

# Exploring privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour

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for the degree *Magister Artium* of Psychology at the  
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November 2015

It all starts here™



## Declaration

I, Christelle Potgieter, declare that this research study, *Exploring privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour* is my own original work. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Magister Artium in Psychology, North-West University, Potchefstroom. It has not been submitted by me or anyone else before for any degree or examination at any other university. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research and that all reference material in the dissertation has been duly acknowledged.



2015-11-12

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## **Declaration of language editing and proof reading**

I hereby declare that the thesis, *Exploring privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour* by Christelle Potgieter, has been language edited by me. After a career as editor-in-chief at a leading publishing house, I am currently working as a freelance text editor.

Lambert D Jacobs (BA Hons, MA, BD, MDiv)

November 2015

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Writing this mini-dissertation was one of the most challenging experiences of my life. This growth experience contributed positively to who I am as a person today. I am greatly indebted to many people who helped, supported and encouraged me in completion of this work.

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## Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore how privileged adolescents in an affluent school in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, South Africa, experienced an act of pro-social behaviour. The age of the participants varied between 17 and 18 years. Every year at the school, Grade 11 learners participate in the Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HFHSA) community building project. It is a volunteer programme comprising of fundraising after which learners physically build houses for members of an underprivileged community. This specific school was involved in a community in Johannesburg.

The study was approved by the Research Committee and Faculty Board of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Consent was also obtained from the Gauteng Provincial Manager of HFHSA and the Headmaster of the school where the study was conducted.

A literature review was conducted to describe the concepts that supported the study. The literature review focused on the development of adolescents and pro-social behaviour and included a discussion on the influences that family, peers and school have on pro-social development as well as discussion on the effects that volunteering and the socio-economic status of the adolescents have on pro-social behaviour. Gratitude and its contribution to pro-social behaviour were explained, followed by the final section on positive psychology as the theoretical basis for the study.

The researcher utilised a qualitative research approach, which enabled her to explore and describe participants' experiences. A phenomenological design was used as method of inquiry through purposive and convenience sampling.

Data collection relied on two focus group discussions and four individual interviews. Preceding the focus group discussions and individual interviews, creative art work was conducted as a reflective technique to assist participants in recollecting their experiences, thoughts and feelings.

Thematic analysis was performed using Braun and Clarke's linear model to analyse data. During data analysis three main themes were identified, namely:

- Experience of a sense of awareness
- Experience of a closeness among community members and with peers
- Experience of the outcome of a simple act of pro-social behaviour

A sense of awareness on an intrapersonal level was experienced by participants in the form of (1) gratitude for the privileges they have and (2) awareness of the reality of others less privileged. Participants experienced the true sense of *ubuntu* in the community as well as closeness with their peers. Reflecting on the experience prompted gratitude and satisfaction in participants in what they had accomplished as the outcome of a simple act of pro-social behaviour.

Considering the above, community outreach programmes should be made mandatory in the school curriculum to provide the necessary exposure for adolescents in order to promote pro-social behaviour and positive outcomes for the self and others less privileged.

## **KEYWORDS**

Adolescents

Gratitude

Privileged

Pro-social behaviour

## Opsomming

Die doel van die studie was om ondersoek in te stel na hoe bevoorregte adolessente in 'n goeie skool in die noordelike voorstede van Johannesburg, Suid-Afrika, 'n daad van pro-sosiale gedrag ervaar. Die ouderdom van die deelnemers het tussen 17 en 18 jaar gewissel. Elke jaar neem Graad 11-leerders van die skool deel aan die Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HFHSA) gemeenskap-bouprojek. Dit is 'n vrywilligerprogram wat bestaan uit fondsinsameling, waarna die leerders fisies huise bou vir lede van 'n minderbevoorregte gemeenskap. Hierdie spesifieke skool was betrokke by 'n gemeenskap in Johannesburg.

Die studie is deur die Navorsingskomitee en Fakulteitsraad van die Noordwes-Universiteit, Potchefstroomkampus, goedgekeur. Toestemming is ook verkry van die Gautengse Provinsiale Bestuurder van HFHSA en die skoolhoof van die skool waar die studie uitgevoer is.

'n Literatuuroorsig is uitgevoer om die konsepte wat die studie ondersteun te beskryf. Die literatuuroorsig het op die ontwikkeling van adolessente en pro-sosiale gedrag gefokus. Dit het 'n bespreking ingesluit van die invloed wat familie, die portuurgroep en die skool op die ontwikkeling van pro-sosiale ontwikkeling het, sowel as van die effek van vrywilligerdiens en die sosiale status van die adolessente op pro-sosiale gedrag. Dankbaarheid en die bydrae van dankbaarheid tot pro-sosiale gedrag is verduidelik, gevolg deur 'n slotafdeling rakende positiewe sielkunde as die teoretiese basis vir die studie.

Die navorser het 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering gebruik, wat haar in staat gestel het om deelnemers se ervarings te ondersoek en beskryf. 'n Fenomenologiese ontwerp is as metode van ondersoek gebruik en daar is gebruik gemaak van doelmatige en gerieflikheidssteekproefneming.

Data-insameling het op twee fokusgroepbesprekings en vier individuele onderhoude berus. Kreatiewe kunswerk is voor die fokusgroepbesprekings en individuele onderhoude as 'n reflektiewe tegniek gebruik om deelnemers te help om hulle ervarings, gedagtes en gevoelens te herroep.

Tematiese analise van data is met behulp van Braun en Clarke se liniêre model uitgevoer. Gedurende data-analise is drie hoofemas geïdentifiseer, naamlik:

- Ervaring van 'n gewaarwording van bewustheid
- Ervaring van 'n hegte verhouding tussen lede van die gemeenskap en met die portuurgroep
- Ervaring van die uitkoms van 'n eenvoudige daad van pro-sosiale gedrag.

'n Gewaarwording van bewustheid is op 'n intrapersoonlike vlak deur deelnemers ervaar in die vorm van (1) dankbaarheid vir die voorregte wat hulle het, en (2) bewustheid van die werklikheid van ander wat minderbevoorreg is. Deelnemers het die ware sin van *ubuntu* in die gemeenskap ervaar, sowel as 'n gevoel van nabyheid met hulle portuurgroep. Besinning oor die ervaring het dankbaarheid en tevredenheid in die deelnemers teweeggebring rakende wat hulle bereik het met 'n eenvoudige daad van pro-sosiale gedrag.

Met inagneming van bogenoemde behoort gemeenskaps-uitreikprogramme in die skoolkurrikulum verpligtend te wees om die nodige blootstelling aan adolessente te verskaf en sodoende pro-sosiale gedrag te bevorder en te lei na positiewe uitkomstevir beide die individu en ander wat minderbevoorreg is.

## **SLEUTELWOORDE**

Adolessente

Dankbaarheid

Bevoorregte

Pro-sosiale gedrag

## **Preface**

This dissertation is presented in article format in accordance with the guidelines as set out in the Manual for Postgraduate Studies, 2012 of the North-West University and in conjunction with the guidelines of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa*. Guidelines for the Journal are attached (see Appendix J).

The researcher used the Harvard referencing method for Section A, Part 1 and Part 2, based on the NWU Reference Guide (North-West University, 2012). The APA referencing method (version 6) was used for Section B, since the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* makes use of the APA reference technique and American spelling rules.

At the time of data collection, the participants in the study were in Grade 12. They had participated in the community project (which was the focus of the study) the previous year as Grade 11 learners. Every year the Grade 11 learners at the specific school are provided with the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HFHSA) community outreach building project. They are required to first raise funds in order to build houses in an underprivileged community during a school holiday. Data collection took place a year after the HFHSA building project seeing that the researcher was still completing the research protocol at the time the project took place and could not interview the learners at that time. The learners were not aware of the possibility of participating in a research study during their involvement in the project. For the purpose of the study, learners are referred to as privileged adolescents throughout the study.

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## SECTION A: THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

Section A consists of two parts. Part 1 introduces the dissertation topic and describes the context of the study. Attention is given to the formulation of the problem, research methodology, rationale of the study and ethical considerations. In Part 2 an integrated literature review is presented.

*Often, social progress doesn't come from governments looking down, directing change. It comes from communities, families, and individuals looking up, driving society forward themselves, fuelled by nothing more than an idea or instinct to do good. It comes from civic engagement. —*

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan

## **PART 1: ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1 ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Being privileged is, according to the Oxford Dictionary (2014:n.p.), to be accustomed lifelong to wealth and privilege. Being privileged is also defined as a “special right, advantage, or immunity or available only to a particular person or group”. Additionally, privilege is described as “enjoying a privilege or having privileges during a privileged childhood, in a privileged society” (The Free Dictionary, 2014:n.p.). Privileged adolescents, in the context of this study, have a socio-economic status referred to as upper-middle income class, who enjoy financial freedom. For example, privileged adolescents have fairly unrestricted access to luxuries such as private education, spending money, opportunities to partake in extracurricular activities, regular holidays, the latest smart phones and electronic devices, to name a few.

In the South African context, the upper-middle class can be classified in accordance with the Living Standards Measure Model (LSM Model) developed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation, whereby households can be classified into ten different living standard groups. The group with the highest living standard is LSM 10 and the lowest is LSM 1 (Martins, 2006:2; Mboji, Matikinca & Ellis, 2011:4). The adolescents from privileged families included in this study fall in the LSM 10 category. Annual family income in this category varies from R631 121.00 to R1 329 845.00+ (Chronis, 2012:n.p.). It can thus be concluded that in being categorised as part of the LSM 10 living standard, the adolescents in the study can be referred to as being privileged.

Whereas the LSM Model places a family in South Africa (SA) within a specific living standard group, the Gini coefficient index is used globally to measure the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country (World Bank, 2014). Within the global context, European countries such as Sweden and Denmark rank lowest in respect of inequality on the list of the 153 countries on the Gini coefficient index, whereas SA is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the world (World Bank, 2014). In SA the

difference between rich and poor is, according to this ranking, rated at 63.1% (Index Mundi, 2014:n.p.), leaving the state, communities and individuals with a huge responsibility to assist underprivileged individuals and families.

One organisation that strives to assist underprivileged families is Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI), a non-profit housing organisation that works in partnership with families in need, without discrimination in terms of religion, race or tribe. HFHI has been seeking to eliminate poverty, inadequate housing and homelessness from the world since the early 1970's (Habitat for Humanity, 2012). Through a collaborative partnership with families in need, HFHI seeks to empower the families by breaking the cycle of poverty and building a foundation for a secure future (Habitat for Humanity, 2012).

An affluent school in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg, Gauteng, has for the past ten years been working with Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HFHSA) in a collaborative partnership to help fund and build houses for underprivileged South Africans in rural areas. Privileged grade 11 adolescents from the school each year volunteer their time during the August school holidays to help build the houses. It is meaningful for two reasons that this specific affluent school works in collaboration with HFHSA.

First of all, Gauteng, of all the provinces in SA, has the highest number of households (453 000) living in informal settlements (Housing Development Agency, 2012:25) and secondly, being involved with HFHSA creates opportunities for the privileged adolescents to be exposed to community service. Horn (2012:948) regards community service as a fundamental experience in preparation for good citizenship. Therefore to encourage adolescents and young adults to volunteer to serve in their communities is widely viewed as beneficial for both society and the individual (Planty, Bozick & Regnier, 2006:177).

Adolescence, according to Erikson's theory of psychological development, is the major personality achievement young people go through to attain identity formation. This is the development phase that occurs between the ages of 14 and 18 years (Berk, 2009:479). Identity is viewed as a solid self-definition based on self-chosen values and goals (Berk, 2009:474). During the period of identity formation, major

biological, psychological and social changes occur and cognitive maturation leads to advanced perspective taking, *inter alia* enabling the adolescent to exhibit pro-social behaviour (Eisenberg, 2000:530; Eisenberg, Zhou & Koller, 2001:519). This implies that adolescents as a result reveal the capability to comprehend and respond to the plight of others (Berk, 2009:474; Carlo & Randall, 2002:33; Eisenberg *et al.*, 2006:686).

Pro-social behaviour can be defined as voluntary, generally helpful behaviour (compliance, obedience, cooperation, helpfulness and sharing) (Piliavin, 2009:210; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000:20) and as helping behaviour that is concerned with actions benefitting the well-being of others (Wentzel, 2014:178). According to Marsh (2010:n.p), privileged and underprivileged adolescents differ in exhibiting pro-social behaviour. It has been found that individuals with lower socio-economic status are actually more altruistic than those higher on the economic ladder (Marsh, 2010:n.p.). The results are consistent with national survey findings in the USA, illustrating that individuals with a lower income donate a greater percentage of their allowance to charity than upper-income individuals (Alderman, 2001:379). The reason for the difference, Marsh (2010:n.p.) argues, is that “the poor may feel more compassion because of feeling more connected to those around them” in a psychological and social way. It has been found that poor children tend to participate more in care giving chores and relatively helpful behaviour, probably due to being used to scarce resources (Karmakar & Gosh, 2012:45; Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng & Keltner, 2010:771).

Due to the generally positive nature of pro-social behaviour, this study was conducted from a positive psychology theoretical basis.

In light of the fact that one might expect less pro-social behaviour from privileged adolescents the researcher with this study intended to explore the experiences of privileged adolescents during an act of pro-social behaviour. The research question that was therefore formulated was:

**What are privileged adolescents’ experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour during the HFHSA building project?**

## **1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The overall aim of this study was to explore and describe what privileged adolescents' experiences were during an act of pro-social behaviour.

## **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.3.1 Research approach and design**

A qualitative approach was used with a phenomenological design as the line of inquiry. Qualitative research was used to answer the research question and to seek a better understanding of the problem. The qualitative approach allows for a better understanding of the meaning that people attach to everyday life (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:64). A qualitative approach furthermore permits the necessary flexibility to allow for changes and adaptations during the research process (Creswell, 2009:175). The main concern was to describe and understand the phenomenon under investigation through interpreting participants' personal experiences as described by them in their own words (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:279).

Phenomenology allows for the description of human experience as experienced by the participants permitting the essence of the experience to emerge (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:316). It concerns itself with answering the question, "What is it like to have a certain experience?" (Seabi, 2012:83). The phenomenological design allows for accurate descriptions of the privileged adolescents' lived experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:272; Fouché & Delpont, 2011:65; Sandelowski, 2000:336) and provides an understanding of the participants' "perspective of their social realities" (Seabi, 2012:83).

### **1.3.2 Research context**

The school where the research took place is situated in the affluent Northern suburbs of Johannesburg, Gauteng. Throughout the first part of the year, learners in Grade 11 have weekly meetings where fundraising strategies to corporate sponsorships are identified and pursued in order to fund the building project in partnership with HFHSA. Once the funds have been raised, learners volunteer to

participate in building houses in the identified community during the August school holidays of their Grade 11 year.

During the building phase of the project (which lasts for approximately one week), learners are transported by bus to a semi-rural community where the context differs completely from what they are used to – no tarred roads, residents walk to where they want to be and if traveling out of the semi-rural community they have to make use of public transport, some even still make use of donkey carts. Houses in general are small (most have only one or two bedrooms, one bathroom, one small living area and a kitchen).

All building materials are provided by HFHSA with the money the learners have raised during the course of the first part of the year, however the school provides packed lunches for the learners. 'Builders' (the volunteering learners) are divided into smaller groups, under appropriate building supervision, and do physical work such as mixing cement, passing bricks, plastering and painting.

### **1.3.3 Participants**

Learners in Grade 12 from a specific affluent high school in Johannesburg, Gauteng, who had participated in a HFHSA building project during the previous year, were selected through purposive and convenience sampling as the pool from which volunteers would be invited to partake in this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166). Purposive sampling was used because the subjects shared similar characteristics. Purposive sampling was used on the basis of the researcher's own judgement and the nature of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166). Purposive sampling is typically designed to "pick a small number of cases that will yield the most information about a particular phenomenon" (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:83). Purposive sampling, according to Devers and Frankel (2000:265), is used to enhance the understanding of the experiences of selected individuals or groups. It further is used to define a particular setting, persons or events (Teddlie & Yu, 2007:78). This method of sampling was appropriate as the study intended to research the experiences of a group of privileged adolescents during an act of pro-social behaviour. Convenience sampling was further employed because it involves drawing on samples that are both easily

accessible and willing to participate in the study (Crossman, 2015:n.p.). The group of privileged adolescents were chosen for the research because they all met the requirements for the study. They were also pupils at a school where the researcher worked as junior counsellor for Grades 8 and 9 at the time of research.

Out of the total group of 89 Grade 12 learners who had participated in the building project, 16 learners volunteered to partake in the study. The sample of 16 volunteers was considered to be a suitable size for the purposes of the study as qualitative research is not concerned with a large number of participants, but rather the level of depth of information of data collection (Davis, Gallardo & Lachlan, 2009:170). The researcher was therefore of the opinion that the number of participants in this study would provide enough rich information to answer the research question. Within the South African context, Babbie and Mouton (2001:287) state that the general rule is to use between five and twenty participants.

The inclusion criteria for the purpose of the study involved that all participants had to:

- be Grade 12 learners (boys or girls) from a specific privileged high school in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg and who had participated in the HFHSA building project during their Grade 11 year;
- be able to speak English well enough to reflect on their experiences;
- consent to voluntary participation.

All the participants (17 and 18 year old White, Black, Indian and Chinese boys and girls) spoke English as their first language except for two Chinese participants, whose first language was Mandarin. They were however fluent in English. Data were to be gathered by means of two focus group discussions and four individual interviews.

Table 1.1 below shows the grouping of the participants.

**Table 1.1: Participants' gender, age and ethnic background**

Focus group 1

Participants	Age	Ethnic background
FG: 1-1 (G)*	17	Indian
FG: 1-2 (B)	18	White
FG: 1-3 (G)	17	Black
FG: 1-4 (G)	18	Black
FG: 1-5 (B)	18	Chinese
FG: 1-6 (G)	18	Black
FG: 1-7 (B)	18	White

Focus group 2

Participants	Age	Ethnic background
FG: 2-1 (G)	18	Black
FG: 2-2 (G)	17	White
FG: 2-3 (G)	17	White
FG: 2-4 (B)	17	Chinese
FG: 2-5 (G)	18	Indian

Individual interviews

Participants	Age	Ethnic background
INT: 1 (G)	18	Black
INT: 2 (B)	18	White
INT: 3 (G)	17	Black
INT: 4 (B)	18	White

\* G: girl; B: boy

### **1.3.4 Research procedure**

The researcher was part of the school counselling team at the time of the research. After consent was obtained from the Gauteng Provincial Manager of HFHSA, consent was obtained from the Headmaster of the specific school. The relevant Grade Head was then informed of the study after which the most viable option to make contact with the total group of learners who had participated in the HFHSA building project the previous year was discussed. It was decided that the group could best be targeted during a Grade Head's Assembly, which is compulsory for all Grade 12's. During this assembly, the researcher addressed the learners who during their Grade 11 year had participated in the HFHSA building project. Learners were informed about the research and it was explained what the general aim of the investigation was, taking care not to coerce anyone into taking part in the study (Strydom, 2011:117). Sixteen learners volunteered to take part in the study. After the rest of the Grade 12's were dismissed the 16 volunteers were given further details about how, when and where the study would be conducted. The volunteers also were given a choice between partaking in a focus group discussion or an individual interview as part of the data collection methods used for the purpose of the study. Volunteers were given consent forms which their parents had to sign should they consent for their child to participate in the study. The parents of all 16 volunteering learners gave their consent after which the learners gave their assent to take part in the study.

### **1.3.5 Data gathering**

#### *1.3.5.1 Orientation*

Two data gathering methods were used for the purpose of the study, namely two focus group discussions and four one-on-one semi-structured interviews. In both data collection methods a creative art activity was used to help refresh participants' memory of the events that they had participated in a year earlier and to assist them in their reflections on their experiences.

Van Goethem, Van Hoof, Orobio de Castro, Van Aken and Hart (2014:2117) state that when adolescents have the opportunity to reflect on volunteering their time to a

charity, they could “process the content and meaning of their community service experience more thoroughly and purposefully”.

#### 1.3.5.2. *Creative art activity*

The decision to make use of a creative art activity was based on two reasons. Firstly, art-based techniques and activities according to Coad (2007:487) can be a “powerful medium through which children can express their views across a wide range of the developmental continuum”. Coad (2007:489) and Van Goethem *et al.* (2014:2115), however, all state that art-based activities are rarely used in isolation and frequently used in conjunction with other data collection techniques such as interviews. Secondly, since data collection was conducted approximately a year after the adolescents’ experience, the creative art activities allowed for reflection on their experiences, and provided a point of departure during discussions (see Appendix I).

Poldma and Stewart (2004:147) support the use of creative art activities because the creative process allows for participants to “generate visual images to express verbal concepts”. For this reason the use of a creative art activity was thought to be helpful to assist participants to firstly, gather their thoughts regarding their experiences and secondly, verbalise what they had experienced. Careful planning of the creative process ensured the activity did not cause confusion or chaos. Since the researcher is a registered trauma counsellor who works with children and young people in a group and individual setting on a daily basis her experience provided her with the skills to facilitate the creative art activity.

Participants were provided with an art pack consisting of the following: A3 white paper, 10 coloured feathers, 10 coloured elastic bands, 4 m of raffia string, coloured potpourri, 5 small coloured pom-poms (2 cm in diameter), 5 big coloured pom-poms (4 cm in diameter), 1 m cotton string, coloured pencils and glue. The researcher guarded against creating unnecessary anxiety for participants regarding the creative process, although some were reluctant to engage as they felt unable to draw. The researcher acknowledged their fears and put them at ease by reminding them the creative art activity was the creative platform to be used as point of departure to explain their experiences and start the discussion process and not a work of art.

Participants gave permission for the researcher to take pictures of their creative art work as part of data collection.

As part of the proceedings they were asked to take a few minutes to reflect on their experience of the HFHSA building project without discussing it with other participants. After reflecting for a few minutes they were allowed 15 minutes to complete their creative art activity. Private work space allocated to each participant allowed for participants not to influence each other. For confidentiality purposes, each participant was allocated a number to be indicated on the back of the creative art activity instead of their names. After completion of the creative art activity, participants took turns in discussing their work with the group, with the researcher fulfilling the role of facilitator through guiding discussions to focus on the topic under discussion. The same process was applied for the individual interviews.

#### *1.3.5.3 Focus group discussions*

According to Greeff (2011:361), focus group discussions allow the gathering of exploratory data and provide participants with the opportunity to share their points of view and experiences without being influenced by the researcher. Seeing that the researcher with this study wanted to explore and describe the experiences of the participants, the use of focus group discussions was thus suitable. Focus group discussions also allow the gathering of key issues and ideas from many participants at once (Seabi, 2012:90). The researcher fulfilled the role of facilitator during the focus group discussions (Greeff, 2011:360; Seabi, 2012:90). Focus group discussions were used because they are thought to produce rich data and are easy to administer (Seabi, 2012:90).

The focus group discussions commenced after the making of the creative art activity where participants took turns in explaining their creative art work and sharing their experiences. Throughout the process the researcher facilitated the discussions to guide participants to stay on the topic under discussion by making use of an interview guide (see Appendix E). The focus group discussion guide consisted of a main question where participants were asked to share what their experiences had been during the act of pro-social behaviour. This main question was further

supported with probing questions such as to ask participants to describe an incident or experience during their time on the building site that really stood out in their memory; what made that incident memorable and in what way did it still influence them. Lastly, they were asked to explain what their experiences were with regards to being able to contribute to someone else's well-being without receiving any reward.

#### 1.3.5.4 *Semi-structured individual interviews*

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim to acquire rich and descriptive information to assist in a better understanding of the social reality and to saturate data (Seabi, 2012:89). The semi-structured nature of the interviews guided the researcher while allowing flexibility in obtaining a detailed picture of the participants' experiences regarding the research question (Greeff, 2011:351). Traditionally semi-structured interviews are not used when conducting a phenomenological study. However, some researchers are of the opinion that semi-structured interviews can be used when the researcher has some knowledge of the topic under investigation (Balls, 2009:33; Ploeg, 1999:37). For the purpose of this study it was therefore decided to make use of semi-structured interviews. This allowed for covering the same topics with all participants but gave flexibility if other issues arose. An interview schedule (see Appendix F) was followed to ensure consistency of data gathering. Participants were guided by open-ended questions to obtain comprehensive comparable data (Greeff, 2011:348) by allowing the researcher to probe for further information that could contribute to the richness of data. Questions focused on thoughts and feelings experienced during the building project; what experiences during the building project had been the most positive and the most negative to them.

Data gathering for both the interviews as well as the focus group discussion was recorded on video camera to ensure that all data were captured, and so that the researcher would not lose focus during the discussions. Using video recording also made it possible to give attention to finer nuances, such as body language and facial expressions from the recording, allowing for fuller and more comprehensive recording of data (Creswell, 2009:120; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012:137; Greeff, 2011:359).

## 1.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis (TA) was employed to analyse the data. This approach is widely used as a qualitative analytic method within and beyond psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2006:77). The benefit of TA is the theoretical freedom it provides the researcher to analyse data. The flexible nature of TA could provide the rich and detailed account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:78) that the study required.

The qualitative nature of the analysis involved continual reflection on the data (Creswell, 2009:181). The researcher reflected on the data after the focus group discussions and individual semi-structured interviews by recording her thoughts on a voice recorder. Verbatim transcriptions of the focus group discussions and individual interviews followed the data collection and these transcriptions were in the initial phase of data analysis used as two sets of data. The transcriptions were made by the researcher personally to ensure accuracy of the data. TA is not prescriptive in how researchers should conduct the analysis. However, during this study, Braun and Clarke's (2013:87) linear model of data analysis was used as follows:

- Familiarisation with the data: the researcher immersed herself in the data by first reading and re-reading the data transcripts of the focus group discussions and listening to the audio-recorded data and reflective voice recordings, after which the same procedure was introduced for the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews.
- Coding: Coding was done in colour to identify themes that emerged in the focus group discussions. Data of the semi-structured interviews were coded with the same colours as the data from the focus group discussions to link the two sets of data.
- Searching for themes: coherent themes and meaningful patterns in both sets of data relevant to the research question were identified.
- Reviewing themes: themes were checked to evaluate if they 'worked' in relation to the data. Individual themes and the relationship between themes were identified. Some themes were split due to sub-themes that emerged which provided richer data. Some sub-themes contained rich data that further needed to be split into categories.

- Defining and naming themes: detailed analysis of each theme was conducted by asking ‘What story does this theme tell?’ and ‘How does the theme fit into the overall story about the data?’ In doing so, the essence of each theme was identified.
- Writing up: this involved weaving together analytic narratives and data extracts to tell a story about the data and the contextualisation of the data in relation to existing literature.

## **1.5 ETHICAL ASPECTS**

Research ethics is a set of principles and rules of professional conduct that the researcher is required to abide by during all phases of the study. Creswell (2009:87) and Strydom (2011:113) emphasise the fact that when humans are the objects under study, ethical issues will arise and data should never be obtained at the expense of participants. Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the North-West University under the clearance number NWU-00060-12-A1 (see Appendix G). Great care was taken to minimise any possible harm, protect the identity and autonomy of the participants and respect their privacy.

The following ethical issues were kept in mind during the study:

- Informed consent was obtained from the Gauteng Provincial Manager of the HFHSA and the headmaster of the school, after which informed consent was obtained from all the research participants’ parents and/or legal guardians. Finally, assent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix A-D).
- Consent and assent forms contained the relevant general information regarding what the study entailed such as who the target population was; that participation in the study is voluntary and that participants could therefore withdraw from the study at any time; that participants have the option to partake in either focus group discussions or individual interviews; that timeslots would be made available for participants; and that all information would be treated as strictly confidential and anonymous. Participants were ensured that if they would choose to withdraw from the study before its conclusion, the data thus far obtained from those participants would not be used in the study.

- Although the researcher was employed by the school as junior counsellor for Grades 8 and 9 during the time the study was conducted, she was not familiar with the participants or worked from an authoritative position with them.
- Privacy was ensured seeing that the school's Club House was selected as the venue for the focus group discussions and individual interviews. It provided privacy owing to its location away from the school.
- Prior to the data collection, consent to take pictures of the creative art work and record the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews digitally using a video camera, was obtained from participants.
- Ethical issues on confidentiality specifically pertaining to data collection during the focus group discussions were addressed before the start of the focus group discussions. The participants came to an agreement that anything that would be discussed in the focus group discussion would stay in the group as this is seen as a reflection of respect for one another. Participants were reminded that during data processing codes would replace their names to keep information anonymous.
- Ethical issues on confidentiality pertaining to data collection during semi-structured individual interviews were also addressed beforehand. The researcher explained to the participants that they had the freedom to express their views. Confidentiality was discussed in that data would be processed anonymously by changing participants' names to codes. The name of the school would not be mentioned nor the community where the building project took place. The area where the participants lived would be kept anonymous.
- Research was conducted in a respectful manner towards all participants for the duration of the research. This was done by creating a safe environment through not judging or criticising their views, feelings and expression of their experiences and unconditional positive regard towards all participants was illustrated.

According to Di Fabio and Maree (2012:141), data must be stored for a minimum of five years to be made available to other researchers upon request. All data were stored on a CD. The CD contains all transcribed data with hand written notes made

during the process of data analysis and will be kept at the offices of the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies of the North-West University for a period of 5 years.

## 1.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness of research is an integral part of establishing legitimacy and credibility of the findings. The following criteria were used to enhance trustworthiness of the study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012:140). Table 1.2 (on the next page) summarises the strategies that were followed to achieve trustworthiness of the study.

**Table 1.2: Strategies applied to enhance trustworthiness**

Strategy	Criteria	Application
Credibility	Authority, background and qualifications of the researcher	The researcher is a registered trauma counsellor and has formal qualifications. She has experience as school counsellor for 2 years after which she has been working in the field of research.
	Appropriate, familiar research methods	The choice of data collection methods and motivation thereof were explained. The method for data analysis, namely TA, was selected to ensure the most credible results.
	Focus group discussions	The participants in focus groups made use of a creative art activity as point of departure to explain the HFHSA building project. Open ended questions and probes provided the participants to provide in-depth knowledge of participants' experiences.
	Interviewing process	The interviewees used a creative art activity as point of departure to explain the HFHSA building project. Open ended questions provided the researcher with the opportunity to encourage participants to ensure richness of data.
	Researcher's reflective commentary	After focus group discussions and individual interviews the researcher made reflective commentary on her own opinions regarding privileged adolescents and themes and patterns that stood out.
	Ensuring honesty of participants	As discussed, it was made clear that withdrawal by participants at any stage was allowed. It was established in the introduction of the focus group discussions and individual interviews that no right or wrong answer exists and that participants' opinions will be valued and recorded truthfully regarding their experience of the HFHSA building project.
	Examination of previous research	A literature review was undertaken to gain thorough insight into the topic under investigation. Previous research investigated how privileged adolescents experienced privilege.
	Debriefing sessions between researcher and supervisor	Throughout the duration of the study, continuous discussions were held between the researcher and supervisor. Through these discussions, the vision of the researcher widened due to the input from the supervisor. In the course of action and alternative approaches were discussed. Meetings provided an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on her own research process.



## **PART 2: INTEGRATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

*“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” – Mother Teresa*

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Pro-social behaviour comprises numerous contributing factors. In this section general adolescent development and pro-social behaviour will be discussed. The influence that family and peers have on developing pro-social behaviour during adolescence will be discussed together with looking at feelings of gratitude when acting pro-socially. The social context of privileged adolescents in general will be considered and also the importance of school based programmes for the development of pro-social behaviour. The discussion will close with an overview of positive psychology and why it was used as a theoretical basis for the study.

### **2.2 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

In the next section a discussion regarding adolescent development will focus on the developmental period and the impact on behaviour as well as identity formation and its role on pro-social behaviour.

#### **2.2.1 Overview of adolescent development**

Adolescence is the developmental period between the ages of 13 and 18 years (Nabeel & Zafar, 2012:282). As with all stages of human development, the physical, cognitive, psycho-social and emotional development of adolescents impacts on their behaviour (Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2008:75). The formal operational phase begins at approximately age 13 and continues into adulthood. At the beginning of the formal operational phase, abstract thinking capacities mature as well as reasoning skills. The formal operational phase therefore shows a noticeable increase in knowledge, thinking and comprehension (Beutel & Johnson, 2004:380). During adolescence the tendency to accept stereotypical prescriptions of what is considered “good” and “bad” decreases, and sophisticated, self-reflective empathic moral reasoning seems

to emerge (Carlo, Eisenberg, & Knight, 1992:333). The development of abilities such as thinking through a hypothesis, planning, meta-cognition (thinking about thinking), and applying new thought strategies to new situations is typically associated with adolescent development (Luengo Kanacri, Pastorelli, Eisenberg, Zuffianò & Caprara, 2012:302).

Adolescent identity formation, i.e. knowing who one is and what one considers as important, is critical in human development as a whole. Identity formation, according to Erikson, includes reaching ego synthesis (which means developing a sense of self that is continuous, integrated and unified), forming a socio-cultural identity (which includes cultural value-orientations), forming gender-role and career identity and developing a personal value system. According to Patel (2009:9) adolescents experience changes in the manner in which they perceive themselves (personal identity), as well as changes in their various roles in society and, importantly, pro-social behaviour. A personal code of conduct develops from the adolescent's perceptions, interactions and cognitive growth (Kohlberg, 1969). The development of morals and values is an integral part of adolescent psycho-social development, as noted by theorists Bandura (Bandura & Walters, 1963) and Bronfenbrenner (1977). Moral values and behaviour are derived from watching and copying behaviours of significant others.

### **2.2.2 Adolescence and the development of pro-social behaviour**

As children grow older and progress into adolescence, their pro-social tendencies increase (Carlo, Fabes, Laible & Kupanoff, 1999:134; Siu, Shek & Law, 2012:4). According to Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNalley and Shea (1991:850), higher levels of pro-social reasoning are possible due to the onset of an understanding of the social functioning of the world (Hart & Fegley, 1995:1347) and changes in complexity of the "child's social environment" (Eisenberg *et al.*, 1991:850). Van Goetham *et al.* (2014:2114) state that adolescence is the ideal developmental stage for exposure to pro-social behaviour. The authors argue that the benefits associated with pro-social behaviour contribute to adolescents' competences, attitudes, academic performance and social interactions. In addition, adolescents are more capable of sharing, being generous and feeling responsible towards others, while exhibiting the ability to self-reflect (Martínez, Peñaloza & Valenzuela, 2012:474). However, there is the potential

for both positive and negative outcomes, such as the development of pro-social awareness *versus* tendencies of anti-social behaviour.

Good perspective taking is not enough to ensure the development of mature pro-social behaviour. Through emphasising the importance of environmental and social influences on adolescents' pro-social behaviour, Berk (2009:475) states that family, peers and the school environment are considered as determining factors in predicting future pro-social behaviour. Identifying with role models who exhibit pro-social behaviour (such as family members, teachers and peers) can contribute to the adolescent's development of pro-social behaviour (Anderson, 2013:118; Carlo *et al.*, 1999:134; Siu *et al.*, 2012:4). However, Carlo *et al.* (1999:142) and Grođlu, Van den Bos and Crone (2009:408) state that adolescents' pro-social development can be "hindered due to transition and multiple changes" that are associated with this developmental stage namely: puberty, changing of schools, dating and family changes such as divorce.

By acting pro-socially, a person sets out to protect or enhance the welfare of others by means of actions such as helpful interventions, volunteer work and donating of money (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010:222). By acting pro-socially, persons do not just act in their own interest, but also according to societal norms, rules and expectations (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin & Schroeder, 2005:366; Siu *et al.*, 2012:2). Siu *et al.* (2012:5) are further of the view that conformity to social norms diverts people from acting in their own interest as well as motivating them to consider other members of society (the greater good), and contributes to the development of pro-social behaviour. Eisenberg *et al.* (2001:518), however, see pro-social behaviour as voluntary and motivated by the "desire to benefit another rather than by social or economic rewards". Such behaviour includes "sharing, helping, comforting, rescuing and cooperation" (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1978:183; Nabeel & Zafar, 2012:282).

Acting pro-socially is described by Eisenberg, Guthrie, Cumberland, Murphy, Shepard, Zhou and Calro (2002:993) as follows:

... the prosocial personality may include other-oriented values, cognitions, and prosocial actions as well as sympathy and empathy. Because it usually is impossible to unequivocally differentiate between other-oriented behaviours and those driven by less lofty motives, ...

internal processes, such as sympathy or empathy and moral cognition (e.g. moral reasoning), are believed to motivate other-oriented behaviour.

From the literature it appears that adolescents engage in pro-social behaviour for a number of reasons, both internally and externally motivated. These reasons are discussed below.

### **2.2.3 Factors influencing adolescent pro-social behaviour**

#### **2.2.3.1 *Empathy***

Wray-Lake and Syversten (2011:15) describe empathy-related responding as the “emotional foundation of caring for others”, which is a precursor for acting pro-socially and altruistically according to these authors. Being empathic allows “the individual to appreciate the world from someone else’s point of view” (Farsides, 2007:474). Eisenberg and Miller (1987:91) define empathy as an “affective state that stems from the apprehension of another’s emotional state”. In other words, matching one’s own feelings with the corresponding feelings of someone else (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1978:185). During adolescence, awareness and understanding of others’ experiences increase, as well as the ability to empathise with others and be altruistic (Farsides, 2007:474; Lindsey, Yun & Hill, 2007:471).

People who exhibit pro-social behaviour have unique characteristics and are guided by the intentional action to help others (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010:222). This could lead to individuals caring about how they ought to behave morally, and by doing so care about the welfare of others, which in turn can lead to altruism (Lindsey *et al.*, 2007:471). Eisenberg and Morris (2001:99) established that a lack of empathy can be positively linked to anti-social or aggressive behaviour, whereas empathy is positively linked to pro-social behaviour. During adolescence, when pro-social behaviour and tendencies are likely to increase, is usually the time when adolescents would be expected to become involved in community projects, initiatives and volunteering.

#### **2.2.3.2 *Altruism and volunteering***

Altruism is defined as the “elevation of the welfare, happiness, interests or even the survival of others above one’s own” (The dictionary of psychology, 2001:26). Altruism involves the unselfish concern for other people, by doing things simply out

of a desire to help, not because one feels obligated to, or out of duty, loyalty, or religious reasons. Research identified altruism as an important motivator for humans to act pro-socially. Altruism builds on characteristics of helping behaviour, but goes further in that it is voluntary in nature, and is carried out without the expectation of being rewarded but with the main goal of increasing the well-being of others (Piliavin, 2009:210; Schmid, 2012:534).

Some writers have made a positive connection between altruism and volunteering, stating that by volunteering one expresses a kind of altruistic behaviour (Siu *et al.*, 2012:2). Promotion of altruistic behaviour in society can be possible if unselfish tendencies are promoted, such as acting on concerns for others' welfare as well as their own (Farsides, 2007:474). Post (2005:68) emphasises that everyone would benefit from "giving as well as from receiving care and consideration" in societies where altruistic acts are promoted. Post (2005:72) further found altruistic behaviour to strongly correlate with "the physical health and psychological well-being" of individuals. It is therefore important for society to nurture the development of altruistic tendencies from an early age, thereby encouraging altruism and volunteering amongst adolescents.

Different opinions exist in social science as to what drives volunteer behaviour. On the one hand, researchers are of the opinion that helpful behaviours can be truly altruistic, and are driven by the need to increase the welfare of others and contribute towards the community (Cornelis, Van Hiel & De Cremer, 2013:456; Wilson, 2000:216). On the other hand, it is argued that people who display generous and altruistic acts are driven by the need to receive praise for their actions or to escape possible guilt (Cornelis *et al.*, 2013:456). Pro-social behaviour could, therefore, result either from an interest in others or out of self-interest.

By participating in community volunteer programmes, a sense of citizenship is fostered through connecting adolescents to society (Hart, Atkins & Ford, 1998:517). According to Martínez *et al.* (2012:474), adolescents' participation in volunteer programmes results in "enhancing their awareness of social and political issues, and stimulating their sense of agency and social responsibility". Volunteering thus has the potential to advance "moral beliefs and consideration for others" (Martínez *et al.*, 2012:475).

According to Wilson (2000:216), volunteering can be considered “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause”. It forms part of a cluster of helping behaviours and is typically proactive rather than reactive. Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010:414) and Wilson (2000:216) state that some research considers volunteering as a desired act to help others; in contrast to other scholars’ beliefs that volunteering is viewed as an act to improve public welfare, where no particular reference to motive is necessary (Cornelis *et al.*, 2013:456).

Wilson (2000:217) and Siu *et al.* (2012:2) further explain that positive effects of volunteering have shown to be beneficial to the volunteer’s life-satisfaction and self-esteem. In studies investigating adolescent school truancy and drug abuse, it is illustrated that volunteer programmes such as working in soup kitchens after school reduce the likelihood of individuals engaging in anti-social behaviour (Hart *et al.*, 1998:517; Wilson, 2000:217). Adolescent involvement in community service has also been associated with lower rates of risky behaviour (alcohol use and sexual risk-taking), illustrating moral identity as one facet of “personal resilience” (Hart *et al.*, 1998:517). Volunteering thus promotes pro-social norms which encourage adolescents to refrain from anti-social behaviour (Siu *et al.*, 2012:2).

By spending time volunteering and helping others, adolescents can become increasingly aware of how they define themselves, and may feel more obligated to expand their positive influence in helping others (Hardy, Walker, Olsen & Woodbury; 2014:46; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010:240). Experiencing helping and volunteering behaviour, according to Penner *et al.* (2005:376), are known to be valuable to adolescent development programmes as well. Volunteers gain insight and understanding of pro-social norms and understanding of the world around them, contributing to their future civic responsibility (Reinders & Youniss, 2006:9; Siu *et al.*, 2012:2).

### 2.2.3.3 *Parental influence*

From an ecological systems perspective the assumption can be made that pro-social development does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in homes, relationships, schools and neighbourhoods (Güroğlu *et al.*, 2009:399; Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011:17). According to Bergin, Talley and Hamer (2003:14) and Eisenberg *et al.* (1991:849),

parental influences can be seen as an important indicator for pro-social behaviour during adolescence.

Past research ventured the notion that children's moral and pro-social development "are influenced by their parents" behaviour through direct modelling of pro-social behaviour in many ways (Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011:17), such as by encouraging and directing appropriate behaviour, punishing inappropriate behaviour and encouraging empathic development (Carlo *et al.*, 1999:135). Parents use multiple strategies to promote pro-social behaviour and communication is one such a strategy (Güroğlu *et al.*, 2009:400; Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011:19). By communicating messages of compassion, parents enhance children's sensitivity toward the needs of others, and this parental communication has been positively associated with adolescents' pro-social behaviour (Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011:19).

Apart from parental influences, peers can also contribute to pro-social behaviour of adolescents.

#### 2.2.3.4 Peers

Stable peer relationships are very important in the development of adolescent self-esteem and moral development (Hart *et al.*, 1998:519), which in the end contribute towards the development of identity. According to Marcia (1980:110 and Siu *et al.* (2012:5), adolescents who are in the developing process of identity formation (which is dynamic and ever changing) and who act pro-socially toward friends are likely to experience reciprocal pro-social behaviour from friends, thus encouraging the continuous cycle of pro-social exchanges.

However, the debate regarding positive and negative peer influences on adolescent behaviour is on-going. Some theorists believe that peer groups influence adolescents to get involved in delinquent behaviours (Carlo *et al.*, 1999:137). In contrast, Wray-Lake and Syversten (2011:19) state that friendships can be an important gateway for adolescents to develop social responsibility. Friends could for instance encourage each other to participate in school and community activities. This illustrates that exposure to either positive or negative elements of peer influences is a predictor of adolescent behaviour. Hardy and Walker (2014:46), however, are of

the opinion that displaying higher moral judgement can be strongly linked to higher pro-social behaviour, lower health risk-taking behaviour (alcohol use and sexual risk-taking) and anti-social behaviour.

In the last instance, gratitude is also found to contribute towards pro-social behaviour in adolescents.

#### 2.2.3.5 *Gratitude*

Gratitude has been defined as being a “sense of thankfulness and joy” (Emmons & McCullough, 2003:377; Tong & Yang, 2011:160). Gratitude is also conceptualised as “an emotion, an attitude, moral virtue, habit, personality trait, or a coping response” (Froh, Emmons, Huebner, Fan, Bono & Watkins, 2011:312), where grateful people have a genuine desire to do *good* towards others (Tong & Yang, 2011:160).

According to Froh *et al.* (2011:311), gratitude is the positive emotion experienced by a person when another has intentionally given or attempted to give something of value. Bartlett and DeSteno (2006:319) further state that gratitude is believed to encourage an individual to reciprocate a favour even if it comes at a cost. The positive effects of gratitude on pro-social outcomes are well known. For instance, Tong and Yang (2011:160) assert that gratitude generates helping behaviour and fosters communal bonds. Scholars from various disciplines believe gratitude is crucial for building and preserving social relationships with parents, peers and school during adolescence (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006:319).

Froh *et al.* (2011:319) describe many studies that focus on the development of attitudes such as gratitude during childhood and adolescence. Studies conducted among late adolescents illustrate that gratitude can be positively linked with academic achievement and contribute as motivation to connect and contribute to society or community and are negatively related with envy and materialism (Froh *et al.*, 2011:312). Gratitude has also been positively linked to promoting personal growth and well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003:378; Froh *et al.*, 2011:321; Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002:137). Kasser and Ahuvia (2002:142) found that students who specifically believed that “money, possessions, image, and popularity” are important also reported lessened “self-actualization, vitality and happiness, [and] more

anxiety”, emphasising that being grateful for what one has can generate feelings of well-being.

Emmons and McCullough (2003:378) and Tangney, Stuewig and Mashek (2007:345) are of the opinion that gratitude is a positive moral affect and feelings of gratitude can result from moral (pro-social) behaviour. Tangney *et al.* (2007:368) observe that “grateful people are often motivated to respond pro-socially”, thus illustrating that expressions of gratitude can reinforce reciprocal moral behaviour in future. Looking through a positive psychology lens, Tangney *et al.* (2007:369) are of the opinion that people who experience and express gratitude have shown enhanced psychological resilience, physical health, psychological well-being, and quality of daily life. Experiencing gratitude during adolescence is especially important and more so for privileged adolescents who could otherwise have taken their privileged lifestyle for granted.

## **2.3 PRIVILEGED ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT**

### **2.3.1 Orientation**

Being privileged can be defined as “any advantage accruing to some members of a group or society and not the others” (Dictionary of psychology, 2001:564). Being privileged, however, does not always guarantee positive outcomes and presents with its own set of challenges. Luthar (2013:n.p.) found in her study on privileged adolescents that a large portion seem to display serious levels of maladjustment as adolescents and even more so during college years. Luthar (2013:n.p.) further states that privileged adolescents seem to fair poorly compared to their lower socio-economic counterparts on substance use. Easy access to money increases the possibility for privileged adolescents to buy drugs and alcohol at will, contributing to anti-social behaviour.

Privileged adolescents are often physically separated from the poor and the working class. By being demographically separated (both physically and socially), feelings of “reduced intimacy, less understanding, and greater prejudice” are created (Kraus, Côté & Keltner, 2010:1717; Nenga, 2011:265). Therefore exposing privileged adolescents to volunteer work allows them to learn about “class inequality” and

affords them the opportunity to reflect on their own privileged circumstances (Nenga, 2011:264; Siu *et al.*, 2012:6). Through volunteer work, adolescents can engage in “positive cross-class interactions”, which can help in understanding poverty, challenge prejudicial ideas about the poor, and “increase commitment to social justice” (Nenga, 2011:264). Furthermore, privileged adolescents are more likely to challenge class privilege when they themselves experience “positive cross-class interaction” (Kraus *et al.*, 2010:1717; Nenga, 2011:24).

### **2.3.2 School based programmes in less privileged communities**

Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin and Silbereisen (2002:140) suggest that effective educational programmes that focus on the development of pro-social attitudes and behaviour raise effectiveness by involving children to actively participate in communities and volunteer services. Adolescent development programmes often aim to enhance pro-social norms such as reciprocity, social responsibility, altruism, and volunteerism (Horn, 2012:949; Siu *et al.*, 2012:5), suggesting that schools can play a critical role in helping learners to understand, tolerate and respect different ethnic and cultural populations in society (Hart *et al.*, 1998:519; Horn, 2012:950; Youniss *et al.*, 2002:140). Participation in educational service learning programmes provides the opportunity for adolescents to “practice moral behaviour” (Yates & Youniss, 1998:497). The authors argue that through practicing helping behaviour adolescents may view themselves as having “skills and responsibility for addressing social ills”. According to Yates and Youniss (1998:497), actually experiencing being helpful to others may lead to incorporating morality into their identities, which is likely to continue into adulthood.

According to Shaw, Brennan, Chaskin and Dolan (2012:8), young people are capable of changing economic, social and political conditions through “individual agency and collective action”. Through adolescent development programmes the opportunity arises for volunteers to focus on their own difficulties as well as acquiring valuable insight into what difficulties others experience and that they are not alone in facing adversity (Shaw *et al.*, 2012:8). For this reason, society is obligated to expose adolescents to non-formal educational and adolescent development programmes to promote “learning and development and social interaction” (Shaw *et al.*, 2012:8).

Horn (2012:965) found that adolescents participating in adolescent development programmes will most likely develop pro-social values.

In the United States, the important outcomes of school based development programmes are identified as one way of emphasising multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusivity, and by doing so provide an opportunity for adolescent volunteers not only to learn about class inequality but also to challenge their own class privileges (Nenga, 2011:264). Owing to the emphasis modern society places on materialism and individualism, scholars of adolescent development have urged that fostering responsible citizenship is crucial (Horn, 2012:965).

### **2.3.3 Divide between rich and poor in Gauteng, South Africa**

Within a South African context, Gauteng, and more specifically Johannesburg, dominates the list of the wealthiest suburbs in SA where millionaires live (Anon (2012). Ultra-high net worth individuals can be defined as individuals who have net assets of an estimated R250 million excluding their primary residences (Carter & May, 1999:3). Johannesburg, as mentioned, is home to the largest portion of these individuals (48% or 261 multi-millionaires). Ultra-high net worth individuals fall in the LSM 10 category, which is the highest earning class in SA, according to Chronis (2012).

However, despite the fact that SA ranks as an upper-middle income country, the majority of South Africans live in poverty and the majority still reside in rural areas and informal settlements (Mafukidze & Hoosen, 2009:8; Wandersman, 2003:227). According to Statistics South Africa (Housing Development Agency, 2012:6), informal settlements can be defined as a dwelling type, with shacks or structures that are built out of temporary or rudimentary materials. Informal settlements are further categorised by a lack of water, electricity and sanitation.

Although Gauteng has the highest percentage of ultra-high net worth individuals, the province also has the highest number of households living in informal settlements (Housing Development Agency, 2012:23), demonstrating the vast social divide amongst rich and poor in the province. It is therefore believed that by implementing

school based development programmes in SA a sense of responsibility toward fellow citizens can be fostered.

## **2.4 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

Positive psychology focuses on the conditions and processes that help people function at an optimal level rather than focusing on pathology (Gable & Haidt, 2005:104; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:5). Heubner and Gilman (2003:99) and Ronel (2006:1135) see positive psychology as the study of human strengths and virtues rather than emphasising factors associated with developmental and behavioural disorders. By focusing on understanding positive experiences and their significance, positive psychology signals a gap in the social sciences that tends to overlook the power of goodness in human existence (Ronel, 2006:1134). Positive psychology is considered to be the “scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (Sheldon & King, 2001:216), in that it values responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, tolerance and work ethic as civic virtues that are an important indicator to move people toward better citizenship (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000:7).

Positive psychology does not suggest that the rest of psychology is negative. However, little empirical knowledge exists regarding the experience of positive human emotions that are felt when people “do good” or act to the benefit of others (Ronel, 2006:1135; Sheldon & King, 2001:216). Positive psychology attempts to urge psychologists to be more open to the possibility of “human potential, motives, and capacities” (Sheldon & King, 2001:216). Positive emotions such as kindness and compassion enhance health “by virtue of pushing aside negative ones” (Höhn, Menne-Lothmann, Peeters, Nicolson, Jacobs, Derom, Thiery, Van Os & Wichers, 2013:11; Post, 2005:72). In a recent study (comprising three different samples) it was found that experience of positive emotions (for example, kindness) was supportive of healthier outcomes and participants decreased their chances of developing depressive symptoms later in life due to greater positive affect (Höhn *et al.*, 2013:11; Post, 2005:73).

Positive psychology endeavours to investigate the ways that “people feel joy, show altruism and create healthy families and institutions”, and by doing so address the full spectrum of human experience (Gable & Haidt, 2005:105). Conversely, Haidt

(2003b:286) suggests that positive psychology must endeavour to create moral or character education programmes that expose participants to experiences of moral growth that enriches their lives. Due to the current global interest in service learning and volunteerism, there is a clear demand for moral education programmes that will make a difference in the lives of adolescents. Positive psychology proposes programmes that focus on “building strengths and trigger positive moral emotions” (Haidt, 2003b:286).

Thus, it seems rational to conduct the research within the context of positive psychology to shed light on what privileged adolescents experienced during an act of pro-social behaviour.

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

Pro-social behaviour can be encouraged and nurtured from an early age which could lead adolescents to demonstrate pro-social behaviour in future.

The key influences in the development of pro-social behaviour amongst adolescents were found to be parental influence, peer influence, experience of gratitude and school-based development programmes.

This body of knowledge can contribute to a better understanding of how pro-social behaviour can be encouraged amongst adolescents.

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## SECTION B: THE ARTICLE

### **Exploring privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour**

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## **Abstract**

The great economic divide in South Africa leads to an uneven distribution of socio-economic resources and services, leaving the majority of South Africans in poor living conditions. Through a qualitative approach, this study explored privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour. Adolescents from an affluent high school in Johannesburg, Gauteng, raised funds in their Grade 11 year for a housing building project in a semi-rural community, after which they volunteered their time to build houses for members of the community during a school holiday. In the following year, sixteen of these adolescents participated in focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. These interviews were preceded by creative artwork to assist them in reflecting on their experience. A phenomenological design was used to generate inductive knowledge regarding their experiences. Thematic analysis was used to analyse their accounts, from which three main themes with subthemes emerged. The findings highlighted the participants' experiences of *Ubuntu* in action, a sense of heightened inner awareness of their own position on an intrapersonal level and thirdly, community members' sincere gratitude for a simple act of pro-social behaviour. The findings suggest that privileged adolescents experience gratitude and enhanced interpersonal relationships when they are exposed to pro-social behaviour.

**Key words:** adolescent, gratitude, poverty, privileged, pro-social behaviour.

## **Introduction**

Sharing, helping, compliance and cooperative behaviour are viewed as the hallmarks of social competence in childhood and adolescence (Wentzel, 2014; Wentzel, Filisetti, & Looney, 2007). Generally, voluntary helpful behaviour is defined as pro-social behaviour (Piliavin, 2009; Van der Merwe, & Dawes, 2000). Pro-social behaviour is concerned with actions benefitting the well-being of others without receiving rewards of any kind (Eisenberg, Zhou, & Koller, 2001; Weinstein, & Ryan, 2010). Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin and Schroeder (2005) and Pramathevan and Garces-Bacsal (2012) understand pro-social behaviour as behaviour where people do not act only in their own interest. Pro-social behaviour is further viewed as acting according to societal norms, rules and expectations (Siu, Shek, & Law, 2012). It is thus believed that to conform to social norms not only diverts people from acting in their own interest, but also contributes to the development of pro-social behaviour (Siu et al., 2012). In most Western societies materialism and the drive to be successful are however the norms people live by today (Luthar, 2013). When materialistic values direct people's behaviour, they are at risk of experiencing reduced well-being and can become less concerned with the welfare of others, consequently also acting less pro-socially (Kashdan, & Breen, 2007; Varnum, 2012). The overall aim of this study was to explore and describe privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour in a poverty stricken community. The research specifically looked at the experiences of adolescents from an affluent school participating in a Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HFHSA) building project.

Adolescence is the developmental period between ages 13 and 18 years and can be described as a phase of many contradictory levels of change and development, physically, emotionally and mentally (Nabeel, & Zafar, 2012). As with

all stages of human development, the developmental changes during adolescence impact on behaviour (Gouws, Kruger, & Burger, 2008). As children grow older their abstract thinking capacities (ability to think of different possibilities) as well as reasoning skills (ability to reason from own new ideas or questions) mature, which in adolescence shows as a noticeable increase in knowledge, thinking, comprehension and pro-social tendencies (Beutel, & Johnson, 2004; Carlo, Fabes, Laible, & Kupanoff, 1999; Siu et al., 2012), and can enhance understanding of the social functioning of the world (Hart, & Fegley, 1995; Ma, Kibler, & Sly, 2013). Following an increased ability to take the perspective of others, adolescents also tend to be more capable of sharing, being generous and feeling responsible towards others (Eisenberg et al., 2001).

Research has found that privileged and underprivileged adolescents tend to differ in their exhibiting of pro-social behaviour. Marsh (2010) has for instance found that individuals with lower socio-economic status act more pro-socially than those higher on the economic ladder. This finding is consistent with an earlier national survey in the United States of America (USA), which indicated that individuals with a lower income donated a greater percentage of their income to charity than upper-income individuals (Alderman, 2001; Luthar, 2013). It has also been found that poor children tend to participate more in care-giving chores and helpful behaviour, probably because they are used to scarce resources (Karmakar, & Gosh, 2012; Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010). Piff et al. (2010) along these lines explain that upper class people, possibly due to an influence of social class on pro-social behaviour and because they are not engaged in the social problems of lower class people, tend to give less. Marsh (2010, p. 4) argues this explanation for the difference from a psychological and social perspective in stating that “the poor may

feel more compassion because of feeling more connected to those around them”. Luthar (2013) furthermore points out that adolescents who live in affluent families are in danger of developing a sense of entitlement. Interesting though, mixed results were found in a study by Nenga (2011, p. 264), when affluent youth who were exposed to volunteer programmes involving underprivileged people either adopted an understanding of poverty, or “maintained a tendency to blame the victim and increased their sense of social distance from the poor and working class”. In the USA, government legislation has allocated over one billion dollars to education to be used in youth-based development programmes, where young people have been estimated to contribute over 1.3 billion hours of service in a single year (Gullan, Power, & Leff, 2013). In South Africa (SA), community outreach programmes do not form part of the school curriculum as they do in the USA.

In the context of this study, the concept *privileged* adolescents refers to adolescents coming from families with a socio-economic status described as upper-middle income class, who enjoy financial freedom (Kashdan, & Breen, 2007). Privileged adolescents have fairly unrestricted access to luxuries such as private education, ample spending money, opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, regular holidays and the latest electronic devices (Luthar, 2013).

In the South African context, living standards can be classified in accordance with the Living Standards Measure Model (LSM Model) developed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation into ten different living standard groups (Martins, 2006; Mboji, Matikinca, & Ellis, 2011), the highest being LSM 10. The adolescents from privileged families included in this study all belonged to the LSM 10 category, with an annual family income of R631 121 to R1 329 845+ (Chronis, 2012).

The World Bank makes use of the Gini coefficient index, used globally to establish the distribution of income between rich and poor. SA is ranked fourth highest in the world (World Bank, 2014), with the difference between rich and poor rated at 63.1% (Index Mundi, 2014). Woolard and Klasen (2005) ascribe this poor record largely to the legacy of apartheid, which according to them produced very high inequality. However, nearly two decades into the new political dispensation the divide does not seem to have shrunk: Some SA communities thrive and develop with ample resources at their disposal, whereas others struggle to survive, with little or no basic goods, services and education.

According to the research report of the South African Housing and Development Agency (2012), an estimated 1.11 million households live in informal settlements, with Gauteng having the highest number (453 000). The privileged adolescents who participated in this study stay in relative close proximity to such settlements, but rarely if ever engage with the inhabitants, isolating them from the poor living conditions and circumstances of many South Africans.

The affluent private school in Johannesburg, Gauteng, where the research was conducted, aims to teach its privileged learners the values of pro-social behaviour by exposing them to a community project of HFHSA in a semi-rural community south of Johannesburg, where residents live mostly in informal housing (Habitat for Humanity South Africa, 2012). HFHSA is a non-profit housing organisation affiliated to Habitat for Humanity, an international company seeking since the early 1970's to eliminate poverty, inadequate housing and homelessness around the globe (Habitat for Humanity, 2012). The school has been involved with HFHSA for the past 10 years, providing the opportunity for its Grade 11 students to take part in fundraising and subsequently volunteer approximately one week of their

time during a school holiday to labour for the project on site through the building of houses (Habitat for Humanity South Africa, 2012).

## **Method**

*Research approach and design.* A qualitative approach was used, with a phenomenological design to generate inductive knowledge regarding privileged adolescents' experience of an act of pro-social behaviour.

*Participants and setting.* Informed written consent to conduct the study was obtained from the headmaster of the school and the Gauteng Provincial Manager of HFHSA. Assent and written consent were also obtained from participants and their parents. The required ethical measures regarding confidentiality, anonymity and freedom from harm were adhered to, although it was explained that full anonymity and confidentiality in focus group discussions would depend on the compliance of the group members.

Sixteen adolescents responded to an open invitation to take part in the study. Purposive and convenience sampling was employed in that the study drew on learners at the school where the researcher worked, who had been involved in the HFHSA building project, thereby exploring these privileged adolescents' experience of an act of pro-social behaviour at a specific point in time (Babbie, & Mouton, 2001). The group of privileged adolescents were chosen for the research because they all met the requirements for the study and were pupils at a school where the researcher worked at the time of research as junior counsellor for Grades 8 and 9. The participants had taken part in the HFHSA building project during their Grade 11 year, but the data were collected one year later during their Grade 12 year. The

participants comprised six boys and ten girls aged 17 and 18 years, who were fluent in English.

*Data collection.* The study made use of focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews. Focus group discussions were used as they allow for the gathering of key issues and ideas from many participants at once, and are known to produce rich data (Seabi, 2012). Focus group discussions further allow participants the opportunity to voice their own experiences (Creswell, 2009). Two focus groups respectively consisted of seven and five members, combining boys and girls in each group. The researcher fulfilled the role of facilitator (Greeff, 2011; Seabi, 2012), listening to participants and asking relevant probing questions. Individual interviews were conducted additionally with two boys and two girls who had not participated in the focus group discussions, with the aim of acquiring rich, in-depth and descriptive data to assist in a deeper understanding of the social reality of the participants and to saturate the data (Seabi, 2012). A semi-structured interview schedule was used to facilitate comprehensive and comparable data (Greeff, 2011), enabling the researcher to probe for further information that could contribute to the richness of the data. With the consent of the participants and their parents the focus group discussions and interviews were recorded on video camera to ensure that all data were accurately captured (Creswell, 2009). The recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Since the data were collected approximately a year after the adolescents had participated in the building project, a creative art activity was used in the focus groups as well as the interviews, to allow participants first to reflect on their experiences. Art-based techniques can, according to Coad (2007, p. 487), be “a

powerful medium through which children can express their views across a wide range of the developmental continuum”. Poldma and Stewart (2004, p. 147) support the use of creative art projects, as the creative process allows for participants to “generate visual images to express verbal concepts”. The art project provided the point of departure during the data collection discussions.

*Analysis of data.* Thematic analysis, based on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyse the data. Verbatim transcriptions of the focus group discussions and individual interviews were used as discrete sets of data. After repeated and close scrutiny of the data, the researcher was able to identify relevant main and subthemes in order to best describe the experiences of the participants.

### *Results and findings*

Results and findings are presented in terms of what participants’ experiences were during an act of pro-social behaviour. Due to space constraints, some discussion of pertinent detail is already incorporated in this section. Three themes emerged from the data: Participants experienced *ubuntu* in action, a sense of awareness of their own position on an intrapersonal level, and community members’ sincere gratitude for a simple act of pro-social behaviour.

### **Witnessing *ubuntu* in action**

*Ubuntu* is an African term used to describe the capacity in African culture to “express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring” (Poovan, Du Toit, & Engelbrecht, 2006, p. 17). In other words, “I am because we are” (Kamwangamalu, 2007, p.29). *Ubuntu* supports positive social bonds and

friendships. Witnessing *ubuntu* in action made an impact on how the participants came to view the community as a communal unit that supports each other despite their limited resources. The participants made comparisons between their urban community and the semi-rural community and observed noticeable differences. They realised that privileged communities do not live by the *ubuntu* “code”, the suburbs are more individualistic and a sense of community is lacking. Participants shared that even as outsiders they had experienced the warmth of community members which had made them feel particularly welcome. Making this the most dominant theme, 15 of the 16 participants reported witnessing *ubuntu* in action and the impact this had had on them. They described it as follows:

*“... other people ... would come out and help build. Even though it’s not their house, but it’s their neighbour ... so ... that sense of community ... everybody ... it’s like ubuntu ... everybody was involved”* (INT3-G,19).<sup>1</sup>

*“And every single person ... no matter who they were ... they all just had a smile on their face. And there was such a big sense of community between everyone”* (INT4-B,1).

*“... everyone is being drawn together to help each other as a community ...”* (FG1.5-B,11).

*Ubuntu* describes the spirit of what it means to be human and to value the good of the community above self-interest (Swanson, 2008). In the words of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, *ubuntu* is defined as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Codes indicate setting (interview/focus group), participant, gender and quote position in the transcript (available on the CD provided as audit trail for examination purposes).

“A person is a person through other persons.’ I would not know how to be a human being at all except (that) I learned this from other human beings. We are made for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence. We are meant to complement each other. All kinds of things go horribly wrong when we break that fundamental Law of our being. Not even the most powerful nation can be completely self-sufficient” (Tutu, 2006, p. 71).

Poovan et al. (2006, p. 18) assert that survival is at the heart of *ubuntu* and can be described as “the ability to live and exist in spite of difficulties”. Participants described their individualistic culture as one that tends to separate people from one another. They experienced their own culture to be in vast contrast to that of the community members of the semi-rural community in that they were working together and helping one another, something that the participants were not used to. In support of these findings, Poovan et al. (2006) and Williams (1996) state that the African people survived by developing a collective spirit that allows them to pool their resources, and preserve and create communities. In the townships and informal settlements of African communities people are obliged to share limited space, food, water and other resources which fuels this kind of collective and unified, essentially pro-social, tradition of *ubuntu*. Participants described their own community as one that creates a sense of “everyone is for him or herself”. This is evident in the individualistic culture participants are exposed to (Luthar, 2013), where high walls and security fences keep them from building bonds with neighbours and which jeopardise the opportunity to create a sense of community as they had experienced in the semi-rural community.

## **Awareness on an intrapersonal level**

### *Experiencing gratitude for one's privileges*

Participants experienced gratitude for their privileged background as a result of being part of the HFHSA building project. Of the 16 participants, 14 reported that they had experienced gratitude and appreciation for their own situation upon witnessing the poor living conditions in the semi-rural community.

The experience made them acutely aware of their privileged lives and thankful for what they sometimes took for granted. Material benefits such as luxurious housing, cars, private education, and a variety of clothing and food choices were some of the things participants in particular felt grateful for. They made specific mention of their living conditions that are very different from the semi-rural community they had observed, in that they did not have to share a room or bathroom with siblings or other family members and had lots of privacy when they wanted it. The following describes their experiences:

*"It changed me, ja ... it sort of makes you think deeper about how other people live ... how the country is ... how privileged we are and it just makes you think how everything else is" (INT2-B,21).*

*"I tend to appreciate what I have now more after the build and I think we often take for granted what we have" (FG1.1-G,1).*

*"... and I definitely felt gratitude as we were driving in to see the houses and the conditions they were in compared to what we have at home ..." (FG2.3-G,17).*

Simpson (2004, p. 688) found that volunteers exposed to observing poverty feel “*lucky*” and merely observing poverty enables them to “develop greater appreciation for their own situation and wealth”. Adolescents in this study strongly confirmed this, and admitted to have taken their privileged lives for granted in the past.

Previous research has conceptualised gratitude as an emotion resulting from a specific benefit that is received as well as a general appreciation for the “people and blessings of one’s life” (Lambert, & Veldorale-Brogan, 2013, p. 117). In line with such research findings, participants in the study demonstrated feeling blessed because they have the good fortune to belong to privileged families. Crossley (2012) is of the opinion that experiencing gratitude and appreciation for what one has, actually exhibits personal growth and internal transformation.

#### *Awareness of the reality of others less privileged and without basic resources*

Participants mostly acknowledged that the experience of the HFHSA building project opened their eyes to the different socio-economic environments that exist in SA, which they otherwise would not have acknowledged. They became aware of the harsh living conditions of the residents of the less privileged semi-rural community, for instance the challenges on a daily basis of existing with basic needs such as proper housing, sanitation and electricity unfulfilled. Housing was observed to range from metal and wood shacks to small two-bedroom houses built of bricks on small plots. Houses were described as being small and overcrowded, with many people having to share one bedroom, one bathroom and a small kitchen. Toilets were mostly outside and participants found them to be inadequate and in sharp contrast to what they were used to. Participants viewed the semi-rural community as not having proper roads as there were no tarred roads. This awareness of others’ life situations

made a profound impact on the participants who had been sheltered from less fortunate communities in the past. Participants experienced their involvement in the building project as *“life changing”* and declared the following:

*“I think for everyone it changed our lives because I think not many of us get exposed to townships ... just being there and the entire atmosphere with everybody else ... I think (it) changed all our lives”* (INT1-G,27).

*“... it’s a different world. You don’t always realise what another person’s life is like ... in a way you grow up ‘naïve’ in what your world is about”* (INT2-B,19).

*“For me it was more the exposure to the situation people live in”* (FG1.4-G,16).

Participants reported that the experience of the building project was more valuable than any past teachings regarding pro-social behaviour. According to Green (2001), teaching about inequality in the classroom is not enough to ensure that students become aware of poverty, class difference and racial issues, *inter alia* because it is a sensitive subject and difficult to discuss. Camacho (2004) asserts that it is challenging to make learners aware and to think about their own privileged situation through teaching in the classroom. Green (2001) suggests privileged children be taught the difference between privileged and underprivileged communities by exposing them to those communities, which could make a difference in how the rich view the poor and afford valuable insight and appreciation for their own life situation.

#### *Realising that material possessions do not guarantee happiness*

Participants experienced the semi-rural community as *“poor but happy”*, highlighting the notion that material possessions do not necessarily guarantee

happiness or contribute to life satisfaction. Participants explained that their perception of happiness was generally measured by the amount of material goods and possessions that one has. They viewed the semi-rural community as *“looking poor”*, but they came to realise that it apparently had *“no influence”* on whether the community experienced happiness or not. According to the participants, before their experience of pro-social behaviour, they regarded materialism as a precondition for happiness and increased life satisfaction. In experiencing pro-social behaviour, they came to realise that material possessions do not necessarily contribute to life satisfaction and have little to do with happiness.

The participants realised that their materialistic attitude towards what it means to be *“happy”* was not necessarily true across the board. Some specific descriptions of participants’ experiences regarding their perceptions of the semi-rural community as *“poor but happy”* are as follows:

*“So ... they live life to the fullest ... I guess ... they don’t always look at the materialistic things ...”* (INT3-G,18).

*“What we have is financial stability and what they have is what looks like happy families ... large families, good gatherings. Life isn’t always about being fortunate and having nice clothes and nice cars”* (INT2-B,21).

*“Well for me ... it was like you think you were going there (the semi-rural community) and find all these depressed people in this poverty stricken area. And we find happy people ... even if they lived in a shack they were still happy ... we were surprised ...”* (INT3-G,17-18).

Earlier, participants appear to have made the connection between material wealth and financial freedom as being prerequisites for having a “*happy*” life. During this project they witnessed poor people being happy; which was hard to comprehend, as they could not imagine themselves being happy with so little material possessions. These findings are consistent with studies conducted by Roberts, Tsang and Manolis (2015) and Tsang, Carpenter, Roberts, Frisch and Carlisle (2014), who found that materialistic individuals measure happiness and life satisfaction according to the amount of material possessions they have. Sirgy, Gurel-Atay, Webb, Cicic, Husic, Ekici, Herrmann, Hegazy, Lee and Johar (2012, p. 80) concur, stating that those “high in materialism view material possessions as the key to happiness” and it is observed that any discontent with their financial situation impacts negatively on their life satisfaction in general (Graham, 2010; Knight, Song, & Gunatilaka, 2009). Research found that people’s social context indeed tends to shape how they perceive others. Upper class people tend to view the world from within their privileged context (Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012), contributing to their perception that material deprivation causes unhappiness.

Participants’ isolation from poor communities possibly contributed to a skewed belief system regarding what causes people to experience happiness. On the other hand, it is unrealistic to believe the whole community was happy. There is firm evidence, however, that illustrates happiness is not proportional to the amount of one’s possessions (Borrero, Escobar, Cortés, & Maya, 2013; Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2002). Graham (2010) and Sarracino (2013) state that wealth and material possessions can actually generate feelings of isolation and loneliness for many people. Although financial wealth contributes to a more comfortable lifestyle, it

seems to come at a price (Sarracino, 2013). People enjoying a more comfortable lifestyle have reported feeling isolated and lonely, finding it difficult to enjoy social relationships (Tsang et al. 2014). Upper-class individuals have been shown to prioritise the “*individualised self*” in that they pursue goals and interests that benefit themselves (Kraus et al. 2012). In contrast to the culture of *ubuntu* the participants witnessed in the community in which they were performing a pro-social deed, they belonged to an individualistic culture, which implied that they valued their own well-being above the well-being of others and interpreted the world accordingly. Their materialistic view might be associated with their individualistic culture.

### **Experiencing community members’ sincere gratitude for a simple act of pro-social behaviour**

Participants were greatly surprised by the sincere gratitude bestowed on them by the community, while they (the participants) viewed their ‘*simple*’ act of pro-social behaviour as a relatively small contribution. After reflecting on their actions, participants, however, came to a deeper understanding of the impact that a simple act of pro-social behaviour could have on those who are on the receiving end of the pro-social act. Participants shared the following in this regard:

*“They appreciate us so much in anything that we do for them ... they are so grateful for it” (FG2.4-B,23).*

*“I felt such hospitality and how they were so grateful for what we have done for them. It was a small bit they could do for us to say thank you ... so I thought it was pretty special” (INT1-G,8).*

*“... that shows how we can change their lives and made their dreams come true and the people were so grateful for us helping them” (FG2.2-G,3).*

*“... a lot of them had broken English, but they all just thanked us and told us how much the house really meant to them because there’s nights when it’s so cold and raining and they actually have to go out and fix their own roof ... and then they can’t sleep ... ja, it’s bad ...” (INT4-B,21).*

An act of pro-social behaviour is widely believed to have a positive effect on the well-being of the helper as well as on the recipient of the help (Berger, 2014; Grant, & Sonnentag, 2010; Weinstein, & Ryan, 2010). Research, however, has revealed that some recipients who receive help may feel incompetent, dependent, vulnerable, threatened and helpless (Grant, & Sonnentag, 2010). How recipients experience the help, according to Weinstein and Ryan (2010), depends a lot on the quality of the help they receive and whether the help is offered with enthusiasm. With regard to the current study, it was evident that the community showed gratitude for being on the receiving end of an act of pro-social behaviour due to the effort and enthusiasm of the participants during the building project. Participants physically worked hard in the cold to complete the houses for them. Their effort was genuine and sincere and seemed to have made an impact on how the community received the houses that were built. The privileged adolescents had had little opportunity in the past to act pro-socially in the way the HFHSA building project provided. Exposure to this act of pro-social behaviour was the participants’ first encounter of the sort and had made a considerable impact on them.

## **Discussion**

The key to the interpretation of the findings of this study appears to be the very context of the community in which the participants took part in the HFHSA building project: *Ubuntu*. The concept of *ubuntu*, which represents the essence of pro-social behaviour, might have been a strongly contributing factor in the intensity of

the participants' experience of pro-social behaviour. Concepts such as community, humanity, caring, affection, interdependence, respect for human life and dignity, collective sharing, humility and hospitality are used in describing *ubuntu* (Kamwangamalu, 2007). The participants went to the semi-rural community to perform a single act of pro-social behaviour – and, in turn, were exposed to a whole community's way of living pro-socially.

The second pivotal effect of the participants' HFHSA experience appears to have been their reflections, which contributed to personal growth and a re-evaluation of materialistic values closely associated with a profound sense of gratitude. Froh, Emmons, Card, Bono and Wilson (2011, p. 302) assert that, during late adolescence, gratitude can be “positively linked with the motivation to connect and contribute to one's society or community and negatively related with envy and materialism”. This was found to be true in the study as participants came to recognise their materialistic tendencies in thinking worldly possessions and wealth contribute to a person's happiness. Their participation in a pro-social project and exposure to the community's pro-social behaviour altered their materialistic views. They physically worked hard and experienced exhaustion during the building project, which contributed to enhanced feelings of gratitude for their own privileged lives which they mostly took for granted. They reflected on how they tended to take for granted commodities such as their spacious homes, their material belongings, private education and financial freedom. This realisation of their own privilege further contributed to them realising that financial wealth does not guarantee happiness or life-satisfaction as previously thought. This realisation further made them aware of the “good intentions” of their parents. The findings are consistent with those of Tsang (2006, p. 139) in that gratitude is “a positive emotional reaction to receipt of a benefit

that is perceived to have resulted from the good intentions of another”. Gratitude has been proven to make people feel fulfilled and have a positive effect on their overall well-being (Berger, 2014; Heubner, Hills, & Jiang, 2013; Watkins, 2014), as also supported by the findings in this study. Bartlett and DeSteno (2006, p. 319) found furthermore that thinkers of various disciplines have posited gratitude to be “essential for building relationships”, and participants indeed reported feeling more connected to their peers as a result of their building experience, having built new relationships with peers who had not previously been in their circle of friends.

Participants reported that they experienced feeling worthy after acting pro-socially and that it contributed to experiencing positive feelings toward the semi-rural community. This aspect is well captured by the gratitude that participant FG1.2-M.9 experienced: “... a lot of it is privileges and a lot of things are basics ... it makes me feel just very grateful for the things I’ve done and ... proud of what I am going to do”.

The results further show that privileged adolescents do exhibit pro-social behaviour if an opportunity arises to act pro-socially. Participants in this study would not have acted pro-socially if it had not been for their school’s involvement in the HFHSA building project.

Overall, the findings from this exploratory study provided more in-depth understanding of privileged adolescents’ experience of pro-social behaviour. Through following a qualitative approach, inductive knowledge was generated regarding privileged adolescents’ experience of pro-social behaviour. The setting was admittedly isolated in that it only explored the experiences of a single group of “privileged” adolescents. On account of the limitations of the setting, together with the small sample of 16 participants used in this study, findings therefore cannot be

generalised. Participants were interviewed a year after their experience and this might have contributed to some experiences being forgotten or not remembered accurately. Making use of the creative art project did, however, seem to be effective in facilitating recall of the experience. The application of focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews were shown to be effective in data saturation. The criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were met, enhancing the trustworthiness of the study.

It is seriously recommended that the study be urgently replicated in many different contexts and in respect of different forms of pro-social behaviour. If the results of more studies are found to support the findings of the current study, the South African Department of Education should be propositioned to move towards implementing outreach programmes similar to those that the USA have incorporated in the general school curriculum. Both sides of the economic divide stand to benefit by such programmes. Such programmes could enhance pro-social behaviour in general and positively contribute to character development and future attitude towards acting pro-socially as well as fostering positive relationships and behaviour as adults.

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<sup>2</sup> Plos One: abbreviation for The Public Library of Science.

**SECTION C: SUMMARY, PERSONAL REFLECTION, LIMITATIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this section a summary and personal reflection with regards to the study will be discussed, followed by consideration of the strengths and limitations of the study and recommendations for further research. The section will conclude with a final comment.

### **3.2 SUMMARY**

This study was motivated by the researcher's involvement at an affluent school in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg. The researcher was a teacher and counsellor at the school during which time the Grade 11 learners in the school were involved with the HFHSA building project. The HFHSA project at the school had never been researched during the past 10 years of the school's involvement with them. Findings from literature indicate that privileged adolescents may be less prone to act pro-socially due to their privileged upbringing and sense of entitlement (Marsh, 2010:4). The researcher therefore became interested in exploring how these privileged adolescents had experienced their act of pro-social behaviour.

The research question was formulated as follows: What are privileged adolescents' experiences during an act of pro-social behaviour during the HFHSA building project? The aim of the study was to explore and describe what privileged adolescents' experience is during an act of pro-social behaviour. The researcher considers the research question to have been answered by the findings of the study. The discussion which follows will shed light on the specific methods that were employed to answer the research question.

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study as that suited the purpose of the research. A phenomenological approach was followed that enabled the researcher to gain insight into the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher employed purposive and convenience sampling in order to recruit participants from the specific population. The population consisted of 16 Grade 12 learners who had experienced the HFHSA building project of the school the year before.

A literature study was conducted in which the main concepts of the study were looked at. The researcher obtained relevant textbooks and academic articles from the North-West University library by using search engines such as EBSCO Host, PsychLit and ProQuest. The literature study focused on adolescent development of pro-social behaviour. The influence that family and peers have on developing pro-social behaviour and feelings of gratitude that are experienced when acting pro-socially, were discussed. Further, a discussion followed on what privileged adolescence entails in the study, as well as the importance of school based programmes that could develop pro-social behaviour. The literature study concluded with a discussion on why a positive psychological perspective was used as basis for the study.

Data collection relied on creative art work to enable participants to reflect on their experience, in conjunction with focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews. The semi-structured nature of the focus group discussions and interviews enabled the researcher to ask questions that were in line with the research question. The researcher was thus not bound by a set of inflexible questions and had freedom to explore thoughts that emerged from the participants.

The researcher performed a thematic analysis of the data. The following three main themes with their subthemes were identified:

Main theme 1: Witnessing a closeness among community members and experiencing closeness with peers

- Subtheme 1: Witnessing *ubuntu* in action
- Subtheme 2: Experiencing a closeness with peers brought on by the act of pro-social behaviour

Main theme 2: Experiencing a sense of awareness

- Subtheme 1: Awareness on an intrapersonal level
- Subtheme 2: Awareness of the reality of others less privileged having to make do without basic needs

Main theme 3: Experiencing the outcome of a simple act of pro-social behaviour

The order of the themes and subthemes discussed in the article differed, however, due to further analysis to identify what would be most relevant for publication, i.e. what would be unique and/or newsworthy as well as to achieve a more logical structure, and was as follows:

Theme 1: Witnessing *ubuntu* in action

Theme 2: Awareness on an intrapersonal level

- Subtheme 1: Experiencing gratitude for one's privileges
- Subtheme 2: Awareness of the reality of others less privileged and without basic resources
- Subtheme 3: Realising that material possessions do not guarantee happiness

Theme 3: Experiencing community members' sincere gratitude for a simple act of pro-social behaviour.

The positive impact and value of the study is evident in the way the participants' experience of their act of pro-social behaviour had affected them. It contributes to the knowledge base regarding adolescent pro-social behaviour which is not widely researched, in that it is important to know how particularly privileged adolescents experience pro-social behaviour. This knowledge can assist in the development of school-based programmes specifically aimed at promoting pro-social behaviour amongst adolescents. As discussed in Section A and B, the importance of acting pro-socially during adolescence is valued for contributing to personal growth as well as for the recipients of pro-social behaviour. With regard to South Africans, the topic is seen as relevant due to the economic circumstances in the country and the need for people generally to act pro-socially.

### **3.3 PERSONAL REFLECTION**

The researcher found herself experiencing the whole process of collecting data and interviewing the participants to have contributed to her own growth process. As new researcher the process was daunting to begin with but with excellent guidance and assistance from supervisors she realised how privileged she was in experiencing the

study from beginning to end. The researcher found that she gained confidence as the research process unfolded in that she became aware that she could accomplish a high standard of work regardless of her inexperience in the field. One of the methodological challenges was the verbatim transcriptions. It was challenging as the researcher transcribed the interviews herself because she wanted to be in control of the process to ensure accuracy. The researcher regarded the importance of correctly documenting the participants' experiences as crucial to data analysis and worked long hours to accomplish it.

The researcher furthermore strived to employ ethical guidelines throughout data collection and data analysis. The most difficult aspect for the researcher was to put aside her own bias of privileged adolescents and how they might experience pro-social behaviour.

The researcher further realised that she had to be careful not to be subjective during the process, because the study had to do with so many positive values. To achieve trustworthiness, she had to be constantly aware not to ignore or miss possible negative experiences of participants.

Pro-social behaviour during adolescence has been shown to be an important positive indicator in intrapersonal relationships and well-being. During data analysis it became clear that the participants in this study had experienced a growth process by self-reflecting on their privileged upbringing. The theme that the researcher found had contributed most to the participants' growth experience was that they had experienced pro-social behaviour in action in the way of *ubuntu*. It was surprising to find how the participants experienced the difference between themselves and the community.

Participants made sense of these differences by acknowledging the community's general happy appearance in spite of the lack of proper housing, roads and general commodities taken for granted by the privileged adolescents. Experiencing these differences created a heightened awareness of participants' own privileged lives together with renewed, sincere feelings of gratitude.

The researcher did not anticipate the positive impact the experience would have on the participants. The theme of gratitude was overwhelming and was unexpected due

to the researcher's view that privileged adolescents appeared to be less grateful for what they have.

They became aware of other communities and the life challenges these communities face. They especially gained knowledge regarding the circumstances of others and gained insight into the world of others less fortunate. Participants reported that they played with the children of the community in the streets. Participants expressed how the community members had made them feel welcome by making tea for them. They felt that the community welcomed them and did not view them as privileged but rather as equals.

Participants further became aware of their own privileged circumstances as they compared it to those of others less privileged. They demonstrated the ability to examine their privileges in a different light by experiencing and expressing gratitude for their privileged upbringing. Privileged adolescents may feel entitled to material goods and this experience increased their awareness of how they live and are not always grateful for the bounty they have.

This process of meta-cognition (thinking about thinking) contributed positively to their pro-social behaviour in that they considered the well-being of others not previously given much thought. With this insight an increase in empathy was noticeable. They realised that with the little they have the community still shared with them – “the rich kids”.

This process of insight contributed to them building new relationships and deep unexpected connections with peers on an intrapersonal level not previously established. Developing new relationships created a sense of tolerance that they exhibited towards others, previously ignored. The researcher was surprised by these findings and did not expect the group to illustrate such a tremendous amount of growth as a result of their experience.

### **3.4 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The strengths of the study have been identified and will be discussed first, followed by a discussion on the limitations:

### Strengths:

- The researcher was focused on producing data that was trustworthy and followed the criteria outlined in Section C as follows: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to the researcher these aspects contributed to the credibility of the findings.
- The researcher found that the focus group discussions and individual interviews that were conducted were adequate and resulted in data saturation.
- Findings are transferable due to the rigorous research procedure the researcher followed throughout the study.
- The time lapse of the study is viewed as a positive contributing factor in that the reflective process allowed for the participants to recall the most important experiences that stood out in their memories. These experiences were what the researcher was looking to investigate.

### Limitations:

- The sample was drawn from a single site, which limits results in that it only focused on a single group of privileged adolescents' experiences.
- The sample size of 16 participants may have produced limited data. Future studies can investigate larger numbers of participants to compare results.
- The participants in the two focus group discussions were unevenly grouped in terms of gender. This was due to the participants volunteering their participation in available timeslots. Results may have been different if the focus group discussions were evenly grouped. Participants may have felt more comfortable sharing their opinions if there had been more of the same gender in a group.
- The use of focus group discussions may in itself have brought limitations to the study. Adolescents' need to conform (as important in their developmental phase) may have influenced the truthfulness of their responses in some instances. Further, the use of focus groups might be controversial in a phenomenological study because some researchers are of the opinion that one can only make use of individual interviews when investigating how

participants experienced a certain phenomenon (Seabi, 2012:90). However, the choice of focus group discussions was made because the act of pro-social behaviour was a group activity that the participants had all taken part in.

- The time lapse of the experience and the research could have contributed to participants forgetting some experiences.

### **3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

As stated in the article (Section B), it is recommended that the study be urgently replicated in many different contexts and in respect of different forms of pro-social behaviour. The South African Department of Education should be approached with the findings to propose that outreach programmes (similar to those in the USA) be implemented in SA. The experience of pro-social behaviour is especially important for privileged individuals because they are usually isolated from individuals and communities in need. Schools from affluent areas should therefore be targeted to get involved in similar projects as the HFHSA building project. Exposing adolescents to the plight of others less fortunate can increase their future involvement in pro-social behaviour that can contribute to the need that exist in SA for its citizens to act pro-socially.

Schools that are not from affluent areas can also be involved in outreach programmes. The idea of pro-social projects does not necessarily involve financial contributions. Projects such as HFHSA welcome volunteers to give their time to help build the houses. The experience of acting pro-socially is valuable for all social classes.

### **3.6 FINAL COMMENT**

Adolescence is the ideal developmental phase to introduce programmes promoting pro-social behaviour because of the maturation of their reasoning skills and their increase in perspective taking. With the increasing number of people living in sub-standard living conditions such programmes as the HFHSA building project can prove to be valuable for those people residing in rural communities as well as for those participating in the pro-social act. Acting pro-socially can promote positive

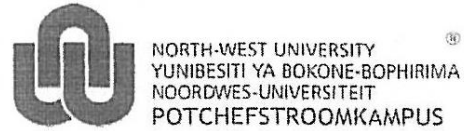
outcomes for many families in need as well as the participants in such projects. Due to the economic difficulties many South Africans face, the need to help will only grow in years to come and promoting outreach programmes will become even more relevant to help alleviate the problem that government on its own cannot address.

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## Appendix A: Consent form: School



Centre for Child-, Youth and Family Studies  
Corner of Oos and Kollege Street  
**Wellington**  
7655

Tel: 021 8643593

Fax: 021 8642654

Mr [REDACTED]  
The Principal

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

I am currently in the process of conducting a research study on how privileged adolescents experience pro-social behaviour. The purpose of this research is to explore their experiences of their participation in pro-social behaviour with the purpose of contributing to research. The proposed research study will focus on the Grade 11 learners' experience of the 2012 Habitat for Humanity Building project.

Participants will be asked to volunteer to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time. Focus groups and individual interviews will be conducted on 5, 6 and 7 August 2013. The identity of each participant will remain strictly confidential. Audio and visual recordings will be made of the focus groups and individual interviews. All recordings and identities of participants will be kept confidential to protect their privacy and will only be used for the purpose of the study.

Your approval will be extremely valuable to this study and findings could contribute to the knowledge base to offer insight to educators, policy makers and researchers.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me or the study leader Dr Susanne Jacobs at the Centre for Child-, Youth and Family Studies, NWU at +27-21- 8643593.

Yours sincerely

Christelle Potgieter

Tel: 083 258 8824

e-mail: [stella2@iburst.co.za](mailto:stella2@iburst.co.za)

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I, [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) hereby give consent that the proposed research study be conducted at [REDACTED] (JHB).

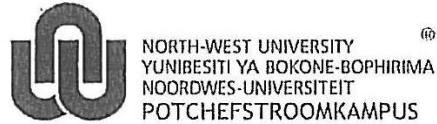
[REDACTED]  
Signature of Headmaster

23 July 2013  
Date

[REDACTED]  
Signature of Researcher

30/7/13  
Date

## Appendix B: Consent form: Habitat for Humanity South Africa



Centre for Child-, Youth and Family Studies  
Corner of Oos and Kollege Street  
**Wellington**  
7655

Tel: 021 8643593

Fax: 021 8642654

Mr [REDACTED]  
Gauteng Provincial Manager  
Habitat for Humanity

Dear [REDACTED]

I am currently in the process of conducting a research study on how privileged adolescents experience pro-social behaviour. The purpose of this research is to explore their experiences of their participation in pro-social behaviour with the purpose of contributing to future research. The proposed research study will focus on the Grade 11 learners' experience of the 2012 Habitat for Humanity Building project.

Participants will be asked to volunteer to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time. Focus groups and individual interviews will be conducted. The identity of each participant will remain strictly confidential. Audio and visual recordings will be made of the focus groups and individual interviews. All recordings and identities of participants will be kept confidential to protect their privacy and will only be used for the purpose of the study.

Your approval for the study to allow the focus to be on the Grade 11 learners' experience during the 2012 HFHSA building project will be extremely valuable to this study and findings could contribute to the knowledge base to offer insight to educators, policy makers and researchers.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me or the study leader Dr Susanne Jacobs at the Centre for Child-, Youth and Family Studies, NWU at +27-21- 8643593.

Yours sincerely

Christelle Potgieter

Tel: 083 258 8824

e-mail: [Stella2@iburst.co.za](mailto:Stella2@iburst.co.za)

---

I, [REDACTED] from Habitat for Humanity (HFHSA)

hereby give consent that the proposed research study be conducted.

[REDACTED]

Signature of Representative:  
Habitat for Humanity South Africa

13/8/13  
Date

  
Signature of Researcher

15/8/13  
Date

## Appendix C: Assent form: Adolescents



Centre for Child-, Youth and Family Studies  
Corner of Oos and Kollege Street  
**Wellington**  
7655

Tel: 021 8643593

Fax: 021 8642654

Dear Learner

I am currently conducting a research study on how privileged adolescents experience helpful and/or volunteer behaviour. You have been chosen because you are part of the Grade 11 learners who participated in the 2012 Habitat for Humanity (HFH) building project at the school. Your participation in the study is voluntary and if you agree to participate you may withdraw at any time. You will be asked to participate in focus group discussions or individual interviews. Research will be conducted before the August holidays over a three day period. Time slots will be made available for you to volunteer your time. You will be asked to share your experiences of the HFHSA building project. All information provided by you will be strictly confidential and anonymous.

Audio and visual recordings will be made of the focus groups and individual interviews. All recordings will be stored in a secure location to protect your identity and will only be used for the purpose of the study. You will unfortunately receive no compensation for your participation.

Feedback will be given in short written form after publication of the findings. If you have any questions about your participation, you may contact the researcher between 8:00-5:00 during office hours on 083 258 8824 or the study leader, dr Susanne Jacobs at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies, NWU at +27 21 864 3593.

Yours sincerely

Christelle Potgieter

Tel: 083 258 8824

e-mail: [stella2@iburst.co.za](mailto:stella2@iburst.co.za)

By signing this form, you agree to participate in the research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Learner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D: Consent form: Parents/legal guardians



Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies  
Corner of Oos and Kollege Street  
**Wellington**  
7655

Tel: 021 864 3593

Fax: 021 864 2654

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian

I am currently conducting a research study on how privileged adolescents experience pro-social behaviour. Your child has been chosen to participate in the research because he/she is part of the Grade 11 learners who participated in the 2012 Habitat for Humanity (HFH) building project at the school. Participation in the study is voluntary and if you provide authorisation, participants will be allowed to withdraw at any time.

Your child will be asked to participate in focus group discussions or individual interviews. Research will be conducted before the August holidays over a three day period. Time slots will be made available to your child to volunteer their time. Your child will be asked to share his/her experiences of the HFHSA building project. All information provided by them will be strictly confidential and anonymous.

Audio and visual recordings will be made of the focus groups and individual interviews. All recordings will be stored in a secure location to protect your child's identity and will only be used for the purpose of the study. Participants will unfortunately receive no compensation for their participation.

Feedback will be given in short written form after the publication of findings. If you have any questions, you may contact the researcher between 8:00-5:00 during office hours on 083 258 8824 or the study leader, dr Susanne Jacobs at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies, NWU at +27 21 864 3593.

Yours sincerely

Christelle Potgieter

Tel: 083 258 8824

e-mail: [stella2@iburst.co.za](mailto:stella2@iburst.co.za)

By signing this form, I allow my child to participate in the research study.

---

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

---

Date

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date

## **Appendix E: Interview guide for focus group discussions**

### **Introduction**

Welcome participants and thank them for participating. Discuss confidentiality and voluntary participation.

### **Aim of the study**

Exploring privileged adolescents' experience of their engagement in pro-social behaviour

Discussion regarding participants' creative art activity will be the point of departure. Every participant can discuss what they made and the creative art work will be explored. If participants provide insufficient data, the researcher will make use of the following interview guide.

### **Question:**

Please share your experiences when you participated in the building project with this group.

### **Probing questions:**

What suggestions would you as a group like to make to the school leadership and HFHSA to improve the experience for the class of 2013?

On a more personal level, please share an incident / experience that really stands out in your memory.

What made that incident memorable in your view?

What influence did that incident have on you? Does it still influence you in any way?

Please share what it feels like to help someone else (to contribute to their well-being) without receiving rewards for services rendered.

Is there anything that you feel you need to add, that has not already been said that could be of value better to understand your experiences with regard to the project?

Member checking

Acknowledgements

Reflective voice recordings

## **Appendix F: Interview schedule for semi-structured individual interviews**

### **Introduction**

Welcome the participant and thank him/her for participating. Discuss confidentiality and voluntary participation.

### **Aim of the study**

Exploring privileged adolescents' experience of their engagement in pro-social behaviour

Discussion regarding participants' creative art activity will be the point of departure (exploring what the participant brings to the foreground). Themes that have emerged from focus group discussions will be used to guide individual interviews. If the participant does not provide the researcher with sufficient data, the following interview guide will be used.

### **Question:**

What thoughts and feelings, would you say, were predominant within you during the time of the building project?

### **Probing questions:**

Did these thoughts and feelings change during the course of the project?

What was the influence of these thoughts and feelings on you?

Tell me about at least two positive experiences that you had with regard to the project.

Tell me about at least two negative experiences that you had with regard to the project.

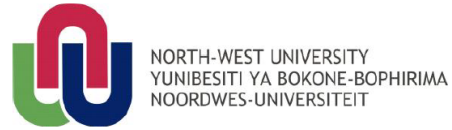
Is there anything that you feel you need to add, that has not already been said that could be of value to understand your experiences with regard to the project better?

Member checking

Acknowledgement

Reflective voice recordings

## Appendix G: Ethics approval of project



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900  
Faks: (018) 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

### ETHICS APPROVAL OF PROJECT

#### Ethics Committee

Tel +27 18 299 4850  
Fax +27 18 293 5329  
Email [Ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics@nwu.ac.za)  
2012/08/31

This is to certify that the next project was approved by the NWU Ethics Committee:

<p><b>Project title</b> <i>DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A TRANS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH.</i></p> <p><b>Project leader:</b> Dr. H Grobler &amp; Prof V Roos</p> <p><b>Ethics number:</b> <b>NWU-00060-12-A1</b></p> <p><small>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</small></p> <p><b>Expiry date:</b> 2017/08/30</p>
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The Ethics Committee would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Committee for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

The formal Ethics approval certificate will be sent to you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



Me. Marietjie Halgryn  
NWU Ethics Secretariate

## Appendix H: Thematic analysis of data

### Data analysis: themes, subthemes and categories

MAIN THEMES	SUBTHEMES	CATEGORIES
<b>Witnessing a closeness between community members and with peers</b>	<b>Witnessing <i>ubuntu</i> in action</b>	
	<b>Experience a closeness with peers brought on by an act of pro-social behaviour</b>	

MAIN THEMES	SUBTHEMES	CATEGORIES
<p><b>Experience a sense of awareness</b></p>	<p><b>Awareness on an intrapersonal level</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gratitude for the privileges that one has</li> <li>• Personal gain install when prepared to reach out to others (a sense of accomplishment)</li> <li>• A need to do community work</li> <li>• Material possessions do not guarantee happiness</li> <li>• To give of one self involves certain sacrifices</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Aware of the reality of others less privileged having to make do without proper basic needs</b></p>	
<p><b>Witnessing the outcome of a simple act of pro-social behaviour</b></p>		

## Appendix I: Examples of creative art work



**Figure 1**

Creative art work of participant describing how the experience changed her in a positive way and facilitated in her personal growth experience.



**Figure 2**

Creative art work illustrated with bright colours to represent the positive memories he had of the experience and how he remembered the community as being happy.

## **Appendix J: Author guidelines for the *Journal of Psychology in Africa***

### Instructions for authors

#### Editorial policy

Submission of a manuscript implies that the material has not previously been published, nor is it being considered for publication elsewhere. Submission of a manuscript will be taken to imply transfer of copyright of the material to the publishers, Taylor and Francis. Contributions are accepted on the understanding that the authors have the authority for publication. Material accepted for publication in this journal may not be reprinted or published without due copyright permissions. The Journal has a policy of anonymous peer review. Papers will be scrutinised and commented on by at least two independent expert referees or consulting editors as well as by an editor. The Editor reserves the right to revise the final draft of the manuscript to conform to editorial requirements.

#### Publishing ethics

By submitting to JPA for publication review, the author(s) agree to any originality checks during the peer review and production processes. A manuscript is accepted for publication review on the understanding that it contains nothing that is abusive, defamatory, fraudulent, illegal, libellous, or obscene. During manuscript submission, authors should declare any competing and/or relevant financial interest which might be potential sources of bias or constitute conflict of interest. The submitting author must provide contact information for all co-authors. The author who submits the manuscript accepts responsibility for notifying all co-authors and must provide contact information on the co-authors.

The Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors will collaborate with Taylor and Francis using the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics <http://publicationethics.org> in cases of allegations of research errors; authorship complaints; multiple or concurrent (simultaneous) submission; plagiarism complaints; research results misappropriation; reviewer bias; and undisclosed conflicts of interest.

## Manuscripts

Manuscripts should be submitted in English. The manuscripts should be typewritten and double-spaced, with wide margins, using one side of the page only. Manuscripts should conform to the publication guidelines of the latest edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual of instructions for authors.

## Submission

Manuscripts should be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, Elias Mpofu, PhD., DEd, CRC, Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney, Cumberland Campus, East Street, PO Box 170 Lidcombe NSW 1825, Australia, email: elias.mpofu@sydney.edu.au. We encourage authors to submit manuscripts via e-mail, in MS Word, but we also require two hard copies of any e-mail submission. Before submitting a manuscript, authors should peruse and consult a recent issue of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* for general layout and style. Manuscripts should conform to the publication guidelines of the latest edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual of instructions for authors.

## Manuscript format

All pages must be numbered consecutively, including those containing the references, tables and figures. The typescript of a manuscript should be arranged as follows:

- Title: this should be brief, sufficiently informative for retrieval by automatic searching techniques and should contain important key-words (preferably <13 words).
- Author(s) and Address(es) of author(s): The corresponding author must be indicated. The author's respective addresses where the work was done must be indicated. An e-mail address, telephone number and fax number for the corresponding author must be provided.
- Abstract: Articles and abstracts must be in English. Submission of abstracts translated to French, Portuguese and/ or Spanish is encouraged. For data-based contributions, the abstract should be structured as follows: Objective – the primary

purpose of the paper, Method – data source, participants, design, measures, data analysis, Results – key findings, implications, future directions and Conclusions – in relation to the research questions and theory development. For all other contributions (except editorials, book reviews, special announcements) the abstract must be a concise statement of the content of the paper. Abstracts must not exceed 150 words. The statement of the abstract should summarise the information presented in the paper but should not include references.

- Text:

- (1) Do not align text using spaces or tabs in references. Use one of the following:

- (a) use CTRL-T in Word 2007 to generate a hanging indent; or (b) MS Word allows author to define a style (e.g., reference) that will create the correct formatting.

- (2) Per APA guide-lines, only one space should follow any punctuation.

- (3) Do not insert spaces at the beginning or end of paragraphs.

- (4) Do not use colour in text.

- Tables: Tables should be either included at the end of the manuscript or as a separate file. Indicate the correct placement by indicating the insertion point in brackets, e.g., <Inset Table 1 approximately here>. Tables should be provided as either tab-delimited text or as a MS Word table (One item/cell). Font for tables should be Helvetica text to maintain consistency.

- Figures/Graphs/Photos: Figures, graphs and photos should be provided in graphic format (either JPG or TIF) with a separate file for each figure, graph or photo. Indicate the correct placement by indicating the insertion point in brackets e.g., <Inset Figure 1 approximately here>. Provide the title for the item and any notes that should appear at bottom of item in the manuscript text. Items should be cropped to avoid the appearance of superfluous white space around items. Text on figures and graphs should be Helvetica to maintain consistency. Figures must not repeat data

presented in the text or tables. Figures should be planned to appear to a maximum final width of either 80 or 175 mm. (3.5 or 7.0”). Complicated symbols or patterns must be avoided. Graphs and histograms should preferably be two-dimensional and scale marks provided. All lines should be black but not too heavy or thick (including boxes). Colour only in photos or colour sensitive graphic illustrations. Extra charges will be levied for colour printing.

## Referencing

Referencing style should follow latest edition of the APA manual of instructions for authors.

- References in text: References in running text should be quoted as follows: (Louw & Mkize, 2012), or (Louw, 2011), or Louw (2000, 2004a, 2004b). All surnames should be cited the first time the reference occurs, e.g., Louw, Mkize, and Naidoo (2009) or (Louw, Mkize, & Naidoo, 2010). Subsequent citations should use et al., e.g. Louw et al. (2004) or (Louw et al., 2004). ‘Unpublished observations’ and ‘personal communications’ may be cited in the text, but not in the reference list. Manuscripts submitted but not yet published can be included as references followed by ‘in press’.

- Reference list: Full references should be given at the end of the article in alphabetical order, using double spacing. References to journals should include the author’s surnames and initials, the full title of the paper, the full name of the journal, the year of publication, the volume number, and inclusive page numbers. Titles of journals must not be abbreviated. References to books should include the authors’ surnames and initials, the year of publication, full title of the book, the place of publication, and the publisher’s name. References should be cited as per the examples below:

## Reference samples

### Journal article

Peltzer, K. (2001). Factors at follow-up associated with adherence with adherence with directly observed therapy (DOT) for tuberculosis patients in South Africa. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 11, 165-185.

#### Book

Gore, A. (2006). *An inconvenient truth: The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale.

(edited book)

Galley, K. E. (Ed.). (2004). *Global climate change and wildlife in North America*. Bethesda, MD: Wildlife Society.

#### Chapter in a book

Cook, D. A., & Wiley, C. Y. (2000). Psychotherapy with members of the African American churches and spiritual traditions. In P. S. Richards & A. E. Bergin (Ed.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and religiosity diversity* (pp 369-396). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

#### Magazine article

Begley, S., & Murr, A. (2007, July 2). Which of these is not causing global warming? A. Sport utility vehicles; B. Rice fields; C. Increased solar output. *Newsweek*, 150 (2), 48-50.

#### Newspaper article

(unsigned)

College officials agree to cut greenhouse gases. (2007, June 13). *Albany Times Union*, p. A4.

(signed)

Landler, M. (2007, June 2). Bush's Greenhouse Gas Plan Throws Europe Off Guard. *New York Times*, p. A7.

#### Unpublished thesis

Appoh, L. (1995). The effects of parental attitudes, beliefs and values on the nutritional status of their children in two communities in Ghana (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Trondheim, Norway.

#### Conference paper

Sternberg, R. J. (2001, June). Cultural approaches to intellectual and social competencies. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society, Toronto, Canada.

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#### Aims and scope

Findings from psychological research in Africa and related regions need an interdisciplinary forum for broad-based dissemination and utilization in the context of development. The *Journal of Psychology in Africa* provides such a forum. Its core mission is to advance psychological research for the social-cultural and health development in Africanist settings, inclusive of the African diaspora communities around the globe. Research that addresses African heritage realities and opportunities is particularly encouraged. Contributions should attempt a synthesis of local and universal methodologies and applications, contributing to the wider body of knowledge in the applied psychological sciences.

The *Journal of Psychology in Africa* publishes original empirical research articles, research reviews, conceptual development articles and thematic issues. Manuscripts can be regular research reports, brief reports, and those that address topical professional issues, including case analysis reports. Book reviews are accepted for publication as special announcements. Specifically, manuscripts with the following qualities are encouraged: 1) Combine quantitative and qualitative data, 2) Take a systematic qualitative or ethnographic approach, 3) Use an original and creative methodological approach, 4) Address an important but overlooked topic, 5) Present new theoretical or conceptual ideas; and 6) Present innovative context sensitive applications. Manuscripts for publication consideration should show an awareness of the cultural context of the research questions asked, the measures used, the results obtained, and interpretations proposed. Finally the papers should be practical, based on local experience, and applicable to crucial efforts in key areas of psychology for development in African cultural heritage settings.

## Appendix K: Data collection: example of individual interview

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW: INT 4 (M) [REDACTED] (Male 18 years) (2013/08/07) 2:58 pm

	Question	Response	Notes
1	<i>I- ok, thank you [REDACTED] will you please tell me about your creative art work.</i>	Uhm....well the first thing that we noticed there was that everywhere we went we just saw people. And every single person...no matter who they were....they all just had a smile on their face. And there was such a big sense of community between everyone.....we're .....like our neighbours, we might say hello to them every day, they would share dinner every night (referring to [REDACTED] residence). They just got this friendship. For example, when their houses are being built, the neighbours will watch over the other people's houses so that no one steals their windows. And they just got that whole "Ubuntu" thing," that I am because we are" ...there is really such spirit as a unit between everyone, not just: my money, my house, my this...my that...which is what everyone including us in the urban areas have. We think this is my family I am gonna put us first. But the community (referring to [REDACTED]) they prioritise and just put everything together and not individually. And they know that.....because they all....have so little, that the little that they can share will benefit a lot more than just than keeping it to themselves.	
2	<i>I- Laugh</i>	Uhm... and then....so that was everyone there (pointing to previous area of discussion).....so then I just drew a picture of a smiley face because there was just smiles everywhere (smiling). Then one think that I was thinking about when I was there was .....to them..... when they look at their house they see a home...they can take refuge in it, and they see it as safety, it's something so important to them (turning his collage up-side-down continues). But when you look at it from our perspective.....we just see our project.	
3	<i>I- I see that</i>	So we just see...you know...we here to do work, we here to do something. But then what's really happening (turning collage upright again)is much deeper of what we actually doing and what this project is.....it's a home.....so that's why I drew eyes (tapping on collage) which is their perspective and our perspective.	