

Tackling Xenophobia through Dialogue: A Freirean Approach

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Abstract

The deadly violence associated with xenophobia has become a concern in South Africa, a country with historically high levels of violence. This article explores the role that peace education can play in mitigating such conflict. Using Paulo Freire's theorisation of dialogue in education, it discusses a peace education intervention that developed participatory workshops to foster dialogue between South Africans and their neighbours of foreign origin soon after the second wave of violence in South Africa in 2015. The article discusses the curriculum and pedagogical intent of the workshops through a theoretical framing of dialogue, how participants and facilitators responded to such plans and what learning and action were generated from these workshops. The experiences of participants and facilitators reveal a preliminary stage of deepening understandings in terms of reviewing rigid us/them dichotomies and identities, and reviewing stereotypical understandings of causes of conflict. The final section offers some critical reflections on the workshop design and the role of such interventions in relation to goals of broader social change. Some recommendations for future workshops in light of the need for psychosocial support generated by the workshop process are offered.

Keywords: dialogue; participatory pedagogy; xenophobia; peace education; South Africa; Paulo Freire

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Introduction

South Africa has exceptionally high levels of violence. The country has some of the highest rates of murder and gender-based violence recorded anywhere in the world. Violence is also a regular part of life in educational institutions, such as schools and universities (John 2016). In the past decade, violence associated with xenophobia has been added to the country's notoriety. Globally, political and economic instability is giving rise to larger populations of refugees and migrants, matched by rising tensions between local and foreign nationals, as well as rising xenophobia. What role can peace education play in mitigating such conflict (Bekerman and Zembylas 2010; John 2016)? This article reports on a peace education intervention that developed participatory workshops to foster dialogue between South Africans and their neighbours of foreign origin soon after the violence that occurred in 2015.

Media coverage of xenophobia gains prominence in periods of extremely violent outbreaks, such as those of 2008 and 2015, when attacks on foreign nationals left many dead and even more displaced. Research on such violence, while growing, tends to provide expert perspectives or victim/survivor-only perspectives. There is no published research to date that has attempted to bring foreign nationals and South Africans into conversation with one another about the experiences of both groups living together in South Africa and about the conflicts experienced and reported as xenophobia. This article reports on an intervention that brought foreign nationals and South Africans, living in the same community space or in close proximity to each other, into workshops designed to generate dialogue between the two groups about their lives, livelihoods and the challenges they face. The workshops employed participatory pedagogy to develop a safe, trusting environment, which could foster critical reflections and honest dialogue. It sought to conscientise and lay foundations for discussing solutions and actions to address the challenges identified by both groups.

After setting out the context of violence and xenophobia in South Africa and reviewing related literature, the article introduces a Freirean lens on dialogue for a later discussion of the design, implementation and revisions made to a set of workshops developed in an action-research project on xenophobia. The focus in this article is on the curriculum and pedagogical intent of the workshops, how participants and facilitators responded to such plans and what learning and action were generated from these workshops for both project partners and participants. These experiences will be discussed as two themes related to deepening understandings in terms of reviewing rigid us/them dichotomies and identities and stereotypical understandings of causes of conflict. This workshop process, however, generates memories of trauma for participants and the need for psychosocial support. In light of this third theme, the final section offers some critical reflections on the workshop design and makes recommendations for future workshops. This article offers insights into the challenging but important task of designing a participatory educational intervention that allows for safe yet critical dialogue in exploring the multiple and contested perspectives on xenophobia. These insights have

implications for educational programmes that seek to build social cohesion, peace and social justice.

Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa

South Africa is known for high levels of interpersonal, political and structural violence. Much of this is a legacy of the brutal colonial and apartheid eras. Since 2008, mass violence against foreign nationals was added to this country's repertoire of violence in the post-apartheid period. While standard definitions of xenophobia refer to "the fear and hatred of foreigners" (Solomon and Kosaka 2013), in South Africa the very term xenophobia is contested and often denied. Antagonism towards and discrimination against foreign nationals from Africa had been reported for a number of years prior to the deadly attacks (Human Rights Watch 1998). Such antagonism manifested in attacks in May 2008. This first wave of mass violence began in the townships of Johannesburg, but quickly spread to other parts of the country. Approximately 60 foreign nationals were killed, and many more were injured and displaced. A second outbreak of attacks in 2015 began in KwaZulu-Natal, and is reported to have resulted in seven deaths, much fear, destruction and displacement. A third of those killed in 2008 and three of the seven people killed in 2015 were South Africans who were attacked because of their physical resemblances to and association with foreign nationals. The 2015 violence prompted the creation of a partnership of concerned organisations in Pietermaritzburg that developed the intervention discussed in this article.

There have been several studies of xenophobia and its violent manifestations in South Africa. A substantial part of this literature attempts to explain the causes of the violence (Amusan and Mchunu 2017; Human Rights Watch 1998; Matsinhe 2011; Mutanda 2017; Neocosmos 2010; Reddy 2012; Steenkamp 2009). A specific focus within explanatory accounts probes the relationship between xenophobia and racism (Fernando 1993; Langa and Kiguwa 2016; Tafira 2011; Wimmer 1997). This literature is particularly pertinent to the South African context given the country's history of racialised oppression and the fact that black Africans from neighbouring countries have almost exclusively been targeted in attacks. Some studies have explored the effects of xenophobia on economic development, human rights and social cohesion (Chen 2015; Crush and Ramachandran 2010; Steenkamp 2009). Another focus of studies has been on the media's role in both promoting xenophobia and how it has reported on the attacks (Els 2013; Smith 2011).

Education has been explored in different ways in relation to xenophobia, in terms of how education in general may be a preventative force (Hjerm 2001), how xenophobia plays out in educational contexts such as schools and higher education institutions (Hale, Kransdorf, and Hamer 2011; Jasson 2016; Kang'ethe and Wotshela 2015; Murara 2011; Pithouse-Morgan et al. 2012), and how education may be used in response to xenophobia as part of interventions such as the one explored in this article (Mati 2011). This last section of the literature on educational interventions in response to xenophobia

is underdeveloped, raising the potential contribution of the current article to future intervention-oriented studies in South Africa and elsewhere.

The studies by Neocosmos (2010) and Chigeza et al. (2013) are noteworthy in that they engage directly with the experiences of African migrants in South Africa. Likewise, Mati (2011) reports on how the Umoja wa Afrika Human Rights Peer Education Programme with young people in Cape Town contributed to participants' critical awareness of their rights as well as the rights of others. Participants found the diverse composition of the group, the workshop design and participatory pedagogy enabling factors of critical awareness of xenophobia. Mati explains that

participatory learning methodologies including learning through diversity and group dynamics; learning through storytelling and personal testimonies; learning through activities and reflection; and learning through an accompanying facilitation style [drawn from the values of liberation theology] were identified as important in fostering such learning. (Mati 2011, 60)

The present article also discusses the composition of workshop participants, workshop design and participatory pedagogy that included storytelling, dialogue and critical reflection. This article thus contributes to the ongoing work on understanding xenophobia and the neglected work on developing interventions in response. Furthermore, this intervention explored how local and foreign nationals understand the conflict and what they propose could be done to avoid further conflict.

Exploring Educational Interventions on Xenophobia through a Freirean Lens on Dialogue

The work of the radical Brazilian theorist, Paulo Freire, provides an ideal lens for examining an educational intervention on xenophobia. Freire's educational theory, best expressed in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), proceeded from concerns about oppression and injustice. Freire believed that education, employing critical pedagogy, could serve as a counter to the alienation and dehumanisation of oppressive political and educational systems. Some key concepts of Freirean critical pedagogy are critical reflection and dialogue, which when combined with action or struggle generate what Freire called praxis. Gadotti (1996, xi) elaborates on this kind of dialogue:

For Paulo Freire, dialogue is not just the encounter of two subjects who look for the meaning of things—knowledge—but an encounter which takes place in praxis—in action and reflection—in political engagement, in the pledge for social transformation.

Rule (2004) echoes the linking of dialogue to an “explicit political agenda of liberation from oppression” (324). Xenophobia in South Africa constitutes such oppression. Freire (1970) identified several essential conditions for such dialogue to occur, which include profound love, humility, faith, hope, courage and critical thinking. It is important to

examine which of these conditions were evident in the workshops discussed in this article.

Freire's critical pedagogy in general and the concept of dialogue in particular have had a strong influence in the fields of radical, alternative and popular education (Rule 2004), as well as peace education (Bekerman and Zembylas 2010; John 2016). Rule (2004) has traced the genealogy of the concept of dialogue across seminal theorists such as Plato, Buber, Bakhtin, Habermas, and Freire, and proposed the concept of dialogic space for theorising popular education projects in apartheid South Africa. This notion of dialogic space is adopted in this article to discuss the workshops we designed. In subsequent writing, Rule (2011) identifies dialogue as having ontological and ethical import, in that "dialogue is something that characterizes authentic human beings and their relationships as they strive to become, as they engage in their ontological vocation of being human" (930). Given that xenophobia often involves the dehumanisation of the Other, authentic dialogue could be seen as an important process of recognising the Other as human and fulfilling one's own vocation of becoming more human. The concept of alienation is relevant to this discussion. Freire saw the denial or suppression of the fundamentally human qualities of love, humility, faith, hope, courage and critical thinking as causing alienation. In South Africa, where many foreign nationals are officially designated alien, xenophobia strips away the essential basis of being human and leads to alienation. We thus have a context of dual alienation, politically and socially.

Dialogue has been harnessed in peace education to help build better relationships between groups in conflict. Drawing on the work of Freire, Bekerman and Zembylas (2010) employed dialogue in workshops with Israeli and Palestinian teachers to transform perpetrator–victim narratives. They report some value from this process when workshop participants are sensitised to the suffering of others. They further note the importance of critical thinking, highlighting that "criticality may be used in the context of facilitated dialogues ... to expand opportunities for reflection, change, and identity work among conflicting groups" (590). These findings on exposure to suffering and criticality have relevance for analysing the use of dialogue in the intervention we developed.

An Intervention to Explore Xenophobia towards Action

In 2015, just after the second wave of xenophobic violence, a partnership between staff of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and two non-governmental organisations, namely the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Action (PACSA) and Sinomlando, was formed to explore ways of monitoring the violence and contributing to its end. Initial discussions led to a funding proposal being developed. By the time the funds for a project were raised in 2016, the violence had abated, and we explored how we could redesign a project that could still make a positive contribution.

We decided that in-depth engagement with both local nationals and foreign nationals in workshops over several days, rather than the more limited engagements allowed by

typical interviews and focus groups, would give us the best chance of understanding the complexity and contestations around xenophobia and identifying solutions. Such a process was also seen as necessary for creating a trusting environment, which would allow for any psychosocial support that needs to be addressed. A key influence shaping this process was the intent of the partners for the study to be located in the critical paradigm, which allows for power dynamics to be critically interrogated, for the research team and partners to be fully involved in the process and for goals of conscientisation and improvement to be realised. Typical of critical paradigm research, we wanted to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon but to do so in a manner that would also deepen the understanding of the participants and foster dialogue about how relationships could be improved. The Freirean concepts of dialogue and conscientisation are noteworthy in the project objectives.

Important objectives/outcomes for the project included:

- Creating a space for dialogue between local nationals and foreign nationals
- Developing a better understanding of “xenophobia” and how it was variably perceived
- Conscientising participants towards a deeper understanding of the causes of violence
- Providing psychosocial support to workshop participants as the need arose
- Ensuring that decision makers (government, media, churches, NGOs) become aware of different perspectives that may inform future policy.

(From UKZN Ethical Clearance Application, 2 April 2016)

A division of responsibilities was agreed to among the partners regarding an ethical clearance application, project and financial management, negotiating with gatekeepers and recruiting participants, preparing for workshop facilitation and providing psychosocial support to participants. The adult education team took overall responsibility for developing the workshops, associated resources and preparing the team of three facilitators to run the workshops.

Workshop Design

We decided to work with two communities, an inner-city community and a peri-urban community. We saw it as important that for each community we would have roughly equal numbers of South Africans and foreign nationals and that there would be three workshops for each community (a total of 6 workshops). The first two workshops would be with each group on their own, within a residential setting. The third workshop brought both groups together for a single day. The workshop structure for the inner-city community included two days with foreign nationals only, two days with South Africans

only, and one day where there was a combination of foreign nationals and South Africans. This workshop had a total of 19 participants (11 foreign nationals, 8 South Africans; 8 men and 11 women). The foreign nationals included citizens of Malawi (2), Democratic Republic of Congo (4), Burundi (3), Rwanda (1) and Tanzania (1).

Our reflections on the first round of workshops with the inner-city group alerted us to the need for more time for dialogue between the groups and the added benefits of having both groups interacting in residence overnight. Accordingly, the revised workshop structure for the peri-urban community included one day with foreign nationals only, one day with South Africans only, and three days with a combination of foreign nationals and South Africans. This workshop had a total of 16 participants (8 foreign nationals, 8 South Africans; 9 women and 7 men). The foreign nationals included citizens of Malawi (6) and Swaziland (2).

It is important to understand this change when considering the workshop design, the main focus of this article. Ideas for the workshop design were generated collaboratively at a meeting of the partners and then mapped out in a detailed workshop guide. We aimed for a guide that would provide the different facilitators with step-by-step directions on the workshop process, but which would also help them to facilitate dialogue and participation.

Key Workshop Design Features and Pedagogy

It is not possible to present and discuss all the aspects of the workshop design in an article such as this. However, because of goals of contributing to social justice and peace, I am willing to share the full workshop guide with anyone who contacts me at johnv@ukzn.ac.za. For the purposes of this article, I will identify some key features of the workshop design and participatory pedagogy and thereafter discuss participant and facilitator experiences of these workshops.

In light of the context, contested perspectives on causes of the violence and how to name it, and the outcomes of conscientisation, deepening understanding and action presented earlier, our workshop design aimed to provide the following:

- A safe space to get to know one another, tell one's story and express one's views free of embarrassment and recriminations
- Opportunities to listen to and engage with the stories and views of others
- Opportunities to deepen understandings of issues through dialogue
- Space to challenge and revise understandings
- Prospects to build common understandings and shared identity as appropriate
- Prospects for exploring and planning creative solutions.

While these goals resonate with the Freirean approach discussed earlier, they also align strongly with those identified by Lum (2013, 218) when she observes that the pedagogies and goals of peace educators often seek to “inspire creativity, reflective thinking, criticality, perspective taking, diversity, holistic problem-solving ... attentive listening, cooperation, [and] communicative dialogue”.

A fair amount of time was spent at the start of the workshop introducing the partners, funding arrangements, the purpose and programme of the workshop, gaining consent, establishing ground rules, and dealing with translation. Apart from this workshop setup and administration and some games and social activities discussed later, five main activities formed the core of the workshop. These five participatory and small group activities were deemed to give us the best chance of giving effect to the above-mentioned goals.

Activity 1: Peoples' Compass and Introductions of Participants

Two initial activities allowed participants to get to know one another and demonstrated journeys of migration.

For the Peoples' Compass, an imaginary map of Africa was identified on the floor. The position of north was then identified and all participants were asked to walk to the position on this map that represents where they originally came from. This generated a buzz of discussion as people discussed where they had come from and how to position themselves. Once at their position of origin, each person was asked to walk their journey to their current location in South Africa, explaining the route they took. For foreign nationals, this journey involved movement and stops across a few countries in Africa. For South Africans, this also involved movement across provinces in South Africa. In the revised workshop design this activity was done in the combined workshop and was very helpful in revealing a common identity of being a migrant of some sort for all participants, foreign nationals and South Africans alike.

The next step of this activity required each person to find someone that they did not know from another position on the map, to interview them and then introduce their partner to the wider group. This was important to start the process of sharing and listening and getting to know one another. It also ensured that everyone spoke.

Activity 2: River of Life

This participatory activity gets participants to reflect on their lives and to draw their life story as a river on a large sheet of newsprint paper using coloured pens. The facilitators showed participants an example and then asked them to creatively portray their lives as a river. They were able to represent both positive and negative life events through turns, rapids, confluences, and blockages etcetera in the river. Participants were free to choose what aspects of their lives they wanted to share.

Each person then presented their River of Life to the group unhindered.

In a subsequent step, after a break, there was a discussion on “How I feel about what I see in the Rivers of Life”. This session allowed for feelings to be aired and processed and moved into a group analysis of significant and common events in the lives of participants. This analysis was deepened when facilitators asked participants to identify the underlying causes of life events, allowing for critical analysis of factors such as oppression, structural violence, culture, and patriarchy. With good facilitation, such a session allowed for probing of events that are absent in the Rivers of Life and why this may be so.

Activity 3: Community Enablers and Disablers

This activity involved each group, local and foreign nationals separately, discussing and identifying community enablers and disablers. They were given pieces of green cardboard on which they wrote about “What builds our community” (community enablers). On pink cards they wrote about “What breaks our community” (community disablers). Each set of green and pink cards was then thematically grouped and stuck on the wall. Each group had to identify the most common or serious community enablers and disablers.

In smaller groups participants then discussed: “What is behind the common themes?”

Each group then selected one key disabler for further analysis, identifying its causes and consequences. In plenary a list of all the underlying causes of community disablers was constructed. In this session participants were encouraged to move beyond stereotypes, to look for complexity, to explore multiple perspectives and a range of causes related to economic, social, political, historical and geographic factors. Participants were also encouraged to work with authentic personal experiences of disablers rather than hearsay or secondary evidence.

To make this exploration concrete, participants then selected one example of a recent conflict related to a key disabler and discussed its features. They were required to identify stages of conflict, its progression and consequences. They also identified parties, stakeholders and their roles in the conflict.

Activity 4: What Can We Do Together to Build Community?

This activity also involved group work building on enablers identified in the previous activity. However, here we arranged participants into small groups with a mix of local and foreign nationals and a mix of genders. Groups discussed and identified four key ideas for building community.

Each group then reported back on their discussion and list, leading to plenary discussion.

A final step of this activity, also in mixed small groups, allowed participants to discuss and plan two short-term actions that participants could engage in jointly in the next month and two long-term collaborative actions/projects. Each group's plan was then shared with the whole group.

This activity took place towards the end of the workshop and allowed for more forward-looking, action-oriented and collaborative dialogue to ensue.

Games and Social Activities

Interspersed throughout the workshop programme were some games and social activities to allow for lighter, fun interaction and breaks from serious and painful sharing. The revised three-day combined residential workshop allowed for more of this and for informal interactions over meals and in the evenings while in residence together. While games foregrounded the importance of collaboration and teamwork and were briefly unpacked, their primary purpose was to allow joint participation in a fun activity. Additionally, a Cultural Concert was planned for the final evening of the three-day combined workshop as a way of promoting cultural exchange and diversity through song, poetry and dance.

Deepening Understanding through Dialogue

The workshops were designed to create a safe space to share one's story and views and to listen to those of others. The primary objective was to create a space for dialogue in order to foster opportunities for critical thinking and deepening of understandings. Our reflections on the workshop process and analysis of the workshop transcripts indicate that the design did establish such a space for dialogue and accompanied critical thinking. These processes also show signs of initial positive shifts in understandings. While such workshop outcomes are welcomed in terms of Freire's promotion of dialogue, the sustainability of new understandings and how they may shape broader social change warrant further discussion. A further workshop outcome, of evoking painful memories, also prompts deeper analysis and recommendations for future workshops. Each of these outcomes is discussed and illustrated below.

Much of the reflections on the workshop from the project partners shared in this section emerged at a day-long review workshop held after all the workshops had been completed and transcripts and reports were available. This workshop was held to draw out key findings and to make recommendations to be shared at the roundtable forum planned as one of the end points of the project. For the roundtable, the press, local NGOs, the city mayor and various government department officials were invited to engage with participants and the project partners on the findings. We decided on a roundtable rather than a seminar as we saw this as part of an action-oriented process that would allow for another level of dialogue between participants and people in positions of power and influence over their lives, as well as other stakeholders. A roundtable suited the critical paradigm and advocacy goals of the project.

Reviewing Rigid “Us/Them” Dichotomies and Identities

Much of the popular discourse on the relationships between foreign nationals and local nationals is negative and involves polarised identities and accounts. This is characterised by strong “us versus them” constructions. There is deep and hostile Othering involved in these accounts. Another feature of this narrative is the identification of separate identities of foreigner and local, victim and perpetrator, and “good guys and bad guys”. Without opportunities for safe and constructive dialogue this discourse is allowed to spread and become the dominant, polarising narrative. The workshops allowed us to see some shifts from this narrative after a short time and the emergence of what could become a counter-narrative if supported and allowed to grow. This counter-narrative is perhaps best expressed by one of the project partners in his notes on the first day of the workshop when he wrote: “A positive outcome of the first day is the discovery that ‘I am not alone’” (Partner 1).

Below are several reflections that capture the softening of hard, polarised characterisations and the recognition of common experiences and identities. Importantly, three different workshop activities are mentioned as triggers of dialogue and deepened understandings.

The initial activity of the People’s Compass was helpful in revealing that most people in the workshop had moved from their place of birth at some point in their lives and some had crossed borders. The following statements of two project partners illustrate the common experience of migration and accompanying fluidity of identity this creates:

Migrant and local are not distinct categories. Some locals are migrants and some migrants, like this Malawian, are locals. (Partner 1)

I am thinking of the children [of migrants born in SA]. How can you tell a child that he does not belong in South Africa [when the child says] “I have never been in Tanzania!”? (Partner 5)

The following comments, this time with reference to the River of Life activity, again reveal shared experiences and softening of us/them or victim/perpetrator dichotomies. This re-narrativisation is discussed later. The final comment by a project partner makes explicit the connection between a safe, dialogic space and authentic sharing.

Both groups shared their struggles in the River of Life exercise:

The phenomenon of fractured families is widespread. It is not a question of good and bad guys. (Partner 1)

We do the big crimes and the foreigners do the petty crimes. It is the same thing with the stories of foreigners who impregnate women. (South African national)

We are not all angels. Not everybody is against us. (Foreign national)

Not all foreigners are innocent, sometimes some of us are perpetrators. ... Even it is important to note that there are differences between foreigners that can trigger the violence and sometimes it is blaming others/forgetting about ourselves. (Foreign national)

Members of both groups are self-reflective and self-critical. Both admit that there [are] criminals among them, whether foreigners and locals. When one creates the right space, people become less defensive. (Partner 1)

There were several indications of challenges to polarised and homogenised conceptions of the Other and acknowledgement of non-conflictual relationships. A third activity (Community Enablers and Disablers) was also identified as helpful and adopted in other work of one of the NGO partners:

The value of enablers and disablers from a methodological point of view. It elicits important information on the relationship between locals and foreigners. This concept was introduced by CAE [Centre for Adult Education] and is now used by Sinomlando. (Partner 5)

Just to come back to what my sister said, we don't need to blame only South Africans, so what we need to understand is the cause of that behaviour and I am sure when we understand, when we sit down together and talk we will come up with something very consistent. (Foreign national)

There is a difference between the fact and the representation of the fact. Hence the need to create a space for dialogue. ... The problem is when we essentialise behaviours. The same happened with the genocide in Rwanda. The Tutsi were categorised as clever, arrogant ... (Partner 1)

There was even mention that the changed understandings as a result of the workshop were impacting behaviour outside the workshop:

At Cinderella Park when a foreigner was attacked by a local, the locals intervened to stop this abuse as a result of the workshop. Before they said that they would not interfere. I heard it from Adam [pseudonym], the leader, and the mother of one of the participants. That was last week. (Partner 9)

Reviewing Stereotypical Understandings of the Causes of Conflict

The previous section discussed shifts in how participants started to view one another. A further significant and related shift we observed was in terms of how participants understood the sources of challenges they faced and causes of conflict. Here we noticed a move from homogeneous and stereotypical understandings to more heterogeneous and complex understandings. The dialogue appeared to open up a space for less defensive and blameful positions to nuance, critical thinking and self-criticism.

There are indications that common stereotypes and simplistic understandings on the sources of conflict were more critically interrogated and yielded acknowledgements of complexity. One of these related to the stereotype that foreigners are responsible for crime in South Africa and the other related to the view that foreigners take away jobs from local citizens. While not possible to undertake in this article, the intersectionality of xenophobia with gender and class warrants further attention. In our workshop a more nuanced understanding on the intersectionality of xenophobia and gender-based discrimination was aired only after some probing by the facilitators, as indicated in the penultimate comment below. The comment on how automation in the Natal Rubber factory has affected jobs and employment opportunities, a central tension in the xenophobia discourse, invites a deeper analysis on the intersection with class.

It [crime] could be a behavioural thing or the result of poverty. (Foreign national)

Another factor is the fact that locals and foreigners combine their skills. Crime is not necessarily the result of poverty. (Partner 9)

We could easily blame the foreigners but let's look at the situation where since the black government took over many companies have shut down. ... At Natal Rubber there are machines which the white owners have brought. Initially it required 15 people to do certain tasks but now with the new machines it needs five people. (South African national)

When Vaughn started to speak about gender, a woman spoke about the pressure she experienced from her husband. She put it in Swahili. Look at Cinderella Park and the relationships between South African girls and male foreigners. It is a bitter-sweet relationship. (Partner 9)

We have a double burden. Women are being divorced and husbands take local women. The SA system doesn't support the foreign women and their children. ... Even in cases of abuse in marriage, women would rather die in the abusive relationship for they can't survive alone. (Foreign national)

The deepening of understandings reported above shows some evidence of critical thinking that the process of dialogue generated. Freire placed much emphasis on critical thinking, but what about the other conditions identified as essential by Freire for authentic dialogue to occur? The project data allows for some engagement with Freire's discussion of profound love, humility and courage. Courage has been written about as the struggles and actions emanating from educational encounters. Our workshop planning saw action as important and created space for joint actions to be planned. However, as a funded project with time-bound workshops, we did not have the capacity and budget to support post-workshop actions. We provided voice within the workshop but beyond the roundtable that we facilitated with political, NGO, media and government stakeholders, we could not also support participants in making their case louder and better heard. In the end, courageous actions would have to be taken forward by the participants themselves, often from vulnerable positions. Freire's promotion of

humility has been interpreted as a pedagogical orientation of non-hierarchical, non-arrogant openness to others' perspectives (Freire 1970). Listening respectfully is one way in which Freirean humility can be displayed. We witnessed this form of humility in the dialogue among participants, facilitators and project partners. Our diverse perspectives as project partners also demanded such humility in discussions outside the workshops. I believe this condition of dialogue was present in our intervention.

Freire's conception of profound love is a more difficult condition to identify in the workshops. Freire believed that a deep love for the world and fellow humans was necessary for dialogue to occur. It is noteworthy that a common definition of xenophobia refers to hatred or fear of foreigners, the opposite of love. Our interactions with participants in the relatively brief workshop interactions did not allow us to discern the presence of strong emotions such as hatred or profound love. A project partner did, however, note one reference to hatred:

In the first workshop somebody defined xenophobia as hatred. There were other forces behind. In many instances locals and foreigners live well together. They support the foreigners. (Partner 9)

The emotional climate of the workshops was one of sufficient trust and a willingness to engage respectfully in sharing views and exploring solutions. Workshop-only interactions cannot be expected to generate the deep love that Freire referred to. However, workshops could serve as the start of new understandings that become the foundation for new relationships. If the projects conceptualised in the workshops became viable joint projects of South African and foreign nationals, it would be interesting to track the nature of relationships and emotional connections over time.

Generating Painful Memories and the Need for Psychosocial Support

The River of Life activity, in particular, evoked many emotions from both participants and facilitators. A separate article would be needed to discuss in full the multiple and repeated traumatic events and displacements shared by participants, both foreign and local nationals. Two examples are provided below:

I was born in Lubumbashi. After Lubumbashi we moved with my parents to Uvira. After our parents died because of war, I found myself in SA where I am not free. (Foreign national)

My parents were born in Rwanda, after the genocide we moved to Mlembwe, then they moved to Uvira, then we stayed in Burundi after war in Congo in 1986. In Burundi war started so we moved to Malawi and stayed at a refugee camp called Dzaleka, Vilembwe. After that we moved to Mozambique, Maputo for quite some time. Then after that we moved to South Africa in a place called Manguzi and then I suddenly found myself in KwaZulu-Natal where I got married. (Foreign national)

Given that the project arose from a concern about the violence against foreign nationals, we had anticipated that this intervention was likely to generate painful memories. In our planning and for purposes of gaining ethical clearance, we had arranged to have psychosocial support available to deal with memories of historical trauma and possible re-traumatisation during the workshop. Two of the facilitators from Sinomlando were trained in trauma counselling. A third member of Sinomlando was a qualified social worker, and a qualified local psychologist was arranged to be on call if further counselling expertise was needed. Despite these arrangements, we were unprepared for the extent of the pain that surfaced and its effects on participants and facilitators during the final combined workshop. This is an area that requires much careful preparation in such interventions. I offer here a description of what emerged, how we dealt with it and what could be done in future workshops.

At the end of the first day of the combined session some of the participants and the facilitators became overwhelmed by the painful stories shared. Some broke down and cried. The facilitators realised that they could not continue with the planned programme and sent out a message for help. Three project partners, some with counselling skills, responded and ran a debriefing session. The following day, additional psychosocial support was provided and additional group and individual counselling was provided. These measures seemed to provide the care needed. A revised programme resumed, and the workshop ended with an entertaining cultural evening.

Our post-workshop reflections identified this breakdown as a key lesson for us and one needing more careful planning in future workshops. The following comments expose these concerns and some questioning regarding the combined workshop:

Each group has psychosocial issues. Once we trigger something, there are major issues. You have touched this, and I want to talk about it. I wanted to move on, but it comes back. The situation takes me back. (Partner 5)

There are multiple levels of fracturing in families and in communities. (Partner 2)

Foreigners are more emotional about the xenophobic attacks in South Africa than about the initial attacks in their home country. It is not the fact but the representation of the fact which is traumatic. (Partner 1)

Sharing Rivers of Life in front of everyone, that does not work. We need to rethink it. It was very overwhelming. Another concern is how to maintain relationships after the workshops. We have many people who call us, but we do not know what to do. In the planning we need to say what the facilitators will have to do after the workshop. (Partner 6)

As project planners and implementers, we found ourselves grappling with what trauma really means and how we could deal with it in a workshop context. The following comments reveal this:

What we have is endemic trauma and undealt with trauma. ... Re-traumatising is when a memory triggers the memory of the old trauma. We must have a discussion on the difference between multiple trauma or compounded trauma and re-traumatisation. (Partner 2)

We can have both. We have those who were not present during the xenophobic attack but are re-traumatised. (Partner 8)

A key concept in the theory of resilience is meaning. People who can make sense of a situation and articulate it respond better to trauma. (Partner 1)

There are people who feel bad about [having] abandoned their home. They do not see themselves as survivors. (Partner 3)

In addition to wanting to find ways to better deal with trauma as it emerges in workshops, the above comments also clearly show our attempts to deepen our own understandings and theorisation of this important outcome of the workshops we designed.

An additional insight on the River of Life activity is gleaned from the experiences of Bekerman and Zymbylas's (2010) facilitated dialogue workshops in Israel. They found that a storytelling activity sensitised participants to the suffering of others, which provided new pedagogical openings:

[T]he identification of small openings on the basis of common suffering offers a point of departure for going beyond victims and perpetrators and propelling teachers into a process of re-narrativization. (Bekerman and Zymbylas 2010, 588)

The River of Life activity was planned as part of the redesigned combined workshops for participants to share their life stories. We saw this as an important opportunity for participants to be sensitised about the reasons for migration and the challenges involved. This goal is also expressed by one of the foreign nationals who reflected on the activity and said "what we did yesterday with the river of life shall not just stay here, I hope that it will help improve the relationship". This statement points to a similar pedagogical opening reported by Bekerman and Zembylas (2010).

Implications for Workshop Design, Pedagogy and Future Interventions

We learnt about what worked and what could be improved through this project. The challenges regarding trauma certainly provide a key lesson. We recommend that similar future workshops provide substantial time at the beginning for participants to be informed of the types of activities and processes of engagement. This should include them being made aware of the likely discomfort and pain that the workshop could trigger when talking about past experiences and trauma. We did mention potential discomfort and the likelihood of painful memories in our introductions to the workshops, but there is a need for greater emphasis of this in preparing participants and letting them know

what support is available. Equally important is the need to explore with participants what would be the best way to deal with deeply emotional reactions and painful memories that may be evoked and how they would like the workshop facilitators to deal with this. This could include the right to leave the room for timeout or counselling or a process to deal collectively with the emotions and pain in the room. Having trained trauma counsellors available throughout the workshop is clearly an important part of the plan and needs to be included in planning and budgets. Provision of such psychosocial support needs to also factor in the language profile of the participant group. This latter consideration means that recruitment has to be planned and secured well in advance of the workshops. This was not the case in the present project as recruitment became a challenge and several alternative recruitment strategies had to be implemented just prior to the workshops.

However, the River of Life activity proved to be extremely generative as a participatory educational and research tool. It allowed for personal reflection on participants' life journeys as they drew their River of Life. In sharing the River of Life with the group, participants mostly enjoyed the opportunity to stand up and let others know about themselves and their journeys. Given the contested understandings and stereotypes about foreign nationals, their motives for coming to South Africa, and their impact on the social and economic fabric of the country as discussed earlier, the telling of such stories provided powerful and challenging moments in the workshop. From an educational perspective, this activity was central in generating counter-narratives that could deepen understanding or create the openings for re-narrativisation identified by Bekerman and Zembylas (2010). From a research perspective, the activity triggers rich data and allows for collective analysis within the workshop, in keeping with the participatory ethos of the workshop. It also generates a visual illustration of the narrative, which can be recorded with the permission of the participant. Thus, subsequent content, visual and discourse types of analyses become possible.

The other activities were likewise generative and contributed to deepening participants' understandings by softening dichotomies and stimulating an appreciation of the complexity and challenges of life in South Africa for all. Our reflections identified the People's Compass as a participatory and safe process to get people sharing about themselves and their stories of migration. It also very powerfully illustrated early on in the workshop that most, if not all, are migrants of some sort. The sense of a common identity, albeit not a strong one, in a workshop about the troubles caused by perceived differences was a bonus outcome. The Community Enablers and Disablers activity allowed for a balance of foci on both challenges and assets. The latter could also be creatively harnessed into plans of action to move the workshop from exploration to intervention, meeting the condition of Freirean courage. For this to be authentic and have a chance of making an impact, some planning and budget allocation should be devoted to such post-workshop joint implementation of plans. Our project did not allow for this because the project design and workshop plans were not what was initially envisaged when the proposal and budget were developed. Future interventions of this

kind should plan for post-workshop activities and support for participants to explore the potential for workshop-generated ideas and plans to be piloted and to become cycles of dialogue, collaboration and action, generating courage and hope.

Across the workshops, there was a clear sense that the design was successful in creating a safe space, which allowed for participation and dialogue with humility. Some of the activities fostered critical reflection, which helped participants explore alternative perspectives. These pedagogical goals, as espoused by Freire, are central to attempts at deepening understanding, challenging stereotypes and reshaping relationships. Gill and Niens's (2014) review of literature on the role of peace education in post-conflict contexts identified the goal of humanisation, as advocated by Paulo Freire, as a major conceptual framework underpinning many programmes. They noted that "[p]eacebuilding education as humanisation is realised by critical reflection and dialogue in most curricular initiatives reviewed, an approach aimed at overcoming the contextual educational constraints often rooted in societal division and segregation, strained community relations and past traumas" (Gill and Niens 2014, 10). Humanisation, a counter to alienation, is an important goal in anti-xenophobia interventions, as much of the popular discourse involves stereotypes that dehumanise the "Other".

We have learnt a substantial amount about running participatory dialogic workshops with small groups of local and foreign nationals and believe that this was a worthwhile pilot intervention. However, making an impact on xenophobia requires interventions on a larger scale that involve many sectors of society. As the dialogue workshops held by Bekerman and Zembylas (2010, 590) in Israel clearly illustrate, "educational interventions alone—no matter how critical they are—cannot go far without structural changes that support these interventions".

The diversity among learner groups in educational institutions such as schools, post-school colleges and universities allow them to engage in such programmes. These institutions could find ways to include aspects of the workshop, reported here, in their curricula. As noted by Van der Dussen Toukan (2019), such engagements by actors in these institutions in the host country carry the additional benefit of increasing their awareness of how they are implicated in conflict and peacebuilding through relationships formed with refugee and migrant students. Many civil society organisations, such as NGOs and faith-based organisations, run educational programmes with communities and could likewise include anti-xenophobia themes and activities. Ongoing staff development for civil servants, who often project government ideology and policy, should also be included in such training. Only such wider societal participation can foster the kinds of political engagement and social transformation that were earlier identified by Gadotti (1996) and Rule (2004). Sharing the design features of such interventions and the experiences of participants and facilitators, as done in this article, contributes a southern perspective on dialogic, action-oriented peace education to a world faced with increasing migration and displacement of people.

Conclusion

This article reports on a small pilot project whose impact on relationships and society is understandably limited. The value of the project, and focus of this paper, is the design of a workshop and participatory pedagogy that shows some indications of encouraging critical thinking and deepened understandings through engaging in dialogue. In terms of the educational aspects, we designed a workshop process and set of activities with related participatory pedagogy that allowed for several objectives to be met. We have also learnt about what can be done differently to improve this process, especially with regard to psychosocial support. Theoretically, Freire's preconditions of profound love, humility, faith, hope, courage and critical thinking for dialogue provide a basis for guiding educational events and for interrogating their outcomes. While dialogic workshops alone cannot bring social change, when they lead to courageous actions, they can become a transformative praxis.

This design and the insights emerging from reflections on this small intervention may be helpful in planning interventions on a larger scale in South Africa and elsewhere where people live in contexts of polarised and conflictual relationships. Increasing displacements and migration as a result of war and economic factors and the tensions these raise require many more interventions of the type discussed in this article. Building an inclusive, cosmopolitan and caring society is a substantial project that requires many more interventions of this nature. Reflections on the project we piloted show how difficult and rewarding this work can be. They also illustrate that key to this is to design safe, dialogic spaces (Rule 2004) with adequate psychosocial support.

Reflecting on this educational intervention in response to xenophobia in South Africa, I am reminded of the calls by both Paulo Freire and Nelson Mandela, both exemplary practitioners of dialogue, for education that builds greater freedoms and humanisation. Education must contribute to increased freedom, physical and psychological, for foreign nationals and South Africans in this country and to building a humanising and inclusive pan-Africanism. The dialogic space created in the workshops discussed in this article could be harnessed towards this important project.

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