

# **The facilitation of participatory research techniques**

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## Declaration of authorship

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this master's thesis is the result of my own work.

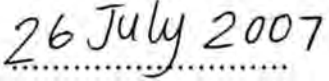
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## **Abstract**

This study engaged in a micro-genetic analysis (Wertsch, 1984) of facilitation in participatory research (PR). The research conducted in this study explored the facilitation process of two facilitators using two participatory techniques (a 'road of life' technique and a ranking exercise) with children in a rural context. The facilitators' perceptions of facilitation and their experiences of facilitating a PR technique were examined through the use of individual interviews, and were analysed using a reading guide method (Mergendollar, 1989). Of particular concern was that in PR, there is no account of the mechanisms which bring about successful facilitation. This study exposed how some PR techniques, like the ranking exercise can simply be implemented through using a set of instructions, but other kinds of techniques such as the 'road of life' technique are inherently embedded in the principles of PR and are more difficult to implement. A lack of an understanding of the PR principles has major consequences for the implementation of PR processes, and whether or not PR processes achieve their aim i.e. critical reflection. The importance of training in PR was thus emphasised, and the importance of providing a theoretical framework of the facilitation process in PR was accentuated.



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## Chapter One: Introduction

Participatory research (PR) is an umbrella term for a variety of methods of participatory inquiry. PR provides the researcher with particular approaches or mechanisms to access the knowledge of the participants. The World Bank Group (2002) has referred to these approaches as a 'basket' of techniques which have emerged from methods used in agricultural extension and development work. These participatory research techniques are designed to maximize the participation of participants in a research setting Groot and Maarleveld (2000, p.3) argue that

participation is presented as the golden key to unlock the door to a more sustainable and democratic world. The task of ensuring that the golden key is used and the door is unlocked is, in general, placed in the hands of the facilitator.

Facilitation thus plays a key role in the overall functioning of participatory research (PR). A participatory research (PR) facilitator can be defined as the researcher who is responsible for creating the space within the participatory intervention in which a change process can occur. Groot and Maarleveld (2000, p.3) acknowledge that PR facilitation is a complex task and that the "underlying diversity in intentions, epistemological and theoretical assumptions underpinning facilitation practices usually remain implicit and unclear". Although it is evident that the success of PR is largely determined by the role of the facilitator, there seems to be very little research on this particular aspect of the research process.

The lack of theorising about this process has meant that the facilitation of PR is potentially unsystematic. This fuels criticism of PR, and might contribute to its failure to be a "critical, reflective understanding of the deeper determinants of technical and social change" (Groot & Maarleveld, 2000, p.3). On a teleological dimension one of the aims of PR is to bring about change. However, if mechanisms which lead to that change are not explicated or are unknown, the process cannot be improved upon. This echoes a key principle in Vygotskian (1978) theory that in order to understand a phenomenon, one needs to understand its generative mechanisms. A theory of the facilitation of PR would allow researchers to further investigate variables.

Vygotskian theory and Wertsch's (1984) constructs of situation definition, semiotic mediation and intersubjectivity provide a way of understanding the facilitation process in PR and thus they allow one to study facilitation through a theoretical lens. This study gives an overview of the relevant

literature in the literature review chapter. This includes the importance of facilitation in research, why a theory of PR facilitation is important, the importance of PR and how the facilitation process can be understood through the theoretical framework provided by Vygotsky (1978) and Wertsch (1984).

The aims and rationale of the study and a detailed account of the methodology are explored in the methodology chapter. The results chapter presents the main findings of the research and these are then explored and investigated in the discussion chapter. Some of the issues investigated include the reasons why the participatory techniques succeeded or failed, and the differences between the two techniques. In the conclusion a critique of this study is given and recommendations for future research are explored.



## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter identifies a gap in the literature in relation to the facilitation of participatory research (PR). The data collection process and its impact on the validity and reliability of the overall research process is explored and the importance of facilitation in research is highlighted. Furthermore, the principles of PR are explained and the importance of developing a theory for the facilitation of PR is mapped out. Additionally, this chapter explores the idea of using the work of Vygotsky to establish a theoretical framework to explain the mechanisms of PR facilitation.

### **2.1. Facilitation**

Data collection in qualitative research is usually in the form of focus groups and interviews. Fontana and Frey (2003) and Dunne (1995) argue that facilitators of interviews and focus groups have to be skilled in various questioning techniques as well as have a firm grasp of group dynamics. In addition, Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, p. 69) argue that the facilitation of focus groups “is an art in itself, requiring the moderator to wear many hats and assume different roles”. These skills ensure that rich, dense or ‘thick’ accounts are accessed in the data collection procedure and this ultimately results in valid data.

In developing contexts, such as South Africa, researchers often require facilitators to implement the data collection process for them because of time constraints and language barriers. Thus, facilitators need to be trained in implementing the data collection process. The data they collect is usually in the form of written or spoken language and/or observations (Durrheim, 1999).

Facilitators implementing a qualitative research process require a specific set of skills which allow them to study selected issues in depth by allowing categories to emerge from the data (Durrheim, 1999).

Both quantitative and qualitative researchers aim to generate data which is valid. In other words they aim to collect data which captures the meaning of what they are observing (Durrheim, 1999). Valid and reliable data is generated through the careful planning of many parts of the research process including study design, implementation, analysis and feedback. Many concerns with validity and reliability centre around the implementation of research. This means that the

data collection process has to meet certain requirements concerning validity and reliability. For example the data collection process should reflect measurement validity in that the measures one uses (i.e. an interview or a questionnaire) should fit with the conceptual and operational definitions of a construct (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). In addition data collection should reflect reliability in that one's research should be consistent and repeatable if necessary (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). Quantitative research relies primarily on the measure i.e. a questionnaire, to ensure validity and reliability, whereas, the qualitative research process significantly relies on how a process i.e. an interview, focus group is implemented by the facilitator.

Qualitative research, however, is not a homogenous paradigm as it consists of various approaches. One such approach, that is often qualitative, is participatory research (PR). PR requires a certain set of skills in addition to the 'standard' set of skills required in focus group and interview research. This is because PR is based on specific principles and it employs specific techniques which set it apart from traditional qualitative approaches. In this study the focus of the research is on the facilitation of particular PR data collection techniques. In PR this means that the use of a PR technique should be valid in that it fits in with the research question (measurement validity) and that the research measure i.e. a PR technique, should be facilitated in a systematic and consistent manner (reliability). Essentially, validity and reliability in a PR data collection process rely essentially on how the facilitator implements and facilitates the PR techniques.

In this study emphasis is placed on techniques drawn from the tradition of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA approaches have their roots in Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA emerged in the 1970's in response to an increasing emphasis on the importance of listening to community members' experiences and viewpoints. This was due to the realisation that the traditional approaches to research were incapable of dealing with the complexities of the ecological and socio-economic interactions embedded in community development (Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). RRA was initially used in relation to agriculture and health but it expanded and was used in multiple fields of enquiry (Chambers, 1994a). RRA was, however, still associated with outside institutions and was mainly extractive in nature (Johnson & Mayoux, 1997). PRA evolved from RRA but it encouraged the ownership of the investigative process, including the results, by local people and extensive feedback concerning the analysis and interpretation of the data. PRA also acknowledges that community members are local experts



who are knowledgeable about the issues impacting on their own lives (Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). The techniques used in this study are PRA techniques but they are referred to generally in this text as PR techniques.

## **2.2. Participatory research**

PR contrasts greatly with the traditional positivist research paradigm, and it in fact, arose in reaction to the positivist framework. Some theorists have argued that positivist inquiry is “linear and closed, seeking to measure, aggregate and model behaviour” (O’Kane, 2000, p. 137). Its foundation consists of notions of singular truths and universal laws (Lather, 1986). The teleology of the traditional paradigm is to identify causal relationships between variables, so that laws can be established and predictions initiated (Rosenberg, 1988). Prediction is important as it allows for manipulation and control of variables, ultimately leading to the extrapolation of phenomena and control of the ‘reality’ of the world (Rosenberg, 1988). It holds to the ontological assumption that reality can be controlled.

Doyal and Harris (1986) however, argue that humans cannot be studied in the same way as plants or animals can be studied in the natural sciences. Many authors argue that the social sciences require a different framework of inquiry (Doyal & Harris, 1986; Lather, 1986; Rosenberg, 1988; Holstein & Staples, 1992). They argue that the positivist position adequately describes phenomena but it fails to explain the dynamic and dialectical interaction between the individual and his/her context. It might be able to describe the ‘state’ but it fails to elaborate, explore, expose or reveal the generative mechanisms of a particular phenomenon. Participatory research (PR) is an approach which offers an alternative framework of inquiry (Reason, 1994). Although PR is often embedded within a qualitative framework it is more radical than traditional qualitative approaches. This difference is related to the teleological, epistemological and ontological foundations of PR. PR assumes a particular understanding of reality and it proposes that knowledge can be created in a particular way. PR is based on principles which go beyond the traditional researcher-researched relationship (Chambers, 1994a), and it is both a form of research and social change (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001).

PR embraces the notion that reality is complex and that it cannot simply be explained by causal relationships between variables. Whereas positivist research is linear, PR is multi-dimensional and it is characterised by process, intersubjectivity, and many truths. In addition, PR is flexible and it is reflexive in its approach to the research environment (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). The PR researcher

recognises that an aloof and objective stance is neither attainable, nor preferable, as situated knowledge is vital to the success of the PR process, and to the attainment of valid data.

### **2.3. Participatory principles**

One of the challenges which face social scientists is to bring about changes in different contexts. However, working as social science researchers in developing contexts there are vast differences in the relative power, capacity and the knowledge of the researcher and the researched and this poses particular challenges. The participatory research (PR) approach has emerged in response to these issues.

The principles of participatory research are based on ensuring that community members' experiences and viewpoints are valued (Chambers, 1995). In addition, the PR principles are founded on the assumption that research should bring about positive changes in the participants' lives (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). Thus, it is a move away from the mere extraction of knowledge from communities, as it aims to benefit both the researcher and the researched.

Various PR principles exist such as the sharing and ownership of the research process by the participants, ensuring empowerment and engaging in capacity building (Chambers, 1994a; Chambers, 1994b). However, the PR principles which are relevant to this study include the use of methods which enable participants to articulate their local knowledge (Chambers, 1994a), and participants engaging in a process of critical reflection which enables them to extend and analyse their local knowledge. These two principles are interlinked as critical reflection cannot be enabled without the relevant PR methodology i.e. the PR techniques. Furthermore, local knowledge and power dynamics are essential components in the PR process.

#### **2.3.1. Local knowledge and participatory research methods**

In PR, it is believed that the participants have expertise, known as local knowledge, about their lives and the problems that they are facing. Local knowledge can be defined as the integrative framework people in a particular setting use to make sense of their lives and it is largely implicit (Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). Local knowledge is important because if change is contextually situated and if interventions are based on information that is drawn from the local context they are more likely to be sustainable. In addition, the type of data collected in the research process provides



a different perspective on issues as it offers rich data which is complementary to the skills, abilities and knowledge of the researcher.

Local knowledge can only be accessed once the power dynamics in a research interaction have been addressed. PR uses methods, called participatory techniques, which aim to lessen the power dynamics in an interaction and thus enable participants to articulate their local knowledge. The nature of PR techniques sets them aside from other research methodologies. The techniques are activities and they are grounded within active participation.

An example of how the techniques help to explicate a participant's local knowledge is the 'road of life' technique. This technique requires that one sees one's life analogous to a road and then represent this road diagrammatically. The participants individually generate their 'road of life' and then share this with the group. Through this participatory activity the participant generates his/her own categories to reflect issues or events in his/her life. It thus could be said that the participatory techniques adopt an "empathic" perspective on the phenomenon. Their 'situatedness' in the context of the participants relates firstly to what is examined (local knowledge) and secondly to how categories emerge in the process. Categories are not preconceived by the researchers but are generated by the research participants. In a way, this use of local categories simulates the participant's everyday interactions.

The diagrammatic nature of the 'road of life' technique also allows the participant to express him/herself in a safe space (Van der Riet, Hough & Killian, 2005). If the task consisted of responding to direct questions, participants might feel uncomfortable sharing their life with the researcher (Van der Riet et al. 2005). However, when a participant communicates with the researcher through the diagram, the interaction is not as direct, and dialogue with the researcher is enabled.

### **2.3.2. Critical reflection**

Critical reflection is an essential component of PR because it benefits the participant and the research process becomes a form of research and social change (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). This process of distancing is reached by the participants through the key operation of visualisation found in PR techniques (Kelly, 1999a). Van der Riet et al. (2005) argue that using a picture to represent something and then explaining it, often creates a context for greater exploration. The

facilitator mediates this interaction by probing and delving deeper into the participant's explanation. The techniques allow reflection to occur and this acts as a catalyst for change within the individual. This impacts the way a participant views a particular situation or problem. This engagement in a process of critical reflection about their reality enables participants to extend and analyse their local knowledge.

Kelly (1999a, p. 404) elaborates on this notion of distanciation and he argues that PR is a process which engages

rural communities in reflecting on their own reality through exercises based on 'mapping' of their reality. By creating images of their history, the structure of their community, the resources they have available to them, and so on, the community is brought through the epistemological function of distanciation to see their reality in different ways, which may represent previously unrecognised perspectives and needs.

Kelly (1999a) argues that critical reflection is made possible because the participatory techniques embrace both distanciated and empathic positions. An example of a technique that embraces both a distanciated and an empathetic position is a mapping exercise. For example, a map of community resources is generated by the participants using their own categories. As a group, the participants plot what they perceive as important resources in their community. This embodies an empathic and situated position. At the same time the map, which is a diagrammatic representation of the community, allows the participants to stand back and reflect on their community. Through this reflection the participants may begin to view their reality in different ways, which may represent previously unrecognised needs and perspectives, as argued by Kelly (1999a). In this way the mapping exercise facilitates a distanciated position.

It is clear from the above discussion of the PR principles that facilitating a PR process is different from facilitating other qualitative research processes. The significant issue here is that PR facilitation does not happen automatically. A deliberate, and specific, type of facilitation is needed so that the process functions optimally.

## **2.4. The guidelines for PR facilitation and their limitations**

The process of facilitation in PR is critical to the generation of robust data and successful outcomes. It is evident that PR facilitation is complex and the PR facilitator is responsible for creating the space within the participatory intervention in which a change process can occur. Despite this, a gap in the literature on implementing PR processes exists. Texts which introduce the PR techniques, simply list the steps through which participatory techniques should be conducted and they neglect to mention how and why these steps should be facilitated. There seems to be very little theorizing of the process of facilitation.

A typical text that explains how a facilitator should run a participatory technique is illustrated in Figure 1. Here Thesis and Grady (1991) give a step-by-step guide on how a preference ranking exercise should be conducted. This includes the structure of the task, and what the facilitator and participants should do in the interaction. In addition to the step-by-step guide, a short explanation is given about the technique and its uses. For example Theis and Grady (1991) suggest that a preference ranking exercise allows the research team to rapidly identify the main problems or preferences of participants. Additionally, it allows problems and preferences of different participants to be easily compared. The description of the technique also includes a diagrammatic representation of what the finished product, in this case a preference ranking exercise, would look like.

However, the instructions fail to demonstrate how the researcher should facilitate the implementation of the technique. This problem occurs in many other PR instruction texts such as in Chambers (1994b) and in Pretty, Guijt, Scoones & Thompson (1995).

**Steps of preference ranking** (Theis & Grady, 1991, p. 63)

1. Choose a set of problems or preferences to be prioritized. This could be for example, farming problems or preferences for tree species.
2. Ask the interviewee to give you her favoured items in this set, in order of priority.  
Get a list of 3-6 items from each interviewee.
3. Repeat for several interviewees.
4. Tabulate the responses.

Figure 1: Steps of preference ranking.

As illustrated above the data collection process in PR relies on how the PR technique is implemented by the facilitator. The quality of the data collection process impacts on the quality of data in a research project and thus the success of the overall PR process is largely determined by the way in which it is facilitated. Despite this, a theoretical understanding of how the facilitation of PR techniques takes place has not been developed (Groot & Maarleveld, 2000).

It is important to develop a theoretical account of how PR researchers ‘do’ facilitation so that the PR process can be understood better and improved upon. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, cited in Kaniki, 1999) argue that theory is important because it provides a starting point for collecting facts since it identifies the different types of facts to be systematically examined. Kaniki (1999, p. 19) explains that the reason for this is that “elements or variables of a theory are logically interrelated, and if relevant theory exists, hypotheses or research questions can be deduced based upon particular relationships between these elements”. A theoretical account of how PR facilitators “do” facilitation will allow for a clearer understanding of what the issues are and it will provide a standard against which to evaluate PR practice. In addition, it will allow for consistency across facilitators when implemented.

Given that there seems to be no theoretical account of facilitation within the participatory research literature, one could draw on other sources for this theory. For example, the concept of facilitation is emphasised in the theory of therapeutic practice. Ivey, Gluckstern and Ivey (1997) argue that listening skills are important in therapeutic practice. Listening enables the therapist to build a sense



of rapport and empathy with his/her patient. Attentive behaviour is characterised by maintaining eye contact, being attentive to body language, being sensitive to vocal style as well as having an appropriate understanding of verbal following. Listening and attentive behaviour are also relevant in PR research as the facilitator has to be constantly aware of the participants' behaviour. Therapeutic theory also emphasises that process is critical in the practice of group psychotherapy (Yalom, 1985). Process in interactional therapy refers to "the nature of the relationship between individuals who are interacting with one another" (Yalom, 1985, p. 137). In therapy this process involves becoming aware of one's own reality which then ideally promotes change (Yalom, 1985). Therapists develop skills that enable them to create effective conditions which promote self-learning or exploration on the part of the group members. Power dynamics within the group interaction are identified and controlled so that each group member has a voice (Yalom, 1985). The participatory research process is similar to this as the PR facilitator shapes the space for reflection and change. However, the main objective of PR is to initiate a change process in a collective sense, whereas therapeutic practice is predominantly focused on individual change.

Another theoretical source is that of the theory of learning and change processes. Learning theories often focus on the dynamic interaction between dyads or within groups, which lead to cognitive shifts in the participants. For example, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of mediated learning focuses on the specific mechanisms involved in a learning process. The theory of Vygotsky, as elaborated by Wertsch (1984) in his analysis of dyadic interactions and the process of internalisation, could assist in understanding the details of the process of interaction within the activities of particular PR techniques. Since this study is interested in the specific mechanisms involved in PR facilitation, this process will be explained through the work of Vygotsky (1978).

## **2.5. Vygotsky's theory and PR**

This study aims to contribute a theoretical level to understanding *how* facilitation takes place in PR through the use of Vygotsky's framework. Wertsch (1984) has extended Vygotsky's theory with additional constructs which are particularly useful in analysing and understanding how the mechanisms of facilitation operate to bring about successful facilitation.

Vygotsky's theory of learning focused predominantly on interactions between adults and children, and amongst peers. His theory, however, could be extended to any interaction where a person or group of people (including adults) are involved in a change process with a 'more capable other'. The term 'change' is used in this study in the sense of reaching a new

understanding about some aspect of an activity or phenomenon under examination. For the sake of clarity, in linking the Vygotskian theory to this particular research study, the 'more capable other' will be referred to as the 'facilitator' and the person undergoing change will be referred to as the 'participant'.

Vygotsky believed that an individual's higher mental functioning had its origins in social activity (Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). Vygotsky explains this in his "general genetic law of cultural development" which states:

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition [and] it goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structures and functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships. (1981, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992, p. 330-331)

Vygotsky makes several claims in this 'law'. Vygotsky suggests that all higher mental functioning is social before it becomes psychological and, thus, social interaction is pivotal for the development of all higher mental functions (1978, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). Therefore, the social interaction of an activity will affect the way in which one understands and engages with the activity, and an understanding of the process which occurs in the activity means that one must focus on this social interaction.

Wertsch and Kanner (1992) argue that a fundamental aspect of Vygotsky's theory about the social origins of higher mental functioning in the individual is his notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) stated that the ZPD "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". What is meant by this is that for a person's potential to be actualised, mediation by an 'other' is critical. The highlighting of the role of the 'other' in individual development is useful for an understanding of the role of the facilitator in the implementation of a PR technique. Vygotsky refers to learning, however, this can also be

interpreted as change in an individual's understanding of a particular issue. Learning, or change, does not happen automatically when a person is 'alone', and no learning or change happens outside of, or independent of, the social dimension which is represented by another person, other people, or things that other people have made (readings, literature, graphics etc.).

Although Vygotsky's main area of application of these concepts was within the field of education and learning, they have particular relevance to processes which occur during the implementation of PR techniques.

In addition Vygotsky argues that

instruction is only good when it proceeds ahead of development. Then it awakens and rouses to life an entire set of functions which are in the stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development. It is in this way that instruction plays an extremely important role in development. (1934, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992, p. 333)

What Vygotsky means by this is that the process of instruction should extend beyond the individual's actual level of development. This emphasises that the process of 'instruction', which in the case of PR refers to the way in which the technique is 'facilitated', needs particular attention.

In relation to this study, the facilitator is the one who knows more about the process, and the direction of the research interaction. The role she (and in this study the facilitators are female, and 'she' will be used throughout) plays is therefore a critical factor in whether there is a movement from actual to potential development. The nature of her 'instruction' will affect the process which occurs within the research interaction. In terms of PR, what is being referred to, is not "development" per se, but a rather a change in the individual's understanding of a particular phenomenon. In Vygotsky's terms, 'mediation' allows this change process to occur, and in terms of this study the facilitator, is the mediator. In the section below, how the facilitator mediates the process of change within the participatory technique using semiotic mediation and the PR techniques (the products of which are mediational means), will be discussed.

### 2.5.1. Mediation

Vygotsky's focus was on the role of sign systems (e.g. language) in intermental and intramental functioning. He argued that higher mental functioning is mediated by tools and signs (Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). Tools can be seen as material tools and signs as psychological tools (Vygotsky, 1978). Material tools impact indirectly on human psychological processes, as they are directed at objects of nature (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995). Vygotsky (1978) defined material tools as collective, as opposed to individual, implements which enhance interpersonal communication and symbolic representation. Psychological tools differ from material tools as they mediate an individual's psychological processes (Daniels, 2001). One of Vygotsky's (1978) examples of a psychological tool is tying a knot in a handkerchief so as to remind oneself of something important. The knot acts as an external mnemonic tool to guarantee memory recall.

This framework of socially and culturally mediated human activity assists in an understanding of participatory research (PR) techniques in two ways:

- a) The participatory research techniques, as processes, are carefully structured acts of mediation. The key mechanisms of the PR techniques are the activities which generate representations of the participants' realities. These activities require 'mediation' in the form of facilitation by a person, the facilitator. That is, a more capable other needs to set up a situation of 'instruction' out of which 'development' can emerge. The PR facilitator needs to use particular mediational means, a sign system (language), so that this mediation is practical in terms of structuring the PR activity, and a key mediational device is semiotic mediation.
- b) In addition to this, the notion of 'mediational means' can be used to refer to the products which are generated in the activities. These representations of reality emerge, or are generated, mainly in the form of diagrams, maps, graphs, photographs, symbols and writing.

Vygotsky highlights the significance of the use of these tools in psychological functioning, i.e. the consequences for individual development when the tool is put into use. Daniels (2001) argues that the way in which individuals and groups use tools and signs impacts on the way in which an activity is understood (or misunderstood). Vygotsky confirms this by stating that:



By being included in the process of behaviour, the psychological tool alters the entire flow and structure of mental functions. It does this by determining the structure of a new instrumental act, just as a technical tool alters the process of natural adaptation by determining the form of labour operations. (1981, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992, p. 334)

What is significant about this particular point is that the use of these tools and signs alters an individual's thinking, and thus affects the way in which an individual is, or acts, in relation to the world. This means that the mediational means used in interactions between people, and in this case, in interactions between a researcher and the participants, are critical in determining how individuals (and thus a group) will think about the particular phenomenon being explored.

Vygotsky (1978) recognised learning as a dialogic interaction that is made possible by the mediating agent and the participants in dialogue with social artefacts (tools and signs). It is these three classes of mediators (material tools, psychological tools, and other human beings), which Vygotsky envisaged as bringing about internalisation and change (Kozulin, 1998, cited in Daniels, 2001). Vygotsky's theory illustrates this process of internalisation. This includes how participants undergo a cognitive shift in an interaction, and as their potential level of understanding is reached they begin to understand a concept in new and different ways. This is the movement from inter-psychological functioning to intra-psychological functioning, where the participant internalises what he/she has learnt on a social plane, and this transforms his/her individual level of functioning. This transformation is facilitated by appropriate mediation on the inter-psychological plane. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that inter-psychological processes become a part of a person's independent development achievement once they have been internalised. In the same way, the PR techniques aim to bring about a change in the understanding of the phenomena held by the participants and by the researcher, during the interaction. Ideally this is sustainable even after the researcher-participant relationship has been terminated.

One of the issues that Vygotsky's theory is helpful in understanding is the role of the facilitator. In the section above, it was mentioned that the nature of the PR techniques sets PR apart from other research methodologies. They are activities, they often occur in groups, they occur in the context of the participants, they use local categories, and they promote critical reflection and change. It is in these ways that PR differs from conventional research. In PR, in order to internalise a new form of thought, which leads to a change in the way one thinks about a phenomenon, one needs to articulate

internalisation in relation to critical reflection. In order for a participant to undergo change in a PR interaction, the nature of the inter-psychological functioning has to be very particular. As discussed above, a key characteristic of participatory techniques is visualisation. In the PR process, these visualisations mediate the participants' understanding of phenomenon as they enable critical reflection to occur.

This process can be explained through the use of an example of a participatory technique. A participatory technique, such as a 'road of life' technique, requires that one sees one's life analogous to a road and to represent this road diagrammatically. The facilitator uses the mediational device of language to structure the activity (semiotic mediation). The product of the activity is a 'road of life', which is a diagrammatic and visual representation of the participant's life. This diagram of the participant's 'road of life' is a second mediatory device that allows the process of reflection to occur. It is this process of seeing one's life in a different light that creates the condition which allows for change to occur within the participant. When collaboration occurs between the facilitator and the participants in the 'road of life' activity, a context of change is produced and internalisation occurs, as other-regulation is transformed into self-regulation.

Although not clearly articulated within the PR literature, what is implied by Groot and Maarleveld's (2000, p. 3) statement that 'facilitation is critical to the success of PR', is that 'mediation' of the process within each of the PR techniques, needs to be 'set up' in a particular way to have a particular effect. The techniques are therefore not merely tools to extract information from the participant, but are rather catalysts which enable critical reflection and the use of which may result in the participant experiencing a cognitive shift in relation to the issue at hand. Vygotsky's theory, thus, helps to understand how this 'change' can potentially occur. Wertsch's (1984) elaboration of internalization provides a theoretical account of how the mechanisms of facilitation take place.

Wertsch (1984, p. 8) argues that Vygotsky did not sufficiently elaborate on his notion of the ZPD and he states that

Vygotsky made several additional comments about the zone of proximal development, but nowhere in his writing did he provide an account of what constitutes problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. In the absence of such

an account, the level of potential development, and hence the zone of proximal development in general, cannot be defined in any precise way.

Wertsch (1984) argues that the concept of the ZPD has to be understood and clearly defined in order for one to understand how internalisation and change occurs within a participant. He illustrates his concern in an example which demonstrates the difficulties that may arise if a precise, concrete analysis of a participant's potential level of understanding is not reached. He gives the example of a fifth grade student and a first grade student working with an adult on the same maths sum. The adult helps the fifth grade student by providing indirect clues to solving the sum. The first grade student is provided with direct clues and the task is greatly simplified. If both students complete the sum correctly, Wertsch (1984) questions whether their potential development level is the same. Wertsch (1984, p. 8) argues that "if we do not elaborate Vygotsky's insightful but cryptic account of the zone of proximal development, the answer would have to be yes". However, this conclusion appears to be flawed. The nature of the adult's assistance differed vastly between the two students. In addition various other mechanisms were operating differently in the two cases. These, however, can only be uncovered by analysing the mechanisms involved in the ZPD in greater detail. In the same way, PR facilitation can only be understood if there is an account of how the mechanisms operate to bring about internalisation and change, which results in a successful interaction.

## **2.6. Wertsch's (1984) three theoretical constructs**

Wertsch (1984) formulated three theoretical constructs which aid in this process of internalisation. These include situation definition, semiotic mediation and intersubjectivity.

### **2.6.1. Situation definition**

Wertsch (1984, p. 8) states that "a situation definition is the way in which a setting or context is represented, that is defined by those who are operating in that setting". Wertsch (1984) emphasises that a situation definition refers to how a person actively makes representations of a situation; the person is not a passive recipient in the situation. According to Wertsch (1984), the situation definition is key to understanding the ZPD and internalisation, as collaboration in the ZPD usually involves a 'more capable other' or facilitator representing a situation in one way and a participant representing the situation in a different way. Wertsch (1984) argues that it is

erroneous to assume that a situation can only be defined or represented in one way. In fact, a task or situation may be defined in such different ways that the task that a facilitator and participant are working on, cannot be said to be the same task.

An example to illustrate this point would be building an object in relation to a model (Wertsch, 1984). The object can be made up in several different ways but the only correct way is in accordance with the model. Preschool children often conduct this task without consulting the model. This does not mean that the children are building an object unsystematically or by chance. However, their situation definition of the task does not include building the object in accordance with the model. This is different to how an adult would define the situation, as the model would play a central role in constructing the object. Thus it can be seen that "one essential aspect of situation definition in such task settings is the representation of objects" (Wertsch, 1984, p.9).

Object representations and action patterns are inextricably linked (Wertsch, 1984). Differences in defining a task are closely associated with how a person is doing the task. In order to further understand the potential development of the participant an analysis of the action pattern must be conducted so that an explicit understanding can be gained (Wertsch, 1984). This analysis of action patterns is often referred to as a task analysis, and an understanding of the ZPD and internalisation requires two types of task analysis (Wertsch, 1984). Firstly a task analysis must be conducted concerning the participant's definition of the task and secondly a task analysis must be conducted concerning the facilitator's definition of the situation. Wertsch (1984, p. 10) argues, "while the child's situation definition corresponds to the actual level in the zone of proximal development, the adult's situation definition does not necessarily correspond to the potential level". This is because the facilitator and the participant can collaborate within a third situation definition that does not have to correspond with the facilitator's situation definition of the task. Task analyses are generated by listing the steps involved in an activity.

For example, a task analysis would involve two action patterns. The one being the facilitator's representation of the task and the other being the participant's representation of the task. The action patterns are made up of specific steps. The facilitator's representation of the task is considered the correct action pattern as she has experience of conducting the task. This action pattern would usually have the correct steps to successfully conduct the task. The participant's steps are often incomplete and miss vital steps which are in the facilitator's action pattern.



This example highlights the implications involved in moving from the participant's action pattern to the facilitator's action pattern (Wertsch, 1984). The participant cannot just add another step into his/her action pattern to enhance his/her level of understanding of the task. Instead his/her situation definition has to be transformed into something different so that this transition in understanding can take place. The participant has to redefine his/her situation definition so that his/her understanding of the task can be elevated.

Wertsch (1984, p. 11) argues that "this process of giving up an existing situation definition in favour of a qualitatively new one is characteristic of the major changes that a child undergoes in the zone of proximal development". Change does not occur through the intake of knowledge but rather through a process whereby one's understanding of a task shifts and this leads to the task being viewed in a different light.

### **2.6.2. Intersubjectivity**

Wertsch (1984) then introduces the theoretical construct of intersubjectivity. Negotiation of situation definitions often takes place when collaborators attempt to agree on a shared definition that is different from both prior definitions. Intersubjectivity exists between collaborators when they share the same situation definition and are aware of this common foundation (Wertsch, 1984).

Intersubjectivity can occur on different levels (Wertsch, 1984). On the one extreme, a facilitator and a participant may reach a shared situation definition in the sense that they may only agree on the location of different objects in a task. On the other extreme, the facilitator and participant may share a nearly complete representation of a task. If this is the case, the facilitator would not need to provide further assistance in the task setting. The participant's actual development level would already be on the same level as the facilitator's intrapsychological definition of the situation (Wertsch, 1984).

Wertsch (1984) argues that the facilitator is responsible for communicating a situation definition to the participant which is most often separate to the facilitator's actual situation definition of the task. This is necessary to ensure the participant's correct understanding of the task. This may not, however, extend to the facilitator's understanding which may be more sophisticated than what is needed for the participant to understand the correct situation definition of the task.

A third situation definition is often created in order for the facilitator and participant to have a shared understanding of the task. The participant is expected to redefine her situation definition so that a higher level of intramental functioning can be achieved. The facilitator does not experience a lasting change in her situation definition but the participant experiences a shift which alters the way he/she views the task and how he/she defines similar experiences. Thus intersubjectivity is achieved.

### **2.6.3. Semiotic mediation**

In order for this negotiation of an intersubjective definition of the task to take place Wertsch (1984) introduces his third theoretical construct, semiotic mediation. He argues that it is a mistake to presume that language is merely a naming tool for already existing situation definitions. Wertsch (1984, p. 13) argues that “such a view overlooks the fact that intersubjectivity is often created through the use of language”.

A participant’s situation definition may be vastly different from a facilitator’s situation definition, but if the appropriate semiotic mediation is used the situation definitions can become shared. Wertsch (1984, p. 14) states that “a particular way of talking about the objects and events in a setting automatically sets the level at which intersubjectivity is to be established”. Thus, semiotic mediation is the concrete mechanism which makes the redefinition of a situation definition possible (Wertsch, 1984). It is in this sense that speech can create, rather than merely reflect, an intersubjective situation definition. Thus, ‘semiotic mediation’ is critical to understanding the process in an activity, and an analysis of the semiotic mediation in an activity might reveal significant things about why the activity works the way it does.

As mentioned earlier Vygotsky stated that various other mediational means exist (1981, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). These mediational means, which also include the products of PR techniques, would also be responsible for creating intersubjectivity and are discussed in detail above. Wertsch’s theoretical constructs of situation definition, intersubjectivity and semiotic mediation potentially provide mechanisms through which to understand the facilitation process in PR. They are also useful in understanding how facilitators and participants engage in tasks and why some interactions fail whilst others succeed.

## **2.7. Engagement in a task**

Palincsar and Brown (1984) and Tharp and Gallimore (1988) conducted studies which help to elucidate how and why the role of mediation is critical to a participant's understanding of a task (both cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). In addition, studies have been conducted on why learning interactions fail (Newman, Griffin & Cole, 1989, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). These studies are important because they are of further help in understanding PR facilitation processes.

The first two studies mentioned above discuss three common elements which demonstrate why facilitator-participant interactions succeed (Wertsch and Kanner, 1992). First of all they argue that it is critical for a teacher to correctly assess a participant's existing (actual) level of understanding in the ZPD. This entails recognising a participant's situation definition and working towards creating a shared understanding and achieving intersubjectivity. Secondly, they argue that a participant's interaction has to be structured so that it promotes active participation in activities. Rogoff (1990, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992) emphasises the importance of this in her theory of guided participation. Wertsch and Kanner (1992, p. 340) argue that "active participation must be enhanced, but it must be guided or organised in accordance to specific principles". Thirdly, the authors argue that there must be some sort of tool which ensures the transition from the intermental plane to the intramental plane of functioning occurs at the appropriate times. Newman et al. (1989, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992) conducted a study which demonstrated why teacher-child interactions fail. They found that the teacher's inability to assess the children's level of understanding and to engage them effectively in the task, and the children's inability to express what they did understand, led to the children's failure in the task. A participant's actual level of understanding, the structure of an activity and the use of mediation can be identified and tracked through the use of Wertsch's (1984) working application of Vygotsky's theory.

## **2.8. Overview**

This chapter has outlined the main issues which have emerged from the literature. This includes the fact that the theory about PR and PR techniques in particular, has not examined the process of facilitation. The information in PR manuals tends to be technical, and does not provide a theoretical account of the process. In order to understand the facilitation process in PR

one can draw on the work of Vygotsky. Vygotsky's theory provides a very particular understanding of interactions which focus on change in learning processes. Wertsch's (1984) theoretical constructs of situation definition, intersubjectivity and semiotic mediation are potentially very useful in that they provide mechanisms through which to understand the facilitation process in PR. Wertsch's applications can be used to identify whether or not a participant's actual level of understanding has been recognised, whether or not an activity has been appropriately structured, and whether or not mediation has been used appropriately.

## **2.9. This study**

In order to explore facilitation of participatory techniques, the researcher required an appropriate setting and research process in which participatory research was being used. An opportunity was provided within a larger National Research Foundation (NRF) study entitled "Mapping the barriers to basic education in the context of HIV and AIDS", conducted by the School of Education and Development, and the School of Psychology, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). This study aimed to map inclusion and exclusion factors in education in urban, peri-urban and rural contexts, from the perspectives of children, adults and the broader community (Muthukrishna, 2006).

The NRF research involved a range of educational contexts which included both formal and informal learning centres and their communities. One of the groups co-ordinated by the "Learner Task Team", focussed on learners (children) within schools. This involved facilitators conducting focus groups with learners in seven different sites using participatory research techniques. This Masters study drew on the data collection process within the school contexts. The details of the research process utilised by this group will be described in the next section which deals with the methodology of this study.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter maps out the rationale and aims of this study, the research question and the study design.

### **3.1. Rationale and aims**

Very little theorizing of the process of facilitation in PR exists. Texts which introduce the PR techniques list the steps through which participatory techniques should be conducted, but they neglect to demonstrate how the researcher should facilitate the implementation of the technique and why this is important.

The aim of the study was to generate an account of how facilitation takes place in a PR interaction through the theoretical framework provided by Vygotsky.

As outlined above, the NRF project provided a context in which the facilitation of participatory research techniques could be studied.

### **3.2. Research questions**

The research questions for this study were thus:

- How does facilitation of a participatory research technique take place?
  - What happens in the process of facilitation of a participatory research technique?
  - What factors affect the facilitation of a participatory research technique?

These questions were informed by responses to the following research questions:

- What are the facilitators' understanding and perceptions of participatory research?
- What is their perception of facilitation?
- What was their experience of facilitating the participatory research techniques within the NRF study?

### **3.3. Research design**

A qualitative approach was the means of inquiry in the research as according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 8) qualitative research “seeks answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning”. The study aimed to investigate the implementation of PR facilitation, which is a relatively unknown area of research, and thus, can be defined as an exploratory study (Durrheim 1999). In addition, this study used a micro-genetic analysis described by Vygotsky (1978), and Wertsch (1984).

### **3.4. Sampling**

For the purposes of this study, data which focused on and captured the process of facilitation, and which accessed the facilitators’ experiences and perspectives on the process, was required. A source of both of these was within the research process used by the Learner Group of the NRF project.

The NRF study aimed to conduct micro-level research into how adult and child learners involved in basic education in formal and non-formal education settings, experience and respond to the barriers to education in the context of HIV and AIDS. A situated understanding of barriers to education was thought to be best explored through the use of a qualitative approach using participatory research methods (Van der Riet et al. 2005; Muthukrishna, 2006).

The ‘Learner Group’ research involved facilitators conducting focus groups with learners in seven different sites using participatory research techniques. The NRF study was conducted in and around a small town in KwaZulu-Natal and the selected schools encompassed rural, deep rural, peri-urban and urban settings. The sample consisted of Grade 3, 6, and 9 learners. Learners within these grades were randomly selected from class registers as every third or fourth name on the register was selected depending on the size of the class (Van der Riet, Hough, Killian, O’Neill & Ram, 2006). The process of obtaining informed consent for the whole NRF project from stakeholders, community members, educators, parents, and the child participants is detailed in Van der Riet et al. (2006). Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Ethics Committee.

In this NRF project, two data collection techniques were used. The first data collection technique involved individual interviews with the participants to collect biographical information.

Additionally, the research process was explained, the children's questions were answered, and the children's assent to participate in the process was obtained.

The second data collection technique used by the Learner Group was a four-stage focus group process which was conducted in *isiZulu* (Van der Riet et al. 2006). Each stage was designed to access data based on specific indicators associated with barriers to basic education (Van der Riet et al. 2005; Van der Riet et al. 2006). The indicators ranged from motivations for going to school, to support systems that aid learning and participation (Van der Riet et al. 2005).

All of the focus groups were video and audio recorded. The verbal discussion was translated into English and was transcribed by the research facilitators and research assistants.

For this Master's thesis two of the five facilitators who conducted these focus groups were sampled. In addition to this, data from the focus groups was sampled. The sampling process for the facilitators and for this data is described below.

#### **3.4.1. Participants: the facilitators**

The two primary participants in this Masters Thesis study were the two facilitators who conducted the research with the learner participants. They were two female facilitators who were between the ages of 35-50. They are referred to in this process as Sibongile and Lungi (it must be noted that all names used in this study have been changed and pseudonyms have been used).

Out of all the facilitators used in the NRF project these two were sampled out of five facilitators because the researcher wanted to follow two facilitators who had been consistently involved in the process, and who had facilitated the focus group process across a range of learners and sites.

#### **3.4.2. Focus group process**

As mentioned previously, the focus group process in each school consisted of four stages (Focus Groups 1 to 4). The researcher chose to analyze the facilitation process of these two facilitators within three school sites because the researcher wanted to follow two facilitators across two different participatory techniques, and across a number of settings. Sampling of schools and focus groups was purposive (Henry, 1998). This was because the sites chosen were dependent on Sibongile and Lungi's involvement. In addition the sampling of the focus groups process was

dependent on Sibongile and Lungi's involvement and the grade of the learners (grade three, grade six and grade nine learners).

In this study, the *second* focus group (Focus Group 2) out of the four-stage focus group process was chosen for analysis because it included two participatory techniques of interest to the researcher: a ranking exercise and a 'road of life' technique. These techniques were of interest because after reading the transcribed discussions and watching the video recordings, it was clear that the ranking exercise was successful whilst the 'road of life' technique failed. These particular techniques thus offered a holistic account of facilitation in PR. Figure 2 graphically illustrates how the data was sampled from the greater NRF data set.

NRF learner group data process	
Focus Group 1	
Focus Group 2	Master's thesis (research targeted Focus Group 2)
Focus Group 3	
Focus Group 4	

Figure 2: Focus group sampling

For the sake of simplicity it will be understood that Focus Group 2 from this point onwards, will be referred to as "Focus Group".

Each facilitator worked with learners at different school sites. Sibongile worked with three groups of grade three learners (aged approximately 9 years) at three different school sites. These groups will be referred to as Group A, Group B and Group C. Lungi worked with three groups of grade six (aged approximately 12 years) and grade nine learners (aged approximately 15 years). These groups will also be referred to as Group D, Group E and Group F. This is demonstrated visually in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Focus group sampling.

Sibongile		Lungi	
Group A	Focus Group 2 (Grade 3 learners)	Group D	Focus Group 2 (Grade 6 learners)
Group B	Focus Group 2 (Grade 3 learners)	Group E	Focus Group 2 (Grade 9 learners)
Group C	Focus Group 2 (Grade 3 learners)	Group F	Focus Group 2 (Grade 6 learners)

Initially the researcher wanted to base this research on Sibongile's facilitation of grade three groups and Lungi's facilitation of grade nine groups. However, the video data for one of Lungi's grade nine groups was missing and the transcript was incomplete. The lost video data forced the researcher to focus on two grade six groups and one grade nine group, and three grade three groups.

### 3.5. Data collection

#### 3.5.1. Focus group process data

A two-fold data collection process was needed in order to answer the research question. The data that focused on *how* facilitation takes place was sampled from the Learner Group data as detailed above and will be known as the focus group process data. The data which accessed the facilitators' perspectives and experiences of facilitation was derived from individual interviews and debriefing sessions with the two facilitators. This will be referred to as the interview and debriefing session data.

The verbal discussion in Sibongile's groups (Group A, B and C) and Lungi's groups (Group D, E and F) was recorded, translated into English and transcribed by the research facilitators and research assistants, prior to the commencement of this master's study. The focus groups were also video recorded. Within these groups, the facilitation of two participatory techniques (a ranking exercise and a 'road of life' technique) was examined.



#### a) Ranking exercise

The ranking exercise is a form of a preference ranking exercise. Ranking exercises are common participatory techniques which are widely used by participatory researchers (Chambers, 1994b; Theis & Grady, 1991). Ranking is concerned with placing something in order and an issue is usually ranked according to certain criteria, such as its importance or how often it occurs. In the focus groups the ranking exercise was used to explicate the worries that children experience in their daily lives. It was hoped that these worries would provide insight into the barriers to children's basic education. The ranking exercise used in this study was a preference ranking exercise and the steps used to conduct the ranking exercise were similar to Theis and Grady's (1991) step-by-step guide of the preference ranking exercise described in Figure 1. This refers to the ideal way in which a preference ranking exercise should be conducted, and it was the process which the Learner Task Team expected the facilitators to follow.

In a typical ranking exercise participants would be asked to generate a list of problems or preferences. In this case it would be the things that worry them most in their lives. The facilitator then writes these worries down on different pieces of paper. The pieces of paper, each with a different worry, are placed randomly on the floor. Each participant is given two beans. The participants are then asked to rank the different worries by placing one bean on the issue that worries them most and another bean on another issue that worries them most. The results are then recorded by the facilitator who numbers the different worries according to the number of beans on them.

#### b) 'Road of life' technique

Although the 'road of life' technique is not commonly recognised as a PR technique, the Learner Task Team adapted the exercise so that it resembled and functioned like a participatory technique. The Learner Task Team believed that this would unearth significant life events experienced by the participants, and would provide insight into the barriers children face in their schooling, for example, whether or not the participants had experienced the loss and /or illness of people in their lives (Van der Riet et al. 2005). The aim of the 'road of life' technique was to give the participants the opportunity to share the good and difficult times in their lives within the group, by using the analogy of their life as a road (Van der Riet et al. 2005).

The 'road of life' technique is similar to a conventional participatory technique because it has all the elements that constitute a PR technique. The product of the 'road of life' technique is a diagrammatic representation of a participant's life journey and it draws on the participants' local categories in the form of issues or events in his/her life. The 'road of life' technique also creates the space for reflection which could lead to a cognitive shift and internalisation which could change the way in which the participant views his/her reality.

In order to evaluate something, in this case the facilitators' facilitation of the 'road of life' technique, one has to have something to measure it against. Thus an ideal version of the steps involved in facilitating a 'road of life' technique has been constructed by the researcher below in Figure 3. This 'ideal' guide is similar to Theis and Grady's (1991) step-by-step guide of participatory techniques discussed in Figure 1. It is also similar to the Wertsch's (1984) action pattern discussed in the literature review. This ideal does not imply that this is the only or best way, of depicting the 'road of life' analogy, but it is one possible way that it could be used, and it was the process expected of the facilitators by the Learner Task Team who designed the focus group process for the learners.

#### **Exercise: 'Road of life' technique**

1. Life is often like a road.
2. As one travels along the road (or through one's life) at times one encounters obstacles and difficulties (steep hills, rocks).
3. At other times travelling along the road is without obstacles (smooth).
4. Discuss this notion above with the group and ask participants to generate their own examples.
5. The participants must explain their own lives in terms of a road by drawing, and then describing and discussing, their picture with the group and the facilitator.
6. The facilitator must ask the participant questions and probe into the participant's 'road of life' diagram.

Figure 3: A facilitator's action pattern of a 'road of life' technique.

It must be acknowledged that the 'road of life' technique was more difficult to facilitate than the ranking exercise. This is because the 'road of life' technique required the participants to think in

an abstract way about their life journey and then to draw it. The ranking exercise was simply a case of listing one's worries and ranking them.

### **Data processing**

On examination of the transcripts of the focus groups, the researcher found that they were lacking in detail and that the interaction between the facilitator and the learners in the focus group, which was captured in the video recordings, also needed to be examined. In this study accurate and detailed data was important to allow for a micro-genetic analysis of the data. The researcher thus sat with a translator and examined and transcribed the video data in relation to the original written transcripts of the focus groups, with a particular focus on the second focus group and the two participatory techniques (the ranking exercise and the 'road of life' technique). The re-transcribing process took a considerable amount of time and resources, but greatly improved the quality of the data. This translator was independent to the NRF project and this provided a form of validity checking of the data.

As outlined above, the transcripts of this focus group data was the one set of data used in the project. In addition to using the focus group data, the researcher conducted individual interviews with the two facilitators as well as using the data from the Learner Task Team debriefing sessions.

#### **3.5.2. Individual interviews**

One semi-structured individual interview was conducted with each of the facilitators in order to access information on the facilitators' perceptions of PR, their perceptions of facilitation and their experience of facilitating a PR technique. The interview questions were structured in such a way so that general questions about PR and facilitation were asked first and then more direct questions about the facilitators' experiences of facilitating the PR techniques followed. The interview questions are documented in Appendix 1. The interviews were approximately 60 minutes long and they were conducted in English.

At the beginning of the interview process, the two participants were given time to read the informed consent document (See Appendix 2) and any questions that they had were answered by the researcher. The researcher made it clear that the participants could terminate the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable and that this would in no way reflect negatively on them. Sibongile and Lungi gave written informed consent to participate in this research.



Despite the focus of the research question not being highly sensitive, the participants might have felt as if their performance was being criticized. That is, the participants might have felt as if the techniques did not work due to their failure as facilitators. The researcher was thus, at all times, sensitive to this concern. In addition to this, participants might have also have felt reluctant to speak fully in terms of their strengths and weaknesses for fear of negative evaluation. The researcher continuously emphasised that the interview was not an evaluation of the participants' abilities but rather a discussion about their experiences. Data from this research was available to the Learner Task Team and this reduced the degree to which the confidentiality of the participants could be protected, as the Learner Task Team was aware of the identities of the facilitators. However, an attempt was made to disguise the identity of each respondent. Furthermore, participants were given the opportunity to see the transcripts of their interviews before they were made accessible to the greater project. Any points in the discussion that they were uncomfortable with were removed from the transcripts. However when given this opportunity, the facilitators chose not to remove any parts of the discussion from the transcripts.

The debriefing sessions were also useful in helping the researcher to gain greater insight into the facilitation process of the PR interaction.

### **3.5.3. Debriefing sessions**

Sibongile and Lungi, along with other Learner Group facilitators, were involved in debriefing sessions with the Learner Task Team after the data collection at each school site was completed or if the facilitators felt that debriefing was necessary during the four-stage focus group process. These sessions involved unstructured discussions and reflection on the process of conducting the focus groups. Although this researcher was not involved in these sessions or the recording of data which emerged in these sessions, they were considered very useful in providing additional information on the facilitators' experience of the research process and a broader context in which to situate the focus group, and interview data. All of these debriefing sessions were conducted in English, they were audio-recorded and were transcribed by a research assistant prior to the commencement of this study.

There were six debriefing sessions in total and some of these sessions ran for up to two hours. The researcher in this study did not use all the data in these transcripts but focused on Sibongile and Lungi's experiences and their perceptions of the 'road of life' technique and the ranking exercise.

### **Note on using a PR design**

In focusing on participatory research (PR) one would assume that this study should itself be conducted using participatory research (PR). However, a PR approach is both intensive and time consuming and the fact that the subjects of this Masters study had given a great deal of time to the NRF study meant that they did not have the time set aside for a participatory approach. In addition to this, the amount of data that was already available to the researcher from the NRF study was sufficient to fulfill the requirements of this Masters thesis.

### **3.6. Data analysis**

The different data sets required different forms of analysis. The focus group analysis was an extremely detailed micro-genetic analysis (Wertsch, 1984), whilst the interview and the debriefing session data was analysed using a reading guide method (Mergendollar, 1989). Each of these processes will be outlined below.

#### **3.6.1. Focus group process**

The transcripts, video data and drawings from the facilitation of the two participatory techniques (the ranking exercise and the 'road of life' technique) were analysed using a micro-genetic inquiry. A micro-genetic analysis is a process analysis which allows one to investigate a phenomenon (i.e. facilitation) by looking at it in terms of how it came to be the way it is. Vygotsky believed that without genetic analysis one can only describe certain aspects of psychological phenomena and one cannot understand the inner workings and causal dynamics of mental functioning (Wertsch, 1984).

Genetic analysis allows one to go beyond merely describing a phenomenon to explaining it by considering the transformations and transitions it had undergone (Wertsch, 1985). In order to explain the facilitation process in PR, it is not appropriate to just describe the process of facilitation, instead it is important to explain the process of how the end product of facilitation came about. Thus, a detailed analysis is needed of how the facilitation process unfolded. A micro-genetic analysis is a very fine-grained analysis of the steps used in the facilitation process with a particular focus on the language used in the interactions. The micro-genetic analysis of the PR facilitation process was made possible through the use of Wertsch's (1984) three theoretical constructs: situation definition, semiotic mediation and intersubjectivity. These concepts are

inter-related, but will be presented separately to explain how they were used in the process of analysis.

#### a) Situation definition

The situation definition refers firstly, to how the facilitator defined the task and secondly, to how the participants defined the task. The situation definition was examined in terms of whether it reflected, or fitted in with the ideal understanding of the task. In the case of the 'road of life' technique the ideal description, which was constructed by the researcher for the purposes of this study, is contained in Figure 3 above, and for the ranking exercise, in Figure 4, below.

The situation definition was identified in three main ways. It was identified in the facilitator's (1) *introduction* of the task, (2) her *explanation* of the task and (3) her *response* to the children's talk about their drawings or ranking output. An introduction is usually comprised of a summary of what is to come or an outline of the steps to take. Thus it sets the foundation for further elaboration and explanation of a task. The introduction to the task is important as it reflects the facilitator's understanding of the task in its most salient form. In analysing the data the researcher looked at how the facilitator introduced the task and whether or not it corresponded with the ideal definition of the task. In the case of the 'road of life' technique, the introduction involves a prologue of the analogy. An introduction to the ranking exercise would entail the facilitator asking the participants what things worry them in life.

The second phase of the technique is the 'explanation'. This expands on the introduction and goes into more detail about the task. In the 'road of life' technique the steps that follow the introduction include a discussion by the group of how one's life can be similar to a road and the generation of examples by the group of a 'road of life'. The facilitator then introduces the task of each participant drawing their 'road of life'. In the ranking exercise, the explanation would include a discussion with the participants about things that worry them. The facilitator would write these worries down on separate pieces of paper and then ask the participants to rank their worries.

The third way in which the situation definition was identified and examined was in the facilitator's response to the participants' drawings/ranking and their situation definition of the task. The question which focussed the analysis was: was the facilitator content with the way in which the participants understood the task? And if not, how was this portrayed?

The facilitators' situation definition was conveyed to the participants through semiotic mediation.

#### b) Semiotic mediation

Semiotic mediation is the language used to mediate a situation definition and it is the means by which a shared situation definition (intersubjectivity) is reached. Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the importance of mediation and semiotic mediation in achieving one's potential level of development and higher mental functioning. Mediation alters an individual's thinking, and thus affects the way in which an individual acts in relation to the world.

In a PR context, the facilitator uses semiotic mediation to structure the activity so it can be understood by the participants. It is the language which is used to create the idea of the activity. For example language is used to set-up the 'road of life' action pattern described in Figure 3 and the ranking exercise action pattern described in this section above. As discussed in the literature review, Vygotsky identified other forms of mediational means such maps, drawings and diagrams (Vygotsky, 1981, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). Participatory techniques (such as the 'road of life' technique and the ranking exercise) are made up of activities which produce diagrammatic representations of phenomena i.e. a 'road of life' diagram. These products of the activities are a type of mediational means and they enable participants to critically reflect on their reality and potentially to undergo change.

In this study, semiotic mediation was examined by analysing the language used by the facilitator in explaining the task. Ideally a situation definition should be mediated consistently throughout the explanation of a task. However, this is not always the case as a facilitator may be unsure of the task, and thus, may mediate many situation definitions within the task. The questions which were asked were:

- What situation definition was mediated?
- How did she mediate the definition/s?
- Did the facilitator consistently mediate *one* situation definition?
- Did she mediate many different situation definitions in the task?



### c) Intersubjectivity

As outlined in the literature review, Wertsch's (1984) third concept in the process of micro-genetic analysis is intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity, refers to the state or point in the activity when a shared understanding of the task is reached. In this case, it refers to the child participants sharing the understanding or situation definition of the facilitator. If the same definition is shared, the task can proceed according to the 'ideal' requirements of a task. In this case it would be the ideal 'road of life' action pattern demonstrated in Figure 3, and the ideal ranking exercise action pattern which is demonstrated in Figure 4.

However, because the facilitator's situation definition might not have been the ideal one, intersubjectivity also refers to the points at which (or moments where) the participants and the facilitators shared *a*, that is, any, situation definition.

If the participants had a shared situation definition of the task this would be evident in their representations of the task. In the 'road of life' task one would be able to see if intersubjectivity was reached because the children's drawings and their verbal discussion in the task would reflect if they understood the task in the same way as the facilitator.

The questions which were posed to the data included:

- How did the children understand the task?
- Was the children's situation definition similar to the facilitator's situation definition?

However, if the ideal task was not reflected in the participants' drawings/ranking or discussion, this indicated a different understanding of the task and thus intersubjectivity, in the light of the task, was not reached. Partial intersubjectivity was identified when participants understood some element of the task such as drawing a road but did not grasp the entire meaning of the task. Intersubjectivity was also identified if the participants' understanding or situation definition was similar to that of the facilitators, even if this understanding did not reflect the ideal implementation of the task.

The micro-genetic analysis was a systematic and meticulous process which was undertaken until the categories which emerged were saturated. This generated a rather lengthy document of 70 pages which had to be condensed to produce the information contained in the Results Chapter.

### **3.6.2. Individual interviews and debriefing sessions**

The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews and the debriefing sessions were analysed using a 'reading guide' method (Mergendollar, 1989). This method uses specific questions through which the data is 'read'. It was considered appropriate in this context because the data from the interviews and debriefing sessions was background information which contextualized the facilitators' activity of facilitating the focus groups. The facilitators' perceptions of facilitation (or mediation) and their experiences of facilitating PR techniques informed the main research question of how facilitation happens in PR. Thus, specific questions were developed by the researcher and formed the lens through which the data was read. These questions were:

- What are the facilitators' perceptions of PR?
- What is their perception of facilitation?
- What is their experience of facilitating a PR technique?

### **3.7. Generalisability, validity and reliability**

This study was a small qualitative project and offered a detailed account of how facilitation takes place in a particular PR interaction. Kelly (1999b, p. 431) argues that:

generalisability relates to the extent to which the interpretive account can be applied to other contexts than the one being researched.

The generalisability or the external validity of findings in qualitative research is limited because of the contextual nature of the research. However, it is argued that qualitative research can obtain transferential validity if a study contains an accurate description of the research process, an adequate argument for choosing one's methodology and a detailed and rich description of the research context (Smaling, 1992, cited in Kelly, 1999b).

Researchers also aim to generate data which is valid and which measures or captures the meaning of what is being observed (Durrheim, 1999). The data collection process should reflect measurement validity in that the measures one uses (i.e. an interview or a questionnaire) should fit with the conceptual and operational definitions of a construct (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). In addition data collection should reflect reliability in that one's research should be consistent and repeatable if necessary (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999).

## **Chapter Four: Results**

This chapter presents the results that emerged out of the analysis of the focus group transcripts, individual interviews and debriefing sessions. The facilitators' facilitation of each task are discussed, starting with the ranking exercise and then the 'road of life' technique. These findings are explored in terms of what the facilitators' situation definitions of the task were, whether or not their semiotic mediation was appropriate, and whether or not intersubjectivity was achieved. Additionally, the findings from the interview and debriefing session data are presented. The different data sets inform each other and have allowed the researcher to gain a more holistic account of how facilitation took place in this particular PR interaction. The implications of the findings presented in this section are discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

Extracts from the data will be used to illustrate the main points and findings. The data is separated into three categories: focus groups, individual interviews and debriefing sessions. The focus groups include Sibongile's groups (A, B and C) and Lungi's groups (D, E and F). The extracts of these data are labelled according to the group and facilitator. The extracts of the focus groups are also colour coded according to the facilitator; Sibongile's groups are coded in red whilst Lungi's groups are coded in blue. In addition within the extracts each speaker is introduced by either the letter P or the letter F. The letter P refers to the participants and these may be numbered according to different participants e.g. P1, P2, P3 etc. The letter F refers to the facilitator of the focus group process. Individual interviews are labelled according to the facilitator (either Sibongile or Lungi). The debriefing sessions were conducted with both Sibongile and Lungi present, and thus they will simply be referred to as a 'debriefing session'. All names in the extracts and the interviews are pseudonyms and the learners in the focus group process gave themselves their own pseudonyms.

### **The facilitation process**

#### **4.1. Ranking exercise**

The ranking exercise was analysed using Wertsch's three theoretical constructs of situation definition, semiotic mediation and intersubjectivity.



#### 4.1.1. Situation definition

The researcher analysed the situation definition of the facilitators by looking at the way in which they introduced the task, how they went on to explain the task and their responses to the children's representations of the task (as detailed in the analysis section). Here the data is still presented in this format, however it has been condensed, and the facilitators' situation definitions are discussed briefly.

The facilitators' situation definitions of the task were demonstrated in the action pattern that they used to conduct the task. In general, these action patterns reflected the correct steps to successfully conduct the ranking exercise, illustrated in Figure 4 below. In fact when the situation definitions used across Groups A, B, C, D, E and F, were examined it was clear that they corresponded very closely to the ideal action pattern in Figure 4. Additionally, the video footage of Groups A, B, C, D, E and F, indicates that the children carried out the ranking as instructed.

1. Ask the participants to generate a list of things relating to things that worry them most in their lives.
2. Write these worries down on different pieces of paper.
3. Place the pieces of paper, each with a different worry, in random order on the floor.
4. Ask the participants to rank the different worries by placing one bean on the thing that worried them most and another bean on the next thing that worried them most.
5. Give each participant two beans and ask them to distribute them accordingly.
6. Record the results by asking the participants to number the drawings from the most worrying issue to the least worrying issue.
7. Facilitate a discussion about the worries.

Figure 4: A facilitator's action pattern of a ranking exercise.

##### a) Introduction of the task

An example of the way in which the facilitators introduced the ranking exercise can be seen in Extract 1. Sibongile introduces the task by asking the participants what their worries are (line

218). The children list these worries and some of them include attention seekers (line 219), rape (line 226, 228 and 230), fighting (line 227), and illness (234-238). The video footage shows that Sibongile writes the different worries down on separate pieces of paper.

### **Extract 1, Group B (Sibongile)**

218. F: What are the things that worry you?  
219. P1: People trying to get attention by doing silly things.  
220. (Noise)  
221. F: Lungelo? Yvonne?  
222. P2: (inaudible)... and hit others  
223. F: Yes, Zandile?  
224. P3: (inaudible)  
225. F: Let's say what happens in the community that worries you?  
226. P4: Raping of small children.  
227. P1: Fighting.  
228. P5: Raping.  
229. P3: Criminals.  
230. P1: I don't like boys raping girls.  
231. F: Oh, you don't like boys raping girls.  
232. (Noise)  
233. F: If people are sick, do you like that?  
234. Group: No we don't like it.  
235. F: Why is it that you don't like it?  
236. P3: My uncle is HIV positive.  
237. F: You don't like that?  
238. P3: No.

### **b) Explanation of the task**

Sibongile's explanation of the ranking of the list of worries is demonstrated in Extract Two.

### **Extract 2, Group B (Sibongile)**

244. F: Ok! Now I will give you two beans. Put one bean on one thing that worries you and another on another place. Hey,  
245. Yvonne you have got two (beans). I know that.  
246. P1: Mam... I have only one Mam  
247. P2: No! No! No!  
248. F: How many are you? One bean short.

249. P2: One bean short.

250. F: Place one bean on one place and the other on another place.

A further example of the similarity between the way in which the facilitators represented the ranking exercise and the ideal action pattern (Figure 4) is demonstrated below in Table 2. The left-hand column demonstrates the facilitator's situation definition whilst the right-hand column represents the facilitator's semiotic mediation of the ranking exercise.

Table 2: Situation definition and semiotic mediation of the ranking exercise in Group B.

Situation Definition	Semiotic Mediation
To explain one's worries	"What are the things that worry you?" (Extract 1, line 218).
To take two beans and to use them to identify two major worries.	"Now I will give you two beans" (Extract 2, line 244).  "Put one bean on one thing that worries you and another on another place" (Extract 2, lines 244).

The ranked output of Group E (Lungi's group) is depicted in Figure 5 below. The English interpretation of each item has been highlighted. As can be seen the participants ranked homework as the most important worry as the participants placed the most amount of beans on this worry (four beans). This was followed by the worry that grandmothers live alone (three beans). Not going to school and parents not having money to send children to school tied with two beans each. The least important worry, with one bean, was strangers approaching children. Being raped and being beaten were listed as worries but did not feature in the ranked output as the children chose not to put any beans on these worries.



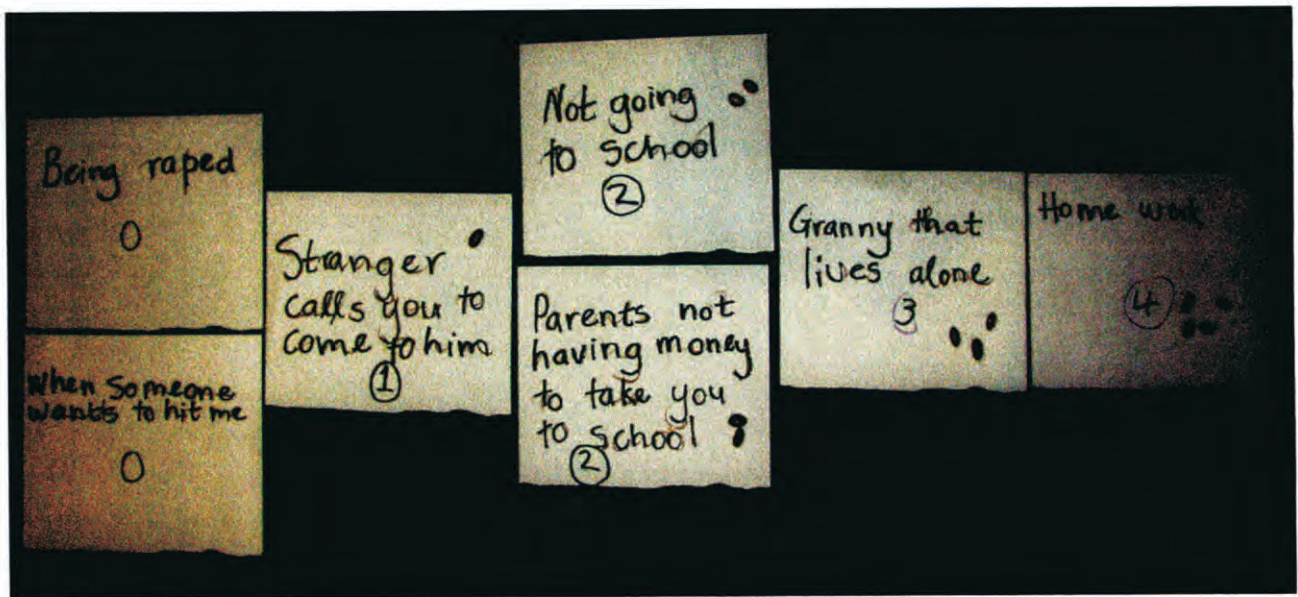


Figure 5: The ranked output in Group E.

#### c) The facilitators' response to the participants' representations of the task

Across the groups the facilitators responded in a positively to the children's representations of the task by complimenting the children on conducting the task correctly and then moving on to the next task in the focus group process schedule.

#### 4.1.2. Semiotic Mediation

Semiotic mediation was the mechanism which made the negotiation of a third situation definition possible so that intersubjectivity could be achieved. The facilitator could not simply make a verbal explanation of the ranking exercise and expect intersubjectivity to happen automatically. Instead this had to be "negotiated". This meant that the participants had to understand the explanation and had to respond appropriately to this explanation. Thus, a deliberate and specific type of facilitation was needed so that the process functioned optimally. The process of the ranking exercise reflected the correct action pattern and it reflected the Learner Task Teams situation definition of the task.

In addition, the product of the ranking exercise (the visual representation of the ranked order of the participants' worries) mediated the participants' understanding of the task. This visual product of the ranking exercise may have enabled the participants to critically reflect on their worries, and this potentially allowed the participants to experience a cognitive shift in terms of how they understood issues in their life. This is essentially a process of internalisation as the product of the ranking



exercise potentially mediates the participants' understanding of the issues in their lives, as it enables critical reflection to occur.

The facilitators seemed to enter the ranking exercise with a clear situation definition of how the ranking exercise should be conducted. Situation definitions of the ranking exercise were consistent throughout groups A, B, C, D, E and F. This situation definition of the task was consistent with that of the Learner Task Team.

So although the participants initially entered the interaction and formed a different situation definition of the task to the facilitators, the facilitators were able to guide the participants in the task and to negotiate a third situation definition.

#### **4.1.3. Intersubjectivity**

In the case of the ranking exercise intersubjectivity between the participants and the facilitator was reached in all six of the groups. The ideal task was reflected in both the participants' discussion about their worries and the ranking output.

#### **4.2. 'Road of life' technique**

An analysis of the 'road of life' technique offers an interesting account of facilitation within a participatory interaction.

The issues that arose in the facilitators' groups in the first and the second school, were very similar i.e. Groups A and B (Sibongile), and Groups D and E (Lungi). These groups were distinctly different from the last groups: Group C (Sibongile) and Group F (Lungi), and will be discussed separately.

#### ***Groups A and B (Sibongile) and Groups D and E (Lungi)***

##### **4.2.1. Situation definition**

According to Wertsch (1984) a situation definition is the way in which a task is represented by the facilitator and the participants. The situation definition was identified in three main ways. It was identified in the facilitator's (1) *introduction* of the task, (2) her *explanation* of the task and (3) her *response* to the children's talk about their drawings as detailed in the Analysis Section.

### **a) Introduction of the task**

The 'road of life' technique requires that one sees one's life analogous to a road and then to represent this road diagrammatically. One of the central issues that was identified in Groups A, B, D and E, was that the facilitators' situation definition of the task remained on a concrete level as opposed to the required analogy of a 'road of life' (which is abstract in nature). Both facilitators tended to focus their explanation of the 'road of life' technique on a physical embodiment of a road.

Examples of both the facilitators' concrete explanations of the task can be seen in Extract 3, 4, and 5. These extracts from Groups A, B and D illustrate the facilitators' introduction of the 'road of life' technique.

Sibongile introduces the task by describing a road, (Extract 3, lines 34-35, Extract 4, line 40; Extract 3, line 38; Extract 4, lines 40-41), as well as the elements that affect the road, (Extract 3, line 39; Extract 4, line 41). As can be seen in the extracts below, the facilitators take a great deal of time in introducing the task as a literal road but do not yet make reference to the 'road of life' analogy.

#### **Extract 3, Group A (Sibongile)**

34. F: Now listen. Imagine. I want you to imagine the road. This road is going up (facilitator makes an upward  
35. action with her hands/arm) this road, this road. This road goes down (downward action with hands/arm)  
36. through the mountains. (She is creating an image of this long road) Ok, this road has rocks. And this road has  
37. got potholes. Have you seen a car when it is travelling on a road that has rocks and potholes, how difficult it is  
38. to travel on this road? Imagine this road, it has got stones even at the sides and this road is going up and it is  
39. going down through the mountains, this road. At times this road has strong winds and dust and at times this  
40. road has potholes.

#### **Extract 4, Group B (Sibongile)**

40. F: ... Think about a road. It goes up and down hills; it's sometimes very bumpy it sometimes has  
41. rocks in it, it sometimes winds. Sometimes it has holes in it, okay.

In Extract 5, Lungi introduces the 'road of life' task. She does this by asking the participants where they walk when they go to school (line 27) and they reply accordingly (line 28). The facilitator then tells the group to think about their 'road of life' (29) but she does not go on to explain what she means by this. Instead she asks what the road to school consists of (line 30). The discussion which follows is all about the elements of a road (lines 31, 32, 33, 34, 35-40). As can be seen in the extracts below the facilitator's explanation is embedded in a concrete framework as opposed to the abstract 'road of life'.

#### **Extract 5, Group D (Lungi)**

27. F: Ok, where do you walk if you come to school?  
28. P1: We walk in the road and others walk in the pathway.  
29. F: I would like you to think about the road of life.  
30. F: In the road you walk in, what does the road have?  
31. P2: There is a rock.  
32. P3: There is sand.  
33. P4: There are waterways.  
34. P1: Road lines  
35. F: Are there any small roads that go upward, or get higher?  
36. Group: yes  
37. F: How do you know, that now you go up?  
38. P2: You feel tired, and we come late at school because we have been walking slowly.  
39. F: Are there any places that you walk downwards?  
40. P4: Yes, there are places like that.

#### **b) Explanation of the task**

The facilitators then go on to explain the task and make the link between the road and one's life. However they struggle to explain to the participants how life is analogous to a road (illustrated in Extract 6, 7, 8 and 9).

In Extract 6, lines 42 and 43, Sibongile seems to want the children to think past the literal road to the analogy of the 'road of life', but the way in which she frames her appeal is extremely difficult for the children to understand. In her explanation (see earlier Extract 3) she describes the road in terms of potholes, rocks, cars, wind and dust. She now asks the children to think of their lives in relation to this explanation. This is an obscure instruction related to the task and it is



extremely difficult for an 8 or 9 year old to understand. The facilitator (Extract 6, line 44) goes on to instruct the children on how to carry out the task. As can be seen in the extract this instruction is even more confusing as the children are told to *either* draw their lives on paper *or* to just draw things on the road which shows their life.

#### **Extract 6, Group A (Sibongile)**

42. F: Now I would like you to think about your life. Now that I've been telling you about this road in the same way think  
43. about your life. I want you to think about your life from the day you were born up until now. Ok, I want you to draw on  
44. the paper. Draw your life on that piece of paper *or* just draw things on that road making a picture about how your life is.  
45. Do you see that your life is almost the same as the road I was telling you about? Because sometimes your life goes up and  
46. down like the road. Because sometimes the road is winding and has got winds. Your life is like that road I was telling you  
47. about.

Although the facilitator does ask the children to think of their lives in terms of a road (Extract 6, lines 42-43) and, thus, takes a step closer to explaining the 'road of life' exercise, she does not build on this notion in the words that follow. Instead she goes onto say how she wants the children to show good and bad things in their lives (Extract 7, line 58). She tells the children that stones could be the bad things in their lives and she tells them to draw stones (Extract 7, lines 58-59). However the connection between how the road is similar to life and how stones could represent something difficult to overcome in life, for example a death of a family member, is not properly explained.

In Extract 7, the facilitator is reverting to breaking the activity into steps which involves the participants very concretely in drawing aspects of a physical road. In addition in lines 60 and 61 she tells the group to "draw anything, anyhow". For a child of nine years, this may add to the confusion of what they are supposed to be drawing as the facilitator has just instructed them to draw stones. She then goes on to tell the children that the drawing is a representation of their lives in good and bad times (line 62). It is unlikely that nine year old children would understand the word 'represents' (line 62).

#### **Extract 7, Group A (Sibongile)**

58. F: Show us the good things and the bad things that have happened in your life. The stones could be the bad  
59. things in your life, draw stones. You have to draw those stones and the stones will tell us  
60. that, that you have difficult times and you need to tell us more about that. Draw anything and anyhow, put



61. whatever you want to put while you are drawing, anything, anything. As soon as you are done you are going to  
62. tell us that this represents my life in difficult times and that this represents good times.

**In Extract 8, from the focus group process in a different school, Sibongile uses the same approach as she reiterates that the drawing is a representation of the good and bad times in the participants' lives (line 45-46).**

#### **Extract 8, Group B (Sibongile)**

43.F: Think of your life as a journey on this road, from when you were born, to now . Try draw it. Show the  
44. important things. Perhaps the hard things are rocks in the road. You can draw pictures of things on the road or  
45. on the road or on the side of the road. You are drawing about your life, there are good things in life, there hard  
46. things in life and I want the good things and hard things in you life to be shown in your drawing.

**In Extract 9, Lungi tries to introduce the abstract nature of the task by asking the group to reflect on the journey of life (line 103). However, instead of building on this situation definition, she reverts back to a concrete description of a road, and engages the participants about the nature of a tar road (line 106).**

#### **Extract 9, Group E (Lungi)**

103. Okay today I'd like us to talk about the path of life. We've heard the types of paths we walk on; we walk on  
104. paths full of rocks, full of mud, and full of dew. I'm sure if you walk on the path full of dew, even if you  
105. washed your legs, it would look bad. But in life, there are days, when you walk on a tarred road. Sometimes,  
106. when we walk on the tar road there is no dew, and no dust. How does it feel?

**When looking at Sibongile and Lungi's facilitation of this activity, it is clear that many situation definitions were used to explain the 'road of life' technique. This is evident across Groups A, B, D and E. Although, it is sometimes necessary for a facilitator to adapt her situation definition in order to extend a participant's understanding of a task so that a third situation definition can be negotiated, too many situation definitions are problematic as they complicate the interaction.**

**The situation definitions used by Sibongile in Group A illustrate this point. In order to explain the situation definitions used one has to take into account the language used to mediate a situation definition. Semiotic mediation enables the facilitator to structure the activity so that it is**

understood by the participants. Thus, a facilitator's situation definition is communicated to the participant using semiotic mediation.

The list below demonstrates the many situation definitions involved in explaining the 'road of life' technique in Group A. The facilitator was erratic in her use of definitions to explain the task.

- Imagine a road (Extract 3)
- Think about your life (Extract 6)
- Think about the road in the same way as your life (Extract 6)
- Think about your life from the day you were born up until now (Extract 6)
- Draw on the paper (Extract 6)
- Draw your life on the paper (Extract 6)
- Draw things on that road making a picture of your life (Extract 6)
- Your life is the same as the road (Extract 6)
- Show good and bad things that have happened in your life (Extract 7)
- Stones are bad things...Draw stones... Stones will tell us you have had difficult times (Extract 7).
- Draw anything, anyhow (Extract 7)
- You will tell us this represents life in difficult times and this represents good times (Extract 7).

Although some of the situation definitions are similar, for example "draw" and "draw your life", they are different because the instruction "draw" simply means to draw something but it does not indicate what. In addition to being erratic the situation definitions are often unclear. For example, "Draw your life", is not an easy instruction to follow, should an aspect of one's life be drawn? If yes, what aspect? Or should it be drawn in its entirety? The situation definition "Stones are bad. Draw stones" is also unclear. If the reader was to place him/herself on the receiving end of this instruction surely the question of 'what about stones are bad?' would arise? Given the erratic and unclear nature of the situation definitions explaining the task, and the number of the situation definitions, it is unsurprising that the participants failed to understand the 'road of life' analogy.

In addition, there appears to be a struggle within the facilitators in terms of what situation definition they think they should be using. Both Sibongile and Lungi know the task involves a road and that this should extend to a participant's life. They make references to representations

because they know they have to get the children to think of their life in terms of a road i.e. a rock symbolises difficult times. However they are unable to successfully explain this connection as the Learner Task Team required. Thus the dominant situation definition remains that of describing a literal road. They are also, however, aware that one of the main expected outcomes of the task is to identify the difficulties in a child's life. It is true that the Learner Task Team had a specific motivation for accessing this information through the 'road of life' analogy as opposed to asking this question directly. However, it appeared as if the facilitators did not understand the reasons behind the 'road of life' analogy and they begin to ask these questions more directly.

The discrepancy between what the Learner Task Team required and what the facilitators actually did indicates that the facilitators and the Learner Task Team had different situation definitions of the 'road of life' technique from the beginning of the data collection phase and in some senses the facilitators' situation definition was 'incorrect'.

It is clear from the data that this incorrect situation definition impacted upon the participants' understanding of the task.

#### c) The facilitators' response to the children's representation of the task

When the children were given paper to draw on they appeared unsure of what was expected of them. This confusion is initially evident in Sibongile's groups as the participants do not ask any questions about the way in which they should carry out the task, however, the video footage clearly illustrates that they are extremely reluctant to start their drawings. In addition, Sibongile races through the explanation and does not allow for any dialogue between her and the participants. In her explanation of the activity, she constantly asks the participants if they understand the task but she does not give them a chance to ask questions, and the children are silent throughout the explanation. Lungi's participants asked more questions than Sibongile's groups possibly because they were older. Despite this difference in interaction the outcome is the same for both facilitators.

In Group A, Rambo (Extract 10) is asked what the 'symbol' of the person in his drawing represents (line 108). Here we see that Sibongile is trying to make a link to the abstract by using the word 'symbol'. She is suggesting that the things in their drawings should represent something in their lives. Rambo's response is that the person in the drawing is himself and he goes on to describe his drawing in a literal sense (line 109). Sibongile then points at different



things that Rambo has drawn in his picture and asks about their meaning (line 110) and Rambo's response remains literal (line 111). The facilitator then tries to ask the question in a different way and asks what the drawing means in Rambo's life (line 112), Rambo's reply, however, remains on a concrete level (113). The facilitator makes another attempt at drawing out an abstract explanation from Rambo (line 114) and Rambo, who seems very confused, does not reply (line 115). Rambo does not seem to understand this idea of his picture representing something else in his life. Rambo's situation definition of the task is concrete and his understanding of the task is concrete.

#### **Extract 10, Group A (Sibongile)**

108. F: That symbol in your drawing, that person, what does it stand for? Who is this person?

109. Rambo: (pause) It's me.

110. F: Other things you have drawn, what are those?

111. Rambo: Stones.

112. F: What do those stones mean, in your life?

113. Rambo: It means the road.

114. F: In your life what do those stones mean?

115. Rambo: (Silence)

Lungi's situation definition of the task is more focused on the road to school, and the little attempt she makes to transform the task into something abstract is not sufficient for the participants to understand the task in its abstract form. In Extract 11, the participant describes how the road to school literally affects her (line 155). When the facilitator asks the participant to reflect on the things she has drawn and to relate them to happy or difficult times in her life (lines 157-158), the participant describes the time when she went to school (lines 161-163). Once again the situation definition of the task is concrete.

#### **Extract 11, Group E (Lungi)**

154. Thuli: There is grass and stones in the path I travel on. (Inaudible) There was dust. These are stones (pointing

155. at the drawing). I was so unhappy, when I walk my shoes get dirty when I have polished them. You can't even  
156. see that I have polished them.

157. F: If you take these things, that happened when you walk, and you relate them to your life, maybe there were  
158. happy times or maybe there were difficult times. Please tell us about those.

159. Thuli: There was a nicer time.

160. F: What happened?



161. Thuli: I visited another place and I studied there. I found that there was a road and my shoes didn't get old  
162. because there was a tar road. There were no stones. The walk was smooth, although my shoes got old because  
163. of the tar but they were not getting dusty. I was always clean. I got to school clean and back home clean.

As the facilitators press the participants for a 'correct' representation of the task they are desperately trying to grasp the meaning of the task. Wertsch's (1984) theory suggests that the participants are attempting to transform their situation definition of the 'road of life' technique so that their level of understanding of the task can be enhanced. In order for this to happen, the participants have to redefine their situation definition of the 'road of life' technique. However, the facilitators' many and erratic situation definitions do not aid this process. The facilitators did not seem to understand the task themselves and, thus, they did not have the language to mediate the interaction (semiotic mediation). This resulted in the participants defining the task differently to what the facilitators expected.

The children across Groups A, B, D and E, define the task differently to how the researchers intended. This is illustrated in their situation definition of the task. In their representations of their drawings they give physical descriptions of a road as opposed to the sought after analogy of a 'road of life'. This is demonstrated in Extract 10 and Extract 11. The literal description of a road to school is further illustrated in Figure 6 below. In this graphic a participant has not explained his life journey but has simply focused on his physical road to school. The concrete interpretation of the task by the participants is further demonstrated in Figure 7. Here the participant has drawn the different things that affect her road to school. As can be seen in the graphic, the participant has drawn, among other things, actual raindrops, stones, mud and wind which hinder her physical journey to school.



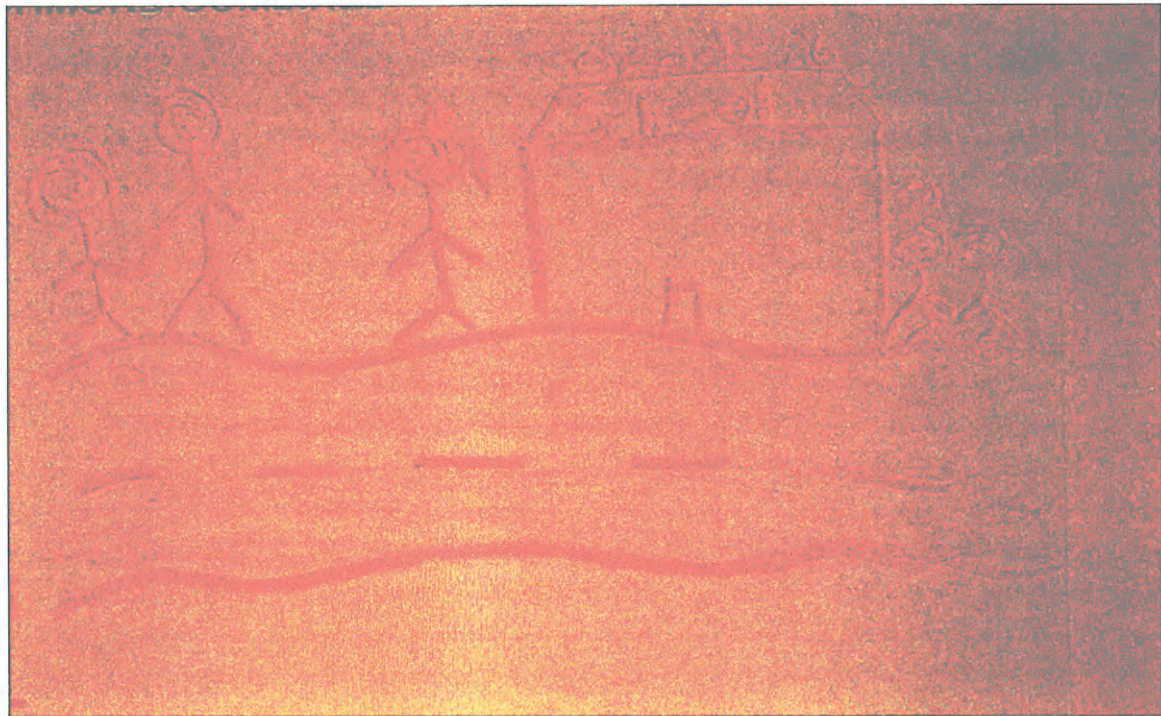


Figure 6: A participant's representation of the 'road of life' task in Group B.



Figure 7: A participant's representation of the 'road of life' task in Group E.



As a result of the children's 'incorrect' representations of the task the facilitators become frustrated and seem anxious to get the children to provide the information that they require for the study. They try and explain the task again, but as their situation definitions are still erratic and varied the participants' understanding of the task remains the same.

An example of this is demonstrated in Extract 12. Sibongile tries to ask the other children in the group about their drawings but becomes frustrated because the participants are not speaking about their life journey. Her response to the children's drawings, and their talk in relation to the drawings, indicates that they do not share the facilitator's situation definition of the task. The facilitator tries to remedy this by trying to get the children to think of their lives instead of a road, but at the same time, to recognise, that like a road, life is not straight. She implies that a straight road means an easy life but this is not explicitly stated and the children do not seem to understand its meaning.

Line 183 (in Extract 12) is interesting because Sibongile refers to 'they' wanting the children to discuss certain things that 'they' require. 'They' refers to the research team and in making this reference it is as if she is disassociating herself from the task at hand and the task as defined as 'those' researchers in the team. She seems to want to blame the difficulty of doing this task on other people (in this case the Learner Task Team).

The facilitator then asks one of the participants, Siboniso, why his road in his drawing is winding (line 185-186) and what it means in his life. Siboniso does not know what to say and does not answer (line 187). The facilitator then goes on to explain the meaning of life in terms of a road (188-190) and how the participant should be relating the road to his life (line 188). Sibongile's frustration about how the participants understand the task is clearly evident. This is because she has an idea of what information she is supposed to access, that is, the difficulties children face, and she thus reverts back to her original situation definition of the task (the difficulties children face) in order to explain this to the group. In addition her explanation of the task is perhaps not age appropriate for 9 year olds.

#### **Extract 12, Group A (Sibongile)**

175. F: Listen Nokwanda, I told you to think back to when you were born to now, and tell us what was happening as you  
176. grew older. Did you notice that the road we talked about was not straight?

177. Nokwanda: Yes.

178. F: This road was going up the hill. This road was going down the hill, there were a lot of potholes. This road is

179. winding in the mountains. Is that so?

180. Group: Yes

181. F: Do you think people's lives are straight? That the things that happen in our lives are always good?

182. Group: No

183. F: That is what they want you to talk about in your life. Mention the things that were good and those that were bad in

184. your life.

185. F: Look at Siboniso's road, it is not straight it is winding. Why is it winding? What was happening in your life here

186. Siboniso?

187. Siboniso: Um... (Silence)

188. F: You are not just looking at the road and drawing it. You are relating it to your life. Are there any things that have

189. happened in your home? Or is life straight like a straight road? Were there bad things your life? The line is not going

190. to be straight then. What were those bad things your life? What were those bad things in your life?

191. Group: Yes there are.

**After this explanation (in Extract 12) the participants are asked again about their drawings in Extract 13, but despite this further attempt to shed light on the analogy, the children have either not drawn a picture (line 198), express their uncertainty in laughter (line 196), or are silent (line 203, 205, 207). These responses demonstrate their lack of understanding of the facilitator's situation definition of the task. This lack of a shared situation definition of the 'ideal' task means that intersubjectivity has not been achieved.**

### **Extract 13, Group A (Sibongile)**

194. F: Where is it (the drawing)? Why did you not draw it? Eh?

195. Group: (inaudible)

196. F: Explain, talk about your life. Sihle, show us your drawing (laughter). Those laughing ~~there~~ **will get** something

197. (punishment). Sihle, where is your drawing?

198. P1: He did not write

199. P2: He did write

200. F: Okay he will show us if he feels like it. Let us leave him. Wise, is there anything you have drawn, tell us about it?

201. Tell us about your life? How is your life?

202. Wise: (Silence)

203. F: Nomveliso, tell us about your life. (Nomveliso is very shy and is rolling on floor) What have you drawn there?

204. Nomveliso: Um... (Silence)

205. F: Neliswa, tell us about your life, sister.

206. Neliswa: Eh... (Silence)



It becomes clear that even though the facilitators used all the situation definitions that they had, to explain the task, this was not enough for the participants to redefine their understanding of the task. In fact, given that the facilitators' understanding of the task was so problematic, the participants did well to define the task in the way that they did.

#### **4.2.2. Mediation**

As discussed above the semiotic mediation used to explain the task was inappropriate. Extract 13 demonstrates that the children struggled to understand the task and thus the product of the activity (a drawing of their 'road of life') was either not produced or was inappropriate in terms of what was expected (see Figure 5). Thus, an appropriate mediational means in this task was not generated to enable the participants to critically reflect on the nature of their lives.

#### **4.2.3. Intersubjectivity**

Intersubjectivity refers to both the participants and the facilitators reaching a shared situation definition of the task.

##### **a) The required situation definition vs. any situation definition**

It has been emphasised that the facilitators had many different situation definitions of the task and moved between a concrete and an abstract definition of the task. By having many situation definitions of the task and by being inconsistent in their definition of the task, their explanation of the task came across as confusing to the participants. Because of this, the children carried out a particular task, rather than the required task. This explanation appears to be the consequence of the facilitators' lack of understanding of the task in the way in which the Learner Task Team had defined it. In other words the facilitators' situation definition of the task was different to that of the Learner Task Team. Even though the 'ideal' task was not reflected in the drawings, or the children's talk in relation to their drawings, the children still carried out an activity and had a particular situation definition of the task.

##### **b) Was intersubjectivity reached?**

The children responded to the facilitators' situation definition by defining the task in a concrete manner. As a result of this, one situation definition (the literal road) of the facilitators and the

children's situation definitions of a literal road were, to a certain extent, shared. However, because the facilitators were unaware of this shared definition and because they knew that there was more to the task than just a literal road, intersubjectivity was not reached.

The analysis of Group C and Group F revealed significant differences in the facilitation process and they present an interesting dimension to understanding how facilitation takes place in PR.

#### ***Group C (Sibongile) and Group F (Lungi)***

The main differences in the facilitators' approach to facilitation in the last school (Groups C and E) were the way in which the facilitators introduced and explained the 'road of life' technique, and the fact that the facilitators gave an example of what should be done in the task.

#### **4.2.4. Situation definition**

In the case of Groups C and F, the facilitators seemed to enter the interaction with a clearer situation definition of how the 'road of life' activity should be conducted. The facilitators' situation definition was still incorrect in light of the Learner Task Team's situation definition (that one sees one's life analogous to a road). However, their situation definition of the 'road of life' technique became more concise and consistent.

Both facilitators made the decision to change the way in which they defined the task and they left the reference to a road out of the task definition. Lungi decided to transform the 'road of life' technique into a timeline, whilst Sibongile opted to transform the 'road of life' technique into a drawing of one's life depicting both good and bad events. Both of these transformations allowed the facilitator to access information about the good and difficult times that the participants had faced in their lives. Interestingly this is similar to the dominant situation definition found in the first groups (A, B, D and E). Examples of the new situation definition of the 'road of life' technique are demonstrated in Extracts 14, 16 and 17. The examples of the 'new' task are demonstrated in Extract 15 and Extract 18.

In Extract 14, it is clear that Lungi's initial situation definition of the task, to extract information about the difficulties and good times that children faced, has become the main situation definition of the task.



### **Extract 14, Group F (Lungi)**

27. F: Individually think about your life since you were born up until now. All the things that have happened in  
28. your life; the bad and the good. For example like myself, I was born in January 1965. Therefore, I am  
29. going to start in 1972 right? (Laughs) For some of you, I am as old as your sisters are, and for some of  
30. you, I am as old as your mothers, and for others, I am as old as your grandmothers.  
31. Group: laughs  
32. F: So you begin in October 1965, and maybe mention that, in 1970, this is what happened. In 1972 this is  
33. what happened, and so on, and so on. Do you understand?  
34. Group: Yes  
35. F: Ok. I am asking you to do that on your pieces of paper. Each person takes a piece of paper. On your  
36. piece of paper you write your code name that is on your nametag and the name of your school. Are there  
37. any questions? Red Rose?  
38. Red Rose: I would like to ask what if things do not happen every year?  
39. F: It is not supposed to happen every year, but during those years, maybe there are important things that you  
40. remember. It might be good things or bad things...

**Extract 15, is very similar to Extract 14 as Lungi continues to define the task in terms of good and bad events in the children's lives. Additionally, Lungi continues to explain and mediate the participant's understanding of the task by giving an example of a timeline of her own life.**

### ***Extract 15, Group F (Lungi)***

49. F: You will draw a line. Let's make this example: let's say this is your paper. Let's have a look. You were  
50. born here in 1957 ok (pointing at paper) and then you will write down in 1957, I was born. Ok. And maybe  
51. in 1962 you went to school. Do you see that?  
52. Group: Ok.  
53. F: But you would have drawn the line, and you mention in 1962, I went to school and so on and so on.  
54. Until the end. Do you see that? You will draw the line crossing (showing on her example timeline).  
55. Then you enter the years. Do you see that? In a certain year this is what happened, in a certain year this is  
56. what happened. Remember that we are looking at the good times in your life and the difficult times in your  
57. life. If you feel you have a problem I will be next to you to help you. (One student picks up a textbook to  
58. press on)  
59. F: Don't destroy the teacher's textbook because you don't have much to write anyway.  
60. P1: Mam, you will begin in the year in which you were born until 2004?  
61. F: Yes. And you will split your paper like this (showing the participant what to do)  
62. P1: Does that mean when I am writing, I will begin since I was born, in 1987, until 2004? Saying what  
63. happened?  
64. F: Ja you will think about all those things. The good times.

65. P2: 2001 (inaudible)

66. F: Ja, it doesn't mean that every year there will be important things happening. It could be a good thing or

67. a difficult thing.

**Sibongile also explains the 'road of life' technique differently to her previous groups. She emphasises good and bad events in the children's lives and moves away from the 'road of life' analogy (Extract 16, lines 31 and 32).**

#### **Extract 16, Group C (Sibongile)**

31. F: Today there is something that I would like you to do, today you are going to draw... I would like you to draw

32. ... you are going to draw ...you are drawing your life since you were born up until now.

**In the explanation (Extract 17, line 35), the participants are told to draw their lives like a road and this is the first and the last reference to a road. The task is then described as a drawing of the happy and sad times in the children lives (lines 36 and 37). This semiotic mediation differs from Groups A and B because the 'road of life' was hardly mentioned.**

#### **Extract 17, Group C (Sibongile)**

35. F: draw your life like a road... draw your life since you were born... draw it like a road... show us the good

36. times in your life and tell us the things that made you happy at that time in your life and also draw things that

37. made you sad in your life, you will tell us what happened that made you feel so sad. These things can be your

38. family ... your mother, father, sisters, brothers or your cousins ... after that you will share it with us ... do you

39. want me to draw you my life? Do you want me to show you the drawing of my life?

40. Group: Yes

#### **Extract 18, Group C (Sibongile)**

42. F: This is I here... I was born... I'm a first born at home... my family was very happy when I was born,

43. very happy. When I was two years old, my mother had another baby. It's not easy when another child comes

44. (into the home), it was not easy. It did not feel good to me, now there was someone else to compete for the

45. love of my mother (Learners: laughing). Here I started school, I was seven years old, and I was happy. Here

46. my mother left us at home it was not nice. Just imagine I was starting school and my mother was not around

47. and we were staying with my uncle... life went on. But it was not nice. When I was doing standard six my

48. mother came back home, it was nice to have my mother with us. The time went on. I started working in 1988

49. and it was the happiest time in my life, to have my own money and to buy things I have always wanted to

50. buy and have. In 1999 my brother passed away, my heart was broken. There will be no right or wrong



51. drawings. I am not expecting others to laugh when someone is telling us about their drawing, I will not stand
52. that, do you understand?

The example given by the facilitator of her own life further influences the outcome of the task (Extract 18). In response, the children seem to mimic the facilitator's approach to drawing her own life. This is demonstrated in Figure 8 below.

The analysis of Group F illustrates that both the semiotic mediation and the situation definition of the task were transformed. The change in Sibongile and Lungi's situation definition of the task is demonstrated in Table 3 below. It can be clearly seen that the situation definition is centred on one main focus as opposed to there being many different situation definitions. What is significant about this is that the facilitators do not get better at explaining (using semiotic mediation) the task across the groups (A, B, D and E) rather they abandon the task and reframe it as a different task in Groups C and F.

Table 3: Situation definition and semiotic mediation in Group F

	Situation Definition	Semiotic Mediation
1	Your life can be seen as the life you have lived from your birth to this point in time. Think about your life from birth to now.	"Individually think about your life since you were born up until now". (Extract 14, line 27).
2	Good and bad times should be included.	<p>"All the things that have happened in your life; the bad and the good. " (Extract 14, line 27-28).</p> <p>"It is (good or bad events) not supposed to happen every year, but during those years, maybe there are important things that you remember. It might be good things or bad things" (Extract 14, lines 39-40).</p>
3	Here is an example. Conduct a timeline similar to my example.	<p>"Here I started school...I was happy" (Extract 18, line 45).</p> <p>"Here my mother left us at home it was not nice" (Extract 18, lines 45-46).</p> <p>"In 2000 my brother passed away, my heart was broken" (Extract 18, line 50).</p>

When asked in the individual interview about this transformation in the situation definition used in the last groups (C and F) both Sibongile and Lungi discuss their experience of the 'road of life' technique.

In the interview, Lungi describes her difficulty with the road of life technique. She describes how it was difficult to get the children to think about the task in the way that was required. She stated "with the 'road of life', they [the children] kept on going back to the stones that are pricking their feet". She discusses how she felt that she was running out of time, as she was not keeping to the schedule, and despite the time spent on explaining the task she had not collected the information needed. Lungi felt that she could have explained the task in a better way and this struggle is evident in the following explanation of how she presented the task to the participants:

I'd say to them (the participants), 'Now I would like you to think about your life and relate it to your actual road, you will remember that we said on the actual road there are difficult areas there, there are easy areas. Now relate that to your life'. So I think that (silence)..."

It is perhaps significant that when she gets to the end of this explanation she literally stops in the middle of her sentence. This is perhaps a reflection of her inability to define the task in the appropriate way. She then seems to resort to blaming the task for being difficult. She refers to the facilitation of the 'road of life' technique as a "messy explanation" to carry out. She implies that although the developmental level of the learners may also have affected the task, the task was still difficult to facilitate. However, the children in Lungi's groups are between the ages of 12 and 15 years of age and thus their developmental level is not of concern in this focus group process. It is almost as if she is disassociating herself from the 'road of life' explanation, and suggests that she was merely carrying out an instruction, that she was told to perform in a specific way.

When asked if it would have made a difference to the outcome of the task if it has been conducted differently Lungi agrees by saying:

Well I think that a different way would have been...not to mention the road. Because, I'm thinking that you know, my road might be ...very comfortable ...to school and

maybe also, my road might be difficult...to school, you know. And some learners were taking kombi's to school (laughs). So, it was...difficult.

By stating this she reinforces her concrete situation definition of the task.

Sibongile implies that she really had to grapple with the situation definition of the task as she discusses how she went home and continued to think about how she defined the task. This seems to suggest that she was aware that she was not succeeding in defining the task well enough in order for intersubjectivity to be achieved. In the debriefing session Sibongile confirms she did not put much emphasis on describing this road and that this worked better because she emphasised the happy and sad events in the children's lives.

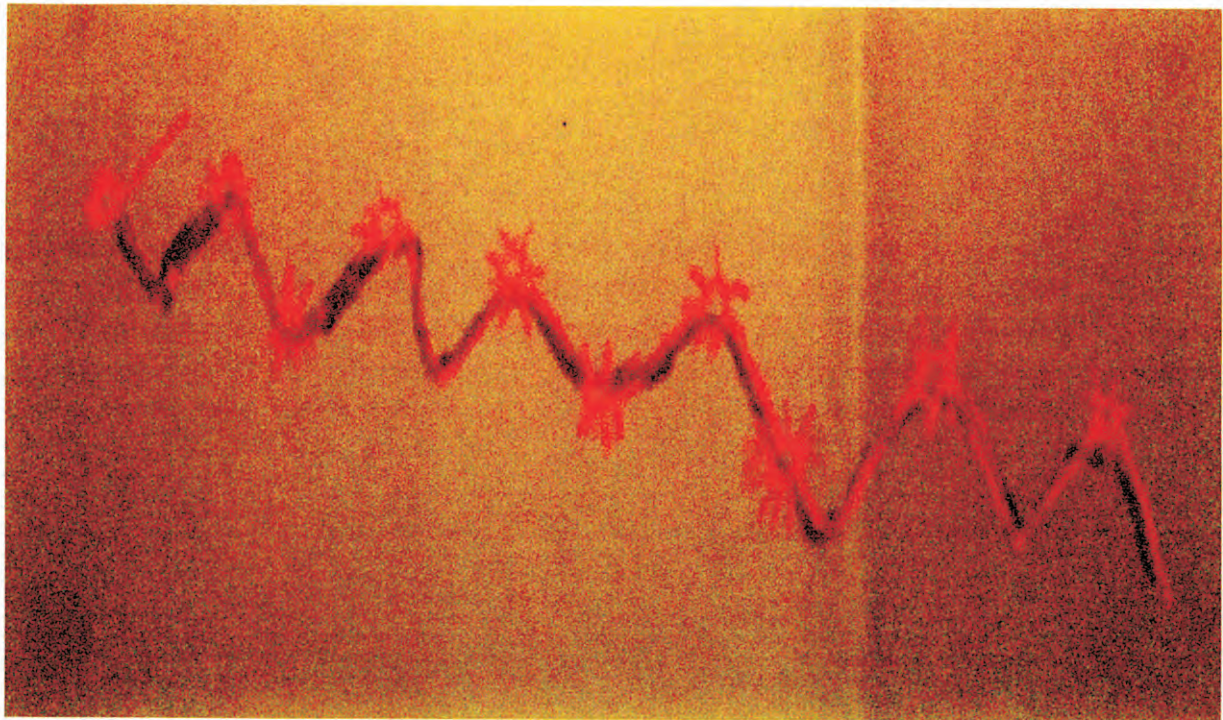
The differences in the facilitation of the 'road of life' technique can be attributed to two things (1) the time and experience in Groups A, B, D and E and (2) an additional training session that occurred just before Groups C and D were conducted.

The task was explained following the format of the 'ideal' example above. In the training session the facilitators had to draw their own 'road of life' and in essence adopted the role of the participants. The task was explained through the use of examples, and in an individual interview with Sibongile, when asked why her understanding of the task changed, she stated that it was due to the additional training she had received.

In addition to this, Sibongile states that what helped her to change her understanding of the task was the realisation that she did not "have to read the whole thing (instruction), if I felt that it was more confusing (for the participants)". This raises a second major issue: the facilitator's idea of how the task should be mediated. The researchers did not intend for the facilitator to read out the instructions to the children but rather to understand the task and explain it in their own words. The focus group guide was a "guide" and not a set of inflexible instructions. Thus, when the facilitator was told that the instructions did not have to be followed rigidly, she abandoned the Learner Task Team's situation definition of the task completely, thus, changing the situation definition of the task from a 'road of life' analogy to a task describing happy and sad events in the participants' lives. The result of this was that the participants' situation definition also changed and their drawings were of a graph depicting happy and sad events in their lives. This is illustrated in Figure 8 below. As can be seen the graphic representation of the task now



resembles a graph, the upper peaks of the graph represent happy times whilst the lower peaks represent sad times.



**Figure 8: A participant's representation of the 'road of life' task in Group C. The transformation of the task into happy and sad times is also demonstrated below in Extract 19 and Extract 20. It is also evident that the children have described their lives in a similar light to the example they were given.**

### Extract 19, Group C (Sibongile)

90. F: Okay... Goodman.
91. Goodman: Here I was happy and here I was not happy.
92. F: What made you unhappy?
93. Goodman: I was injured.
94. F: Where are your parents?
95. Goodman: My mother stays in Durban.
96. F: Is she working?
97. Goodman: No she is not.
98. F: Where is your father?
99. Goodman: My father passed away.
100. F: How does it feel to you not to have a father figure?
101. Goodman: Bad.



### **Extract 20, Group F (Lungi)**

125. Red Rose: I was born in 1987. In 1994 I went to the clinic. In 2002, my mother bought me a nice gift.  
126. F: Maybe you would like to tell us, what that gift was?  
127. Red Rose: She bought me clothes.  
128. F: Ok, ok. Did that make you happy?  
129. Red Rose: Yes it made me happy. In 2004 my sister passed away. In 2003 the day I will never forget, it  
130. was December 16, when we visited the beach.  
131. Group: laughs  
132. F: Thank you

#### **4.2.5. Mediation**

In this task, the facilitator and participants were able to negotiate a third situation definition of the road of life task as the children's representations of the task (their verbal discussion and their drawings of the task) were what the facilitators expected. The alignment of the participants' situation definition of the task with the facilitators' situation definition of the task is demonstrated in Extracts 19 and 20. The participants understood the explanation of the task and responded appropriately. Examples of the participants' understanding of the task are illustrated in Extract 19 and 20.

#### **4.2.6. Intersubjectivity**

Intersubjectivity was identified in the children's drawings and in their verbal interaction with the facilitators about these drawings if they reflected the facilitators' definition of the situation. Because intersubjectivity also refers to the points at which (or moments where) the participants and the facilitators shared *a*, that is, any, situation definition, it can be said that intersubjectivity was reached in Groups C and F, and although it was not the 'ideal' situation definition in that it was not what the Learner Task Team required, it was shared by the participants. However, specific information such as an in-depth account of the children's lives that would have been gained using the 'road of life' technique was not collected and thus the insight the Learner Task Team hoped for was lost.

#### **4.3. The facilitators understanding of participatory research (PR)**

The question must now be asked about why the ‘road of life’ technique failed whilst the ranking exercise succeeded? In answering this question there appear to be two sources of ‘failure’. The one is the nature of the activity, and the other is the ability of the facilitators to understand and facilitate the task. To some extent someone’s ability to facilitate depends on their own understanding of the task and the process. Information about this aspect of the question was obtained in the individual interviews with the facilitators. These findings will be presented below but will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

Both Sibongile and Lungi seem to have a basic knowledge of some of the principles of PR. These include participation, participants owning the research process, the guiding roles of the facilitator’s role as a guide, accessing voices of the participants, and empowerment. In the individual interviews Sibongile explains her understanding of PR as something that is “meant to include participation”, where “you allow your participant(s) to lead the way (in a discussion)”. As a facilitator, she describes her role as a person who sets the guidelines within the research. She also explains that the topics should come from the participants and that as a facilitator one’s role is to enable and encourage the participants. Sibongile commented that the difference in facilitating a PR process as opposed to an ordinary research process is that in PR “you are creating a platform for people to talk about their lives”. The facilitator has a list of questions but these are merely are a guide. She argues that PR is a chance

for people to express how they feel or what they know, in their surroundings, and to say things you might not have expected.

Up until this point, it seems as if Sibongile has a good understanding of the PR process. However, Sibongile then states that:

You know they [the participants] might lead the discussion in a different direction than what you wanted them to, and I think it takes somebody who has a particular skills to bring them back, to, to direct them to the questions that you want them to answer... You have to, to listen attentively to what the person is saying and you try and to shape, you know, direct the person towards, you know what, what you intend.

This statement about directing participants to what the researcher intends is contradictory to what Sibongile initially stated. A tension seems to exist between the participatory, participant-directed process outlined in Sibongile's response above, and these later comments.

Although Lungi did not contradict herself in the same way Sibongile did, her understanding of PR was very basic. Lungi discusses how in PR the information that is generated needs to be "owned by the participant" and how participants should be a "part of information generation as well as the analysis of the information". She also says that in a true participatory endeavour, the process "should be some kind of an empowerment for them [the participants] for ...skills that they will use". She, however, did not mention how the participants own the research process or how they are empowered in a PR interaction. She was thus able to, in general, list why she thought PR was important but when asked to elaborate on these concepts, she was not able to do so.

The second issue which could have contributed to the facilitation of one technique failing whilst the facilitation of the other succeeding was that the 'road of life' technique was far more complex than the ranking exercise. The ranking exercise simply called for the facilitator to get the participants to list their worries and to rank them by 'voting' with beans. The 'road of life' technique, however, required participants to think abstractly. It required them to think of their lives as being analogous to a road, then to draw their 'road of life' and then to explain it back to the group. The ranking exercise was, thus, easier for the facilitators to understand and to engage the appropriate semiotic mediation to explain to the group of participants.

In this section the findings of the research have been presented and described. Some of these findings included: the ranking exercise was successfully facilitated and intersubjectivity was achieved whereas the 'road of life' technique failed. Some of the reasons why the 'road of life' technique failed included the nature of the activity, and the ability of the facilitators to understand and facilitate the task. The significance of these findings and their importance in relation to the theory will be discussed in the next section.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This thesis aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how facilitation occurs through the use of a micro-genetic analysis. Wertsch's (1984) three theoretical constructs of situation definition, semiotic mediation and intersubjectivity enable a fine-grained analysis of how facilitation took place in these particular PR interactions.

This chapter explores the main findings of the research, and in doing so it offers greater insight into the research questions of this study. Some of the issues explored include the reasons for the success and failure of the two participatory techniques. Additionally, the effect of the facilitators' understanding of PR principles, and the implications of this, are discussed.

In the review of the literature it was argued that a theoretical account of how facilitators implement PR was lacking in the literature. The PR literature does not give a standardized account of how PR facilitation should take place and because of this PR facilitators conduct PR facilitation in many different, and possibly inconsistent, ways. A theoretical account of a phenomenon is important because it enables scientists to have a foundation for collecting different facts. In order for an approach, such as participatory research (PR), to advance it requires a strong theoretical foundation so that researchers can evaluate and improve on the practice of PR.

As was suggested in the literature review Vygotsky's theory, as extrapolated by Wertsch (1984), was useful in understanding and explaining the process of facilitation in PR. The application of Wertsch's (1984) theory allowed for a systematic examination of all of these 'facts', which thus revealed the mechanisms of how facilitation in these PR interactions happened. This theoretical account of how PR facilitators "do" facilitation has allowed for a clearer understanding of what the issues are and it has provided a standard against which to evaluate PR practice.

The facilitation of the ranking exercise and the 'road of life' technique proved to be different for each technique. This was due to the fact that each task was structured differently. This included the nature of the situation definition and the semiotic mediation of the activity, and the way in which the facilitators structured the PR techniques in the interaction.



### **5.1. The facilitation of the ranking exercise**

Various elements led to the success of the ranking exercise. This “recipe” or “formula” for successful facilitation included the fact that the facilitators correctly assessed the participants’ understanding in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), they structured the interaction in such a way so that it promoted active participation, and they mediated the task appropriately using the products of the ranking exercise as a mediational means. Consequently, these things led to the participants understanding the task.

As highlighted in the literature review three common elements demonstrate why facilitator-participant interactions succeed and these were relevant to this study (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, both cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). First of all, it is critical for a facilitator to correctly assess a participant’s existing (actual) level of understanding in the ZPD. This entails recognising a participant’s situation definition/s and working towards creating a shared understanding and achieving intersubjectivity. Both facilitators were able to assess the participants’ actual level of understanding in the ZPD. They thus recognised the participants’ initial situation definitions and were able to negotiate a third situation definition based on this information. Secondly, the participant’s engagement in the task has to be structured in such a way that it promotes active participation in activities. The ranking exercise was structured in such a way that it encouraged active participation by the children (evidenced in Extract 2, and in the video data). Wertsch and Kanner (1992) argue that an activity must be ‘guided’ or ‘organised’ in accordance with specific principles, in this case, PR principles. Thirdly, there must be the use of a tool which ensures the transition from the intermental plane to the intramental plane of functioning occurs at the appropriate times. The facilitators used the ranking exercise as a tool which possibly enabled internalisation as the product of the ranking exercise (the ranking output) was a mediational means. It is these mediational means which possibly allowed the participants to critically reflect on the activity and to experience a cognitive shift in the way they understood the issues in their lives.

#### **5.1.1. Situation definition**

The specific steps one uses to define a task are called action patterns and these convey the situation definition of the task (Wertsch, 1984). The use of an appropriate action pattern was significant to the success of the ranking exercise. The facilitators’ steps or action pattern, which

structured the task and guided the participants to conduct this task, was very similar to the ideal action pattern of the ranking exercise, as demonstrated in Figure 4. It was also the action pattern endorsed by the Learner task Team. As reflected by the action pattern, it seems that the facilitation process was successful because the facilitators had a clear idea of how the task should unfold and they were consistent in implementing one main situation definition (see Table 2). It might be that this clarity was connected to the simple and concrete nature of the task.

### **5.1.2. Mediation**

Wertsch (1984) argues that the appropriate semiotic mediation is a vital component for the negotiation of a third situation definition of a task and it seems that in this task the facilitators also used appropriate semiotic mediation to structure and explain the ranking exercise to the participants. This led to the participants understanding the task and being able to articulate their most salient worries.

Thus the semiotic mediation facilitated the internalisation of an understanding of the task. The inter-psychological interaction (one aspect of this is evidenced in the semiotic mediation/language interaction between the participants and the facilitator) was internalised to change the participant's intra-psychological functioning (the cognitive functioning of the individual), so that s/he could engage in the task.

This transition of psychological functioning from the intermental plane to the intramental plane meant that the participants redefined their situation definition of the task and thus intersubjectivity was achieved in the ranking exercise as the participants identified their worries and ranked them in the manner expected by both the facilitator and the Learner Task Team.

The ranking exercise did achieve measurement validity as the use of this technique did 'fit' with the research question of investigating the children's worries. In addition the process of the ranking exercise was consistent across the different focus group processes and sites and thus reliability was also achieved.

As has been stated in the results section the 'road of life' technique was not as successful as the ranking exercise and the facilitators encountered several problems in its implementation.

## **5.2. The facilitation of the 'road of life' technique**

Various factors seem to have contributed to the failure of the 'road of life' technique. These included the facilitators' inability to assess the participants' understanding in the ZPD, the fact that the interactions lacked structure, and the fact that the facilitators' situation definitions and semiotic mediation was inappropriate.

The facilitators were unable to assess the participants' level of understanding in the 'road of life' task and, as Newman et al. (1989, cited in Wertsch & Kanner, 1992) argue, this often leads to the failure of a task. This seemed to occur in the 'road of life' technique across two of the three schools (as evidenced in Extract 10, 11, 12 and 13). Furthermore, just as Newman et al. (*ibid*) argue, this lack of engagement lead to the participants' failure to understand the 'road of life' activity and their failure to express what they did understand to the facilitator. The facilitators could therefore not effectively engage the participants in the task in such a way so as to help them to reach their potential level of understanding of the 'road of life' technique. Their semiotic mediation thus failed to promote the participants' internalisation of the activity. This is evidenced in Extract 13 as many participants were silent and did not act, in response to the facilitator's mediation.

The issue that now becomes important is 'why did the facilitators not understand the participants' level of understanding in the ZPD?' The reason for this might be that the facilitators did not themselves have a clear understanding of the task and thus they failed to employ an adequate situation definition and appropriate semiotic mediation.

### **5.2.1. Situation Definition**

In this study, it is clear that both the facilitators and the participants did, as Wertsch (1984) argues, enter the interaction with different situation definitions of the 'road of life' technique.

As mentioned above, in an ideal situation, a facilitator's action pattern for a task would have the correct steps to successfully mediate the participants' engagement in an activity. However, the facilitators' situation definition and action pattern were different from that of the Learner Task Team.



The Learner Task Team specifically chose the 'road of life' technique because they believed it served a particular purpose in helping to answer the research question. There was thus a third party involved in defining the situation.

### **5.2.2. Mediation**

In addition to the lack of an appropriate and consistent situation definition and action pattern, inadequate semiotic mediation was used in the facilitation of the 'road of life' technique. As discussed in the literature review, semiotic mediation is the mechanism which makes the negotiation of a third situation definition possible so that intersubjectivity can be achieved (Wertsch, 1984).

It seems that although the facilitators were aware of the need for the participants to link their life story with a road, they did not fully understand the purpose of the task or the 'road of life' analogy. They, therefore, did not have the semiotic means to explain the task and as a result, they had many inadequate situation definitions which were erratic. Just as Wertsch (1984) argues, for intersubjectivity to occur, it was necessary for the participants to understand the facilitators' explanation (situation definition) and to respond appropriately to this explanation. This was however not the case with the 'road of life' technique as the verbal explanations of the activity that the facilitators provided were insufficient to enable intersubjectivity. Furthermore, the facilitators' reversion to a much simpler form of the task, illustrating the good and difficult events in children's lives, also dominated their facilitation of the activities.

The Learner Task Team specifically chose the 'road of life' technique to mediate the participants' reflection of their lives. Ideally the 'road of life' technique should be able to do this in many ways. In the 'road of life' technique participants use their own categories to plot their life journey. This embodies an empathic position.

When conducting a 'road of life' task, the participant produces a diagram of his/her life journey. In the PR process, these visual representations mediate the participants' understanding of phenomenon as they potentially enable critical reflection to occur. This diagram of the participant's 'road of life' is thus a second mediatory device that allows the process of reflection to occur, because it embodies a distanced position. As Kelly (1999a) argues it is this process of seeing one's life in a different light that creates the condition which allows for change to occur within the participant. The 'road of

life' technique thus ideally allows the participant to adopt both an empathic and distanced position on his/her life.

However, this change process cannot occur if the mediation of the activity, and in this case, the facilitation of the participatory technique, is problematic. This ideal process did not occur in the facilitation of the 'road of life' technique. The participants were unable to reflect on the diagrammatic representations of their lives because these were not appropriately generated. This negatively affected the creation of a context for change.

The in-depth analysis of the focus group data, the individual interview data and the debriefing session data revealed that the Learner Task Team assumed that the facilitators understood the 'road of life' technique, when in actual fact they did not. This suggests that the facilitators also needed mediation of the 'road of life' technique from the Learner Task Team just as the participants needed mediation of the task by the facilitators.

The 'road of life' technique did not achieve measurement validity as the use of this technique deviated from the research question of discussing and plotting a participant's life journey. In addition the process of the 'road of life' was inconsistent across the different focus group processes and sites and thus reliability was not achieved.

### **5.3. Differences between the techniques**

The nature of the ranking exercise was simple and concrete whilst the 'road of life' technique was abstract and thus more complex. The nature of the techniques was thus different and this required a difference in the way in which they were facilitated.

### **5.4. The facilitators' limited understanding of PR principles**

One of the most easily recognisable differences between the techniques was that participants understood the ranking exercise but did not understand the 'road of life' technique. The simplicity of the ranking exercise resided in its main activity: making lists of things (in this case worries) and voting according to what is most important. It could thus be structured appropriately. On the other hand, the 'road of life' activity was perhaps too foreign for these participants and also too foreign for the facilitators to understand. The participants needed

appropriate mediation from a facilitator in order to redefine their situation definition and to negotiate a third situation definition of the task, but this could not happen because the facilitators did not understand the task appropriately and consequently did not have the semiotic means to explain the task.

The abstract nature of the 'road of life' technique required the facilitators to understand the principles of PR in order to facilitate the technique successfully. These PR principles have to be understood, and have to be internalised by the facilitators before they can facilitate (or mediate) the PR techniques properly.

Some PR techniques, like the ranking exercise can simply be implemented through using a set of instructions, but other kinds of techniques such as the 'road of life' technique are inherently embedded in the principles of PR and are more difficult to implement. A lack of an understanding of the PR principles has major consequences for the facilitation of PR processes.

The facilitators' knowledge of PR did not reflect a comprehensive understanding of PR and its practical application. This is perhaps what contributed to their inability to facilitate the 'road of life' technique in the appropriate way, and their reversion to a simpler, and more manageable form of the task. The facilitators knew that they had to access information about the participants' lives so that the Learner Task Team could learn more about the barriers to the children's basic education. However the facilitators' use of more manageable and direct questions, may have led the participants to provide the relatively superficial accounts of their lives. This might not have occurred if the facilitators had implemented the 'road of life' technique appropriately.

The facilitators acknowledged the need to access the children's local categories. In this sense they were adhering to one of the basic principles of PR, that of accessing the local knowledge of the participants. Despite the facilitators' statements about the importance of accessing local knowledge, one of the facilitators, Sibongile, stated that PR facilitation also requires that the facilitator direct the participants in a particular direction. This tension signifies a direct violation of the PR principles which state that the research must be based on the participant's local categories. A tension thus existed in terms of Sibongile's perceptions of PR as her latter position seemed to contradict the idea of prioritising the participants' views. Sibongile's statement of directing the participants to answer the researcher's questions is no different from the approach used in more traditional methodology such as a focus group or a questionnaire. In PR a researcher has an idea of the topic he/she would



like to explore but if the participants focus on other issues that they find to be more important, the PR researcher adapts the process to include these categories of inquiry.

The facilitators did collect local knowledge in the ranking exercise and to a lesser extent in the 'road of life' technique. However, their facilitation process seemed only to access very shallow accounts of the participants' lives. This was possibly because of their lack of understanding of how to access local knowledge. As illustrated in the literature review, attention needs to be given, for example, to the power dynamics in a research interaction (Johnson & Mayoux, 1997). By stating that one needs to control the research process, Sibongile illustrates her lack of knowledge about reducing power dynamics in an interaction as here she is admitting to using her power in influencing the research outcome. In addition, although the facilitators expressed a need to access the participants' voices they did not understand that PR techniques are a vital component in enabling this process as they help to address the power dynamics in an interaction. If they had known this, they would not as easily have transformed the 'road of life' technique into a completely different task. Additionally, the facilitators were unaware that the Learner Task Team had carefully selected the 'road of life' technique for a particular reason.

In addition PR techniques ideally enable participants to articulate, extend and to analyse their local knowledge. In this 'road of life' technique the participants were meant to individually generate a diagram of their life, in the form of a road, and then share this with the group. The participatory nature of this activity allows for the participant to generate his/her own categories to reflect issues or events in his/her life. The construction of the diagram ideally challenges this empathic and situated account by allowing the participant to stand back and reflect on the process of his/her life (Kelly 1999a). In this way the 'road of life' technique ideally facilitates a distanced position. However, in this research process, the facilitators did not even allow for the proper generation of the 'road of life' diagrams and thus the first step in facilitating the conditions for critical reflection in PR was lacking. Thus, by failing to ensure the success of the first step for critical reflection, the facilitators did not come close to acting on, or acknowledging, the PR principle of the participants engaging in a process of critical reflection, and how this could potentially impact on the way in which they understood their reality.

#### **5.4.1. The significance of training**

The facilitators' lack of understanding of the PR principles has implications for how researchers train PR facilitators. It is interesting that in spite of the training the facilitators received, they did not have a working understanding of PR. They were given more training by the Learner Task Team after their first focus groups but this did not help them to engage in the practice differently. It seems that the training by the Learner Task Team did not focus on the principles of PR, but rather how the techniques should be run. They also seem to have neglected to mention how these steps should be facilitated and why this was important. Thus the training was similar to most PR instruction texts such as in the Theis and Grady (1991) manual (see Figure 1).

Trainers should take into account the level of difficulty of the tasks, and the kinds of conceptual demands that it places on the facilitators. This should inform how the training process must take place.

At a glance these principles seem to be simple and self explanatory, and one might assume that merely by reading a text on PR, that anyone could grasp these concepts. However, grasping these principles and adopting them in one's practice as a researcher has a profound effect on the way one would implement a research process. The difficulty of understanding (and ultimately working with) these principles, is perhaps underestimated. For example, it is the nature of the PR techniques that sets PR apart from other research methodologies. If one does not understand the principles, then implementing the techniques becomes mechanical and most likely will not achieve the aims of the PR process. It is only once one has an understanding of, for example, critical reflection and how the techniques enable this, that one can see how PR brings about internalisation and change and why this is important. More importantly this understanding relates to the epistemological and ontological foundations of PR, *viz.* they assume a particular understanding of reality and they argue that knowledge can be created in a particular way. It might be that if a facilitator understands these epistemological and ontological foundations, then she would inevitably have a firmer grasp of their potential impact and the significance of implementing the techniques in a particular way.

Essentially, validity and reliability in a PR data collection process rely solely on how the facilitator implements and facilitates the PR techniques. In this study the facilitators did not implement the PR techniques in a systematic or consistent manner across the research sites and

this affected the reliability of the Learner Task Team's research as the study would not be easily repeated. Additionally, the 'road of life' technique was used inappropriately and it was not related to the Learner Task Teams research question and this affected the measurement validity of the study. The research question thus could not be said to measure what it claimed to measure and the meaning of the data was thus rendered questionable.

The elaboration of the mechanisms of facilitation within this research project assists in developing an understanding of the relationship between the principles of PR and the techniques, and the implications of this for training. It also provides a way in which to evaluate or understand the effectiveness of the PR techniques. This theorization of the process of facilitation improves the implementation of the research process and could have a significant effect on the kind of data that is produced in a PR process.



## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to generate an account of how facilitation takes place within the PR process. Through the use of a fine-grained micro-genetic analysis the researcher was able to determine the mechanisms behind the success and failure of each of these techniques. This, along with the interview and debriefing session data, allowed the researcher to gain insight into the impact of the facilitators' understanding of PR principles on the overall research process.

It is clear that PR facilitation has to meet certain requirements in order to have successful research outcomes. A significant element of this is the facilitator's understanding of the nature of the task (this includes an appropriate situation definition and the appropriate use of semiotic mediation) and her understanding of the PR principles. If facilitated effectively, this leads to intersubjectivity and the techniques thus enable a process of critical reflection.

It is also important to recognise that different PR techniques require different kinds of facilitation as some techniques are simpler than others. This is because PR techniques have different functions which do not always include enabling the degree of critical reflection which leads to changes in how one views one's reality. This has implications for training facilitators in PR processes. It might be that for some techniques the PR principles have to be understood, and sufficiently internalised by the facilitators before they can facilitate (or mediate) them properly. Training processes need to take into account the level of difficulty of the tasks, and the kinds of conceptual demands that it places on the facilitators.

### **6.1. Limitations of the study**

One of the main findings was that the Learner Task Team and the facilitators had different situation definitions of the 'road of life' technique and that this contributed to the failure of the task. However, this study did not focus on the relationship between the facilitators and the Learner Task Team. More information about this relationship could have shed light on its impact on the facilitation of the PR techniques. This would have meant that the study would have included the examination of three different situation definitions (that of the Learner Task Team, the facilitators and, to a lesser extent, the participants) and this would have further informed the study of facilitation in PR interactions.

The findings of this study did obtain transferential validity as a thorough account of the research process and the reasons for the chosen methodology have been provided in this document and the findings of this thesis can be transferred to new contexts in other studies. However, the generalisability of this study could have been enhanced by examining the facilitation process of more than two facilitators across a variety of PR techniques as this would have provided greater insight into PR facilitation. Ensuring reliability in qualitative research is difficult as researchers are not investigating an unchanging reality and research that is repeatable and consistent is difficult to achieve. However, the micro-genetic analysis used in this study was a rigorous and detailed process and this strengthened the reliability of this Master's study.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

This study has emphasised the fact that there is something about understanding the principles of PR that helps a facilitator implement participatory techniques in a fundamentally different way from someone who does not understand the PR principles and this relates to the issues of the epistemology and ontology of PR.

This study suggests that the nature of PR training needs to be re-thought so as to maximise PR facilitators' understanding of PR principles and the implementation of the techniques.

It is recommended that the facilitation process of participatory research (PR) requires more research, with a focus on how the understanding of PR principles impacts on the facilitation process. In addition, more research which elaborates the mechanisms of facilitation could provide greater insight into PR facilitation

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Individual interview questions**

##### **1. General questions about the PR process**

1a. How would you define the role of a participatory facilitator?

1b. Is it different from facilitating an interview or a focus group?

##### **2. *The participatory process***

2a. What does your role in the focus groups entail?

2b. How did you feel about the facilitation of the PR process?

2c. What was easy about the facilitation process? Why?

2d. What was difficult about the facilitation process? Why?

##### **3. *Participatory Techniques***

3a. What techniques did you facilitate?

3b. What techniques worked well?

3c. Why do you think they worked well?

3d. What techniques failed to work?

3e. Why do you think they failed to work?

3f. What is different between the techniques that worked and those that did not?

##### **4. *Experiences of facilitation***

4a. How has your experience of facilitation changed since the initial focus group?

4b. In what ways has your ability to facilitate changed?

4c. What mechanisms have occurred to initiate this change?

- 4d. Have you developed new skills concerning facilitation in the research process? If yes, what are they?
- 4e. What skills do you think are necessary to facilitate participatory techniques?
- 4f. Did you feel you lacked any skills to facilitate the PR techniques? If yes, what are they?
- 4g. What are some of the positives of facilitating participatory techniques?
- 4h. What are the negative aspects of participating participatory techniques?
- 4i. Do you think the participatory techniques are useful? If yes why? If no why?

## Appendix 2

### Informed consent for participation in a research project

I....., voluntarily give my consent to serve as a participant in a research project being run by Merridy Boettiger who is a masters student in the School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg) along with the 9147 NRF project. I consent to an interview administered by Merridy Boettiger on this day .....

I have received a clear and complete explanation of the general nature and purpose of the study. I have also been informed of how the results of the research will be used. I am aware that all information will be confidential and my identity strictly protected. No one other than Merridy Boettiger will know my personal identity. I am also, however, aware that information is available to the larger 9147 NRF project although my personal identity will be protected. Furthermore, I am aware that I will be given the opportunity to see the transcript of my interviews before it is accessible to the greater project. Any points in the discussion that I am uncomfortable with will be removed from the transcript.

The data will primarily be collected for a master's thesis, but it will also be used for conference presentations, and possibly for research publications. I am not obliged to offer any personal information that I do not wish to disclose. I have the right to withdraw at anytime and may terminate my participation in the interview.

.....  
Signature of the participant

.....  
Date

.....  
Print name here

.....  
Signature of the researcher



### **Permission to tape**

I understand that this interview will be recorded and transcribed and consent to this. The transcripts will be available to Merridy Boettiger and the larger NRF project.

.....

Signature of participant

.....

Date

.....

Print name here

.....

Signature of the researcher