds of insights coming from numerous angles (Thomas, 2011). This approach is also useful when answering explanatory 'how', 'what', and 'why' questions, and through doing so is able to provide an in depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Crowe et al., 2011). The researcher employed a single case study design for these reasons. Overall, this approach seemed to be a 'good fit' for the purposes of this particular research study.

3.3   SAMPLING

In order to answer the very specific research questions, participants were selected deliberately. This particular research study therefore employs a purposive sampling technique (Bryman, 2012). The target group consisted of 31 individuals who volunteered at least an hour of their time weekly for the *Project Read* literacy programme during the course of 2016. As a retrospective study, participants included both those who have continued volunteering with the programme after 2016 and those who no longer volunteered with *Project Read*. During 2016 the researcher worked at the Lebone Centre as a site-coordinator for the *Project Read* programme. The researcher therefore managed to build working relationships with the staff at the Lebone Centre and those who volunteered for the *Project Read* literacy programme. The Lebone Centre granted permission for the researcher to contact and interview the *Project Read* volunteers (see appendix B). A preparatory information letter was then mailed to all those who volunteered for the *Project Read* literacy programme during 2016 (see appendix C). This was sent two weeks prior to the researcher phoning the volunteers (see appendix D).

3.4   DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering credible information to answer the research question/s (Creswell, 1998). Data were collected for this research project using both surveys

and focus group discussions. The aim of the telephonic survey was to determine who it is that volunteers for the *Project Read* literacy programme, whilst the data collected from the focus group discussions were used to answer the research questions (see section 2.7). During 2016 there were over 30 *Project Read* volunteers. All of these volunteers were aged 18 years or older. Those whom the researcher was able to contact were asked to participate in an initial survey. The survey was conducted telephonically, as not all of the volunteers had internet access. The questions asked in the survey explore who volunteered for the *Project Read* Literacy Programme. The survey questions have been included (see appendix D). All of the volunteers who participated in the telephonic survey verbally consented to their answers being used in this research study. During the telephonic survey volunteers were asked if they would be interested in joining one of the focus group discussions. The details of the focus group discussions were then mailed to interested volunteers (see appendix E).

Focus groups can be defined as "a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (Morgan, 1996, p. 130). Two focus groups were conducted in order to gather data from participants regarding their volunteering experiences. Focus groups allowed the researcher to investigate participants' perceptions of the phenomenon of volunteerism in a short amount of time. Within the focus group setting, participants' experiences, which may have been forgotten or considered unimportant, were often triggered by the responses of other participants (Mashek, 2015). This particular approach provided more insight into the behaviours and motivations of volunteers, since the researcher and participants were able to query others' responses, which led to further explanations being given. Morgan (1996) views this as being the real strength of utilising focus group discussions.

All interested volunteers joined one of the focus group discussions held at the Lebone Centre. Both focus groups consisted of 4 participants, and were no longer than one and a half

hours each. Smaller focus groups were utilised as these are easier to set up and manage, and allowed more opportunity for each participant to share their experiences. Focus groups were facilitated by the researcher as moderator, who guided the discussion using carefully developed open-ended questions, with minimal intervention (Litosseliti, 2003). Both focus groups were asked the same open-ended questions (see appendix F). Open-ended questions were used to avoid leading the participants in any way (Bryman, 2012). The questions served as a guide for the discussion. A digital audio recording device was utilized as a data collection aid, which allowed the researcher to concentrate more fully on the participants, their non-verbal cues and on facilitating the direction that the discussion took.

3.5   ORGANISATION OF DATA

The next step was to organise the data that had been collected. The researcher tabulated the telephonic survey data and transcribed the focus group discussions. Given the researcher's inexperience in transcription, the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim, using 'playscript' notation. Had the researcher been aware of the various standard transcription notation systems, more details (such as the length of pauses or words that had been stressed) could have been captured. However, since the researcher was not undertaking a discourse analysis, this did not impact the utility of transcriptions. In order to check the accuracy of the transcripts, the researcher read through each transcript with the accompanying recording. This was done a number of times, which also assisted the researcher in becoming more familiar with the content of each focus group discussion. This later assisted in the process of data analysis. The names of the participants were anonymised in line with ethical procedures regarding confidentiality.

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of compiling a thematic analysis were employed. Although the topic of thematic analysis is covered by a variety of stepwise methods, Braun and Clarke have one of the most systematic approaches available (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases include familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and compiling the report.

Familiarising oneself with the data was achieved by the researcher transcribing the data and re-listening to the audio in order to ensure that the data was captured accurately. The researcher then read through the data repeatedly in an active way – searching for various meanings and patterns whilst making note of them. The entire data set was read through thoroughly before the second phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps was initiated.

The researcher then began generating initial codes which would later be used during the coding process. A code can be defined as a feature of the data which appears interesting to the researcher and refers to the most basic meaning unit of the raw data which can be assessed in a meaningful way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Generating codes is therefore a rather subjective process, as researchers may find different aspects of the same data interesting. It is also important to note that people are diverse and two people will probably code the same data in different and unique ways. During the time spent reading through the two focus group transcriptions, an initial list of ideas was drawn up regarding potential coding as well as what the researcher found to be interesting.

During the analysis of the focus group discussions, themes emerged. A theme is meant to capture something important from within the data that relates in some way to the research question/s. Themes tend to represent patterned responses or meanings within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The supervisor read through the transcriptions

21

independently and also made a list of potential themes. The researcher and supervisor then compared notes regarding themes that had emerged. During this process themes were reviewed and named. Finally the report was produced. This forms the last phase of the steps of compiling a thematic analysis.

3.7   EVALUATING THE RESEARCH

The way in which this research should be evaluated is using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria. The strength of the research will depend on its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In terms of the analysis/discussion this should be a detailed description, with a reasonable amount of interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Credibility refers to the internal validity of the research (Guba, 1981). Here the focus is on whether or not the study measures what is actually intended. Lincoln and Guba (cited in Shenton, 2004) argue that credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness of research. Numerous provisions were made whilst conducting this particular research in an attempt to ensure its credibility. Frequent meetings between the researcher and the supervisor were held, where numerous ideas and various approaches were discussed. Opportunities for scrutiny of the project were welcomed and feedback and new ideas were often implemented. Throughout the study the researcher also endeavoured to ensure thick descriptions of the phenomena under scrutiny.

Transferability (or external validity) is concerned with the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Although the findings of a qualitative study are generally specific to a small number of individuals within a particular environment, transferability is still a possibility if sufficient contextual information about the study is provided by the researcher. By doing this other researchers are able to determine the transferability of the findings of a particular study to their own contexts.

With this said it is important that the results of a qualitative study are understood within the particular and unique context.

Dependability refers to the reliability of the study (Guba, 1981). The researcher has made known the techniques employed for this particular study in order to show that, if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same sample, similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). This enables a future researcher to repeat the work if desired. This also allows the reader to assess the extent to which suitable research practices have been followed. Through providing this detailed information, the researcher hoped to ensure a more dependable study.

The concept of confirmability is concerned with objectivity (Guba, 1981). A key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own predispositions. "By making clear their positionality, researchers are able to reflect on the aspects of their lives that might influence how they conduct their research study" (Runswick-Cole, 2011, p. 91). This has been documented throughout this study (particularly towards the end of this chapter). The researcher has endeavoured to ensure integrity, quality and transparency throughout the process of conducting this particular research with the aim of being able to contribute to the collective body of existing knowledge. It is for all the above reasons that this research can be viewed as being trustworthy.

3.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Beauchamp and Childress's (1994) principle-based common-morality theory is a useful way to engage with ethical considerations. The four principles include "respect for autonomy (respecting the decision making capacities of autonomous persons), non-maleficence (avoiding the causation of harm), beneficence (providing benefits and balancing benefits, burdens, and risks), and justice (fairness in the distribution of benefits and risks)" (Ebbesen,

Andersen, & Pedersen, 2012, p. 1). Before beginning with the research study, the researcher considered any ethical issues that may have arisen and put precautionary measures in place (in the rare case that these would be necessary). Ethical approval was granted by the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University and the letter has been attached as appendix A.

In terms of autonomy, ethical considerations, such as informed consent and the recording of the focus groups were discussed prior to the focus group discussions starting. Each participant granted their permission by signing two documents; the agreement between the student researcher and participant (appendix G) and the permission to use tape recordings form (appendix H). Although there was no real anticipated risk of harm to individuals participating in the research study, a support contact number for any personal issues that may have arisen during the focus group discussions was provided (see appendix G). Participants were also given the opportunity to withdraw from the research study at the start of the focus group discussions – before any documentation had been signed. In terms of the principle of beneficence, the potential benefits of the study were more likely to outweigh any of the potential risks. Volunteers would be provided with a space to share their experiences and perhaps through this gain insight into their contributions as *Project Read* volunteers. By participants sharing their volunteering experiences it was possible that important data would be collected, which may result in more volunteers being recruited for the literacy programme. This could end up benefiting many more children.

3.9   LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

As the sample of this study is specific and limited to one city and literacy programme, the findings are not generalizable. However, as detailed contextual information has been provided, the findings may be transferable in similar contexts. As a previous site coordinator

with the programme, the researcher had formed working relationships with the *Project Read* volunteers of 2016. Due to this there was a risk of potential bias.

3.10   REFLEXIVITY

According to (Creswell, 2007, p. 39) "qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand". As the researchers' interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, and context it is important for researchers to reflect on their position. Any potential bias related to the researcher's previous role as a site coordinator was reduced by the researcher utilising the focus group questions as a guide, refraining from offering personal opinions during focus group discussions, and discussing and identifying common themes in the participants' responses together with her supervisor. The previous working relationships that had been formed seemed to allow the participants the space to share their experiences in a confident and authentic way.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter is presented in two parts. Part A provides the descriptive statistics about the research participants and their responses to the telephonic survey, whilst Part B focuses on the volunteers' experiences (collected in the focus groups) in relation to the research questions.

PART A: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

A total of 17 of the *Project Read* 2016 volunteers were willing to participate in the telephonic survey. The main aim of the survey was to determine *who* volunteers for the *Project Read* literacy programme. The researcher also wished to determine how volunteers came to hear about the programme as well as the average length of time they chose to volunteer. All of the volunteers who participated in the survey were invited to join one of the focus group discussions. The results generated from this survey are documented on the next page. Each of the volunteers who participated in the survey was assigned a number in order to differentiate one volunteer from another. The highlighted section of the table depicts the volunteers who participated in the telephonic survey as well as in the focus group discussions.

4.1   TELEPHONIC SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Of the seventeen volunteers who participated in the telephonic survey, 94% were women. The participants ranged in age from 26 to 86 with the average age of participants being 65 years old. The majority of participants (71%) were retired. 23% of participants who volunteered during 2016 were employed. Half of these individuals were employed on a full-time basis and were self-employed whilst the other half were employed part-time. A total of 6% of participants reported being unemployed whilst volunteering. 88% of the participants reported that they had completed a tertiary education with the remaining 12% having matriculated.

Volunteer	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Highest Level of Education	Full-time / Part -time Employment	No. of Months Volunteering	Heard about Project Read via	Participated in focus group
1	74	W	Widowed	BEd Honours	Retired	60	Word of Mouth	Y
2	50	W	Separated	Matric	Part-time	12	Word of Mouth	Y
3	63	C	Married	Teaching Diploma	Retired	12	Word of Mouth	Y
4	71	W	Married	Diploma	Retired	36	Word of Mouth	Y
5	71	W	Widowed	Teaching Diploma	Retired	24	Word of Mouth	Y
6	63	W	Widowed	Diploma	Retired	60	Word of Mouth	Y
7	71	W	Single	BA Degree	Retired	48	Word of Mouth	Y
8	55	W	Married	Diploma	Unemployed	12	Word of Mouth	Y
9	82	W	Married	Teaching Diploma	Retired	36	At a Presentation	N
10	54	W	Married	MA Degree	Full-time	12	Social Media	N
11	46	W	Married	Matric	Full-time	24	School Newsletter	N
12	75	W	Married	BSoc Sci Degree	Retired	36	Local Newspaper	N
13	26	C	Single	PGCE	Part-time	1	Word of Mouth	N
14	79	W	Married	Diploma	Retired	36	Word of Mouth	N
15	86	W	Widowed	BA Degree	Retired	60	Word of Mouth	N
16	71	W	Married	Bsc Degree	Retired	36	Local Newspaper	N
17	71	W	Married	LLB Degree	Retired	60	At a Presentation	N

TABLE 1: TELEPHONIC SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' DETAILS

Of the 88% of participants with a tertiary education, 33% were qualified teachers. In terms of ethnicity, 88% identified as white whilst 12% identified as 'coloured'. The majority of participants (65%) came to know about *Project Read* via word of mouth. Other participants became aware of the literacy programme via presentations and talks (12%), newspapers (18%) and social media (6%). On average at the time of the survey, participants had volunteered with the programme for a period of 33 months.

4.2   FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

A total of 8 volunteers participated in the focus groups discussions. All 8 of the participants (1 – 8) were female and had volunteered with the *Project Read* programme for an average of 22 months. In terms of ethnicity, 87% identified as white whilst 13% identified as 'coloured'. The average age of the focus group participants was 65 with the majority (75%) having retired. Each of the participants had come to know about *Project Read* via word of mouth. All of the participants had achieved a matric, with 88% having studied further and obtaining either a diploma or a degree. 38% of the volunteers who participated in the focus group discussions have a teaching qualification.

PART B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section of the findings will be focused on answering the research questions from the data generated from the focus group discussions.

4.3.   WHAT PROMPTS A PERSON TO VOLUNTEER?

4.3.1   Reasons for volunteering

The ways in which *Project Read* volunteers describe their motivation for volunteering varied from participant to participant. Below are some of the main reasons that participants chose to volunteer with the *Project Read* literacy programme.

a)   Experiencing a life-changing event

Two of the research participants began volunteering after experiencing difficult and life-changing events. Participant 6 explained that her decision to volunteer with the *Project Read* programme came after the loss of a loved one.

> *"....my husband died, and I just needed to do things, and I thought well, you know, this is a wonderful thing to do." (6)*

Participant 8 stated that she started her volunteering journey a few years after she underwent surgery and was unable to continue to work. She explained that she began volunteering at various sites as a way of keeping busy as she did not want to 'sit around and do nothing'. When participant 8 moved to Makhanda (Grahamstown) a few years later she began searching for other volunteering opportunities. She joined *Project Read* after a friend told her about the programme.

b)   Retirement

Many of the volunteers and research participants are retired individuals. This particular life stage seems to be another reason for individuals choosing to volunteer with the literacy programme. Participant 4 stated that she felt it was important that retired individuals continue to remain involved and to push themselves. For participant 5 volunteering with the

programme seemed to provide her with a sense of purpose. This was indicated in the following statement:

"I just feel that as we get older it's just so important that every single day you try and do something useful for somebody other than yourself. You know, whatever it is, and this seems like a brilliant way of being useful." (5)

Although retirement is usually seen as a time for individuals to begin to 'slow down' in their lives, it can also provide opportunities to try something new. This seemed to be the case for participant 6. She explained that volunteering with the programme was a way for her to 'broaden her horizons' and to try something completely different and out of her comfort zone.

c)   **Teaching background**

A number of the *Project Read* volunteers and research participants were qualified teachers. This seems to have impacted on their decision to volunteer with the literacy programme. For participant 1 her teaching experience seemed to provide her with a sense of confidence. She knew she would be able to manage assisting children with their literacy development. Volunteering with the programme also seemed to allow this retired individual to continue to do what she loves – teaching. Her passion for teaching was expressed in this statement:

"I've been a teacher my whole life, it's kind of in my blood. I can't stop."(1)

Participant 3 explained how joining the programme provided her with the opportunity to use her teaching qualification for the first time. This opportunity presented itself to this individual during her retirement, when she had some free time on her hands.

d)   A sense of awareness

For some of the research participants, their decision to volunteer with the programme was impacted by their awareness of the South African context. During one of the focus group discussions participant 7 reflected on the state of education.

"I just feel so helpless when we look at the education in the country and I thought well this is at least something I can do to help with maybe two children. You can't change the whole thing but you can help those two." (7)

Participant 7 realises that she can make a small contribution to help. For participant 1, her decision to volunteer seemed to be greatly influenced by the history of the country and the effects of Apartheid. She shows awareness of her privileged position.

"One of the worst things that we've done is given a lot of people an inferiority complex and we've given ourselves a superiority complex, and that has to be changed…. You can't make it all right but you can make your little poke here and there and everywhere…" (1)

This particular participant stated that she couldn't just sit back and watch; but also felt the need to actively do something to assist.

e)   To 'give back'

The concept of 'giving back' is one that is often linked to volunteerism. For participant 4 this seemed to be one of the main reasons that she decided to begin volunteering with the literacy programme. She stated the following:

"I needed…I wanted to give back in some way and this was a way I felt I could do it." (4)

f)   Being approached to join the programme

Four of the focus group participants explained that one of the reasons that they began volunteering with the *Project Read* literacy programme was simply because they had been

approached to do so. Generally these individuals had been approached by a friend or someone affiliated with the literacy programme and/or the Lebone Centre.

4.3.2 Reasons for not volunteering

When participants were asked why other individuals with similar demographics and situations such as themselves might not choose to volunteer, they provided the following possible reasons.

a) Commitment

Participant 7 felt that it might be the discipline of committing one's time on a weekly basis that could possibly put others off volunteering. Participant 8 corroborated this viewpoint by stating that people generally don't like making commitments. The issue of available time was brought up by numerous participants. It was participant 1 who acknowledged that it must be incredibly difficult for individuals with full-time jobs to find the time to volunteer. Participant 5 stated that the busier she became, the more difficult she found it to stick to her weekly commitment of volunteering. She later explained that she felt 'bad' for cancelling sessions and decided that if she could not commit fully to the programme, she would rather not do it at all.

b) Retirement

Although retirement seems to be one of the main reasons for people choosing to volunteer, participants explained how this life stage could also be a reason for some individuals choosing not to volunteer. Participant 8 explained that when people stop working and enter into retirement they often feel as though their time is finally their own.

"You think that when you retire from work you've got a lot of time on your hands but there are plenty of other things you can do." (7)

She further explained how this could make individuals reluctant to have to commit yet again to something else. The above statement indicates that perhaps it comes down to individuals prioritising what they are passionate about. Some participants explained that they had spoken to their retired friends about the literacy programme but this hadn't seemed to interest them. Participant 1 explained that some of her retired friends felt as though they had already 'done enough' and stated that as people get older there comes a point when 'enough is enough'.

c)   Fear / lack of confidence

Participant 6 wondered whether individuals chose to not volunteer because they were concerned about their ability to assist learners with their literacy development. She thought that this lack of confidence could be due to these particular individuals not having any prior teaching experience. In the previous focus group discussion, participant 2 had stated that when she began volunteering with the programme, she questioned whether she was 'doing it right' or not. The reason she gave for doubting herself was because she was not a qualified teacher.

d)   Working with children

Participant 4 pointed out that some individuals might not wish to volunteer with the programme as it requires working with children. She stated the following:

"Unless one is very used to small children and coping with the level of activity and lack of concentration that children have these days, you can actually be absolutely floored by it."(4)

e)   Lack of awareness

Individuals might not volunteer with the programme because they are unaware of the desperate state of education in South Africa. This point was raised by participant 1.

Participant 4 raised an interesting point when she noted that she struggles to get involved with certain causes because she can't stand to see people suffering. Perhaps then, some individuals are aware of the challenges of the context, but choose not to volunteer as they do not want to be faced with the realities of these.

f)   Underestimating the difference it can make

Participant 7 stated that perhaps the reason for individuals not volunteering is because they don't understand the difference that it can make. This leaves individuals questioning what the point of volunteering would be.

4.3.3   Skills needed to volunteer with the programme

When participants were asked about the skills, talents, and aptitudes that they brought to the programme they listed the following: (1) life experience, (2) teaching experience, (3) granny experience, (4) patience, (5) a love of children, and (6) genuinely being interested in the children's lives. These could be considered helpful skills for individuals wanting to volunteer with the programme. One volunteer seemed to capture the essence of her approach in the following statement:

> *"...all you have to be actually is a mother. I walk in there and pretend they're my own grandchildren."(4)*

4.4   WHAT ARE THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING?

Throughout both focus group discussions it was apparent that the *Project Read* literacy programme offers benefits for both the learners and the volunteers involved. Some of these benefits are shared, whilst others are specific to each of the mentioned groups.

4.4.1   Shared benefits

a)   Building meaningful relationships

One of the main shared benefits that the participants mentioned are the rewarding relationships that are formed between themselves and their learners. Participant 4 stated the following:

"I keep telling myself that next year I'm going to stop, and then I don't, and like I say you go to a session and you get these lovely little smiles and the children, not right in the beginning, but after a little while they're so open with you."(4)

Participant 2 agreed that children's responses make volunteering so worthwhile. Another participant noted that the relationships provide the learners with the opportunity to come out of their shells and to relate to somebody else. Through the relationships that are formed, learners are also able to develop certain life skills – particularly learning how to interact with others. It was participant 1 that commented on the racial divide that still seems to exist and how the relationships formed on the programme seem to cut across this divide. The relationships between the learners and their volunteers are not only central to the programme, but are also the reason for the majority of the benefits listed below.

b)   A learning experience for all

Although the programme focuses on children's learning and literacy development, volunteers are also able to learn and grow from the experience, illustrating reciprocity. Participant 8 explained that in general she is a person who likes structure and discipline. She stated that working with children on the programme required her to learn more patience. Participant 2 (who was originally unsure of herself and her ability as a volunteer) seemed to gain confidence as time went on. She stated that through her volunteering experience she learnt that she 'wasn't so bad' after all and that she could actually 'teach a bit'. Participant 1 (a qualified teacher who had taught for a number of years), said that she had learnt that 'there

are always new ways of doing things'. This seems to be what she took away from her volunteering experience. Participant 5 described her profound learning experience in the following statement:

"It awakened an awareness in me of what was going on in this other community,…we sail through our lovely lives and often don't even think about what's going on, and that certainly was a big wakeup call."(5)

The above quote seems to highlight increased awareness as a result of volunteering.

c)   Enjoyment

Participants perceive that the learners enjoy being part of the literacy programme. This was indicated through a number of statements. Participant 3 stated that she felt the learners looked forward to the time that they spent with their volunteers. Another participant reported that the learners would miss break at school in order to come to their sessions early. The participants also found enjoyment from the programme and many stated that they would continue volunteering for as long as they were able to do so.

4.4.2   Benefits for the learners

The focus group participants listed the following perceived benefits specifically for the learners on the literacy programme:

a)   Individual attention

Participant 4 stated that the literacy programme offers the learners an opportunity to receive individual or at least semi-individual attention. Although this is beneficial in terms of learners' literacy development, the sessions are never limited to this alone. Participant 3 stated that the learners enjoy sharing information about themselves with their volunteers. According to participant 2 sitting and listening to the learners leaves them feeling important.

b)   **Encouragement**

Whilst interacting with the volunteers, learners are also receiving encouragement. Participant 2 explained that when learners hear 'well done' or receive a sticker in their books or on their foreheads, they are made to feel special. The participants felt that the encouragement that the learners receive goes a long way towards improving their self-esteem.

c)   **Improved confidence**

According to participant 4, providing the learners with a sense of confidence is what makes the difference. She feels as though building up a learner's confidence in their own ability is more important than the literacy skills that are being taught by the volunteers. Participant 4 explained that it is the teacher's job to teach the learners and it is the volunteer's job to fill in the gaps.

4.4.3   Benefits for the volunteers

Participant 8 explained that it was not only the learners in the programme that were receiving 'help' but the volunteers as well. This was illustrated by using her personal story of undergoing surgery and no longer being able to work. She explained that assisting children with their literacy development had helped her get through what had happened to her. Throughout the focus group discussions participants identified various benefits that they had experienced whilst volunteering. These are presented below.

a)   **Feeling loved and needed**

One of the main benefits was feeling loved and needed by the children with whom they were working. Participants described the love that they felt and received from their learners by speaking about the looks on their learners' faces and the hugs that they would receive. Participant 2 stated the following:

"…they're so happy to see their teacher, that in itself is just, it just does it you know?"(2)

b)   Rewarding

Many of the participants reported that they found their volunteering experience rewarding. For some participants, the reward was when learners would advance in their literacy development. For others, the reward came when learners were able to express themselves after forming trusting relationships with their volunteer. Participant 2 stated that by volunteering she was doing 'her bit' and she found that this was rewarding.

c)   Uplifting

Participant 6 explained that she would leave the volunteering sessions feeling uplifted and energised. She ascribed this energy to the learners' youth. Participant 7 responded by admitting that there were some mornings that she would not necessarily feel like attending the sessions, but explained that she would always come away from the sessions feeling completely different.

4.5   HOW DO VOLUNTEERS REPORT ON THEIR VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE?

Participants reported on their personal experience of volunteering with *Project Read* as well as how they experienced the literacy programme itself.

4.5.1   Personal experience of volunteering

a)   The first session

When participants were asked to reflect on their first sessions as a volunteer with the literacy programme, individuals seemed to report on their emotional state at the time. Participant 5 indicated that she could not remember the first session as such but recalls feeling excited. Participant 6 explained that she had initially felt quite confused and unsure of her ability in

assisting the learners with their literacy development. It was both she and participant 2 that used the word 'daunted' to describe how they had felt at the beginning of their volunteering. Participant 2 joined the programme much later in the year, when she replaced a volunteer who had relocated to another town. Unlike the other volunteers, participant 2 had not yet received any training. She admits that she had felt quite fearful and uncertain of what to do during that first session. During the same focus group discussion, participant 2 stated:

"If you stick with the programme and you run with it, it does work."(2)

It is apparent from this statement that as time went on and participant 2 received the necessary training, she was able to gain more confidence in the programme and her ability as a volunteer.

b)   Memorable moments

Participant 6 described the transformation that one of her learners had gone through whilst being on the programme. During the first session this particular learner would not say a word but as time went by she began to open up. Participant 6 described the transformation as follows:

"…it was like a flower opening. It was wonderful to see this child…open up and get it, and she was loving it." (6).

A memorable moment for participant 4 was when one of her learners was able to make the distinction between 'a' for apple and 'e' for elephant. Participant 4 stated that she will always remember the way in which this learner's face lit up when she realised that there was a difference between the two sounds.

c)   Shared experiences

Towards the end of the second focus group discussion, participant 7 noted that she had found listening to the other volunteer's experiences incredibly beneficial. Participant 5 seemed to feel more at ease knowing that other *Project Read* volunteers had experienced similar volunteering experiences to her. She stated the following:

"I think it is hugely good to hear that other people are having similar problems or breakthroughs."(5).

Participant 5 also conveyed that through sharing experiences volunteers can provide one another with useful tips in tackling common obstacles.

4.5.2   The programme

Overall the participants reported that they found the structured nature of the literacy programme to be helpful. Below are some of the difficulties and possible future considerations that were raised by the focus group participants.

a)   Selection and pairing of learners

During the first focus group discussion participant 4 enquired about the process of pairing the learners. She explained that two of the learners she was allocated were at different levels in their literacy development. This seemed to result in one learner 'taking over' and dominating the literacy sessions.

b)   Ratio of learners to volunteers

Each *Project Read* volunteer is allocated two learners. The Grade R volunteers see each of their learners individually for 30 minute sessions, whilst the Grade 1 volunteers work with both of their learners simultaneously for an hour. In both of the focus group discussions the ratio of learners to volunteers was deliberated upon. Some participants felt that it would be

better to work with learners on a one to one basis in order to eliminate any competitiveness between the learners. In this way learners would be able to receive more individual and specialised attention. This would also eliminate the risk of one of the learners dominating the sessions. Participant 4 advocated for volunteers to assist three learners at a time instead of two. Due to various circumstances this particular participant experienced this scenario and said that she had found this much easier to handle. Other participants reported that they were content to continue assisting their two learners simultaneously. These participants seemed to have a system in place that ensured that both of the learners received individual attention and equal opportunities to develop their literacy skills.

c)   Continuation with the same learners

A number of participants stated that they would like the option of continuing with the same two learners for a period of two years. This was expressed through various statements. One such statement was made by participant 5.

"I sort of felt it was sad that you take a kid through a year and then suddenly you're gone out of their lives, there's no follow through, and you wonder what's going to happen to them."(5).

Participant 7 informed the other focus group participants that she had previously been allocated the same two learners for a second year. She explained that both the learners still required assistance with their literacy development but seemed content to continue working with her for another year. Participant 7 expressed the thought that it was beneficial for the learners to continue with her for a second year but also brought up the ethical dilemma of other struggling learners. She wondered then if it would be better to assist learners for a period of a year, in order to give other learners a turn to be on the programme.

d)   Parent evenings

During 2016, a parent evening was held at each of the *Project Read* sites. The purpose of these meetings was to inform parents about the literacy programme and for them to meet the volunteers. Parents each received a literacy pack containing some of the same games used in the programme. The games were explained to the parents and some time was given for them to practice playing the games with the volunteers. Parents were encouraged to spend time playing these literacy games at home with their children. Participants 7 and 8 described how beneficial these parent evenings had been and reported a definite subsequent improvement in their learners' literacy development. Participant 5 commented on the important role that parents play with regards to the programme and their children's literacy development.

e)   Working alongside the teachers

Participant 4 felt that it would be helpful for volunteers to be kept up to date with the educators' teaching schedules. Participant 2 agreed with this idea and noted that in this way volunteers could work alongside the teachers – reinforcing what is currently being taught to the learners in the classroom.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The following chapter is a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions.

5.1 OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH PRIVILEGE

Before unpacking the motives for volunteering, it is important to understand who it is that is able to volunteer. From the descriptive statistics generated through this research study, it is clear that white, female individuals who have the privilege of time (often once retired) tend to volunteer with the *Project Read* literacy programme. These statistics are no coincidence, but instead seem to reflect those who hold more privileged positions within the South African context. The idea of privilege resulting in opportunities (including the option of volunteering) speaks to the human resources theory on volunteerism described by Wilson (2012). The theory postulates that the more resources that an individual has access to, the more likely he/she is to volunteer. Given the active racial privileging of apartheid it would make sense that white individuals would have access to more resources and because of this would be more likely to volunteer. The volunteers (and indeed the learners themselves) are in some ways an example of the continuation of the system of inequality, and perhaps due to this some volunteers may wish to 'give back' charitably as a way to assuage their feelings of guilt.

5.2 MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

The initial motivations to volunteer described by the research participants in the present study seem to provide support for three out of the six motivational functions as proposed by Clary et al., (1998). The most common motivations expressed by the volunteers were to 'give back to the community' (values function), to learn new skills or use existing skills that may otherwise go unused (understanding function), and perhaps indirectly to reduce negative

feelings with regards to the privileged positions they hold through the injustices of South Africa's past (protective function). Although not initially a motivating factor, the numerous benefits experienced by volunteers seem to have contributed to sustaining their involvement with the literacy programme. Clary et al., (1998) refers to this as the enhancement function. These functions speak to the intrinsic values of the volunteers themselves. These seem to impact on an individual's decision with regards to volunteering.

A number of similarities seem to exist when research participants are compared to the literacy volunteers from Wymer Jr.'s (2003) study. In both cases, volunteers had commented that life changing events (such as entering into retirement or widowhood) were instrumental in their decision to volunteer. These experiences seem to have transitioned individuals into a different life stage. In many cases these new life stages seemed to have an element of loss about them, and perhaps because of this, individuals may have decided to volunteer in an attempt to fill a 'gap' in their lives. Several of the research participants (from both research studies) disclosed that had been teachers before retirement. Volunteers with previous teaching experience seemed to exude a sense of confidence in their ability to assist others with their literacy development. This seemed to be a contributing factor to these individuals choosing to volunteer with the programme. Volunteering with a literacy programme could also provide someone with a passion for teaching an opportunity to continue to teach beyond retirement.

One interesting finding was that a number of the research participants seemed to choose to volunteer as a result of social influences (i.e. being asked to volunteer by someone they knew). In such cases individuals would be responding to an external motivation to volunteer. Given this finding and the high rate of unemployment in South Africa, newly qualified teachers might also be approached to join the programme. In this way they too might gain more experience and confidence in their teaching ability which in turn could assist them with future employment.

44

5.3　DETERRENTS

Many studies based on the phenomenon of volunteerism tend to focus purely on the motives of individuals choosing to volunteer. This particular research study also explores some of the possible deterrents. From the researcher's perspective it is important to understand both types of factors. This information can assist an organisation in identifying potential volunteers, and this information can help managers better understand what to communicate to these potential volunteers. Interestingly, a number of the factors which motivated research participants to volunteer were also perceived to be possible deterring factors for other individuals with similar demographics to themselves choosing not to volunteer.

Although not much can be done when it comes to deterring factors that are based on personal choice and preference alone, there are some potentially deterring factors that could possibly be addressed if explored in more detail. In addressing these types of potential deterring factors (such as fear/lack of confidence, a lack of awareness, and underestimating the difference that volunteering with the project can make) the researcher is of the opinion that the number of *Project Read* volunteers could be increased. For example, if individuals are not volunteering with the literacy programme because they underestimate the difference that this can make, information regarding the effectiveness of the programme can be compiled and presented to potential volunteers. In this way a potentially deterring factor such as this might not have as much influence as it did before and could result in another individual choosing to join the programme.

5.4　ACTUAL VERSUS PERCEIVED BENEFITS

Through engaging with numerous research studies and articles (including this particular study), the researcher became acutely aware of the absence of the learners' voices. It is unclear what they make of the programme or the volunteers themselves. As such, the benefits

experienced by the learners are perceived benefits given from the volunteers' perspectives. Although this is still useful information, it would be interesting to compare the perceived benefits with the actual benefits experienced by the learners themselves. Having said this, literacy volunteers (from this research study as well as those from Tracey et al.'s, 2014 study) seemed to agree on a number of these perceived benefits. These benefits included the learners being made to feel special through receiving individual attention, an improvement in self-confidence, and the overall enjoyment of being on the programme. Other perceived benefits generated from this research study include learners being able to develop particular life skills, as well as the constant encouragement received from their volunteers.

Similarities also seem to exist between the study at hand and that of Tracey el al. (2014) with regards to the benefits experienced by the literacy volunteers. These include learning more patience, an improvement in self-confidence, and an overall sense of satisfaction (particularly when witnessing the progress being made by their learners). From this study, the research participants expressed the feelings that they were made to feel special and needed by their learners. They also noted feeling uplifted and energised after the literacy sessions. The various benefits (and perceived benefits) mentioned above seem to have resulted from the meaningful relationships that had formed between the volunteers and the learners. This is certainly true for what seems like the most profound benefit experienced by the volunteers themselves. This is discussed in detail below.

5.5   THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

Mahlomaholo & Matobako (2006) theorise that Community Service Learning (CSL) can be posited and practised at three different levels. These three levels include (1) CSL as a charity, (2) CSL as a project, and (3) CSL as a genuine engagement. Although Ellen and Ross (2012) point out that service learning is slightly different to volunteerism (in that it connects

academic coursework with services to the community), the researcher was able to use Maholmaholo and Matobako's (2006) theory in interpreting parts of the research findings.

From the focus group discussions, it appears as though some of the volunteers initially entered the literacy programme with the intention of doing something *for* the community (rather than perhaps *with* the community). From this perspective volunteers would be operating from a charitable level – with the idea of giving to the 'less fortunate' without the expectation of receiving anything in return (Mahlomaholo & Matobako, 2006). According to Weerts and Sandmann (2008) the emphasis that is placed on this one-way transfer of knowledge (in this case from the volunteers to the learners) tends to reinforce the stereotype of communities as being helpless and in need of assistance from 'external others'. This further perpetuates the dominant power relations embedded in this type of relationship through implying that one group has skills and resources to offer whilst the other does not (Hammersley, 2013).

Although individuals may have begun volunteering from a charitable position and understanding of giving, their perspectives on what it meant to be a volunteer began to shift over time. The main catalyst in bringing about this change was the meaningful relationships formed between the volunteers and their learners. The volunteers and the leaners no longer seemed to exist as separate entities, but instead formed collaborative relationships that were reciprocal in nature. Whilst initially volunteers may have seen themselves as the ones giving, they began to recognise that they too were receiving. This is illustrated by the numerous benefits mentioned by the volunteers during the focus group discussions (see sections 4.4 and 5.4). The reciprocity experienced in these relationships seemed to begin to break down the artificial categories of 'giver' and 'receiver', which in turn assisted in reducing the power differences between the volunteers and the learners. This idea is confirmed by Lough and Oppenheim (2017). It was through these relationships that volunteers (like the learners)

seemed to undergo a process of development. Although the volunteers' development may not have been in relation to skills, it was most certainly with regard to personal insight. The essence of some of the volunteers' developmental process is captured in the following quote: Volunteers (might) receive a transformative learning experience: a new recognition of their social, economic and political privileges within an unequal world, a new appreciation of the ways in which their lives are entwined with the lives of others, and a new understanding of the moral and ethical obligations that such privilege and interdependence might demand of them (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017, p. 201).

The development of personal insight also seemed to result in the development of social empathy. Segal (2011) defines social empathy as "the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gain insight into the structural inequalities and disparities that exist" (p. 267). Volunteers seemed to realise that they hold privileged positions, and because of this they were made more aware of the social injustices that exist (and indeed their roles in relation to these injustices). Through this process, volunteers no longer seemed to approach the literacy programme and the learners from a charitable position, but rather seemed to move towards an approach of genuine engagement (the third level of Mahlomaholo and Matobako's, 2006, theory). From this type of approach the volunteer no longer does something *for* the community but instead the community that the volunteer is engaged with is also his/her community.

5.6   AN EMOTIVE EXPERIENCE

The personal experiences of the volunteers seemed to be quite emotive in nature – particularly before their first volunteering session with their assigned learners. Although training seems to provide volunteers with the necessary skills and information to carry out the steps of the programme, perhaps a space for volunteers to debrief (particularly after their first

48

session) may be useful. With regards to the literacy programme itself, volunteers seemed to have a number of queries, thoughts, and opinions that they wished to raise and discuss. Through the focus group discussions, the researcher became aware of the need for volunteers to meet with one another and the site coordinator/programme manager to be able to discuss such matters. At the start of the focus group discussions, the researcher had also assumed that the volunteers knew one another. This however was not the case, and perhaps through bringing volunteers together supportive relationships (perhaps even friendships) can be formed.

5.7 A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

From the findings, it was apparent that volunteers were advocating for a holistic approach to the learners' literacy development. Volunteers commented on the importance of parents' involvement with the programme and seemed to be in favour of the continuation of the parent evenings. In addition, the suggestion to work alongside the teachers might be something for the literacy site coordinator and programme manager to consider in the future.

5.8 PROCESS COMMENTS

Research participants note that they found the focus group discussions useful and appreciated learning about other volunteers' experiences. Although the implicit role of the *Project Read* site coordinator is not necessarily to sustain volunteer involvement, providing a space for volunteers to share their volunteering experiences may go a long way in helping to achieve this. This notion is supported by Cummings (1998) who promotes public dialogue as a way of sustaining volunteer involvement. Volunteers should be encouraged to speak about any volunteering matters that concern all those involved. Providing a regular space for such dialogue would be likely to assist in building and maintaining relationships between the

volunteers and the site coordinator/programme manager. Any difficulties or problems experienced by volunteers could be raised, and at the same time volunteers would be able to receive the necessary support. This type of space also lends itself to reflecting on and evaluating the way in which the programme is run – allowing for any adjustments or changes to be made.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

From the findings it is clear that individuals who have access to resources and hold privileged positions are more likely to volunteer than those who do not. The research participants seemed to be prompted to volunteer by both internal and external factors. Research participants reported that the chose to volunteer with the *Project Read* literacy programme in order to (1) 'give back to the community' (perhaps to assuage feelings of guilt regarding their privileged positions), (2) to learn new skills, (3) to fill a 'gap' in their lives, and/or (4) to appease those who had approached them to join the programme. In terms of benefits, research participants reported feeling loved and needed by their learners. They also noted that they had found their volunteering experience to be rewarding and uplifting. Perhaps one of the main benefits experienced by the research participants were the meaningful relationships that they had formed with their learners. This in turn seemed to result in a number of the volunteers undergoing a profound process of development and transformation – something that they had not anticipated at the start of their volunteering journey. Research participants perceived that the learners on the programme benefitted from receiving individual attention and encouragement, which in turn seemed to improve the leaners' confidence.

Overall, research participants reported a positive volunteering experience. During the focus group discussions it was apparent that volunteers seemed to enjoy sharing their personal volunteering experiences with one another. The focus group discussions seemed to provide a space in which volunteers could engage in open dialogue. This resulted in a number of queries, thoughts, and opinions about the literacy programme being raised. These types of discussions could be useful for reflecting on and evaluating the way in which the programme is run. This type of space could also assist volunteers in getting to know one another and perhaps forming supportive relationships/friendships through the process.

51

6.2   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A great deal of research on the phenomenon of volunteerism tends to focus on the volunteers' perspectives. As the aim of this study was to learn more about literacy volunteers it too adopted this approach. However, as mentioned, the researcher became acutely aware of the absence of the learners' voices and how they make sense of the volunteers and the literacy programme. The focus group questions prompted volunteers to speculate regarding the perceived benefits experienced by the learners on the programme. Although this is useful information, in some ways the learners are then spoken for. Future research could focus on the leaners' experiences of being on the *Project Read* programme as well as the benefits that they have personally experienced. These could then be compared with the perceived benefits provided by the volunteers.

6.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the discussed findings and arguments presented, the following recommendations are made with regards to the *Project Read* literacy programme:

- To approach newly qualified teachers to volunteer with the programme whilst searching for employment (due to the high unemployment rates in South Africa and the social factors that influence individuals to volunteer – see the last paragraph of section 5.2);

- To offer a debriefing space for volunteers after their first session with their learners so they are able to be supported, encouraged, and affirmed (volunteers reported on their emotional state prior to, during, and after their first session with their learners – see section 4.5.1a);

- To provide a regular space for volunteers to share their volunteering experiences with other volunteers, the site coordinator, and/or the programme manager (in an attempt to

sustain volunteers' involvement with the programme and to continually assess and evaluate how the programme is run - see sections 4.5.1c, 5.6, and 5.8);

- To continue to involve parents in their children's literacy development through hosting parent evenings (due to the subsequent improvement in learners' literacy development – see section 4.5.2d);

- To work alongside the learners' class teachers in order to reinforce what is being learnt in the classroom (see section 4.5.2e).

- In terms of future research it may be beneficial to explore the learners' experiences of the volunteers and the *Project Read* literacy programme. This could potentially validate some of the findings presented in this study and provide more insight into the literacy programme itself (see section 5.4).

6.4   FINAL COMMENTS

Literacy volunteers (such as those who volunteer with the *Project Read* literacy programme) are crucial in tackling the literacy crisis in South Africa. It is hoped that the data generated from this study will assist in encouraging, recruiting and retaining more (*Project Read)* literacy volunteers in the future, so that more children can be assisted with their early literacy development. In a country where not everyone has access to the same basic quality education, it is imperative that we strive to assist those who are left struggling and potentially falling behind their age cohort. We cannot underestimate the importance of education in bringing about the much needed change in this world.

REFERENCES

Akhurst, J. E. (2000). *Peer Group Supervision as an adjunct to individual supervision: An investigation of models of learning*. (Unpublished PhD thesis). Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Akintola, O. (2011). What motivates people to volunteer? The case of volunteer AIDS caregivers in faith-based organizations in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Health Policy and Planning*, *26*(1), 53–62.

Baatjes, I. (2003). Reading in South Africa: An overview of policy, programmes and campaigns since 1994. *Innovation*, *26*(1), 1–10.

Bantjes, J., Kagee, A., & Young, C. (2016). Counselling pscyhology in South Africa. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 29(2), 171 - 183.

Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2001). *The Practice of Social Research*. South Africa: Oxford University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Chilisa, B., & Kawulich, B. (2012). Selecting a research approach: Paradigm, methodology, and methods. In C. Wagner, B. Kawulich, & M. Garner (Eds.), *Doing social research: A global context*, (pp.51-61).McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Clary, E. G., Ridge, R. D., Stukas, A. A., Snyder, M., Copeland, J., Haugen, J., & Miene, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*(6), 1516–1530.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. (2007). Designing a qualitative study. In *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (pp. 35–41). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Creswell, J., Hanson, W., Clark Plano, V., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counselling Psychologist*, *35*(2), 236–264.

Crowe, S., Creswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *Medical Research Methodology*, *11*(100), 257-271.

Cummings, R. (1998). Leadership for volunteers: The way it is and the way it could be. *Journal of Extension*, *36* (5), 1-4.

Ebbesen, M., Andersen, S., & Pedersen, B. (2012). Further development of Beauchamp and Childress' theory based on empirical ethics. *Journal of Clinical Research & Bioethics*, 1–7.

Eckstein, S. (2001). Community as gift-giving: Collectivistic roots of volunteerism. *American Sociological Review*, *66*, 829–851.

Ellen, M., & Ross, T. (2012). Linking classroom learning to the community through service learning. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, *29*(1), 53–60.

Girolametto, L., Weitzman, E., & Greenberg, J. (2012). Facilitating emergent literacy: Efficacy of a model that partners speech-language pathologists and educators. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *21*(1), 47–63.

Govinden, K. (2014). *Statistics South Africa*. *Volunteer Activity Survey*. Retrieved 7 April 2018 from http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P02113/P021132014.pdf

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, *29*(2), 75–91.

Hammersley, L. (2013). Community-based service-learning: Partnerships of reciprocal exchange? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, *14*(3), 171–184.

Heckman, J. J., & Masterov, D. V. (2007). The productivity argument for investing in young

    children. *Review of Agricultural Economics*, *29*(3), 446–493.

Howie, S. J., Combrinck, C., Roux, K., Tshele, M., Mokoena, G. M., & McLeod, P. N.

    (2017). *PIRLS literacy 2016 : South African highlights report*. Pretoria: Centre for

    Evaluation and Assessment.

Howitt, D., & Cramer, D. (2011). Thematic analysis. In *Introduction to research methods in*

    psychology (3rd ed., pp. 328–342). Harlow: Pearson.

Justice, L. M., & Ezell, H. K. (2004). Print Referencing : An emergent literacy enhancement

    strategy and its clinical application. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*,

    35, 185–194.

Kozulin, A., & Presseisen, B. (1995). Mediated learning experience and psycholoigical tools:

    Vygotsky's and Feursteing's perspectives in a study of student learning. *Educational*

    Psychologist, *30*(2), 67–75.

Lebone Literacy Programme - ICDP Trust. (n.d.). Retrieved 8 April 2018 from

    http://www.icdptrust.com/index.html

Litosseliti, L. (2003). *Using focus groups in research*. London: A & C Black.

Lough, B. J., & Oppenheim, W. (2017). Revisiting reciprocity in international volunteering.

    Progress in Development Studies, *17*(3), 197–213.

Mahlomaholo, S., & Matobako, T. (2006). Service Learning in South Africa held terminally

    captive by legacies of the past. *Alternation*, *13*(1), 203–217.

Mashek, C. (2015). *Exploring experiences of Western Cape based Shine volunteers about the*

    Shine Centre programme and the children they support. (Unpublished Master's thesis).

    University of Cape Town.

Mercer, N. (1994). Neo-Vygotskian theory and classroom education. *Language, literacy and learning in educational practice* (pp. 92–110). Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters and Open University Press.

Methula, P. (n.d.). Education to be able to read and write : DGMT's literacy strategy for 0-15 year olds. Retrieved 29 March 2019 from http://www.paulroos.co.za/wp-content/blogs.dir/4/files/2012/02/Detailed-Literacy-Strategy-final.pdf

Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *22*(1), 129–152.

O'Carroll, S. (2011). An exploratory study of early letter-sound knowledge in a low socio-economic context in South Africa. *Reading and Writing*, *2*(1), 7–26.

O'Carroll, S. (2018, November 27). How you can be part of the solution to our literacy crisis. *Mail and Guardian*. Retrieved 19 March 2019 from https://mg.co.za/article/2018-11-26-how-you-can-be-part-of-the-solution-to-our-literacy-crisis

Okeyo, A. (2015). *Strengthening foundational literacy: A process and outcome evaluation of the Wordworks Early Literacy Programme*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Cape Town.

Rodgers, E. M., Wang, C., & Gómez-Bellengé, F. X. (2004). Closing the Literacy Achievement Gap with early intervention. *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, San Diego, CA.

Roy, K., & Ziemek, S. (2000). On the Economics of Volunteering. *ZEF - Discussion Papers on Development Policy*, *31*, 1–47. Retrieved 4 April 2018 from https://www.zef.de/uploads/tx_zefportal/Publications/zef_dp31-00.pdf

Runswick-Cole, K. (2011). Interviewing. In P. Banister, G. Bunn, E. Burman, J. Daniels, P. Duckett, D. Goodley, … P. Whelan (Eds.), *Qualitative Methods in Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 88–100). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Sanacore, J., & Palumbo, A. (2009). Understanding the fourth-grade slump: Our point of

view. *The Educational Forum*, *73*, 67–74.

Segal, E. (2011). Social empathy: A model built on empathy, contextual understanding, and social responsibility that promotes social justice. *Journal of Social Service Research*, *37*(3), 266–277.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*, 63–75.

Swan, K. (2005). A constructivist model for thinking about learning online. In J. Bourne & J. C. Moore (Eds.), *Elements of Quality Online Education: Engaging Communities*, 13-31. Needham, MA: Sloan-C.

Thomas, G. (2011). *How to do your case study*. London: Sage.

Tracey, D., Hornery, S., Seaton, M., Craven, R. G., & Yeung, A. S. (2014). Volunteers supporting children with reading difficulties in schools: Motives and rewards. *School Community Journal*, *24*(1), 49–68.

Van Willigen, M. (2000). Differential benefits of volunteering across the life course. *Journal of Gerontology*, *55B*(5), 308–318.

Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., Kouzekanani, K., Bryant, D. P., Dickson, S., & Blozis, S. A. (2003). Reading instruction grouping for students with reading difficulties. *Remedial and Special Education*, *24*(5), 301–315.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and Language*. (E. Hanfmann & G. Vakar, Eds.). New York: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Weerts, D. J., & Sandmann, L. R. (2008). Building a two-way street: Challenges and oppportunities for community engagement at research universities. *The Review of*

Higher Education, *32*(1), 73–106.

Whillans, A. V., Seider, S. C., Chen, L., Dwyer, R. J., Novick, S., Gramigna, K. J., … Dunn, E. W. (2017). Does volunteering improve well-being? *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology*, 1–16.

Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *26*, 215–240.

Wilson, J. (2012). Volunteerism research: A review essay. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *41*(2), 176–212.

Wilson, S., Dickinson, D., & Rowe, D. (2013). Impact of an Early Reading First program on the language and literacy achievement of children from diverse language backgrounds. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *28*, 578–592.

Wood, Bruner, & Ross. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, *17*, 89–100.

Wymer Jr., W. W. (2003). Differentiating literacy volunteers: A segmentation analysis for target marketing. *International Journal of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, *8*(3), 267–285.

Young, C., Bantjes, J., & Kagee, A. (2016). Professional boundaries and the identity of counselling psychology in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(1), 3-9.

Ziemek, S. (2003). *Economic theories on motivations for volunteering: A cross-country Analysis*. Bonn.

APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER
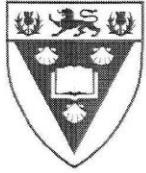
RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Psychology Department
1 University Road, Grahamstown, 6139, South Africa
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa
T: +27 (0) 46 603 8500
T: +27 (0) 46 603 7614
E: psychology@ ru.ac.za

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

22 June 2017

Kaitlin Yendall
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Kaitlin,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2017/47

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2017/47 and title, *'Learning about Volunteering: An exploration of literacy volunteers' experiences'*, served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 14 June 2017. The RPERC notes that this project is supervised by Prof. Jacqui Akhurst. Your project has been given ethics clearance.

Please note that should your project require consent from institutional gatekeepers, the RPERC requires that you submit written confirmation of this consent. Kindly also ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Werner Bohmke
CHAIRPERSON: RPERC

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC ● Tel: (046) 603 8502 ● Fax: (046) 603 7203 ● e-mail: y.scheepers@ru.ac.za

Department of Psychology
1 University Road
Grahamstown
6139

A. Maritz
Lebone Centre
15 Currie Street
Grahamstown
6139   (21 July 2017)

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Anneliese,

I would like to request your written permission to conduct my Masters research on the experiences of the *Project Read* literacy volunteers. Although we have briefly spoken before, I would like to confirm that I do not need to use pseudonyms for the Lebone Centre or Project Read within this study. Professor Jacqui Akhurst is my research supervisor and if necessary can be contacted via email (j.akhurst@ru.ac.za).

In order to conduct this research, I would need to contact the 2016 *Project Read* volunteers who would be asked to complete a telephonic survey. Should volunteers consent to participate in this survey, they will be required to answer a few short questions regarding their demographics. All volunteers who complete the telephonic survey will also be invited to join one of two focus group discussions which will be held later this year. These discussions will focus on the participants' experiences of volunteering, their motivations for volunteering, and the factors which influence the duration of their volunteering with the *Project Read* literacy programme. I would therefore also like to request permission from you to approach the *Project Read* volunteers of 2016 to participate in this study.

Once the research is complete, a summary of the results will be presented to the *Lebone Centre*, its trustees and research participants. Should you be willing to support this research, please could you sign below to indicate your approval, in order for me to obtain ethical clearance for this research project?

Yours sincerely,

Kaitlin Yendall

(Researcher)

Signed on (Date): 25/07/2017

Manager of Lebone Centre:

APPENDIX C: PREPARATORY INFORMATION SHEET

RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown ● 6140 ● South Africa

PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC ● Tel: (046) 603 8502 ● Fax: (046) 603 7203 ● e-mail: y.scheepers@ru.ac.za

Dear Project Read Volunteer,

RE: RESEARCH ON LITERACY VOLUNTEERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES

I am busy conducting my Masters research on the experiences of *Project Read* volunteers. In about two weeks I will be phoning each of the 2016 *Project Read* volunteers and asking questions regarding volunteers' demographics. The purpose of this survey is to help determine who it is that volunteers for the *Project Read programme*. It is my hope that the information gathered will help *Project Read* to recruit more volunteers in the future.

All of the information I gather will be kept strictly confidential. If you do not wish to answer particular questions you may choose not to. You may also choose to not take part in this telephonic survey at all. The survey will not take more than 5 minutes and I will ask you questions regarding your demographics over the phone.

In order to understand the experiences of *Project Read* volunteers each volunteer will be invited to join in on a focus group discussion. Two focus group discussions will take place at the *Lebone Centre* and should not last longer than one and a half hours each. Those who wish to participate will only need to attend one of these discussions. Tea and cake will be served and volunteers will be able to discuss their experiences of volunteering with *Project Read*. All those who volunteered at least an hour of their time in 2016 are welcome to join the discussion. The information I gather during these discussions will be kept strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used to assure anonymity. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Warm regards,

Kaitlin Yendall

(Researcher)

APPENDIX D: TELEPHONIC SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your date of birth?

2. Which ethnic group do you identify with?

3. What is your marital status?

4. What has been the highest education level you have successfully achieved?

5. Are you currently employed?

6. (If so), is this full time / part time?

7. How did you hear about *Project Read?*

8. How long have you volunteered with *Project Read*?

APPENDIX E: DETAILS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Dear 2016 Project Read Volunteers,

I hope you are well? It has been a number of weeks since I phoned and/emailed you to ask about your demographics for my masters' research project. Thank you so much for responding to my questions. I really do appreciate this! The information that was gathered will be useful for recruiting future volunteers for the programme.

The second and final part of my research project consists of focus group discussions. A focus group discussion consists of a small group of people who are asked questions about a particular topic and are invited to join in an open discussion about the topic. In this particular case we will be discussing volunteering and the experiences that you have had as past and present *Project Read* volunteers. I would like to invite you to participate in **one** of these focus group discussions.

The dates and times of the focus groups are as follows:

Wednesday the 4th of October at 14:00 - 15:30 OR

Friday the 6th of October at 09:00 - 10:30

Please let me know if you will be attending one of the focus group discussions (as well as the date and time of the focus group that you have chosen to participate in). Tea and cake will be served.

It would be lovely to see you all again and to hear about the various experiences that you have had as volunteers with the programme. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,
Kaitlin

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. When did you begin volunteering with *Project Read*?

2. What was happening in your life prior to you deciding to volunteer?

3. What made you decide to join the *Project Read* programme specifically?

4. What influences other people with similar demographics and situations to not volunteer?

5. What kinds of people do you think volunteer?

6. How has your experience of volunteering been so far?

7. Can you remember your first session volunteering with *Project Read*? Would you be able to describe this session? What were you feeling at the time? How did you feel after the first session?

8. Do any particular experiences stand out for you?

9. What do you enjoy about volunteering with *Project Read*?

10. What do you dislike about volunteering with *Project Read*?

11. What made you decided to continue/discontinue volunteering with *Project Read*?

12. Do you feel like you gain anything from volunteering?

13. What benefits do you feel there are for the children whom you work with?

14. What skills, talents or aptitudes do you bring to the programme?

15. Have you learnt anything new about yourself throughout your experience?

APPENDIX G: AGREEMENT BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS

RHODES UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project of Kaitlin Amy Yendall on literacy volunteers' experiences.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 072 775 3200 or kaitekay@gmail.com . The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee, and is under the supervision of Prof Jacqui Akhurst in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on 046 603 7084 or j.akhurst@ru.ac.za .

2. The researcher is interested in the experiences of the *Project Read* volunteers, why they are motivated to volunteer, and the factors which influence their decision to continue or discontinue volunteering.

3. My participation will involve contributing to a focus group discussion around *Project Read* and my experiences of the programme. This discussion should not last more than one and a half hours. If I agree, the discussion will be audio recorded for research purposes.

4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.

5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. Anneliese Maritz (a qualified social worker and the *Lebone Centre* Manager) may be contacted in the unlikely event that participation results in any

feelings of distress, embarrassment, or guilt. She can be contacted via telephone (046 622 7985) or email (a.maritz@lebonecentre.org).

6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.

7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date): _____

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

APPENDIX H: PERMISSION TO USE TAPE RECORDINGS

Rhodes University — Department of Psychology

USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM

Name of participant			
Participant's contacts details	Email address: Phone number:		
Name of researcher			
Level of research	Honours	Masters	PhD
Brief title of project			
Name of supervisor			

DECLARATION

(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)

1.	The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me.	verbally	
		in writing	
2.	I agree to be interviewed and to allow recordings to be made of the interview.	audiotape	
		videotape	
3.	I agree to _____ and to allow recordings to be made.	audiotape	
		videotape	
4.	The tape recordings may be transcribed	without conditions	
		only by the researcher	
		by one or more nominated third parties	
5.	I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the study is complete and the report has been written. OR I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to utilised for the following purposes and under the following conditions		

Signature of participant: _____   Date: _____

Witnessed by researcher: _____   Date: _____