

The Influence of a Prosocial Community Action on Privileged Adolescents' Sense of Awareness

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the influence of participating in a prosocial community action on privileged adolescents' sense of awareness. A qualitative descriptive design was incorporated to purposively select 10 female and 6 male racially diverse privileged adolescents between 17 and 18 years who participated in a voluntary house-building project in a semi-rural community. The data were gathered by using focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, supported by a creative artwork activity. A thematic analysis suggested that the adolescents acquired an awareness on an intrapersonal level, an awareness of the socio-economic divide in their community, an awareness of a social responsibility, and an awareness of their individualistic culture. Prosocial community actions appear to engender positive introspective reflection among adolescent school learners, and an awareness of the circumstances of others of which they otherwise would not have taken notice.

Keywords: adolescent, sense of awareness, gratitude, poverty, privileged, prosocial action, social responsibility

Introduction

Sharing, helping, compliance and cooperative behaviour are viewed as the hallmarks of social competence in childhood and adolescence (Wentzel 2014; Wentzel, Filisetti, and Looney 2007). Generally, voluntary helpful behaviour is defined as prosocial behaviour (Piliavin 2009; Van der Merwe and Dawes 2000). Prosocial behaviour is concerned with actions benefitting the well-being of others without receiving rewards of any kind (Eisenberg, Zhou, and Koller 2001; Weinstein and Ryan 2010). Prosocial behaviour is further viewed as acting in accordance with societal norms, rules and expectations (Siu, Shek, and 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 prosocial behaviour (Siu, Shek, and Law 2012).

In most Western societies today, materialism and the drive to be successful are, however, the norms people live by (Luthar 2013; Zhang et al. 2020). When materialistic values direct people's behaviour, they are at risk to become less concerned with the welfare of others, consequently also acting less prosocially (Kashdan and Breen 2007; Varnum 2013). The focus of this article is therefore to explore and describe the possible influence that participating in a prosocial community action had on privileged adolescents' sense of awareness. The research specifically looked at the experiences of adolescents from an affluent school participating in a building project by Habitat for Humanity South Africa (HFHSA).

In this article, the authors first introduce the background to the study before giving an overview of adolescent development, prosocial behaviour and conscientisation. Methodological aspects that were taken into consideration are then discussed, followed by a discussion of the findings and limitation of the study. The authors end the article with concluding remarks, implications for social work practice and social work development, and suggestions for future research.

Background to the Study

An affluent school in Johannesburg, in the province of Gauteng, South Africa, has for the past 13 years been working with HFHSA in a collaborative partnership to help fund and build houses for South African people in resource-poor communities. HFHSA is an affiliation of Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI), which is a non-governmental and non-profit housing organisation that works in partnership with families in need, without discrimination in terms of religion, race or ethnic group. Worldwide, HFHI has been seeking to redress the inadequate housing circumstances of people who live in poverty, and of people who had been homeless since the early 1970s (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 by building a foundation for a secure future (Habitat for Humanity 2012).

Each year, privileged¹ Grade 11 adolescent learners from the affluent school volunteer their time during the August school holidays to help build houses in rural communities. The involvement of the specific affluent school with HFHSA is meaningful for three reasons. First, as children grow older and progress into adolescence, their prosocial

1 Being "privileged" was operationalised as attending an affluent school, even if the child's family was not contributing to school fees.

tendencies increase (Siu, Shek, and Law 2012) and adolescence is therefore the ideal developmental stage for exposure to prosocial behaviour (Van Goethem et al. 2014).

Second, Gauteng, of all the provinces in South Africa, has the highest number of households (453 000) living in informal settlements (The Housing Development Agency 2012).

And third, being involved with HFHSA creates a good opportunity for the privileged adolescents to be exposed to prosocial behaviour during community service. Privileged adolescents are often physically separated from people living in poverty. By being demographically separated (both physically and socially), feelings of “reduced intimacy, less understanding, and greater prejudice” are created (Kraus, Côté, and Keltner 2010, 1717; Nenga 2011, 265). Horn (2012) regards community service as a fundamental experience in preparation for good citizenship. To encourage adolescents and young adults to volunteer to serve in their communities is therefore widely viewed as beneficial for both society and the specific individual (Planty, Bozick, and Regnier 2006).

Adolescent development programmes that aim to enhance prosocial norms, such as reciprocity, social responsibility, altruism, and volunteerism (Horn 2012; Siu, Shek, and Law 2012), can play a critical role in helping learners to understand, tolerate and respect different ethnic and cultural populations in society (Horn 2012; Silke et al. 2020; Youniss et al. 2002). The important outcomes of school-based development programmes could therefore be seen as one way of emphasising multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusivity, and by doing so provide an opportunity for adolescent volunteers not only to learn about and become aware of class inequality (Meiring, Kannemeyer, and Potgieter 2018; World Bank 2018) but also to challenge their own class privileges (Nenga 2011). For adolescents to achieve this, a process of conscientisation should take place.

Conscientisation is a process “whereby people become aware of the political, socioeconomic and cultural contradictions that interact in a hegemonic way to diminish their lives” (Ledwith 2005, 97). The process of conscientisation enables one to become a critical thinker through the unpacking of dominant and oppressive thoughts which ultimately result from continued socialisation (Ledwith 2005). The process of conscientisation could thus be understood as the development, strengthening and changing of one’s consciousness (Montero 2014) and as creating awareness, but on a much deeper level.

For this reason, society (including the Department of Education, the Department of Social Development, school principals and parents) 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).

Overview of Adolescent Development and Prosocial Behaviour

Adolescence is the developmental period between the ages of 13 and 18 years and can be described as a phase of many contradictory levels of change and development, physically, emotionally and mentally (Nabeel and Zafar 2012). As with all human development stages, the developmental changes during adolescence have an impact on behaviour (Gouws, Kruger, and Burger 2008).

During the formal operational phase, which begins at approximately age 13, children's abstract thinking capacities (ability to think of different possibilities) and 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 prosocial tendencies (Beutel and Johnson 2004; Carlo et al. 1999; Siu, Shek, and Law 2012). 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 et al. 2012).

The formal operational phase also enhances adolescents' abilities to understand the social functioning of the world (Ma, Kibler, and Sly 2013). Following an increased ability to take the perspective of others (Killen et al. 2011; Rasmussen et al. 2018), adolescents also tend to be more capable of sharing, being generous and feeling responsible towards others (Eisenberg, Zhou, and Koller 2001).

Related to the formal operational phase is adolescent identity formation which, according to Erikson (in Papalia and Duskin Feldman 2012), includes reaching ego synthesis (which means developing a sense of self that is continuous, integrated and unified), forming a sociocultural identity (which includes cultural value orientations), forming gender-role and career identity and developing a personal value system. The authors are of the opinion that identity formation mostly occurs when adolescents are introduced or exposed to different experiences as it is these experiences that change the way in which adolescents perceive themselves (personal identity), their various roles in society and, importantly, their prosocial behaviour (Patel 2015).

Facilitating opportunities for prosocial behaviour is considered one of the three qualities of perspective taking (Williams 1996) and more specifically as perspective taking "in action" (Jacobs 2019), as it seems to be the obvious result or product of the ability to take the perspective of others. Moral reasoning and empathy (as with perspective taking) are the fundamental competencies that contribute to prosocial behaviour, with empathy being regarded as the foundation of prosocial behaviour and moral reasoning as making an impact on the development of prosocial behaviour (De Hooge 2013; Lai, Siu, and Shek 2015).

Method

A qualitative descriptive design (Jiggins Colorafi and Evans 2016; Kim, Sefcik, and Bradway 2016; Lambert and Lambert 2012; Sandelowski 2010) was used to generate inductive knowledge regarding privileged adolescents' experience of an act of prosocial behaviour. Purposive sampling (Bradshaw, Atkinson, and Doody 2017; Plowright 2011) was employed to select female and male adolescents aged 17 and 18 years who were learners from a specific school in Gauteng and who have participated in the HFHSA building project during the winter vacation of their Grade 11 year. A total of 16 adolescent learners (10 female and six male) were selected, of whom six were African, six were White, two were Indian and two were from Chinese descent. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the participants' demographic profile.

Table 1: Participants' gender, age and ethnic background

Focus Group 1			Focus Group 2			Individual Interviews		
Participant Gender	Age	Race group	Participant Gender	Age	Race group	Participant Gender	Age	Race group
FG1.1–F	17	Indian	FG2.1–F	18	African	INT.1–F	18	African
FG1.2–M	18	White	FG2.2–F	17	White	INT.2–M	18	White
FG1.3–F	17	African	FG2.3–F	17	White	INT.3–F	17	African
FG1.4–F	18	African	FG2.4–M	17	Chinese	INT.4–M	18	White
FG1.5–M	18	Chinese	FG2.5–F	18	Indian			
FG1.6–F	18	African						
FG1.7–M	18	White						

FG1 = First focus group; FG1.1 = First participant of focus group one; FG2 = Second focus group; FG2.1 = First participant of second focus group; INT = Interview; INT.1–F = First interview with a female participant; F = Female; M = Male

The study made use of focus group discussions (Creswell 2009; Flynn, Albrecht, and Scott 2018; Seabi 2012) and semi-structured interviews (Greeff 2011) as data collection methods. Two focus groups consisted of seven and five members. In order to acquire 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), four additional individual interviews were conducted with two male and two female adolescents who had not participated in the focus group discussions. With the consent of parents and the assent of the participants, the focus group discussions and interviews were recorded on video camera to ensure that all data were accurately captured (Creswell 2009). Since the data were collected approximately a year after the adolescents had participated in the building project, a creative art activity was incorporated in both data collection methods to allow participants to reflect on their experiences. Art-based techniques, 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”. Poldma and Stewart (2004, 147) support the use of creative art projects, as the creative process allows for participants to “generate visual images to express verbal concepts”.

The participants were provided with an art pack consisting of an A3 white paper, 10 coloured feathers, 10 coloured elastic bands, four meter of raffia string, coloured potpourri, five small, coloured pom-poms (two centimetres in diameter), five big, coloured pom-poms (four centimetres in diameter), one meter cotton string, coloured pencils and glue. The participants were asked to create a picture with the content of the art pack that would depict their experiences during the HFHSA house-building project. For confidentiality purposes, each participant was allocated a number to be indicated on the back of the creative art activity instead of their names. The art project provided the point of departure during the data collection discussions.

A thematic analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas 2013), based on the linear model of Braun and Clarke (2013), was used to analyse the data. Verbatim transcriptions of the focus group discussions and individual interviews were used as discrete sets of data. The qualitative nature of the analysis involved continual reflection on the data (Creswell 2009). After repeated scrutiny of the data, the authors were able to identify relevant main and subthemes in order to best describe the experiences of the participants (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the North-West University (NWU-00060-12-A1). Further permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education, and from the Gauteng Provincial Manager of HFHSA. To safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, a gatekeeper (the principal of the school), mediators (teachers at the school) and an independent person made the initial contact with the adolescents and their parents. The parents gave consent that their adolescents could participate in the study, and the adolescents provided assent for their participation in the study. Because adolescents participated in the research, ministerial permission was also obtained for their participation. 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.

Findings

The results and findings are presented in terms of the four main themes that were identified, namely, awareness on an intrapersonal level, awareness of the socio-economic divide in the community, awareness of a social responsibility, and awareness of the individualistic culture.

Awareness on an Intrapersonal Level

The participants' sense of intrapersonal awareness seems to have resolved around different aspects, such as feeling humbled to have been given the opportunity to partake in the house-building project:

I felt humbled to be able to do something for someone like that. (INT.2–M)

It was just so nice to be there, to know that we're giving them something completely new. (INT.4–M)

The participants also became aware of an eagerness to help someone else to better their circumstances. This awareness seems to have instilled a sense of perseverance to complete what they have set out to do and a proud feeling to have accomplished the task at hand:

Someone is sleeping in the snow and it's freezing out there and I have to go do this. And it's really a good motivation . . . it feels good. (FG1.3–F)

I was happy about the fact that I [have] at least done something, and I guess that it helped made me feel better to make a difference in their lives. (INT.1–F)

I felt proud of myself, my grade . . . because you know that was the first time eight houses were built. (INT.3–F)

The participants' realisation of how much effort, energy and commitment such a project demands seems to have come as a surprise for them. Being physically involved also brought with it mental and emotional involvement, an aspect that the participants probably did not foresee before they enrolled in the house-building project:

. . . the amount of energy and amount of effort that it takes to help other people, but in the end, it is all worth it. (FG1.5–M)

. . . and that's when I went back and realised you have to give it your all because it's gonna mean so much more at the end, and it did. (FG2.3–F)

Being part of the HFHSA building project in a semi-rural community also made the participants aware of the privileged environment in which they operate and instilled feelings of being grateful and appreciative for what they have:

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–F)

. . . [I] 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–F)

The participants admitted that they often take privileges, such as not having to share a room or bathroom with siblings or family members, for granted.

Awareness of the Socio-Economic Divide in the Community

The participants mostly acknowledged that the experience of the HFHSA building project opened their eyes to the different socio-economic environments that exist in South Africa, which they otherwise would not have acknowledged. They became aware of the living conditions of the residents in the semi-rural community, for instance the challenges with regard to basic needs, such as proper housing, sanitation and electricity. Housing was observed to range from metal and wood shacks to small two-bedroom houses built of bricks on small plots. The houses were described as small and overcrowded, with many people having to share one bedroom, one bathroom and a small kitchen. The toilets were mostly located outside of the houses, and the participants found them to be inadequate and in sharp contrast to what they were used to. Basic infrastructure, such as proper roads, was also lacking. This awareness of others' life situations made a profound impact on the participants who had been sheltered from resource-poor communities in the past. The participants experienced their involvement in the building project therefore 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. (INT.1–F)

. . . 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. (INT.2–M)

It changed me . . . 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. (INT.2–M)

For me it was [about] the exposure to the situation [other] people live in. (FG1.4–F)

The participants reported that the experience of the building project was more valuable than any past teachings regarding prosocial behaviour.

Awareness of Social Responsibility

The participants' awareness of their social responsibility was captured in the following quotes:

. . . it obviously makes you question your own life and . . . the whole time it made you feel like I should really, really be giving more . . . (INT4–M)

. . . you are doing something so significant even if it's for a small group, it can be so great just to set an example. (FG1.2–M)

I definitely want to go back and I think address the need that I saw. Especially the medical issue. I would like to go back as part of my community service to do something. (FG2.5–F)

I would like to get involved in community service . . . like community service here at school . . . (INT–F)

The purview of the participants' awareness of their social responsibility seems to have energised them to continue doing volunteer work in different communities and to influence others to do the same. Community volunteer programmes for adolescents should therefore never be underestimated as it seems to not only make adolescents aware or bring them in touch with their sense of social responsibility, but it also gives them the opportunity to learn more about themselves in relation to others. This is probably an opportunity that the participants who participated in this study might never have had if it were not for the longstanding agreement between the HFHSA building project and the affluent school that the participants attend.

Awareness of the Individualistic Culture

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 participants mentioned how they experience the suburbs to be more individualistic and that a sense of community is lacking. They shared that even as outsiders they had experienced the warmth of community members which had made them feel particularly welcome:

. . . 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. (INT.3–F)

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. (INT.4–M)

. . . everyone is being drawn together to help each other as a community. (FG1.5–M)

The 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.

Limitations of the Study

The sample was drawn from a single site, which limits the transferability of the findings in that the study 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 owing to the participants volunteering their participation in available time slots. The findings might have been different if the focus group discussions were evenly grouped. The participants might 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 might have brought limitations to the study as adolescents' need to conform may have influenced the truthfulness of their responses in some instances. However, the choice of focus group discussions was made because the prosocial community actions was a group activity that the participants had all taken part in.

Finally, the time lapse between the prosocial community action and the research could have contributed to the participants forgetting some of their experiences.

Discussion

The current study found that a prosocial community action influenced privileged adolescents' awareness on an intrapersonal level, their awareness of the socio-economic divide in their community, and their awareness of their social responsibility and individualistic culture.

Awareness on an Intrapersonal Level

The participants became aware of feeling humbled as a result of their participation in the house-building project and also an eagerness to complete the task at hand. It was, however, their awareness of being grateful which particularly moved the participants.

The positive effects of gratitude on prosocial outcomes are well known (Emmons and McCullough 2003; Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek 2007). Gratitude is defined as a "sense of thankfulness and joy" (Tong and Yang 2011, 160) and conceptualised as "an emotion, an attitude, moral virtue, habit, personality trait, or a coping response" (Froh et al. 2011, 312). It is believed that "grateful people are often motivated to respond pro-socially" (Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek 2007, 368), thus illustrating that the expression of gratitude can reinforce reciprocal moral behaviour in future. Crossley (2012) is of the opinion that experiencing gratitude and appreciation for what one has, in fact exhibits personal growth and internal transformation.

In the case of the present study, the participants expressed an awareness of gratitude only after they were given the opportunity to participate in an act of prosocial behaviour. It could in other words be understood that these two concepts are interrelated. However, as was mentioned, gratitude is seen as an emotion that is linked to an attitude, a personality trait or a moral virtue, and that is performed as a habit, or as a coping response (Froh et al. 2011). To introduce an act of prosocial behaviour thus does not “guarantee” that the participants will be grateful, but by given the opportunity, the participants can become aware of a personality trait or moral virtue that they were not aware exists within them. One could rightfully ask what needs to come first: the presence of gratitude to act prosocially, or an act of prosocial behaviour to be grateful. In the context of this study, it seems that the participants first needed to be introduced to a prosocial community action, in order to become aware of and grateful for the privileges they have.

Awareness of the Socio-Economic Divide in the Community

Camacho (2004) asserts that it is challenging to make learners aware of and to think about their own privileged situation through teaching in the classroom. Green (2001) suggests that privileged children be taught the difference between privileged and resource-poor communities by exposing them to the communities. It is in this context that the theory of conscientisation can also be implemented where privileged adolescents can, through personal discipline, engage in experiences “that will encourage critical thought and the dismantling of previously held dominant and oppressive worldviews” (Ledwith 2005, 79).

Interestingly though, in South Africa, very few volunteer programmes exist in which South African adolescent learners can volunteer their time in resource-poor communities. Many volunteer programmes, however, exist which cater for adolescents and youths from abroad but are “sold” at a price to not only do volunteer work, but also to have an Africa experience while doing so (for example, Global Leadership Adventures (2017), Go Abroad (2017), and SAVE! Volunteering).

Awareness of Social Responsibility

According to Martínez, Penaloza and Valenzuela (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”. Participating in community volunteer programmes thus has the potential to foster a sense of citizenship through connecting adolescents to society (Penner et al. 2005) while at the same time advancing “moral beliefs and consideration for others” (Martínez, Penaloza, and Valenzuela 2012, 475). Advancing adolescents’ moral beliefs and consideration for others through their participating in volunteering programmes may most likely set the scene for developing and understanding prosocial values and norms and the world around them, which could contribute to their future civic responsibility (Horn 2012; Reinders and Youniss 2006; Siu, Shek, and Law 2012).

Awareness of the Individualistic Culture

Probably the most profound awareness for the participants came through being able to witness “ubuntu” in action, where there is a collective concern and focus on “us” and “we” in the community as opposed to “I” or “me” as one often experiences in more affluent communities (Luthar 2013). “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, and Engelbrecht 2006, 17). In other words, “I am because we are” (Kamwangamalu 2007, 29). Ubuntu in its broader meaning describes the spirit of what it means to be human and to value the good of the community above self-interest (Swanson 2008). Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (2006, 71) defines ubuntu as follows:

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.

The participants’ awareness of their own community was one where “everyone is for him or herself” and which stands in vast contrast with the ubuntu philosophy. This is what Luthar (2013) refers to as an individualistic culture where high walls and security fences keep residents from building bonds with their neighbours and which jeopardise the opportunity to create a sense of community as the participants have experienced in the semi-rural community.

Conclusion

Privileged adolescents are often physically separated from people living in poverty. By being demographically separated (both physically and socially), feelings of “reduced intimacy, less understanding, and greater prejudice” are created (Kraus, Côté, and Keltner 2010, 1717). Exposing privileged adolescents to volunteer work therefore allows them to learn about “class inequality” and affords them the opportunity to reflect on their own privileged circumstances (Nenga 2011; Siu, Shek, and Law 2012). Through volunteer work, adolescents can engage in “positive cross-class interactions”, which can help to understand poverty, to challenge prejudicial ideas about people living in poverty, and to “increase commitment to social justice” (Nenga 2011, 264). Furthermore, privileged adolescents are more likely to challenge class privilege when they experience “positive cross-class interaction” (Kraus, Côté, and Keltner 2010, 1717) at a personal, one-on-one level.

The participants acknowledged that the experience of the HFHSA building project opened their eyes to the different socio-economic environments that exist in South Africa, which they otherwise would not have acknowledged if it were not for their

involvement in the building project. This awareness of others' life situations made a profound impact on the participants who had been sheltered from less fortunate communities in the past. The participants experienced their involvement in the building project therefore as "life-changing".

Important is that the participants reported that the experience of the building project was more valuable than any past teachings regarding prosocial behaviour. Teaching about inequality in the classroom is important but is not dealt with adequately enough to ensure that students become aware of poverty, class differences and racial issues, because it is a sensitive subject and difficult to discuss. It is, however, hoped that the participants' awareness of the socio-economic divide between their communities was at a deeper level and that a process of conscientisation (Montero 2014) was created which will urge them to not only become critical about the divide but also to challenge the inequalities in the South African society.

Although this study did not intend to evaluate the effectiveness of the HFHSA programme, such a programme in which the adolescents become involved in a physical task in a less privileged community is probably the only way in which privileged adolescents will be able to truly become aware of the inequality among socio-economic groups. School social workers, the South African Departments of Social Development and Education and school governing bodies from all different schools should therefore do more to implement or to get involved in similar projects such as the HFHSA building project. Through activities and actions such as these projects, different South African communities and cultural groups will have the opportunity to get to know one another, learn from one another and break down preconceived ideas that very often are to blame for the fact that communities and cultural groups are isolated from one another.

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