

**“During the Pandemic, the Sense of
Ubuntu was Fantastic”: A Participatory
Research Study Commemorating
Community Mobilisation**

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Acknowledgements

I began my MPhil journey during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which was a pivotal time in my life. The degree brought me a community to connect with and a sense of purpose that significantly impacted not only how I view the world, but also how I want to show up in the world.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic will forever be etched into the world's collective memory as a defining event of our generation as the ramifications will be felt and experienced long into the future. To understand the effects and learn from the experiences of a community organization in a pandemic, the research question for this study was 'What are the experiences and perceived effects of a community organisation engaging in a commemorative arts-based process for social innovation during a pandemic?'. The research methodology of this study was qualitative participatory research and it was conducted in Cape Town, South Africa, with members of the Woodstock Community Action Network. Data were collected virtually from seven participants through an online meeting (n=1), one-to-one interviews (n=7), online workshops (n=5), and a focus group (n=1) from April 2021-October 2021. Although there is significant literature on collective memory, commemoration, and community mobilisation, there is limited literature on these aspects in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, South African Community Action Networks (CANs), as well as arts-based methods for commemoration and remote participatory research. The findings that emerged were presented under the following themes: 1) Addressing mental health and wellbeing challenges, 2) Empowerment within place, 3) Commemoration during a pandemic, 4) Heightened awareness of social inequity, and 5) Agency development through collaborative video. The significance of this research study was that it provided a means to understand what motivated community mobilisation to occur through focusing on documenting the experiences of Woodstock CAN members. In addition, the study demonstrated how the CAN as a social innovation, was already engaged in its own form of commemoration practice. Lastly, the video became a way to commemorate more tangibly and as a result, acted as social innovation tool in practicing agency and collaboration.

Key words: Commemoration, community mobilisation, COVID-19 pandemic, participatory research, arts-based methods, Woodstock, Cape Town, Community Action Network, collective memory

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study, titled “‘During the Pandemic, the Sense of Ubuntu was Fantastic’: A Participatory Research Study Commemorating Community Mobilisation’, was a qualitative participatory research study. This introductory chapter outlines the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, with its effect on society and how it forced communities into action. One of these communities was the Woodstock Community Action Network (CAN), an organisation in Cape Town, South Africa, that mobilised to offer aid to those in need. A rationale and significance of this study is provided which outlines commemoration as a significant aspect of the pandemic. Following this is an overview of literature on the COVID-19 pandemic, commemoration, arts in times of crisis, and remote participatory research. The chapter also outlines the study’s research question, aim, objectives, research methodology and data collection. The research method of participatory research, enabled the research process to be guided by participants as they chose video as their research tool, shaped the direction of the video and shaped the interview process. Data were collected from seven participants through an online meeting (n=1), one-to-one interviews (n=7), a focus group (n=1), and online workshops (n=5) from April 2021-October 2021. This led to the development of a collaborative video and poem with members of the Woodstock Community Action Network. Through this participatory, arts-based approach, the study unpacked how and why the Woodstock CAN mobilized during the pandemic and commemorated their experience.

1.1 Research Area

The research area below begins with providing a context to the COVID-19 pandemic and Community Action Networks. The context is important as it helps in understanding what was occurring during the time of the research study and the main factors that influenced the way the research study was shaped. The research area then outlines the research problem and provides an overview of the research study which frames what the focus of the study was: Commemorating community mobilisation in a pandemic through collaborative video.

1.1.1 Context: The COVID-19 Pandemic

Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a respiratory illness which emerged in late 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China and became recognised as a global health threat due to its fast transmission and mild to severe effects (Dhama et al., 2020). On 31 January 2020 it was declared as a global health emergency, and on 11 March 2020 it was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (Dhama et al., 2020). Globally, countries were experiencing varying degrees of severity in confirmed cases and numbers of deaths. According to the World Health Organisation, “Over 760 million cases and 6.9 million deaths have been recorded worldwide since December 2019, but the actual number is thought to be higher” (WHO). [SAcoronavirus](#), a website that was developed during the pandemic to provide key and reliable information to South African citizens, had on record: 4,092,483 positive cases, 3 946 943 recoveries, 102 595 deaths, and 39 102 367 vaccinations.

To decrease the likelihood of infection, the following was advised by health officials across the world: “Social distancing via stopping large public or private gatherings, wearing masks and gloves, avoiding unnecessary travels and visits” (Baloch et al., 2020, p.272). In addition, to further control the spread of the virus and reduce lives lost, several countries around the world enforced self-isolation through lockdown regulations (Greyling et al., 2021). One of the ramifications of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations was mass job loss experienced internationally or situations where employees retained their jobs for the lockdown period but were not working and not being paid a salary (Posel et al., 2021).

South Africa enforced one of the most restrictive and stringent lockdowns in the world which severely affected peoples’ wellbeing and the economy while navigating the impact of an economic downturn (Greyling et al., 2021; Stiegler & Bouchard, 2020). The aim of the lockdown (which started with Level 5- the most strict) was to provide healthcare facilities with enough time to prepare for the large amount of anticipated cases which meant that shops, restaurants and non-essential business were authorized to close, travel was significantly restricted, and sports, social activities, alcohol, and cigarettes were banned (Greyling et al.,

2021; Stiegler & Bouchard, 2020). According to Greyling et al. (2021), only businesses that were considered as providing ‘essential services’ were allowed to operate.

In developing countries where households experience food insecurity, people had to make a difficult decision between avoiding starvation by trying to make an income or accept the possibility of infection (Arndt et al., 2020). Van Ryneveld et al. (2022) asserts that for “those facing massive food insecurity, the threat of hunger looms far greater than the threat of the virus itself” (p.6). As South Africa is recognized as the “world’s most unequal nation in terms of income inequality” (Carlitz & Makhura, 2021, p.6), increased food insecurity became a severe consequence of lockdown measures as household income was affected and many struggled to purchase food (Arndt et al., 2020). Thomas (2020) supports this notion as he argues that several South Africans relied on regular employment and did not necessarily have savings to support them in the case of a lockdown or economic downturn.

In addition to food security experienced as a socio-economic challenge, according to Thomas (2020), the 2018 Afrobarometer survey findings indicate that South Africa entered the COVID-19 period “with large disparities in access to essential services” (p.1), and many did not have adequate resources to work or study remotely, and access information and help. As a result, many South Africans were “less supportive of government restrictions on free movement” (Thomas, 2020, p.1), and the South African National Defence force/army, tasked with enforcing the lockdown, faced “significant popular distrust and doubts about its professionalism and respect for the rights of all citizens” (Thomas, 2020, p.1). Amidst the fear and uncertainty, the government’s approach was critiqued by some as problematic because it was “Top-down public health measures that mimic ‘international responses’, informed by state-appointed experts, and the differentiated localised responses on the ground” (Odendaal, 2021, p.124). Essentially, the South African government was accused by some as implementing a ‘copy and paste’ model in terms of the pandemic response, rather than delving deeper into the South African context to better understand what would work from the ground-level up. One could speculate that perhaps they did not know better and therefore implemented what they thought to be the best strategy without necessarily considering the impact it would have within the South African context.

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic and amidst these tensions of inequality, food insecurity and government distrust, South African citizens across economic and social divides were inspired to render assistance to others through the mobilisation and connection of communities (Gilmore et al., 2020, p.6). One such example is the Community Action Networks (CANs) that sprung up across South Africa (Gilmore et al., 2020).

1.1.2 Community Action Networks

In order to try to address some of the socio-economic challenges that the pandemic exposed, people across South Africa banded together to form Community Action Networks (CANs) that enabled suburbs to work together and support one another across social and spatial divides (Scheepers et al., 2020). Initially started by an organisation called *Cape Town Together*, CANs emerged as a means for suburbs to self-organise in their own unique ways and see to the needs of their immediate communities. After two months, there were already 170 CANs across Cape Town alone (Gilmore et al., 2020). According to Gilmore et al. (2020), “In some cases, pre-existing neighbourhood-level structures such as street committees or faith-based groups work alongside or together with the CAN” (p.6) and “in other cases, completely new relationships were established both within and between neighbourhoods” (p.6). The CANs did not receive any financial support from the South African government and mostly relied on local fundraising drives or gathered donations to support their activities (Gilmore et al., 2020). As there was no support from the government or formal organisations, CANs were fully grassroots, ‘ground-up’ initiatives.

The Woodstock CAN was run out of a suburb called Woodstock (located in Cape Town, South Africa) which had historic ties to community resistance from South Africa’s apartheid era (Garside, 1987). More about the research site of Woodstock is found in the methodology chapter. The culturally diverse suburb was represented within the Woodstock CAN as it had members from different ‘walks of life’ (e.g. culture, languages, racial identity, socio-economic status, age range). Specifically, the Woodstock CAN prioritised soup kitchens and mask sewing in its activities, and utilised members’ resources, connections, and passions to address these issues.

1.1.3 Research Problem

The COVID-19 global crisis affected and continues to affect the world's population in multiple and varied ways, both tangibly and intangibly. As Pfefferbaum and North (2020) state, "The COVID-19 pandemic has alarming implications for individual and collective health and emotional and social functioning" (p.521). Onyeaka et al. (2021) further outline how the COVID-19 pandemic lead to "the rapid decline in social interactions, a looming global economic depression, loss of lives, and the growing fear of the 'unknown' and consequently the alteration of the status quo" (p.13). These effects of the pandemic can contribute towards collective trauma experienced by society which is "a social psychological process that is primarily dedicated to the construction of meaning" (Hirschberger, 2018, p.2). If spaces and opportunities for capturing and healing and discussing are not intentionally created to process collective trauma and derive meaning, society is at a disadvantage as there is the risk that the trauma will continue for subsequent generations (Hirschberger, 2018). According to Cullen et al. (2020), once there is a disease outbreak, the psychological response of citizens plays a fundamental role in shaping how the disease could spread, but also the "emotional distress and social disorder during and after the outbreak" (p.1).

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted South Africa's spatial, economic, and social inequalities reminiscent of key features of the apartheid era (Valodia & Francis, 2020). It brought to the fore issues around access, basic service delivery, and inequality. Essentially, the pandemic significantly marked a specific moment in society's history and its effect will continue being experienced by communities around the world, and in years to come.

1.2 Research Question, Aim, and Objectives

1.2.1 Research Question

The research question for this study was: what are the experiences and perceived effects of a community organisation engaging in a commemorative arts-based process for social innovation during a pandemic?

1.2.2. Aim

The aim of this study was to understand the effects and learn from the experiences of a community organization in a pandemic, through using a commemorative arts-based process.

1.2.3 Objectives

The objectives of this research study were to:

- 1) Explore social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics, and
- 2) Unpack understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis.

1.3 Rationale and Significance of Study

When the pandemic hit and South Africa went into lockdown, I was living alone in my apartment in Woodstock, Cape Town. I was extremely isolated but found solace in still being able to work and stay connected with friends and family online. During this time, I saw a call for proposals from the National Arts Council of South Africa for ideas/concepts on how the Arts could connect and unite the country during the crisis. Feeling frustrated at only seeing horrific statistics of people infected and dying and feeling like there was so much to highlight and acknowledge in my community through creativity and innovation, I decided to apply with my own concept. The focus was on memorialisation and commemoration to celebrate and acknowledge not only those that passed, but those still living. The concept was that in every province there would be a plaque in memory of those that had passed as well as an art installation by an artist from that province. Each unveiling would be opened with a performance by dancers from that province. The process would directly engage local community members of each province in conceiving the ideas for each commemoration. I would travel around the country with a videographer documenting the process and each unveiling. While my application was unsuccessful, I was still inspired to delve into the topic further in my Master's because I wished to explore and document what a creative commemorative process would be like, and it could be my opportunity to do some community-orientated work in my suburb.

At the same time, through a friend who was leading Woodstock's CAN group, I became aware of the incredible community response in my own neighbourhood. This presented me with the

opportunity to apply my national idea on a smaller, community level scale. Having lived in Woodstock for the last eight years, I was interested in exploring how Woodstock's CAN would opt to commemorate their experiences remotely during COVID-19 using an arts-based method so I conducted participatory research workshops to work on an idea that we as a group could implement together.

1.4 Literature Review Overview

The key literature drawn upon in this study includes Paolo Freire's writings on theatre of the oppressed (Freire, 1970; Mustakova-Possardt, 1998; Watts et al., 2011; Diemer et al., 2016; Carlson et al., 2016), and the Ubuntu philosophy (Hailey, 2008; Matolino & Kwindigwi, 2013) as the foundational theoretical frameworks.

Following this, I unpack literature around COVID-19 and community mobilisation (Whittaker et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2023; McCabe et al. 2020; Cuen et al., 2022; Marston et al., 2020; Spear et al., 2020; Seow et al., 2021; Odendaal, 2021; Whittaker et al., 2015), and COVID-19 and community mobilization in South Africa (van Ryneveld et al., 2022, Whyte & Brady, 2022; Bjögvinnsson et al., 2012; Mulgan, 2006; Scheepers et al., 2020; Unger, 2016).

Commemoration is unpacked through literature on commemorating during COVID-19 (Eyre, 2007; Millar et al., 2020; Foote & Azaryahu, 2007; Morcate & Pardo, 2022; Koscieljew, 2022), arts and commemoration in crisis (Mccarthy et al., 2004; Goessling, 2020; Fee, 2006; Adams & Kopelman, 2022), and the power of collective memory (Marzi, 2023; Tollerton, 2022; Hodgson & Brennan, 2021; Rice, 2020).

Lastly, remote participatory research (Auerbach et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2021; Polat, 2022; Hall et al., 2021; Sattler et al., 2022) is discussed.

As I began researching memorials and collective memory, I found that there were gaps in literature about COVID-19, collective memory and commemoration as it was a relatively new phenomenon. There was also limited literature about CANs and remote participatory research

using art-based methods. Realising this, I felt my research study would have something valuable to contribute to existing literature.

1.5 Research Methodology Overview

The target population for this research study was members who belonged to the Woodstock Community Action Network in the suburb of Woodstock, located in Cape Town, South Africa. As a researcher and Woodstock CAN member, I invited members of Woodstock's CAN to participate in a creative and participatory research process to commemorate their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven individuals (out of ten that I had approached) agreed to participate and in our first kick-off workshop, when posed with the question of how they would like to commemorate their experiences of the pandemic, they chose video out of the options of video, mural, multimedia. Later in the process, the participants opted to collaborate on a poem as well. Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. The research paradigm that guided this study was interpretivism and the research approach was qualitative participatory research. Thematic analysis was conducted on the data which was collected from the following sources: online meeting (n=1), online one-to-one interviews (n=7), online group workshops (n=5, 60 minutes in length), in-person focus group (n=1, 6 participants), and remote collaboration in the creation of a video and poem, as described in the methods chapter¹. The research study was conducted between April 2021 and October 2021.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the different elements of this dissertation responding to the research question: ‘What are the experiences and perceived effects of a community organisation engaging in a commemorative arts-based process for social innovation during a pandemic?’ During the COVID-19 lockdowns in South Africa, activists and non-activists banded together to contribute towards their communities. The study aimed to commemorate

¹ The full chapter can be viewed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

community activists' lived experiences in the socially unequal context of the South African suburb of Woodstock during the COVID 19 pandemic using an Arts-based approach. Doing so exposed the conditions that led so-called 'ordinary people' to act. This study thus contributes towards knowledge and awareness relating to community work, traversing social inequalities during a pandemic, and remote participatory research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review chapter provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical evidence related to this thesis, which used video collaboration to commemorate community mobilisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. It begins with an overview of key topics related to community response and COVID-19, organized according to the research objectives of exploring social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics, and unpacking understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis. This chapter includes examples of existing projects that have utilised the arts or participatory research in creatively documenting aspects of a pandemic. Following these examples is an overview of uUbuntu and critical consciousness, which are the theoretical frameworks that inform this research. The literature review concludes by addressing gaps in literature, and providing a summary of the chapter.

2.2 Research Objective One: Exploring Social Innovation and Community Mobilisation in Pandemics and Epidemics

The content below is structured according to research objective one which is ‘Exploring social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics’. This section includes ‘Social innovation, Community Mobilisation, and Community Actions Networks’ and ‘Community response in HIV and Ebola epidemics, and the role of digital technologies’.

2.2.1 Social Innovation, Community Mobilisation, and Community Action Networks

A social innovation can be tangible (a product or service), intangible (a concept, a movement, an intervention), or a combination of these, the primary purpose being that it satisfies a social need (Bjögvinsson et al., 2012). Mulgan (2006) defines social innovation as “innovative activities and services” (p.146) that work to address a social need through “organizations whose primary purposes are social” (p.146). Unger (2016) further argues that a social innovation must identify an issue which cannot be resolved via “conventional practices and established

institutions” (p.234), rather it must provide a practical solution in understanding a challenge and how to resolve it.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa’s Community Action Networks (CANs) were successful in aiding governments’ efforts to reach many people quickly. CANs had the ability to develop new and innovative solutions that were adaptable to the unique challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis presented. The network’s resourcefulness stemmed from their ability to connect CAN members who worked together in driving different initiatives. This behaviour was an act of community mobilisation, which is defined as “a capacity building process, through which individuals, groups and families (such as model families), as well as organisations, plan, carry out and evaluate activities on a participatory and sustained basis to achieve an agreed goal” (The Open University, 2025). A key feature of community response and mobilisation in Cape Town during the pandemic were community role players who included individuals with the resources and ability to cook and/or distribute large quantities of food, or a person with the phone numbers of neighbours on their street, or a retired healthcare worker who could share medical advice (van Ryneveld et al., 2022).

Mccabe et al. (2020) describe how strong, community-led infrastructure, which includes established relationships with residents, community leaders, organisations, and access to finance, is the foundation for efficient community response. They specifically note that crisis response is usually food-focused, and where solid and reliable community infrastructure is in place, the response to food insecurity is far-reaching and more effective (Mccabe et al., 2020). Essentially, increased community mobilisation leads to greater results when there is already formidable groundwork, such as a relationship network that can be leveraged and called upon when needed.

According to Whittaker et al. (2015), the term ‘emergent volunteerism’ refers to the volunteer response that occurs during times of crisis, in which citizens provide their time, energy and support as they feel needs are not being met by more formal institutions. They argue that these ‘emergent volunteers’ have a key role to play in times of crisis and disaster, even though there is sometimes the assumption or belief they are not to be taken seriously as they could spark confusion and chaos (Whittaker et al., 2015). Whittaker et al. (2015) further argue that improvisation and innovation are key features of emergent volunteerism” (p.362) as

emergent volunteers are usually directly involved ‘on the ground’ and experiencing the challenges first-hand and are therefore better equipped to understand and address local needs.

Community/volunteer response during the COVID-19 pandemic, neighbour to neighbour and organised volunteer groups, to provide care and support where needed, became more recognised and acknowledged as a positive factor by both the media and official organisations (McCabe et al., 2020). McCabe et al. (2020) suggest that “the vibrancy, agility, innovation and responsiveness found at citizen and community level are promoted in contrast to a system dominated by a stultifying, controlling state and other powerful institutions” (p.8). The authors suggest that community response was in some cases faster, more efficient, and more creative in addressing challenges raised by the pandemic than the government response was (McCabe et al., 2020).

The CANs highlighted the possibilities and opportunities of a “reimagined community health system” (p.6) where the reliance on state institutions was challenged, while showcasing the power of collective action in addressing health challenges at a grassroots level (van Ryneveld et al., 2022). Van Ryneveld et al. (2022) point out that issues can arise when there is tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches, that is state versus community initiatives, which can occur because bottom-up approaches tend to ignore standard hierarchy and bureaucracy and focus on human relationships. This is counterintuitive to state-led, top-down approaches, which rely on the structures of hierarchy and bureaucracy to implement action. Marston et al. (2020) note that pandemic responses usually involve the government instructing citizens on what to do and fall short of community involvement with citizens. However, citizens can provide insights into various community barriers and dynamics and have relationships and networks in place to aid with collective response (Marston et al., 2020).

Whittaker et al. (2015) argue that the popular assumption regarding the role citizens play in disasters is that citizens are unruly or ineffective because they’re disorganized. The authors believe that research is changing this perception as it is being proven that citizens can become more cohesive when working together within communities to “overcome disaster-induced

challenges” (Whittaker et al., 2015, p.359). Some examples of this, are the various ways communities and activists around the world mobilized around initiatives during the disaster-induced challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in India, Dibyendu Tarafder mobilised and coordinated a team of volunteers to field hundreds of calls by people seeking COVID-19 related information such as how to access oxygen tanks, hospital bed availability, and where to get tested (Wickramanayake, 2020). He would source this information from what he saw on Whatsapp and Facebook (Wickramanayake, 2020). In Kenya, Wevyn Muganda and Suhayl Omar founded Mutual Aid to care for vulnerable communities, specifically focusing on digital advocacy (Wickramanayake, 2020). While in South Sudan, Nelson Kwaje started the #211CHECK collective, which was an online youth community who worked together to spread accurate information and raise awareness of COVID-19 to fight misinformation and raise awareness on coronavirus prevention and protection (Wickramanayake, 2020).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, community mobilisation and self-organisation demonstrated the need to rethink how society can ensure collective action is sustainable and is taken seriously as a legitimate and fundamental response in times of crisis (van Ryneveld et al., 2022). As Marston et al. (2020) states, “with communities on side, we are far more likely – together – to come up with innovative, tailored solutions that meet the full range of needs of our diverse populations” (p.1676).

2.2.3 Community Response in HIV and Ebola Epidemics and the Role of Digital Technologies

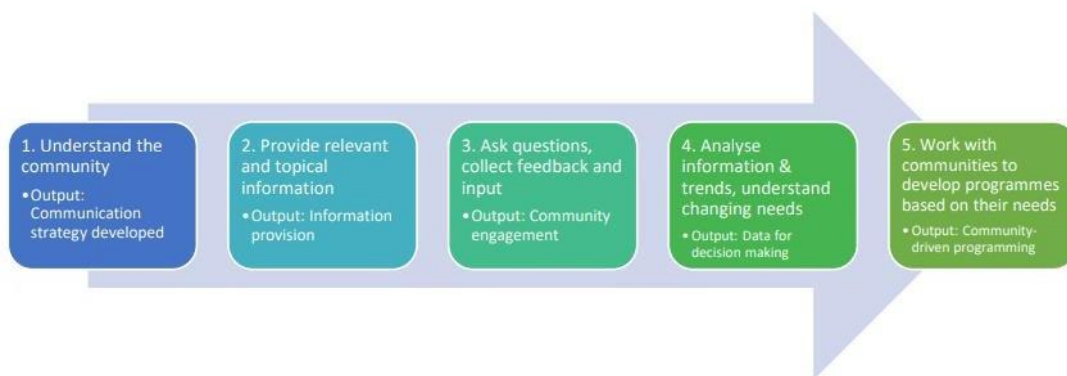
The HIV epidemic and Ebola epidemic draw many parallels to the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore much can be learnt from them in terms of community response and mobilisation, especially within Africa. According to Cuen et al. (2022), one of the key lessons that can be learnt from COVID-19 and HIV community-led responses to address future pandemic or health threats is enabling communities to resolve and adapt solutions to suit their needs. By building upon existing local knowledge and trust, communities can develop greater resilience and more

sustainable community response through a ‘bottom-up’ approach versus a ‘top-down’ approach by unfamiliar entities or organisations (Cuen et al., 2022).

Marston et al. (2020) also support the notion that past experiences should guide the future. They argue that grassroots movements in tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the Ebola virus in West Africa were instrumental in disseminating information, reducing stigma, and negotiating better access to treatment. Anoko et al. (2020) reinforce this as they argue that the main lesson learnt from Ebola was that co-constructed solutions contributed towards better community engagement and responsibility for the response to the virus. Although much can be learnt from Ebola in terms of community mobilization and response in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, it should not be a ‘one size fits all’ approach as different communities are unique and engagement must be contextualized (Anoko et al. 2020).

During the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, a European Union funded project was focused on reducing and lessening the impact of disease transmission through implementing an initiative targeting “community engagement and social and behaviour change communication” (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2017, p.1). See *figure 1* below outlining the five -step process they established.

Figure 1: A Five-step Process for Community Engagement



Source: (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2017, p. 1).

The figure above outlines the most important factors in community mobilization that was found during the Ebola outbreak. These factors included understanding the community, providing

relevant information, asking questions and gathering feedback, analysing information to understand needs, and working with communities to develop programmes (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2017, p. 1). This is an example of how community response for Ebola could be applied to COVID-19 because essentially, the CAN followed a very similar process which affirms that community engagement and mobilization within Africa occurs in similar patterns.

A main differentiating factor with the COVID-19 pandemic (in comparison to the HIV and Ebola epidemics) was the use of digital technologies as part of community response. The nature of COVID-19 required social distancing, and therefore technological solutions were specifically necessary to provide information, solicit and provide help, and provide socio-emotional support (Spear et al., 2020). This online activity was then able to affect and influence reality; “online organisation tools are used for needs in offline life” (Spear et al., 2020, p.3).

For example, in Canada, communities started a Facebook social media movement called #Caremongering to provide care and support to vulnerable individuals; they used social media to share “community-led solutions to address health and social needs” (Seow et al., 2021, p.2). According to Seow et al. (2021), connecting over a shared purpose via social media can significantly influence how communities respond to complicated challenges which may not be resolved if joint action doesn’t occur. Spear et al. (2020) support the argument that as an essential tool for effective action, technology, together with action and emotion, has the potential to tackle times of crisis with more efficient and innovative methods of response.

In South Africa, Community Action Networks (CANs) coordinated and mobilised COVID-19 community response, such as “food delivery, care for the elderly, local advocacy and information dissemination” (p.126) through Whatsapp, Facebook, and Zoom (Odendaal, 2021). As there were restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the organising happened online through Zoom and via digital social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp which transcended to offline activity, wherein members were allowed to move within city spaces to conduct CAN work. According to Shah et al. (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic enabled digital technologies to be utilized more and provided new opportunities for business and healthcare to deliver communication and stay connected.

Odendaal (2021) observes that what emerged from the CANs social media engagement, was that key issues were quickly and easily identified as they were directly linked to place (their respective communities and suburbs), and their lived experiences. This was possible because as residents of a community and suburb, they were best placed to understand the immediate needs of their community, and utilised social media to communicate, mobilise and address those needs (Odendaal, 2021). Social media enabled the opportunity for multiple interactions (technical, political and material) to reconfigure in the online space which could then affect offline, existing relations (Odendaal, 2021). In other words, what occurs online has the power to significantly impact offline spaces because of how easy it was to share information and mobilise mass groups.

2.3 Research Objective Two: Unpacking Understandings of Commemoration and the Role of Arts in Times of Crisis

The content below is structured according to research objective two which is ‘Unpacking understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis’. This section includes ‘The importance of collective memory in relation to commemoration’, ‘Commemorating during COVID-19’, ‘Arts commemoration in times of crisis’, and ‘Remote participatory research’.

2.3.1 The Importance of Collective Memory in Relation to Commemoration

As a society, we are obliged to remember the COVID-19 pandemic to address current socio-economic challenges and to preserve knowledge for future generations (Kosciejew, 2022). The act of commemoration through events, memorials, can help communities heal and emotionally process events together, so that they do not disconnect from real experiences and are better equipped to deal with future challenges:

“research indicates that reflective, consultative, and locally embedded commemoration can strengthen social cohesion, through the production of inclusive collective memory” (Millar et al., 2020, p.8).

Other authors (Kosciejew, 2022; Tollerton, 2022) draw comparisons between the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic and the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising the need for collective reflection and memory because the Spanish Flu was ‘forgotten’ due to a lack of documentation, remembrance events and sites. Hodgson and Brennan (2021) and Rice (2020) delve further into the comparison between the two pandemics, focusing on New Zealand and Australia’s response in the past and present, outlining how the two countries were better equipped for the COVID-19 pandemic because there was “institutional and collective memory” (Hodgson & Brennan, 2021, p.10). Hodgson and Brennan (2021) and Rice (2020) assert that lessons from the 1918 pandemic were directly incorporated into plans for the COVID-19 response, and as a result the two countries had some of the lowest death rates.

A unique aspect of this pandemic was the opportunity to commemorate it in ‘real time’ because of digital technologies, smartphones with video and photo capabilities, that enabled individuals and communities to instantly document their everyday lives and share information online (Marzi, 2023). This documentation was compounded by social distancing restrictions and lockdowns that forced people to stay at home, resulting in more interaction with social media and a desire to share their lives and ‘memorialise the present’ through online media (Adams & Kopelman, 2022). Sharing and documentation functioned both as a coping mechanism and a form of commemoration if something bad happened (sickness or death) as commemoration can be “ephemeral or permanent; the key point is they produce collective memory”(Savage, 2018, p.1).

According to Millar et al. (2020), pandemics significantly affect and threaten social order due to the mass loss and grief experienced by communities, and while the focus is usually on health, the social impact should not be dismissed. This is why memorialisation and collective memory are essential to address the feelings of loss and to enable communities to build resilience for future crises (Millar et al., 2020). As Kosciejew (2022) states, “We have a duty to ourselves and future generations not to forget COVID-19 but instead to remember by documenting it” (p.31). In doing so, we can learn from the innovative and sad experiences, to be better prepared and have a proactive approach should a crisis occur again.

Tollerton (2022) emphasizes that beyond capturing experiences of COVID-19 in our shared collective memory, broader societal effects of the pandemic should not be neglected, such as, “impacts on mental health, child development, domestic abuse, homelessness, and employment that are likely to be long lasting” (p.20). These issues, which were amplified by the pandemic, need to be addressed and reflected upon for the benefit of society (Tollerton, 2022). Consolidating these broader revelations, and innovations and responses, would enable society to capture a clearer narrative of the pandemic that would contribute towards a more definitive collective memory. Tollerton (2022) proposes that one of the reasons why the UK government may have been hesitant in officially supporting public reflection and documentation is that these identified issues could become the focal point of public assessments of the state’s response to COVID-19. This could lead to a negative shared collective memory (Tollerton, 2022).

As collective memory can hold great power, Tollerton (2022) suggests that it is essential to be mindful of moving away from strong discourse on national achievement and sacrifice which is “comfortable language of adversity and overcoming” (p.20). He felt it was important to acknowledge the shortcomings of digital communication and documentation which can immediately exclude those that do not have access, who tend to be vulnerable members of society (Tollerton, 2022). Therefore, not being reliant on online platforms but also creating offline, physical spaces for memorials and reflection sites could enable people to gather individually or collectively (Tollerton, 2022). He also believed it was important to understand that contributing towards collective memory and the act of commemoration is an ongoing process that needs to be renegotiated and reconfigured as society continually adapts and evolves to the changing circumstance of the impact and effects of a pandemic (Tollerton, 2022).

2.3.2 Commemorating during COVID-19

The process of commemoration after a collective tragedy provides commentary on broader changes in society – the possibility that things may not feel or be the same again, echoed in COVID-19 news reports with the constant referral to “the new normal” (Eyre, 2007, p.442). Foote and Azaryahu (2007) state that “participants, victims, survivors, and families usually exert the greatest control of meaning in the immediate aftermath of an event” (p.6). They go on to identify the commemoration of events, people, and places as an important aspect in most traditions to honour public memory (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007). If one were to subscribe to

From Foote and Azaryahu's (2007) notion that "public memory is part of the symbolic foundation of collective identity, where the question, 'who are we,' is at least partially answered with the question, "where do we come from," and "what we share and do together as a community" (p.6), it is clear that commemoration is fundamental to society as a way to reconnect after experiencing a shared tragedy.

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred in a time of "globalisation in communications and the circulation of images" (p.426), meaning that it created a unique opportunity to document the experiences and knowledge gained from the pandemic in real time from millions affected around the globe (Morcate & Pardo, 2022). Social narratives and ways of commemorating these experiences are necessary to learn and evolve:

"In the grip of a pandemic, humans create new narratives, new metaphors and even new language to understand and control it, not only from a purely technical or healthcare perspective, but in the social arena too" (Morcate & Pardo, 2022, p.426).

Across various sectors, in different formats and platforms, COVID-19 is being documented, from "government regulations to corporate policies, from biomedical and scientific studies to cultural materials, from social signage to social media content" (Kosciejew, 2022, p.21). Without this documentation, there would be a lack of knowledge about the disease and greater difficulty in navigating it, as well as re-inventing the wheel in influencing future decision making involving a pandemic (Kosciejew, 2022). Millar et al. (2020) argues that deciding not to memorialise an event such as the COVID-19 pandemic is indicative of a lack of consideration of the long-term effects on social cohesion and disregard for preparing for future occurrences.

Throughout history, memorialisation has occurred differently for countries across the world regarding pandemics (Millar et al., 2020). With respect to COVID-19, Italy was the only country with explicit and formally recognised memorial plans backed by the government together with local and regional initiatives, whereas elsewhere in the world plans for memorialisation have been more ad hoc, private or community led (Millar et al., 2020). Collective action to memorialise a pandemic should be encouraged because:

“Commemoration serves to demarcate the start and end of mass death events, providing a site around which communities may grieve, seek catharsis, recollect, prepare, and place into context future mass death events” (Millar et al., 2020, p.57).

The act of commemoration is a useful platform from which to process a crisis or event and reconnect with a community. It is also necessary for sustainability, as the act of remembering, and/ or a record of an event, equips others with the ability to deal with future crises.

2.3.3 Arts Commemoration in Times of Crisis

“Arts are an essential tool for helping us understand the human experience. They generate insight into different perspectives and experiences, generating empathy and solidarity. Due to their ability to transcend cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers, creative and art processes – music, theatre, film, public art, and printmaking – have long been used as a vehicle for social change” (Goessling, 2020, p.7).

Arts’ ability to encourage and foster communication, coupled with the intimacy of individual creative expression, and the trust and vulnerability associated with sharing one’s creativity with others, uniquely places it in a position to support “forging social bonds and bridges across social divides” (Mccarthy et al., 2004, p.29).

An example of how the arts can bridge divides and be used as a powerful tool for social change in times of pandemic crises can be found in the AIDS Memorial Quilt, conceived by gay rights activist Cleve Jones in San Francisco, USA. The artwork was comprised of names of victims on placards which, when viewed together, looked like a patchwork quilt (National Aids Memorial, 2025), leading to a community mobilised initiative to create a real quilt with contributions from the public to commemorate those that lost their lives to HIV/AIDS:

“With a small seed grant from the World Health Organization, Quilt organizers travelled to eight countries to mark the first World AIDS Day on December 1 1988, with simultaneous displays broadcast from six continents. Throughout 1989, more than 20 countries launched similar commemorative projects based on the Quilt” (National Aids Memorial, 2025).

The AIDS Memorial Quilt went beyond commemorating lives lost and connecting communities, as it brought significant awareness to the AIDS campaign and made a tangible impact on the fight against the disease:

“The AIDS Memorial Quilt was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. In the last 20 years, the quilt has been viewed by more than 15 million people and has raised more than \$3 million for AIDS service organisations” (Fee, 2006, p.979).

The AIDS Memorial Quilt initiative developed quickly because people around the USA and world could relate — representing the power of community mobilisation, commemoration, and art.

As a pandemic of the 21st century, COVID-19 has been experienced differently to pandemics of the past and brings to the fore discussions around commemoration in modern times and documentation through digital technologies, such as video and social media in particular (Adams & Kopelman, 2022; Kosciejew, 2022; Morcate & Pardo, 2022). An example of commemoration of the COVID-19 pandemic using social media and photography is the initiative by Historic England (HE), in the United Kingdom, that asked British citizens to share their lockdown experiences by submitting photographs to their website and social media, inadvertently also contributing to the HE archive with their collective documentation (Adams & Kopelman, 2022). HE’s request for personal accounts of lived experience are an example of “memorialising the present” (p.274) and turning a “private citizen into a potential field agent” (p.274) by collaborating with the public in capturing real life in real time, directly from individuals ‘on the ground’ (Adams & Kopelman, 2022)

“The public collection thus seeks to encapsulate a conversation between the public and the official institute, the personal experience and the national one, which blurred the lines of individual and organisation, private and public by enlisting the assistance of the general public to contribute towards national collective memory” (Adams & Kopelman, 2022, p.274).

This recognition by a formal entity showcases the value placed on community experience, which democratises the process of developing and capturing collective memory for society.

In another example, in South Africa, *United Apart SA* was a documentary that was produced and included crowdsourced video content from the Sunday Times's 2020 *United Apart* campaign (The Sunday Times, 2021). The campaign requested "South Africans to show how they were getting through lockdown by submitting video clips, images and voice notes that captured the essence of the pandemic" (The Sunday Times, 2021). Some of the questions addressed in the documentary included: "How much did our lives change? Did the authorities go too far? Can a developing economy follow the lockdown models for fiscally sound countries? What fault lines did Covid-19 expose? What more could have been done to effect change while fighting a devastating pandemic?" (The Sunday Times, 2021). This documentary was interesting because the content was generated by the public, it was recorded while the pandemic was still unfolding, it included interviews by key experts, it was produced by a national newspaper, and it captured the effect of the pandemic on South African society (The Sunday Times, 2021).

As is seen from the example above, video documentaries can play an important role in how stories are told. Iorapuu (2011) describe how "storytelling has been an age long tradition in African societies and elsewhere in the world" (p.17), and a notable feature of documentaries in relation to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is that they could be made with little or no crew and could be used to "mitigate socio-political challenges" (p.28). Whiteman (2004) describes how film can be used to create space where citizens "encounter, discuss, and decide to act on the issues" (p.55), as it can play a role in mobilizing supporters of the film to "challenge the dominant discourse" (p.55). Some examples of how activists around the world have used documentary filmmaking for social change are Maxcine Mitchell who produced a documentary about poor conditions in public housing, or Rob Danielson who told the story of mining activities in northern Wisconsin, or George Stoney and Judith Helfand who captured the story of the General Textile Strike of 1934 (Whiteman, 2004). Some impacts of these documentaries included strengthening activist organizations and changing public policy, distribution as part of an educational programme to educate and raise awareness on the issues presented, significant media coverage, networking between activists and other stakeholders within society, and the construction of a memorial 1934 (Whiteman, 2004).

According to Adams and Kopelman (2022), the act of capturing and documenting a crisis as it unfolds moves away from the usual retrospective function of documenting the past and stresses the recurrent flow between past, present, and future. Millar et al. (2020) believes this intention to commemorate is an ongoing process of remembering and capturing experiences and emotions that can have an impact on a disrupted social order in the long term. Gallo et al. (2021) emphasise that during a crisis such as a pandemic where social distancing is required, there's an opportunity to conduct art interventions remotely (online) and reap "the benefits of its positive cognitive effects" (p.1), which is helpful when people feel displaced and disconnected.

2.3.4 Remote Participatory Research

Due to social distancing, measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, events and meetings that would have previously occurred in person, had to move online. This posed significant research-related challenges, especially regarding "collaborative, co-developed participatory research and scholar-activism" (Auerbach et al., 2022, p.1). The very nature of participatory research relies on building trust while collaborating and working closely with communities (Hall et al., 2021).

In Polat's (2022) participatory research study, 'Facilitating a 'virtual space' for social change during the COVID-19 pandemic: working with high-risk population using an arts-informed method', participants were not passive but became "co-constructors of knowledge and transformation" (p.23). This was possible because they became "co-researchers and co-facilitators and engaged in different aspects of the study" (Polat, 2022, p.23). As a result, the research was being conducted 'with' instead of 'on' participants and was more inclusionary than exclusionary as participants had the opportunity to produce their own narrative as their insights were welcomed (Polat, 2022).

Remote participatory research introduces challenges emanating from engaging with various virtual platforms, as well as the ethical and moral complexities that have to be unpacked regarding privacy, ownership of participants' visuals, and who has access to online media (Polat, 2022). Auerbach et al. (2022) raise further challenges of remote participatory research, particularly with respect to participants which include, the difficulty in managing different personalities in a virtual setting such as Zoom, where dominant participants can be more outspoken than quieter participants and online fatigue can make participants less likely to engage due to the overall fatigue of working online in other aspects of their lives. Auerbach et

al. (2022) also describes how participants can be excluded if they don't have access to digital technologies or are digitally illiterate; and technical issues (sound/video quality) can interrupt the flow of engagement. In the specific context of remote participatory research in a pandemic, Hall et al. (2021) highlighted a significant consideration: In the stressful and ambiguous time of a pandemic, is data collection even necessary? And if so, how can one ensure the research process adds positive value and wellbeing to participants instead of causing harm and/or further stress?

At the same time, there are positive outcomes from engaging online and there have been innovative ways that participatory research has adapted to better suit the online environment. Auerbach et al. (2022) highlight some of the strengths and opportunities of remote participatory engagement, such as the emergence of new creative formats for engagement such as Zoom, Whatsapp, etc., and the ability to reach more people through different platforms (especially social media), therefore in some ways include more than exclude. Also, it ensures safety of the participants in situations that would put their health at risk, and it demonstrates how digital tools can allow for more shared analysis, design, editing (Auerbach et al., 2022). It can also enable the development of digital literacy as participants learn about other digital tools and methods of online collaboration (Auerbach et al., 2022). According to Sattler et al. (2022), participants may feel more comfortable engaging from their home environment and observing researchers in theirs, and this in turn builds familiarity and trust. Remote participatory research is also useful in the case of researchers and participants who "are not able to travel because of time and budget constraints" (Sattler et al., 2022b, p.71).

These examples denote that remote participatory research extends beyond the parameters of a method that can be used when research can no longer be undertaken under normal conditions, such as in the context of a pandemic. Utilising digital technologies to conduct research can be strongly influenced by what participants are already familiar with in some way (Auerbach et al., 2022).

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

Given the above literature theory behind the research objectives of ‘exploring social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics’ and ‘unpacking understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis’, Ubuntu and critical consciousness were identified as the most suitable theoretical frameworks for this research study. Ubuntu’s prime focus is on care in relation to others and the practice of community orientated support and engagement. Therefore, for this study using Ubuntu as the lens through which to explore community mobilization and commemoration was fitting. The prime focus of critical consciousness is developing an individual’s reflection capability in relation to their reality. Therefore, using the framework of critical consciousness to better understand social innovation and the practice of participatory research, specifically the art of collaborative video, unpacks participants’ empowerment in realizing their potential as contributors towards their community.

2.4.1 Ubuntu

According to Hailey (2008), Ubuntu is the shortened expression of “umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu” (p.9), which is translated as “a person is a person through other persons” (p.9). The phrase is also known as “I am because we are” (Nussbaum, 2003, p.3). Ubuntu is also a long-standing part of Southern African cosmology (Dandala, 1994). The Ubuntu ethos draws parallels with Christianity in its encouragement of treating others the same way one would want to be treated, and the view that privileged members of society should support those who are not (Hailey, 2008, p.6).

Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013) describe how Ubuntu was a direct opposition and antithesis to colonial rule and apartheid, its value residing in the restoration of human dignity for “transformation in all spheres of life” (p.199). According to Hailey (2008), Ubuntu is commonly understood to help “individuals value their own identity through their relationship with the community” (p.7). Essentially, Ubuntu provides an alternative way of thinking to European and North American philosophy and theology, which predominates much of present-day society’s thinking and way of life (Hailey, 2008).

According to Hailey (2008), Ubuntu, when applied practically, offers five key areas of communal assistance or support: 1) Developing stronger self-worth through our relationships

with others; 2) Community development; 3) Collective action; 4) Mediating conflict and creating resolutions; and 5) Positively influencing an organisation's efficiency and productivity. As an African ethos based on shared humanity and understanding to bring about change, Ubuntu is a suitable theoretical framework for unpacking collaborative commemorative practice by a group such as CAN. And as Hailey (2008) observes, there is critical reflection in Ubuntu to reconcile and move beyond immediate grief, therefore it is "part of the process of community healing, reconciliation and bridge building" (p.14).

The theoretical framework of Ubuntu is relevant to this research study because according to Jamieson and van Blerk (2022), during the pandemic, there were examples of Ubuntu in that communities started working together to look out for those less advantaged and advocacy organisations were fighting for human rights and establishing standards of care. They argue that the "pandemic showed that the spirit of Ubuntu is alive and well" because according to South African cultures, it is imperative to ensure those you know do not starve if you have food therefore those who were more financially able cared for those who were not able to sustain themselves (Jamieson & van Blerk, 2022, p. 5). Jamieson and van Blerk (2022) argue that the South African government would not have been able to provide enough support at scale due to the size of the crisis and the time constraints. South Africa was able to rally together through their "safety nets including a strong and vibrant civil society, a culture of Ubuntu in communities, the school feeding programme and a comprehensive social assistance scheme" (Jamieson & van Blerk, 2022, p.7).

2.4.2 Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness was developed by Paulo Freire (1970), an educator from Brazil who wanted to teach literacy and create an approach for oppressed or marginalized rural Brazilians to better understand how to navigate the world and utilise their potential (Diemer et al., 2016). According to Diemer et al. (2016), "Freire observed that as oppressed peoples' thinking about and understanding of their social conditions developed, their views of themselves in relation to society also developed" (p.216). The idea was that by reconstructing the way oppressed people understood and viewed the world, they became less constrained by it and developed their own agency in initiating change and addressing the social conditions and developmental challenges around them (Diemer et al., 2016).

Mustakova-Possardt (1998) defines critical consciousness as a psychological concept which

integrates private aspects of an adult’s understanding of the world with an adult’s public actions within society. Critical consciousness is the process of individuals engaging in critical dialogue relative to the society around them, bringing to the fore “concerns for justice and equity, and to define their own place with respect to their surrounding reality...” (Mustakova-Possardt, 1998, p.13). For Watts et al. (2011), they argue that this kind of critical analysis is essential in society because it is “how oppressed or marginalized people learn to critically analyze their social conditions and act to change them” (p.44).

The theoretical framework of critical consciousness is relevant to this study because it explored how using an arts-based method of participatory research for commemoration potentially embodied principles of critical consciousness. Freire’s learning approach prioritized both the teacher and learner as cocreators of knowledge which meant that power was shifted from the standard approach in that both became equal (Carlson et al., 2016). Freire believed that the transfer of knowledge was an equal process and allowed for “communal introspection he called dialogue” (Carlson et al., 2016, p.837). This study sought to engage participants in dialogue as creative collaborators in commemorating their experiences of a pandemic. Participants were identified as unique contributors who were best equipped and placed to understand their community’s needs. This method of participatory research aimed to empower participants to tell their story in their voice. Doing so provided them with the opportunity to practice agency in the commemorative process. Carlson et al., (2016) believe that the theoretical development of interpreting critical consciousness as a pivot from cultural norms “from dependency to interdependency” (p. 850), is “essential to better understand and optimize the power of Freirian approaches to actively engage citizens for meaningful community-based participatory work” (p.851). Essentially, for citizens to meaningfully engage in their communities and therefore society, they need to become interdependent, operating more as a collective.

2.5 Gaps in Knowledge

Williams et al. (2023) declare that another pandemic will occur, and that it is up to us to learn as much as possible from COVID-19, which “represented a novel global challenge” (p.3), and the pandemics and epidemics of the past to prevent and/or overcome the next threat.

With COVID-19 having spurred community responses across the world, each group adapted and thought innovatively and creatively to address the concerns of citizens around them. However, there is limited information on how these different groups mobilised into collective

action, which is why it is necessary to explore what took place systematically, through detailed and comprehensive research, across community and organisational levels (McCabe et al., 2020). There is a lack of literature about the ways in which participatory research in a pandemic might serve as a form of commemorating social innovations such as CAN. Furthermore, while the use of smartphones for remote collaboration has become abundant, the full extent to how they can be used in participatory research, specifically the role of video, needs further attention (Marzi, 2023).

As Auerbach et al. (2022) suggest, it would be useful to develop an information platform for participatory researchers to share their interventions and online tools specifically aimed at remote engagement. This platform could also cater to different languages, thereby connecting North-South academics in dialogue “to document both formal and informal practices of digital engagement”, which would lead to “stronger networks, cooperations, and partnerships between universities and community partners” (Auerbach et al., 2022, p.13). Also, videos have traditionally been used to gather data, however, its use has developed in academia as a form of communication (Moura et al., 2016).

Although understandings of commemoration continue to develop, it is necessary to carefully analyse how “memory practices penetrate all facets of our collective life, much work remains to be done on the actual impact of all these practices” (Savage, 2007, p.14). Essentially, it is necessary to explore the effects of commemoration practice and the different forms it can take in developing collective memory.

While there is significant literature on commemoration, Ubuntu, critical consciousness and community response, there are significant gaps in the connections between commemoration and Ubuntu, critical consciousness, and social innovation. Furthermore, because COVID-19 was a sudden pandemic, there is a shortage of literature on remote participatory research during this time, and much is still unknown about how different communities around the world responded, specifically CANs in South Africa. The implications of this study are that new knowledge will be contributed towards these areas, and the video arts-based approach selected

by participants for commemoration will exist outside of the academic sphere and therefore be able to reach and impact more people. Lastly, and most importantly, this research study and collaborative video will become part of society's collective memory of the COVID-19 pandemic through the stories captured and commemorated by research participants from South Africa's CANs.

2.6 Chapter Summary

literature review chapter unpacked key literature for this research study, structured according to the two research objectives of exploring social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics, and unpacking understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis. The first set of themes that were discussed included social innovation, community mobilisation, and Community Action Networks; and community response in HIV and Ebola epidemics and the role digital technologies. The second set of themes included the importance of collective memory in relation to commemoration, Commemorating during COVID-19, arts commemoration in times of crisis, and remote participatory research.

The chapter then drew the connection to the theoretical frameworks of Ubuntu and critical consciousness. This research study aims to address these gaps with the research question 'What are the experiences and perceived effects of a community organisation engaging in a commemorative arts-based process for social innovation during a pandemic?'. The following methodology chapter will outline how this research was explorative as it sought to study the experiences of engagement during a pandemic and what people chose to commemorate. It was also explanatory as the process lent itself to participants expressing and sharing their stories and experiences of a specific time, within a specific context.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology of this qualitative and participatory research study that focused on commemoration using art-based methods during a pandemic. It begins by providing an overview of the research methodology and approach, followed by an outline of the design, data collection method and research instruments. This is followed by an outline of the research site, participant recruitment, and sampling. The chapter concludes with an overview of data analysis, criteria, limitations, reflexivity, and ethics.

3.2 Research Methodology

Qualitative research aspires to achieve “in-depth, holistic, contextually sensitive understandings of phenomena” (Patton, 2015, p.91). In this study, the phenomena was the COVID-19 pandemic and how members of the Woodstock Community Action Network mobilized during this time, which was captured in this commemoration project using an arts- based approach. According to Atieno, (2009), “for some qualitative researchers, the best way to understand what’s going on is to become immersed in it” (p.14), an approach that suited me as researcher, Woodstock resident, and CAN member participant.

Qualitative methodology enables important things to be seen beyond recorded numbers; it goes beyond the surface to connect with lived human experience. Furthermore, qualitative research designs are flexible and adaptable, lending opportunities for the process to pivot depending on participants’ interactions. This is particularly helpful when exploring phenomena, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and commemoration. Qualitative research can also address some of the shortcomings of quantitative methods which, according to Patton (2015), are “important things can’t be reduced to standardized instruments; quantitative data only tap the surface of human experience; experimental designs are too rigid and controlling” (p.91). Essentially, quantitative research can be rigid and miss key information because of its limitations and lack of flexibility.

3.3 Research Approach and Paradigm

This study used the inductive approach in which “theory is built up from empirical observations” (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p.180). This means the study’s findings were analysed according to what emerged from the data as opposed to moulding the data to fit set theories or expectations. The research approach that guided this study was naturalistic inquiry, defined as “entering real-world settings to observe, interact, and understand what emerges” (Patton, 2015, p.91). In this study, the ‘real-world’ setting was the Woodstock CAN organization, in the suburb of Woodstock during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the researcher engaged with an active community group who influenced and guided the research journey. Findings emerged from the individual and group experiences and insights from the Woodstock Community Action network. This type of inquiry allowed for flexibility in the research approach, allowing the researcher to be guided by the process as it unfolded.

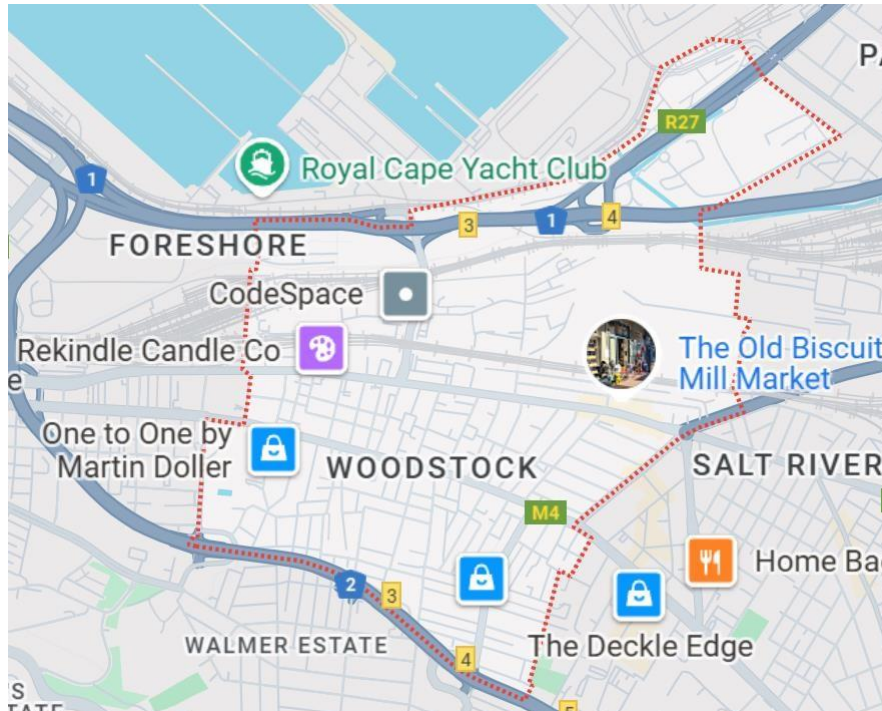
As a result, the research took on an interpretive paradigm which according to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), consider “different factors such as behavioural aspects based on participants’ experiences” (p.42). By engaging with participants, this research study aimed to commemorate community experiences of the Woodstock Community Action Network (CAN) during COVID-19 and explore the role of collaborative video as a social innovation tool. It is necessary to unpack the experiences from people ‘on-the ground’ to be better prepared for a similar event in the future.

3.4 Research Site, Project Inception, Participant Recruitment and Sampling

3.4.1 Research Site: Woodstock

The research location of this study was the suburb of Woodstock which lies east of Cape Town’s Central Business District, beneath Table Mountain, next to District Six, close to the coast of South Africa (see figure below). Woodstock is the city’s oldest suburb and as per the last census conducted in 2011, has a population of 12 656, of which 50% are Coloured, 25% are Black African, and 14% are White (City of Cape Town, 2013).

Figure 2: Diagram of Woodstock’s location



Source: [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps)

During the Apartheid regime, there were attempts to classify Woodstock as ‘White’, however, by the late 1980s it became ‘Unclassified’ or ‘Grey’, terms used to describe neighbourhoods where the Group Areas Act (a law which focused on racial segregation) was not enforced, meaning that multiple races settled in Woodstock (Wenz, 2012). According to Garside (1987), the community of Woodstock launched the ‘Open Woodstock’ campaign in 1986 in response to feeling threatened by the Group Areas Act’s mission to disrupt its multi-ethnic and multi-racial nature. This campaign was successful in its purpose to keep the suburb diverse and raise awareness which became symbolic of Woodstock’s community resistance (Garside 1987).

This history has translated to the present as Cape Town Tourism currently describes Woodstock as “an incredible mix of diversity and cultures” (Cape Town Travel, 2017). However, Woodstock is also experiencing tensions through urban regeneration, whereby the development

of residential and business properties has resulted in “skyrocketing property prices, evictions of long-time residents unable to afford the rent and rate hikes, and headline-grabbing protests” (Middleton, 2018, p.1). Essentially conflict has erupted between working class residents and wealthy residents and developers (Joseph, 2014).

3.4.2 Project Inception, Participant Recruitment and Sampling

I have been a resident of Woodstock since 2016 and joined the Woodstock Community Action Network via a Whatsapp group in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had heard about their various activities from a friend, who was the main coordinator of the group. I invited participants via the Woodstock CAN Whatsapp group to send me a message if they were interested in working on a collaborative, creative research project about the Woodstock CAN and pandemic commemoration. I joined one of the groups’ regular meetings where I described my research project in more detail, answered questions and confirmed some of those in attendance as participants. Some of the participants recommended specific individuals that I should reach out to. After contact was made, an initial group of ten agreed to participate in the study. However, three pulled out because of time/work commitments, resulting in a final group of seven. I then distributed consent forms and received the signed copies. Later in the process, participants felt that it was necessary to bring in additional voices, so another three Woodstock CAN participants were approached with a set of questions and consent forms for inclusion in the final video.

Convenience and snowball sampling were used for this research study whereby Stratton (2021) defines convenience sampling as “the researcher announces the study and participants self-select if they wish to participate” (p.373), while snowball sampling occurs when “participants are referred to the researcher” (p.373). Convenience sampling was the principal method of sampling used due to the study’s reliance on members within Woodstock’s CAN to indicate that they were interested and available to participate. Inclusion criteria for participation in this research study were that the participant had to be over the age of 18, a Woodstock CAN member, and available for 8-10 hours (total hours for interviews, workshop and focus group). They also had to have access to technology (phone or laptop) to participate in meetings online. Snowball sampling also occurred when participants suggested other

members who they felt should be a part of the research study.

3.4.3 Participants for the Research Project

This study was conducted with a total of ten participants from Woodstock’s CAN. Seven participants were involved throughout the process, which consisted of interviews, workshops, video contributions and a focus group discussion. Three were invited to provide video contributions towards the end of the process.

Table 1: Breakdown of Participants

Participants	Gender	Race	Nationality	Participation
Participant 1	Female	Mixed race	SA	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group
Participant 2	Female	White	SA	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group
Participant 3	Male	Black	SA	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group

Participant 4	Male	White	Italian	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group
Participant 5	Male	White	SA	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group
Participant 6	Female	Coloured	SA	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group
Participant 7	Female	White	SA	Interviews, workshops, video contribution, focus group
Participant 8	Male	Coloured	SA	Video contribution
Participant 9	Female	Coloured	SA	Video contribution
Participant 10	Male	Coloured	SA	Video contribution

3.5 Research Design, Data Collection Methods, and Research Instruments

A participatory research design is compatible with the study of inclusive innovation, which prioritises enabling and empowering communities so that stories and information are captured according to their narrative and what they know, thereby practicing individual agency (Sengupta, 2016). It includes systematic reflection and action together with participants, placing value on local participant knowledge and perspectives as fundamental to the process itself (Cornwall & Jewkes, 2001). This enables practitioners to contribute toward and participate in the activities and engagements in which the practice will occur (Kemmis et al., 2014).

In the context of this study, the participants were members of Woodstock's CAN who were able to contribute towards a project in real-time, meaning that it was directly linked to their lived experience. Participatory research aims to shift power to participants as it is understood and emphasised that decision making will be shared "from design to dissemination", therefore the research process is democratised with a core commitment to social change (McDonald, 2021; Hore et al., 2021). This study was facilitated by myself as researcher, but participants were able to dictate the direction of the research process and what would be included and excluded in the process. Their voices were instrumental in shaping the narrative of their lived experiences of the pandemic.

As part of the participatory process, participants were offered, in the first kick-off workshop of the study, the options of a mural, a video, or multimedia as arts-based approaches to commemorate their community mobilisation during the COVID-19 pandemic. They voted and decided on the video format as their preferred tool. Participatory video, similarly to participatory research, empowers participants through the ownership of the project, is inclusionary and adaptable, and is an accessible medium (Lunch & Lunch, 2006, p. 14)

Roberts and Lunch (2015) describe how Shaw and Roberston (1997) discovered that through creating videos about their social context, participants developed the skill to understand and analyse the world more analytically. Essentially, Shaw and Robertson (1997) understood participatory video's process as similar "to the conscientization advocated by Freire in

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970)” (Roberts & Lunch, 2015, p.1). Roberts and Lunch (2015) further outline that there is no ‘correct standard’ to conduct participatory video as some processes may focus on the method of collaborative production; while others may focus on the production value of the final film, specifically in instances where the film’s role is to advocate for social change or used as a development tool. In the context of this particular research study, the focus was more on the collaborative process and how participants engaged with it.

According to Baumann and Burke (2020), “Collaborative Filmmaking is an embodied, participatory, and visual research method in which participants are trained to create, analyze, and screen films to answer a research question” (p.1). Video collaboration in this format poses a research question at the start, and the final product is specifically aimed at eliciting change (Baumann & Burke, 2020). The end product can be used for advocacy initiatives, such as to educate others, to raise awareness around certain issues, as well as share evidence (Baumann & Burke, 2020). For this study, a modified collaborative video method was developed based on the work of Baumann and Burke (2020): a six-step process of collaborative filmmaking developed for a study on menstrual hygiene management in Nepal. Their model included introduction, orientation and training; filmmaking/data collection; film assembly and preparation for film co-analysis; co-analysis; public screenings; and synthesizing findings (Baumann & Burke 2020). The modifications are outlined below.

- 1) Unlike the collaborative video process outlined by Baumann and Burke (2020), the researcher did not require participants to answer the main research study question through the video material they produced. Rather topics were participant driven and more open-ended, while still linked to the main research question.
- 2) Furthermore, instead of jointly analysing each person’s input individually, we combined all input and analysed it as a group. This was necessitated due to time constraints and was possible because the group felt comfortable enough to openly share their feedback together. In Baumann and Burke’s (2020) case study, each participant had their own film, while in this study the individual films were combined to tell the collective story of Woodstock’s CAN.
- 3) Lastly, this process was undertaken completely online over the Zoom platform, as it was not possible to meet in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study’s full process is described below.

Considering we were undertaking the process of collaborative documentary, Nash (2014) argues that within documentary practice there are two key concepts: voice-as-authorship which refers to participants' ability to engage in decisions of the film's representation and voice-as-social participation which emphasises participants' ability to interact with others through film. Documentaries serve as a significant social function because they are able to record and archive for civic engagement and influence.

3.6 Data Collection Summary and Timeline

Data was collected from seven online one-on-one semi-structured interviews, one online introduction meeting, five online workshops, one collaborative video, one collaborative poem, three video contributions, and one focus group discussion in person.

*Where a participant was not able to join the full group of 7, the researcher would schedule a one-on-one briefing to update the participant and get their feedback before the next workshop.

Table 2: Data Collection Summary and Timeline

Date	Activity	Notes
8 April 2021	Kick-off and introduction meeting [1hr]	<p><i>Check in: Objects of special meaning (commemoration)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Introduction to project. Brainstormed commemoration. Chose video as collaborative tool
15-23 April 2021	1:1 interviews [45min-1hr]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 semi-structured in-depth interviews
1 May 2021	Workshop 1 [1hr]	<p><i>Check in: how they are feeling now - looking back a year later</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Showed presidential address video, brainstormed intention/theme of video, showed different video styles to get an idea of what they prefer • Brainstormed and decided on themes for video intention and style idea
7 May 2021	Workshop 2 [1hr]	<p><i>Check in: Emoji to express how they're feeling.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Discussed video transcript and where video will be shared

18 May 2021	Workshop 3 [1hr]	<p><i>Check in: 1 thing you learnt about yourself during lockdown</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Presented updated transcript and discussed shots. Participants named others to include in video • *3rd wave, vaccine trials started
22-29 June 2021	1:1 Video briefings [30min]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with each participant to discuss their video contribution
5 August 2021	Workshop 4 [1hr]	<p><i>Check in: What would you tell your 2019 self about what was to come.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided feedback on 1st video draft
30 August 2021-27 September	Gather additional video contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested voicenote responses and images from three additional participants that the group identified
21 September 2021	Workshop 5 [1hr]	<p><i>Check in: How are you feeling/what's your favourite thing about Spring?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Provided feedback on 2nd video draft. Discuss and plan screenings. • *Video was then edited one more time and shared with participants via email

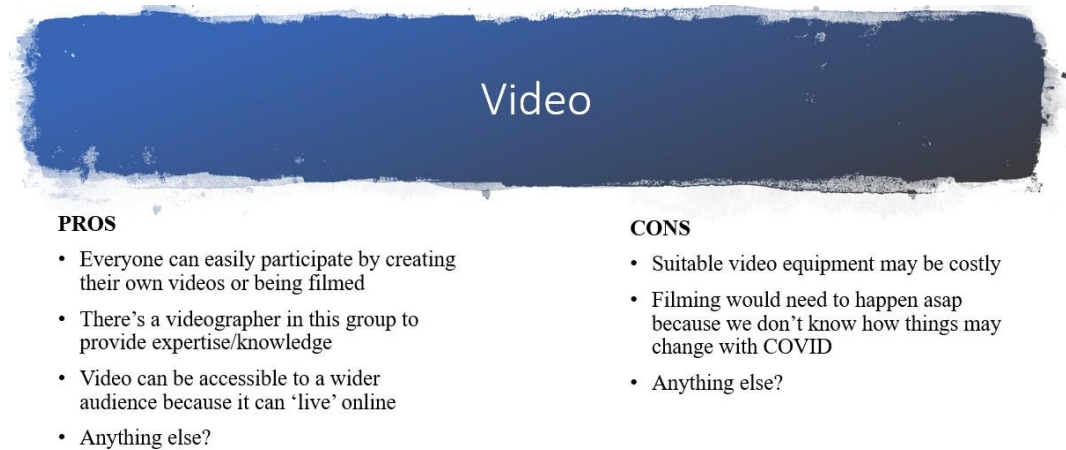
6 October 2021- 13 October 2021	Poem creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent poem cocreation prompts to participants • Compiled poem from contributions <p>*See appendix for poem prompts and final poem</p>
14 October 2021	Screening 1	Go Drive-in screening in Salt River
15 October 2021	Screening 2	Bertha House screening in Mowbray
18 October 2021	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Reflection on the process
11 November 2021	Uploaded video online	Video is available on YouTube (Together We Can, 2021)

3.6.1 Data Collection Process

Introduction meeting

To ensure everyone was on the same page, I introduced the topic of commemoration and my research focus. As a member of Woodstock’s CAN, I had been aware of previous discussions within the group of what some members were interested in doing creatively, so with that in mind, I proposed three participatory art-based methods to commemorate their experiences: Mural, video, or multimedia. The group discussed the pros and cons of each option, and the majority of the group selected the video format because they felt that it was easily accessible, could reach more people, and allowed for potentially including more people in terms of captured stories. See *figure 3* below.

Figure 3: Screenshot of Video Brainstorm Workshop



Conduct one on one interviews

One-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured online video interviews through Zoom (see questions in Appendix) were conducted with seven participants between the kick-off and introduction meeting (8 April 2021) and the first workshop (1 May 2021). Interviews were conducted with research participants after consent forms were signed, at a mutually convenient time, and were recorded as they took place online via ZOOM. Qualitative interviews are flexible and open-ended; they emphasise real-life experiences more than general opinions, and the relationship between researcher and participant is fundamental to the process (King & Horrocks, 2010). These interviews were also used to inform the structure/ content of the workshops for the video collaboration.

Group workshops to collaborate on the video

A series of five iterative online group workshops were held between 1 May 2021 and 21 September 2021. Each one informed the content and structure of the next one. I would make observation notes during these workshops and record them to use for data analysis later. In the first workshop it was necessary to outline the research as per screenshot below.

Figure 4: Screenshot of Research Outline



There were two specific workshops that required additional activity. For example, after workshop three, in order to receive strong visuals from each participant, it was decided that the video editor and I would meet with each of the participants 1:1 to discuss the types of visual contributions they could make. These video briefings were necessary to ensure participants were clear on what they could provide, and request any support. These video briefings were necessary to ensure participants were clear on what they could provide, and felt supported in the process. See screenshots below.

Figure 5: Screenshot of Video Planning 1



Figure 6: Screenshot of Video Planning 2

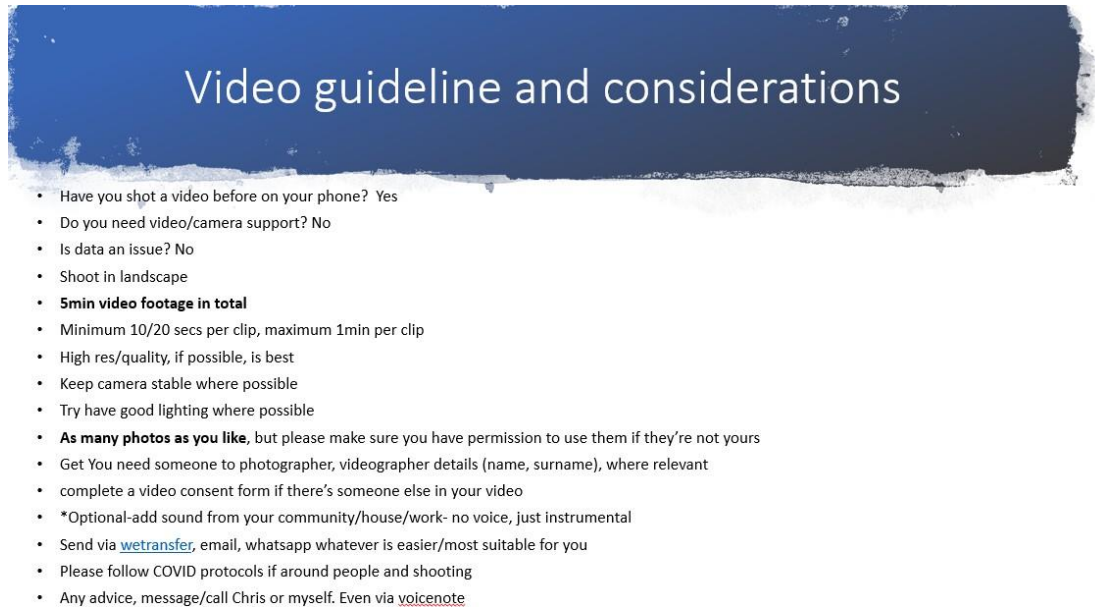


Figure 7: Screenshot of Video Planning 3



In workshop four, as per the feedback guidelines below, participants clearly articulated that there needed to be more voices included. They suggested three additional participants of Woodstock CAN that should be reached out to. Given the time frame and to ensure responses, it was decided that five prompts that were covered by participants already would be sent to the

three participants, and they could send their responses via voicenotes on Whatsapp as well as send images to accompany their voice for the video. See screenshots in Appendix.

Figure 8: Screenshot of Feedback Prompts



Poem creation

As the video was reaching its conclusion in being produced, the group recognized that there was a core narrative that was missing to tie the video together. They decided a poem was needed to articulate the core themes and guide the viewer. Initially, an independent poet, separate from the group, was approached to provide the main narrative for the video. However, the group subsequently decided to collaborate and write the poem themselves, citing concerns about involving someone at a later stage who was not familiar with the group and their experiences. A poem was then cocreated by members of the group to connect the different stories together around the core themes. Prompts about each theme were sent to every participant via email and Whatsapp for them to complete within a specific time frame. It was decided that I as researcher would narrate the poem for the video. See poem prompts in the Appendix and full poem in the findings chapter.

Video screenings

Two video screenings were held at different locations in Cape Town. The group suggested different options, then made their final selection by voting via a form which was sent to them after workshop five (see form in the Appendix).

The first screening was held at a drive-in cinema called Go Drive-in, located in the suburb of Salt River next to Woodstock. Go Drive-in was accessible, which was especially important for one of the participants who wanted to give the Woodstock homeless community an opportunity to attend and watch the video too. The drive-in cinema was normally used to screen commercial movies, but let the group rent the space at a discounted rate because the event was a community initiative. The event took place outdoors, with guests seated in cars or on chairs placed outside. Guest attendance mostly consisted of people who featured in the film and their family and friends. For most participants, it was the first time meeting in person.

The second screening was held at an activist centre called Bertha House located in the suburb of Mowbray. It was hosted there because it was free, and the group hoped to attract more of an activist crowd for a discussion after the screening. The space was indoors and setup like a theatre in front of a screen which projected the video. Guest attendance also mostly consisted of people who featured in the film and their family and friends.

Focus group closing discussion

To complete the six-month research process, a focus group (n=6 participants) was conducted as a final group engagement. This was an opportunity for the group to provide feedback on the entire experience, as well as share any further insights and recommendations. The focus group was audio recorded and took place in person. A focus group is a data collection research tool implemented with groups that places key emphasis on the group discussion as the main source of data, with the researcher playing a key role in facilitating the discussion (Morgan, 1996). As the Woodstock CAN members I was engaging with were familiar with one another, a focus group to conclude the research study was suitable as Rabiee (2004) argues that when discussing personal things, engaging with a pre-existing group can prove to be quite successful as there would be more trust and therefore more can be expressed. The focus group was held to explore, document and reflect upon the group's experiences of the process of creating a participatory, commemorative, collaborative video (see the research tool in the Appendix).

3.7 Data Analysis

To analyse the data from multiple engagements, a thematic analysis was conducted on data from the in-depth semi-structured Zoom recorded interviews, workshops, and the in-person

focus group. The research study also engaged in group-based thematic analysis when deciding on the core themes of the video. This type of analysis suited this study because it is a flexible research approach that can provide a comprehensive account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the first workshop, the group decided to use the one-on-one Zoom video interviews as the cornerstone of the video. They also outlined what the intention of the video must be and how they would want their audience to absorb the information. With an interactive post-it note platform, participants were prompted to brainstorm on: 1) What do we want people to feel? 2) What do we want people to think? And 3) What do we want people to see? It was necessary to agree on intention to align various perspectives and create a sense of purpose, clarity and common understanding.

Figure 9: Screenshot of Online Brainstorm for Video Intention



Participants were invited to determine an intention for the creative product, after being provided an overview on the value of intention during a creative process. Using the platform Google Jamboard online, I explained to participants that they would be engaging in a creative brainstorm – an online post-it note board that allowed them to share ideas around a particular

topic of 'intention for the video'. Three sets of post-it notes were provided to participants, who had a few minutes to jot down whatever came to mind for each note. Allowing participants to brainstorm freely around touch (yellow post-it notes), sight (blue post-it notes), and thought (green post-it notes) enabled participants to contribute their own insights and feelings in a structured manner. The platform enabled participants to see in real time what everyone was contributing, and it was easy to move the content around to explain things in a visual manner. This interactive activity enabled the group to feel like active participants that were directly contributing to the project.

While participants discussed the completed post-it brainstorm above, they emphasized that it was important to highlight the word 'change' in the video to make the audience question what needs to change to prevent society from repeating the same mistakes. Furthermore, because Woodstock's CAN participants had borne witness to Woodstock change over time, they wanted the audience to feel a connection to the past: a sense of time, where we have come from, and the future. There is also a political aspect to this given Woodstock's history. Participants also agreed that the stories that are told must be the ones that they choose to tell, aware that different formats elicit different feelings, and that stories are also anchored in history and place.

Together, we were then able to look at everyone's contributions and start identifying patterns/themes that the post-it notes could be divided into (orange notes). The accumulated words were: seeing, unseen; feeling connected/not alone; Woodstock's change overtime; celebratory nature; stories; connected to past, part of future; what is necessary to change; and positive emotions. Guided by these words, the researcher further refined them into five distinct themes which formed the basis of the video. Together, we established the core themes of the video using group-based thematic analysis. See detailed explanation of thematic analysis further in this chapter. To simplify the language and make it more understandable when communicating with the group, I referred to these core themes as 'golden threads'. Below is a summary of the breakdown from participants' core themes which became the video's core themes.

Table 3: Participants' and Video Core Themes

Participants' core theme	Video core theme
Feeling connected/not alone	Relationships
Seeing, unseen connected to past, part of future	Commemoration
Woodstock's change overtime	Woodstock
What is necessary to change?	Self-organising
stories positive emotion celebratory nature	Celebration

The video editor and I watched the interviews together and then selected a video section that encapsulated central messages of the participants' interviews. They termed these short video sections as 'golden threads'/core themes. These sections were then coded and grouped into the video themes of: Woodstock, commemoration, self-organisation, celebrate and relationships which were established from participants and what they wanted to highlight (as explained above). Each participant was then invited to find or create their own visuals (video and/or photography) to match their sections. At every workshop, participants were consulted, and feedback was welcomed in terms of the editing process, structure, and content. By enabling participants to review and comment on their sections and the material others had provided, it allowed for member checking whereby findings were reflected back to participants to ensure

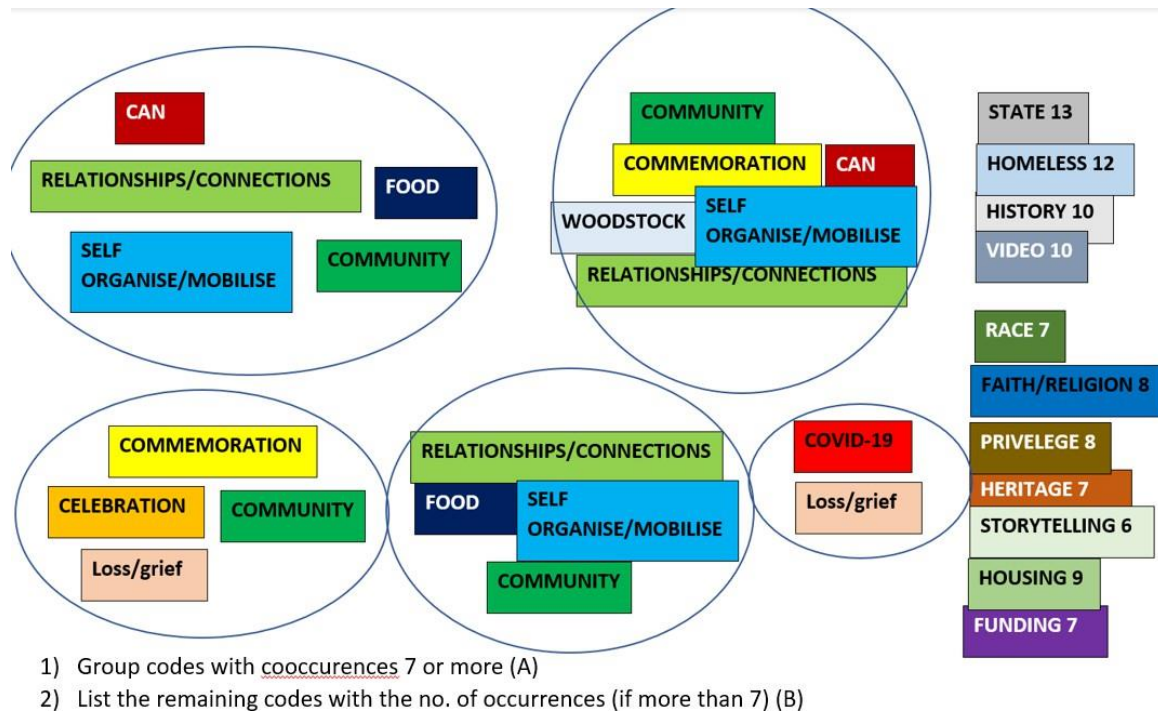
for accuracy. In addition, the video editor and I consulted with a professional video editor, as well as reached out to the broader CAN via Whatsapp inviting additional participation and commentary.

A rich thematic description of the full dataset was conducted to identify predominant and important themes and is presented in the findings section. While this approach may be critiqued to lack some depth and complexity, it provides a rich overall description and is a suitable method for exploring an under-researched area (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data from each approach (video interviews (n=7), online meeting (n=1), online workshops (n=5) and the focus group discussion (n=1) were transcribed verbatim. Interviews were transcribed using otter.ai software, then checked and edited by me. The complete dataset was revised several times so that I could familiarise myself with the data. Following this, an initial coding framework (codebook) was developed and the data uploaded to Dedoose software which is a web-based data analysis application for organizing and analysing research data (Salmona et al., 2019). Each transcript was meticulously read through and coded as per my codebook. Once complete, the transcripts were read through again to ensure nothing was missed. The transcripts were then downloaded into an Excel sheet according to codes so that all quotes that were linked together would appear in the same place. By engaging the co-occurrence function on dedoose, and because I had multiple datapoints, those with the most co-occurrences were used (see *figure 10* below).

Following this, groupings that were too similar were removed. I then organised quotes linked to groupings and found key patterns that could form themes. At this stage it was important to review all the codes again to ensure nothing was overlooked. In doing so, some emerging themes were found to be similar and could therefore be merged.

Figure 10: Initial Planning for Thematic Analysis



3.8 Credibility, Limitations, Reflexivity

3.8.1 Credibility

During the participatory research study, I validated findings iteratively with participants throughout the process as they were given the space and opportunity to provide feedback and share their insights at every stage. Final findings will be shared with participants as well.

In the hope that other practitioners and/or researchers can find value in this research project, I developed a praxis model on a 'Remote commemoration framework utilising collaborative video', see appendix. This is a template that could be adapted to suit other settings/contexts. Also, detail is provided in the data collection section and in the appendix to clearly outline how the research was conducted.

There is the possibility that this study can be adapted and replicated in another country wishing to commemorate their experience(s). Also, pandemics are not consistent and usually

occur in different countries at different times. Therefore, this study could be adapted and replicated when a different pandemic occurs. Lastly, a pandemic can also be viewed as a time of crisis. As such, this study could also be adapted and replicated to suit tragedies and events of global significance, which could include terrorist attacks, a gender-based violence onslaught, civil rights cause, political upheaval, genocides, and natural disasters.

3.8.2 Limitations

While participatory research is a powerful method for collaboration in research, some critique calls attention to its tendency to be biased, impressionistic, unreliable and contradictory, as a lot that passes as ‘participatory research’ is fully researcher-led, designed, and managed (Cornwall R., 2001). Although it was difficult at times to be neutral and not influence key moments, it was important to ‘trust the process’ and let it be led by participants.

Method limitations and considerations

Research: This study was a qualitative participatory research study. Participants were active and influential in guiding the research process.

Consideration: A different research method could be used for commemoration, where the researcher plays a more directive role in the outcome of the research.

Research group size: The group of seven that participated in this research project was a small pool from a much larger group. Although we were able to incorporate some additional voices later in the project, having more people participate from the beginning would have allowed for greater representation and more diverse data. Due to time constraints, the impact of the pandemic, and online fatigue, the research study had to proceed with the seven participants. However, this was also a strength, in that it was more manageable to coordinate a smaller group of participants for multiple engagements over an extensive period.

Consideration: Find other innovative and creative ways to incorporate more material from the beginning, such as submitting videos, letters, and photos through a platform link. It may also be helpful to provide an ethical incentive for participation, e.g. a certificate of completion, skills development, etc.

Access and inclusivity: Due to the nature of COVID-19 and the need for social distancing, all engagement had to take place online and utilise technology. This meant that people who did not have a laptop/phone with Wi-Fi or data were excluded. Although data was offered to participants once they committed to the study, access and connectivity still sometimes posed problems. Recording large material on a cellphone and then having to store and send it also sometimes posed a challenge.

Consideration: It is important to consider access and inclusivity in future studies or interventions. An option is to offer payment for data upfront for mobile phones as a possible means to engage more participants. Training for platforms such as Zoom could also be provided so that more people are familiar with it.

Video feedback: The impact of the final video was not captured from people who attended the screenings or watched the video online. This information would have clarified how the video was received by the public and society. However, it was not captured due to scope and time constraints.

Consideration: Send out a survey to attendees, share a feedback form in the YouTube caption, and have a document to store any associated feedback from the project.

Pandemic research: Conducting research during a pandemic necessitated sensitivity in considering the mental health of the participants. There were also instances when participants became sick and needed time to recover, or someone was travelling, so the project took longer than planned.

Consideration: The researcher must balance flexibility, empathy and patience, while ensuring the process is steered to completion.

Participant attendance: Sometimes not everyone was in attendance because of other commitments, which affected the group dynamic. More time was required to then brief the person who missed the discussion, but this was essential to ensure everyone was still a part of the process.

Consideration: It is important to keep everyone informed and to be as accommodating as possible. For instance, providing different date options worked well.

Arts-based method selection: Video was the chosen arts-based method for this research study. Participants selected it because they felt it would be more accessible, and more people could be included. Together, as a group, we were able to collaborate on a video commemorating the story of Woodstock's CAN. However, it is unclear if the process would have unfolded the same way if a different arts-based method was selected as a means for commemoration, such as a mural, multimedia project, dance piece, theatrical piece, etc.

Consideration: Other arts-based methods could be explored in the future to identify similarities and differences with this project. For example, one could collate an online arts-based repository of different community responses that occurred around the world, through community organisations, activists, and individuals. This online repository could be multimedia and serve as an opportunity to creatively learn about and observe how the world responded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.8.3 Reflexivity

Figure 11: Diana Ocholla, Muizenberg, Performance, 2020



"It is an artist's duty to reflect the times". Nina Simone

“Hard times, require furious dancing”. Alice Walker

“I remember during the pandemic, hearing about Woodstock CAN and all that they were doing but felt like I didn’t have the emotional, mental, and physical capacity to engage with others. I needed all that energy for myself. So I chose to be selfish and focus on getting myself through the time. I was blown away with stories of how individual people, some who’d never even considered themselves activists were suddenly ‘stepping up’ and helping those around them. I wondered where they found the willpower, the energy—capacity—to care for others. “I joined Woodstock CAN on the ‘tail end’ of the lockdown/ restrictions. In my first online meeting, I only knew two people, one who was a friend and the other an acquaintance. I remember feeling the warmth between CAN’s participants. This was the core group that continued to meet regularly even as others tapered off and started returning to their lives. It was beautiful to immediately sense strong camaraderie and connection, even through a screen.” [Diana Ocholla, Reflections, 2021]

I was aware that my own positionality, experiences and world views could influence and/or shape my research process and findings. I am of mixed Kenyan and Russian heritage but have been living in South Africa since 1996 and consider it home. At the age of 29 (at the time of data collection), I was aware that the participants I was working with were older, therefore I tried to approach them in a respectful way as their ‘junior’. My work environment also had an effect, as it focused on projects, partnerships, events, that had a positive impact on society, which greatly influenced me in terms of understanding how communities know their environments best, and why their voices should be put first. Through my work, I also had had the experiences of witnessing the negative effects of interacting with a community without care, respect, and sensitivity and knew what to avoid.

In terms of art-based methods of commemoration, connecting to myself and others through dance/ movement has been a powerful tool that I have used to gain a deeper understanding of myself and others. In this study, I wanted to really listen to the experiences of community activists, and being a creative person, chose to do so creatively. It was important for me to be intentional with my engagement while trying to be aware of my subjectivity and potential assumptions. Trusting the participatory research process was difficult at times as it meant some things took longer as there (always) had to be a group consensus. Being younger, I also had to

balance demonstrating respect and sensitivity with firmness to ensure that the project moved along.

It was helpful for me as researcher to also be a member of Woodstock's CAN, as it allowed me to immerse myself in the organisation and to truly understand how it operates, its values and principles, and to build authentic relationships based on trust. Understanding the dynamics of the organisation, who to speak to about what, and creating a 'safe space' where participants could be vulnerable and feel empowered enabled participants to open up, and feel seen, heard, and respected.

Figure 12: Diana Ocholla, Woodstock, 2021



3.9 Research Ethics

As stated earlier, during the COVID-19 pandemic people were restricted to their homes and had to adhere to COVID-19 health protocols to curb the spread of the virus. This meant that any engagement had to be done online/virtually (until restrictions were eased) and if any engagements happened in person, health protocols had to be followed. Other than physical illness (whether they might get sick or know someone that is sick or has died), participants also suffered mental health challenges caused by all the uncertainty. They also had to draw boundaries and navigate between their personal lives and professional and community work lives while working remotely from their homes. This required some sensitivity with respect to meeting ethical requirements with participants.

Ethical approval to conduct this research was provided by the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Commerce (REF: REC 2021/03/011) [see the ethics approval letter in the Appendix]. Below is an outline of the different ethical considerations with respect to this research study:

Remote engagement

If a meeting had to be held in person, e.g. to have a consent form signed, I would monitor health protocols by using hand sanitiser, wearing a mask, and ensuring a safe distance during the meeting. It was imperative to ensure that participants came to no harm while engaging in this research. Unfortunately, one of the participants contracted COVID-19 rather severely during the research process (not through engagement in this process). I maintained clear communication and brought her back on board once she had recovered and had the strength to engage. Once restrictions were eased and people could meet in person, the group held two video screenings and the focus group in-person while adhering to COVID-19 protocols.

The COVID-19 safety protocol, as well as useful websites and helplines, were always on hand when engaging with participants. Regular check-ins were conducted at the start of every online workshop to get a sense of where participants were and what they were feeling. This was part of my commitment as researcher with research study participants to get a sense of their emotional wellbeing before we engaged in content, as well as build rapport. A question would be posed, then each person would provide a response. Sometimes the response would spark a discussion in a particular direction, but mostly they were very useful in getting to know the participants. Check-in prompts included: 1) *Describe an object of special meaning to you and why (commemoration)?* 2) *How are you feeling now - looking back a year later from the pandemic's start?* 3) *Share an emoji that expresses how you are feeling?* 4) *What's one thing you learnt about yourself during lockdown?* 5) *What would you tell your 2019 self about what was to come? and* 6) *How are you feeling/ what's your favourite thing about Spring?*

Confidentiality

Participants remained anonymous in the research findings. In the collaborative video, the researcher received written consent via email to include participants' faces. However, their names are not displayed in the video or in the captions.

Data storage

The researcher used the University of Cape Town's approved platform of Teams to store all content including video recordings, transcriptions, and thesis drafts.

Informed consent

All the participants signed informed consent forms upon the commencement of this study. Where additional consent was necessary, this was done in writing (see the Appendix for the consent form).

Healthy dynamic: As researcher with participants and supervisors

Developing and building trust was essential in sharing relatively intimate and vulnerable experiences together during an uncertain time. This trust was developed by respecting the participants' time and accommodating them as much as possible, for example by setting up a one-to-one to update those who couldn't make the previous group meeting, or buying data for a participant without online access, among other examples. This was also essential in the facilitation of online workshops - ensuring everyone had a chance to be heard and acknowledging what was shared before moving on.

Check-ins with the supervisor were also very necessary to ensure the researcher was practicing sensitivity and on track in terms of the process, and to seek any additional consent as the research evolved. Listening to the supervisor and participants at pivotal points also ensured the process wasn't rushed, but rather that the necessary time was taken to ensure that all decisions were made with intent.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This methodology chapter outlined the process behind this qualitative, participatory research study. It provided a detailed overview of the research site, participants and every data collection method. It concluded with a description of the research ethics that were considered while undertaking this study during a pandemic. The main gaps that were identified were outlined as limitations of the study which included the sample size, the online restrictions and the selected arts-based method of collaborative video. The next findings chapter will present the findings of this research study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

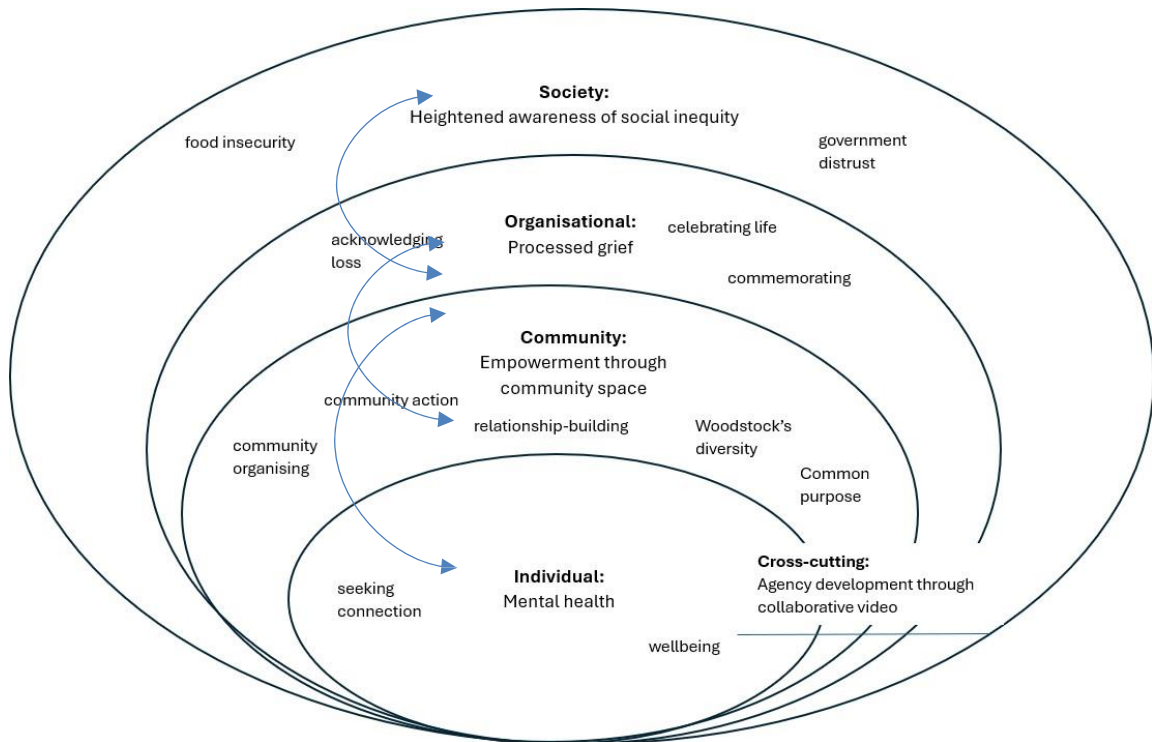
This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative and participatory research study with the Woodstock Community Action Network (CAN). The chapter begins with the findings represented visually as a socio-ecological framework model demonstrating their layers and interconnectedness. Following this, findings are presented under five themes that emerged from thematic analysis: 1) Addressing mental health and wellbeing, 2) Empowerment within place, 3) Commemoration during a pandemic, 4) Heightened awareness of social inequity, and 5) Agency development through collaborative video. Each of these themes and their sub-themes are introduced and accompanied by exemplary participant quotes. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and their relationships with one another.

4.2 Framework Model

The video aspect of this research was created during COVID-19 pandemic from the period April 2021- October 2021. As one of the most significant health crises in recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic was central to this research study, and the findings are dependent on its context and impact. The modified social-ecological framework model that follows, visually represents the experiences and perceived effects of a community organisation engaging in a commemorative arts-based process for social innovation during a pandemic.

A socio-ecological framework is based on the interconnected relationships between the individual, community, and societal environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to McCloskey (2011), “this approach focuses on integrating approaches to change the physical and social environments rather than modifying only individual health behaviors” (p.21). In the modified socio-ecological framework model below, there are four levels, namely Individual, Community, Organisational, and Society, which correlate with the four main findings. Each level consists of one primary theme as well as related sub themes. In addition, there is a cross-cutting element as the findings indicated a cross-cutting theme across the four levels.

Figure 13: Modified Social-ecological Framework Model Outlining the Experiences and Perceived Effects of a Community Organisation Engaging in a Commemorative Arts-based Process for Social Innovation during a Pandemic



Individual: Addressing mental health and wellbeing challenges

The individual level refers to ‘addressing mental health and wellbeing challenges. This is in reference to the individual participants of this research study and their exploration of mental health and wellbeing because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The smallest circle is represented as the ‘Individual’ as it is the base from which the other circles emerge. This diagram is initiated by the individual’s experience of mental health and wellbeing. Individuals dealt with their own personal mental health challenges and observed mental wellbeing deteriorating around them, which was one of the reasons that they decided to participate in this commemorative project. It is the base from which participants saw this project as a way to reconnect with each other and in the process, reflect on and unpack their experiences in a healthy and safe environment.

Relationship to community level

Participants described feelings of loneliness. The regular meetings of the Woodstock CAN and of the research project were a routine that reminded people they were not alone, and the relationships and connections were therefore a vital part of processing what occurred during the pandemic and reflecting on it. Individuals thus sought to process with others, and for this they needed community (hence the link to community).

By having the space of Woodstock CAN and this research study to commemorate within the suburb of Woodstock, participants were able to reflect on and unpack a traumatic period together.

Community: Empowerment within place

The community level refers to ‘empowerment within place’. Here the community is represented as Woodstock, a suburb in Cape Town, South Africa. Due to Woodstock’s history of activism and its multifaceted present, individuals developed common ground with others because they shared the same space. Regardless of differences or backgrounds, living in the same suburb and having a desire to make it a better place to live meant that the participants shared a common purpose.

The second circle is ‘community’ which represents how the ‘individual’ gains strength and insights. The outcome is empowerment within place. As a community within the suburb of Woodstock, individuals were able to: form a collective and embrace Woodstock’s diversity; participate in community mobilising and self-organising; build relationships; and find common purpose in seeking to address society’s ills. The pandemic spurred a community in Woodstock (Community Action Network) to mobilise during a time of crisis, and to connect, express, and document their experiences by collaborating on this commemoration project.

Relationship to organisational level

Community is then linked to organisation and vice versa because the organisation of Woodstock’s CAN was borne out of Woodstock’s history. At the same time, Woodstock’s history and foundation is why the Woodstock CAN came to exist. Community and organisation go hand in hand as the community would not be able to meet their needs without some form of

organisation taking place through an entity like Woodstock CAN. Conversely, Woodstock CAN needed the suburb of Woodstock from which to engage with community members and run its various activities.

Organisational: Commemoration

The organisational level refers to ‘Commemoration’. Here, Woodstock CAN is represented as the organisation. Commemoration occurs at this level because participants and members of Woodstock’s CAN (through the process of commemoration in the creation of a collaborative video for the former and participation in CAN for the latter) were given the opportunity to process their negative and positive experiences and memories during the COVID-19 pandemic. Woodstock’s relationships and history laid the foundation for the Woodstock CAN to exist. If participants didn’t feel safe within these Woodstock relationships, they would not have opened up the way they did as part of the CAN. Common purpose led to the organisation’s development; the organisation could not exist without the community.

The circle that follows is Woodstock CAN represented as the organisation through which community members could process their grief and commemorate. They were able to acknowledge loss, celebrate life and commemorate their experiences during the pandemic. The pandemic caused significant loss, but at the same time was the catalyst for innovative solutions to pressing challenges. Consequently, there was and is a necessity for the Woodstock CAN to commemorate what was lost and what should be celebrated in order ‘not to forget’.

Relationship to society level

What happened within the organisation of Woodstock CAN influenced society in terms of community mobilisation bringing people together to initiate action without being told what to do by formal entities. Hence the link from organisation to society. Society was positively influenced by the activities of Woodstock CAN. The organisation encouraged society to commemorate a difficult time through creativity and innovation and brought to the fore issues and discussion around society’s inequality and lack of service delivery.

Society: Heightened awareness of social inequity

The society level refers to ‘heightened awareness of social inequity’. This is in reference to South African society and participants’ greater understanding of the social inequity within the country.

‘Society’ is the outer and largest circle as it encapsulates and influences the organisation, community and the individual. The individual, organisation, and community, through their layered experiences, developed a heightened awareness of social inequity and society’s weaknesses. On a societal level, the pandemic highlighted and amplified existing issues within society. Two of the issues that featured prominently in this study included food security and distrust in the government, issues that existed before the pandemic that were amplified during the pandemic. Communities, organisations, and individuals lacked trust in the governments’ ability to provide food to society’s most vulnerable, and that is one of the reasons they were prompted to act and attempt to make a positive impact themselves. What was occurring ‘at the top’ trickled down as individuals were affected by broader societal issues. Individuals were empowered through their community and self-organisation of the Woodstock CAN to come together and attempt to address the food security issue.

Cross-cutting: Agency development through collaborative video

The cross-cutting theme across all levels was that of ‘agency development through collaborative video’. It was a cross-cutting theme because all the levels were influenced by the process of collaborating on the video. For individuals, the video was a means to process, unpack and learn, while for the community, the video was able to provide a visual ‘window’ into the world of Woodstock during the pandemic. In terms of organisation, the Woodstock CAN video was able to capture a portion of their community work during the pandemic and commemorate their experiences of the pandemic, while for society, the video was able to highlight some of the social ills of a community and how people addressed them. As the video was created by participants involved in each of the four layers, they practiced full agency in shaping the narrative and the story they wanted to talk about their experiences, based on where they lived and what prompted them into action. The video became a tangible way to highlight what

participants were already engaged in with respect to their community work as part of Woodstock CAN.

4.3 Addressing Mental Health and Wellbeing Challenges

The findings reveal that mental health and wellbeing was a significant issue amongst participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants had to navigate isolation and disconnection while trying to care for others. By caring for others through their involvement in the Woodstock CAN and reconnecting with the Woodstock CAN group through this research project, participants were able to reflect on what they had experienced and identify what they wished to commemorate during the pandemic.

Challenges pertaining to mental health and wellbeing were established as a predominant theme. Notable from participant narratives were two inter-related sub-themes: i) ‘Isolation and fragmentation during the COVID-19 pandemic’; and ii) ‘Using commemoration as a means to improve mental wellbeing’.

Overall, participants reflected on the mental health and wellbeing challenges they experienced or witnessed during the pandemic and identified these challenges as one of the motivations behind engaging in a creative and collaborative process of commemoration.

4.3.1 Isolation and Fragmentation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The first sub-theme outlines the mental health and wellbeing challenges that participants experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It unpacks the difficulty participants had in navigating a complex situation with little information and a great deal of uncertainty, while experiencing extreme isolation.

Participants described experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges, specifically relating to depression and anxiety. These challenges included, for example, navigating a health diagnosis of a loved one, struggling with technology and social isolation, being away from home, and dealing with loss. Four examples are provided below to exemplify the mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by participants.

“Because I was just like, I have to be here for my mom. I went through a massive depression. And I just needed to remove myself from everywhere. You know, that was

from all my friendship groups that was, and I felt like me being true to that allowed other people to do the same.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, interview]

Having played a key role in the Woodstock CAN’s activities, this participant’s belief that she had to ‘remove herself’ to overcome her depression and provide support for her mother reflects an internal battle that she was having with herself. However, she felt that being true to herself at that time would create the opportunity for others to do the same. This demonstrates the difficulty of pressures of expectation in times of crisis where many people needed support and care, including the care providers themselves.

“Personally found it very hard. First because I’m a person that I not like too much phone and digital communication...I think all of us for me with managing my depression in this situation manage, the way that you feel enabled to do you feel inadequate, inadequate for everything that you do you say but is not enough is not realism.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, interview]

This participant, who was not digitally inclined and older, expressed his frustration at only having virtual communication available since it was no longer possible to engage in-person due to the health risks of the pandemic. He reflected on his depression which was linked to feelings of not doing enough, being inadequate, and being forced to manage different, difficult aspects at the same time in an unfamiliar environment.

“So I felt this like, huge disconnect as to, as to I was so far away. And so it felt so disconnected from what was happening here. And was so worried about it. So to me, it was a time of like, feeling so far away from what's happening, but at the same time, it's happening everywhere.” [CAN participant 7, white, female, interview]

For this participant, being in a foreign country, physically separated from family and friends, created a greater sense of disconnection and fear. She also found it disorientating knowing that what she was experiencing was being experienced by others, all over the world.

“...we have this one old couple, they lost five family members last year. You know it is very hard for them to speak about it and you know we that is just one family. There is also people who worked from home since lockdown started who didn’t

socialise. You know it's not good for people in terms of their mental health and that." [CAN participant 6, coloured, female, interview]

This participant focused on how one family in her community lost five family members during the pandemic, which was incredibly traumatic. The participant stressed that this was only one family, which showed her awareness that there were so many others who experienced great loss at a significant scale during the lockdown period. She proceeded to draw a connection to people living alone who didn't have any family or friends around them and how the lack of socialisation could be experienced as a type of trauma. These experiences were significant and affected the mental health of those around her.

As is seen from the examples above, the conditions during the pandemic, in particular the lockdown, meant that participants' movements were restricted, and they had to transition to mostly virtual interactions which was difficult for many. Participants shared their awareness of the impact of loss and isolation on community wellbeing and mental health. They described what they observed around them and also suggested that whether or not they were experiencing mental health challenges themselves, they were aware of its effects on wellbeing. Overall, participants described a range of emotions they experienced including confusion, uncertainty, loneliness, fear, and guilt.

4.3.2 Using Commemoration to Improve Mental Wellbeing

Against this backdrop of mental health and wellbeing challenges experienced by CAN members, participants described how they drew value in learning through their experiences and wanted to participate in this commemorative study. Some of the key reasons that motivated participants to be part of this commemoration project included sharing leadership experiences, learning, capturing their story, and using the project to reconnect with the group because strong relationships had already been formed. Through this commemorative project, participants were also able to explore and reflect on why they joined the Woodstock CAN and the origin of their community work. These discussions brought to the fore issues around racial tension, which they had the opportunity to unpack.

As the researcher, I noted the initial bond, familiarity and warmth between participants of the Woodstock CAN. However, by the time this commemorative project was initiated, it was clear

the dynamic was starting to shift. COVID-19 restrictions had begun to ease, enabling participants to move more freely and return to previous work and social routines. Some participants still sought and/or were open to connection and some form of closure for the experience they had together. For example, a participant expressed how she missed the group and saw the project as an opportunity to reconnect as people had started going back to their ‘normal lives’:

“I miss my people, I love those people so much.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, interview]

Participants had various reasons why they wanted to participate. For example, another participant emphasized the need to participate because he was a community leader and therefore had direct experience and knowledge to share:

“It helps me as a community leader to contribute with my experience as a leader...I want to be a change agent, like you know someone who influences. My influence could come into play as well. Change agent is quite important to me as well because means that I’ll influence someone and can also learn from someone.” [CAN participant 3, black, male, interview]

He saw it as an opportunity to influence others in a positive way as a ‘change agent’ because he was already acknowledged as someone wise that others would respond to positively. Conversely, he also looked forward to learning from others through the experience. This sentiment of learning from others was echoed by a second participant who was excited to reconnect with the group as well as play his part in ensuring the story was captured from different angles. He felt it was important that the story would be shared with more people:

“And already I’m learning just multiple perspectives as to what’s what really happened in different different places and times... And so on one hand, I was amped to just connect with them again, reconnect, but also just to make sure that this this story is somehow seen and heard.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

However, for some participants, the process of commemoration was not only contributing in a positive way to their mental wellbeing and individual learning but also requiring them to

confront some uncomfortable realities about their backgrounds, motivations, and South Africa and Woodstock's history and demographic. At the same time, these aspects were also part of their motivation for being involved in the CAN. For example, a participant demonstrated self-awareness in recognising his privilege as a white male:

“I think South Africa is a very uncomfortable place. I mean, I've grown up very privileged, and I've always just felt like, I need to do something. I can't sit back and, you know, sort of continue with my life as if everyone lives as a privileged life as I do...” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

Based on the country's apartheid history, 'white privilege' in South Africa is a term used to mean his life has been easier and/or more privileged from the point of financial stability and access to resources and opportunities (Davids et al., 2019). He acknowledged the need to essentially 'break out of the privilege' and act instead of being complacent.

Another participant specifically questioned the intentions of her community work.

“You know, like, sometimes I wonder, you know, was the origin of what I'm doing white guilt? Knowing in COVID, I'm sitting up there with a house over my head, in the smallest form it is that so all of these things also creates us that it makes us who we are. It depends how we act on it, or how we move forward through it.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

She questioned whether her participation in CAN was as a result of 'white guilt', the implication being that feeling guilty about her privilege is what compelled her to act and engage in community work during the pandemic. These participants' reflections demonstrate clear introspection, which is important in the context of South Africa's history, especially when working with diverse communities and people still affected by past and present inequalities. Despite feelings of guilt or remorse, they chose to continue with the work they were doing while being sensitive to their role or representation within community spaces.

In the cited examples above, participants described how they had significant experiences to share and could learn from one another. Some participants also felt that it was important to

acknowledge their ‘whiteness’ in relation to their community work and explore the origins of their motivation. Participants had formed a close bond due to their community work as part of Woodstock CAN, however, were not engaging as regularly because COVID-19 restrictions easing. This commemorative project brought participants together who were excited to reconnect and reunite as a group and wanted to share their story.

4.4 Empowerment within place

Recognising Woodstock as a site for community organising and relationship building

These findings relate to Woodstock’s history as participants recognized the suburb’s historic and ongoing self-mobilization. Participants also described the importance of uniting behind a common purpose as a means for community mobilization.

Participants’ narratives uncovered two inter-related sub-themes: i) ‘Woodstock as a site of historic and ongoing community action and resistance’; and ii) ‘Shared common purpose for overcoming diversity’. Unpacking why Woodstock, as a site for self-organising, was a significant influence on participants’ community action, allowed for the subsequent exploration of how within Woodstock, the diversity of cultures was also recognised as a strength and enabled them to work together the way they did. These sub-themes reflect the site-specific aspect of what encouraged participants to come together to take action to support their community during COVID-19 through the Community Action Network (CAN).

4.4.1 Woodstock as a Site of Historic and Ongoing Community Action and Resistance

The first subtheme outlines how Woodstock’s CAN participants were familiar with Woodstock’s historic community action and resistance and situated their community mobilisation within this context. Participants also described how Woodstock’s CAN catalysed existing work, intentions and passions, and created a platform for new community organising initiatives.

Participants stated that Woodstock had a history of community organising and therefore regardless of time, community organising would continue as it was deeply entrenched in Woodstock’s culture:

“Even the people who entered the CAN in the first place were like, you know that there's been organizing happening in Woodstock for decades. This is not a new thing.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, interview]

“...things happened before CAN and things will always happen after CAN.” [CAN participant 6, coloured, female, interview]

As per the examples above, participants felt that Woodstock had a long history of community mobilisation. Participants also felt that the CAN amplified work that had already started within the community and would continue regardless of if it ended.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, some participants were already actively engaged in voluntary community work and organising initiatives in Woodstock, such as housing activism. This pre-existing involvement in community initiatives served as an entry point to their involvement with COVID-19 Community Action Networks:

“I saw some item which was about a shelter for those who were affected with COVID...So when I saw it, it just caught my attention as someone already who was doing housing struggles and helping other people that then I realized there was a CAN which can suit me to help those people.” [CAN participant 3, black, male, interview]

In the example above, this participant, who was already involved in housing action, was clear about his passion for helping people. When he came across a call to action for the CAN, he realised that his passion was aligned with what the CAN was actively doing, which prompted him to sign up.

Others became involved in community organising directly because of getting involved with the CAN. This occurred because participants identified what resources they had access to and/or which personal relationships they could draw upon to address specific needs:

“There was a man...who was currently cooking one pot in his like storeroom basically to feed like 300 people. And we offered our kitchen and very quickly we went from one pot to three pots to eventually six pots. And yeah, it was amazing. Because I had

so much capacity, my studio became a storeroom for food.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

Like many participants of Woodstock’s CAN, research participants looked at what resources, connections, and/or spaces they had access to that could assist in the CAN’s activities to reach more people. Hearing what was needed and tapping into their own networks, individuals enabled Woodstock’s CAN to have a greater impact through intentional collective action.

Woodstock’s history of community mobilization continued into the present because as described above, some participants were already involved in community work, some started through the Woodstock CAN and some new initiatives began with the intention to continue. For example, a participant was inspired to further develop an organization she had started through her involvement in the CAN;

“Our support group has just recently shifted from just a community support to an NPO who's a registered or we registered NPO last year. Yeah, and it was registered in October, but only 9 February. Oh, we registered an NPO the district six foundation.”
[CAN participant 6, coloured, female, interview]

As this example demonstrates, this participant started a community support group as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the specific project she led as part of Woodstock’s CAN, officially became recognised as an NPO. Naming it the ‘District Six Foundation’ was a nod to Woodstock’s past and the umbrella under which she chose to continue with non-formalised community organising.

The cited examples describe how participants were aware of Woodstock’s historic community mobilization. They pointed out that community organising had been happening before the Woodstock CAN; recognised that some people started organising because of the CAN; and acknowledged that community work would continue post/outside of the CAN. This emphasized the pivotal role Woodstock played and continues to play as a site for community mobilization.

4.4.2 Shared Common Purpose for Overcoming Diversity

This sub theme captures how participants believed that they were better equipped to solve challenges in their community because they shared a common purpose. The foundation of this common purpose was established by participants as their location of Woodstock, from which relationships could develop. This enabled participants to recognise their diversity as a strength; despite their differences, they could work together, learn from one another, absorb problems, and find solutions.

While participants situated their community work within Woodstock's history, they also unpacked what it meant to be a resident of Woodstock in the present. Through dialogue, participants reflected on who counted as a resident of Woodstock because they should all be considered a resident if they live in the same area, even the homeless.

“Every people living in Woodstock, live in Woodstock. If you live in the street, you are a resident in Woodstock. You are on the street and we need to tackle the problem, how we can help you. Not the problem, how we can push you, because where you push the people?” [CAN participant 4, white, male, interview]

As per the example, above, participants strongly felt that as a community, it was important to try to provide genuine and sustainable assistance to solve community issues and help one another. Without this mindset, participants opined that issues wouldn't be solved but rather pushed out of the way. The question of 'where you push the people' reflects on and questions a societal system that may already be overrun, which may therefore be unable to cope or care for more.

Participants wanted to acknowledge that the way the Woodstock CAN was established was not with the focus of becoming a formal organization. They suggested that because no one took the initiative to make it a formal organisation, it just naturally developed into a collective. This process facilitated genuine relationships to establish between community members:

“And at the end of the day, we said the purpose of this is to create relationships, which we hope will last beyond the CAN, you know, like, this isn't about creating an organization that never was...So we were like, Well, that seems to be the direction we're going. ...We're a collective.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, interview]

As described above, this participant recognized that relationships were a key element of the CAN. Participants agreed that the Woodstock CAN was more of a collective entity which prioritized relationships and grounded their common purpose in their location, like-mindedness, and relationship-building.

Participants described diversity as a strength and related this to their own strength as a CAN during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a participant felt strongly that more diverse communities were more powerful because of their complexity. He argued that multifaceted communities could solve issues with more innovation than if a community is very similar and all thought or did the same. According to him, this would lead to a community falling apart due to its inability to absorb crisis:

“Whatever more level or layer in the community you have, more this community can absorb problems that come because it's a network that is okay, you have a problem I can try to help you, more the community is flat, where all the people are without resource and all... only thing that they are able to do is to ask somebody to solve the problem. More the community is fragile, because if something happen, the community can be [broken]...” [CAN participant 4, white, male, interview]

This type of thinking was considered by participants to be fundamental to how the Woodstock CAN ran and its success in self-mobilising. As per the example above, participants felt that if a community was too ‘flat’, i.e. similar and/or simple, then it was more fragile and susceptible to damage. On the other hand, a community is strong and more adaptable when it is multilayered, i.e. complex and diverse.

The CAN that formed in Woodstock consisted of various representatives from different sectors of the community, representing the socio-economic, racial, and cultural diversity of the community and drawing upon its rich and lived history:

“I think, you know, Woodstock as a community is going to be the cultural hub of South Africa. Because we we are seriously a neighbourhood with examples of every single type of human being in South Africa. And every single religion.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

The example above captures the strong sense of pride in Woodstock's multiculturalism, even describing its potential to be a hub for the entire country. Participants also felt that the Woodstock CAN's activities had a role to play in bringing these multiple cultures together. It was further suggested that different Cape Town districts that were seen as separate before the pandemic, came together and fell under the umbrella of Woodstock, expanding its borders into the past. For example, a participant spoke about the divisions between the districts:

“I feel like the one thing which Woodstock CAN has done, which I don't think people often speak about is I always thought Woodstock was a suburb and now I see Woodstock my suburb as District Six into Salt River. Woodstock CAN kind of sucked up District Six and Salt River with Woodstock CAN and all of a sudden again, and if you go back to heritage, those divisions were lying so clearly unspokenly in the streets of our neighbourhood.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

This example is in reference to Cape Town's apartheid legacy that created geographical divisions in the city based on race. By working together, the participant highlights how communities were able to move beyond historic injustices.

While participants reflected on their common purpose and acknowledged the strength in their diversity, they agreed they were best placed to make an impact in their community because they were more familiar with it than any outside actors. Thus, they were best equipped to respond to community needs:

“And so, when the data and knowledge are there you can a lot more strategically and sustainable, fix the issues in your neighbourhood. Because you are present. And you are there serving.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

As per the example above, this participant expressed that community members had the information and knowledge to understand how to solve issues in their area. Being 'present' and 'serving' demonstrated how community members were available and willing to do more for others. This enabled participants to note the value of their work in CAN and what it created for them as per examples below.

Participants were proud of the Woodstock CAN and its efficiency. They attributed this to the aforementioned factors of the strength in their history, diversity, and common purpose. For example, a participant specifically noted that the feeding schemes of the Woodstock CAN were running successfully and that donations were coming in from around Woodstock to keep the feeding schemes running smoothly. This kind of operation was only possible because everyone was ‘present and ready to serve’:

“This is one of the best run CANs in all the other CANS because we are very active in many aspects. We have so many projects which are happening in the Woodstock CAN, especially feeding scheme is going quite nicely, donations are coming around Woodstock.” [CAN participant 3, black, male, interview]

Participants also expressed that despite what may have been going on in their personal lives, the online community that developed because of Woodstock CAN enabled them to reach out and connect with others in their neighbourhood. For example, a participant expressed how he felt empowered by being granted permission to drive around empty streets delivering food to the community. Another participant explained how the online community motivated her spiritually to seek out people in the real world and gather at street corners to pray in person (with masks and social distancing in effect):

“I don't know how people actually did do lockdown without being something connected to this at least I had an online community that I was meeting with plus, I was able to get a permit to drive around empty streets of Woodstock and Observatory, to get out of my house and actually get to be with people.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

“Everybody needed that time but for different reasons. We came together just to get your own spiritual healing, and your own energies back.” [CAN participant 6, coloured, female, interview]

As the narratives demonstrate, participants expressed a great need for connection during the pandemic and sought different ways to achieve this. They expressed that by being with others, whether online or in person (while social distancing), they gained something positive. Furthermore, by connecting with others who were different to them, whether culturally,

economically or racially, participants felt they learned more about themselves and others and developed a greater appreciation for humanity. Participants recognised their diversity as a strength, which developed from relationships formed as residents of Woodstock.

4.5 Commemoration during a Pandemic

Acknowledging loss and celebrating life

Another prominent theme in participant discussions was that of what is included and excluded in commemorative practices. While participants flagged the importance of commemoration in remembering ('not to forget') and learning from the past, they also identified its shortcomings in potentially being exclusionary of people and their stories if not practiced with sensitivity and consideration to ensure authentic representation of a moment in time. Commemoration was recognised to process various layers of grief related to the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well to unpack what needs to be acknowledged and celebrated.

Under the theme of commemoration, participants' narratives revealed two inter-related sub-themes: i) 'Commemoration and what we choose to remember'; and ii) 'Exploring layers of grief during the pandemic'. These sub-themes demonstrated the need to question the act of commemoration while acknowledging it as a useful practice to express and process different emotions.

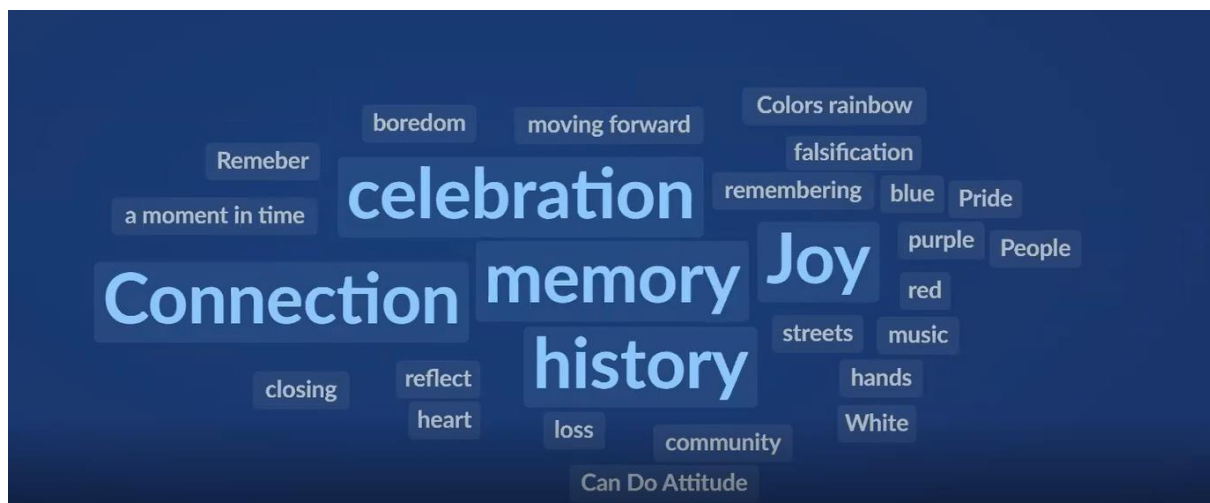
4.5.1 Commemoration and What We Choose to Remember

This sub-theme unpacks the positive and negative connotations of commemoration as outlined and discussed by the participants. Participants ascribed mostly positive connotations to the word 'commemoration', but also suggested commemoration should be treated with sensitivity and consideration as it could easily lead to exclusion, as outlined further below.

In the kick-off workshop, participants were asked to contribute to an online interactive word cloud responding to the prompt, "What does commemoration mean to you?" As seen below, words that appear larger signify that multiple participants chose the same word. The main words selected by the group were connection, celebration, memory, joy, and history. This was helpful in gaining a basic understanding of participants' attitudes towards commemoration and

demonstrated that participants associated commemoration with positive connotations and its role in remembering and honouring the past.

Figure 14: Screenshot a Word Cloud Generated by Participants with the Prompt- "What does commemoration mean to you?"



In interviews, participants discussed how they felt that commemoration captured a time in history, one that could be joyful or sad. For the majority of the Woodstock CAN’s participants, commemoration was associated with happiness and celebration. It was an opportunity for communities to come together and honour people and events from both the past and the present. Participants also felt that commemoration was very much linked to the collective creation and maintenance of community. Participants suggested that by sharing emotions such as joy or sadness, commemoration could connect, unite, and inspire communities and enable individuals to feel seen and heard. While it was acknowledged that commemoration could be difficult in unequal and diverse spaces, participants felt that coming together builds community:

“I think it’s difficult when you have such a diverse society when you have such distinct and different and unequal spaces. Yeah, so I guess I like linking it to festival because festivals feel like a commemoration in the sense of, it’s the coming together of a community... celebrate what we are. And so it doesn’t have to have a negative or sad connotation...maybe the sadness is good, too. So like, for example, to commemorate the Woodstock CAN would be joyful, you know, like... it was a sad time. But what happened in it, and through it, in terms of the relationships and connections that were

that that happened, whether they stayed in that time, or continued, which a lot of them I think did. There is something beautiful to commemorate.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, interview]

As per the example above, for this participant, commemorating the Woodstock CAN connoted joy, even though the circumstances were sad, because unique relationships and connections were established that had not existed before. The participant also specifically associated commemoration with festivals because they both focus on celebration and community unity. Festivals bring together different people and amplify and highlight a moment in time, which is not dissimilar to acts of commemoration.

Likewise for another participant, although commemoration could evoke sadness, it was countered by the more joyful aspect in the celebration of a person or event and people coming together. Essentially, commemoration provides an opportunity for people to connect by remembering an event or person together:

“Because with sadness, you can also have joy in terms of celebrating something or someone and, and the connection is normally people who commemorate something together because there is some form of connection between everybody and either the event or the person that is being commemorated.” [CAN participant 6, coloured, female, interview]

Participants also expressed the value of commemorative practice, indicating that it was an opportunity to pause and reflect in order not to forget.

“And I think, especially in today's day and age, it's so easy to forget. There's so many distractions...these moments of honoring and commemorating are super important in our, in our human race...you're actually getting a deeper picture every time you revisit it. How many things were happening at that time, who was affected? Who played certain roles?” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

As per the example above, the participant outlined how human beings were distracted by various things on an ongoing basis. According to him, the act of commemoration allowed

people to look past the distractions, to revisit and question the past and analytically unpack it. He observed that information is generated each time one honours and commemorates.

While the larger, more selected words from the word cloud indicated a positive connotation with the word ‘commemoration’, the smaller, and therefore less chosen, words were discussed at length. For example, participants elaborated on their choice of the word ‘falsification’ and discussed what it means.

Participants noted that commemoration could play a significant role in capturing a specific perspective and/or narrative of history, however, a part of history could be excluded based on what was chosen to be included. The concept of falsification was identified, which could be utilised in commemoration as an ideological tool, where only certain histories are told in the service of oppression—building a reality around a myth. ‘False’ is the particular narrative that is chosen to be told while excluding the broader narrative.

“We come out with a society that was shaped by apartheid. And that apartheid decided to building communities and space where the people living in was an intention. There is a lot of historical falsification that is not to be missed. They building the ceremony, they building memory, they building everything that is fake, or at least is not historical.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, interview]

In the example above, the participant pointed to South Africa’s apartheid past as an example of how a certain narrative was portrayed to hide parts of the country’s history. He argued that by believing this narrative to be true, citizens and others around the world were given only a portion of the truth which in turn, meant it became their reality. The participant was arguing that if people believe a fake narrative, then they’re not experiencing an authentic history.

Participants felt that communities must be active participants in the process of commemoration to ensure multiple voices are recorded and contribute to a history’s documentation. This project included seven perspectives from the larger Woodstock CAN group. It was seven voices, experiences, and insights that could be very different from the broader group. Keeping in mind that as a group they were forming a particular narrative based on their experiences, participants emphasised the risk of losing one’s identity if others formed a narrative without including voices central to the part of history being captured.

“Heritage or commemoration is a problematic word is a problematic area...you risk to keep identity that somebody building around you and thinking okay this is my identity without questioning...” [CAN participant 4, white, male, workshop]

As per the example above, participants were concerned that if an individual sits back and does not contribute to how history is remembered, then he or she was enabling others to shape their identity and memory around them. Essentially, by enabling and then accepting such a situation without questioning intentions, individuals risk losing agency and becoming passive citizens.

Another negative aspect of commemoration, was that remembering trauma could be painful:

“I think, in many ways, I’m sad that we don’t have more commemorations like in many ways they get associated with, like nationalism or...associated with certain political ideals. And I think in many ways, maybe in South Africa, commemoration is difficult because it’s often so linked to trauma, and so linked to loss and pain.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, interview]

As per the example above, the participant emphasized how commemoration sometimes gets entangled with politics, instead of commemoration for its own sake. She elaborated how commemoration in South Africa was complicated by the trauma, loss and pain experienced during apartheid. The implication was that some people would not be as open to or accepting of commemorative practices if they associated the act of commemoration and remembering with politics and/or a difficult and traumatic time.

In considering “What does commemoration mean to you?”, participants acknowledged the positive and negative connotations of ‘commemoration’. They recognised that commemoration could be a celebration, but that it could also be traumatic when people were remembering a negative or painful event. Participants felt that commemoration brought people together, but that it could also force people apart if the stories weren’t captured accurately and authentically.

4.5.2 Exploring Layers of Grief During the Pandemic

This sub-theme outlines how participants as a collective, reflected, mourned and grieved about different aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants specifically reflected on feelings of

loss, both tangible (e.g. loss of life, income) and intangible (e.g. loss of way of life or friendships). Participants also touched on privilege in relation to loss.

Reflecting on the practice of commemoration, participants described various degrees of processing grief based on their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the examples below, participants specifically acknowledged different people in society who experienced tangible loss such as healthcare workers and homeless people.

Participants believed that it was necessary to acknowledge and grieve the loss of doctors, icons of the community, and frontline workers who put their lives on the line. During the pandemic, these service providers were fundamental in fighting COVID-19, so the act of commemorating them was a powerful reminder of the sacrifices they made to protect and serve their society. For example, as a participant described:

“Just anyone who was lost to COVID, I think would be important. I think to commemorate... Yeah, and just sort of income loss and suffering that people have had.” [CAN participant 7, white, female, interview]

Another participant wanted to draw attention to the homeless community in Woodstock and how their deaths would be unacknowledged. She grew emotional as she mourned their loss and what they lacked versus what others had in terms of safety and care:

“People that that people don't want to look at, our homeless. Like still for them. You know, most people nearly lost their minds to be locked up by the government in their own houses where these people don't even know what safety means. So for me it is ja maybe the people that went through this and never got light or hope or love.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

Participants described various forms of loss due to the pandemic, including that of friendships or a dream. For example, a participant described the loss of friendships due to her community work. Mourning the loss of her social circle while understanding she would rather lose those friends than keep them made her realise how much the Woodstock CAN had changed her purpose in life:

“I actually lost a few friends during COVID because they perceived me as too intense, and I'm not but my life has changed. These people changed my life. So that's fine, then they need to move on.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

Another participant reflected on his career and livelihood, and how he was mourning the loss of his dream art studio. But he also recognised that it was important to feel the grief, process it and move on. He found that it was beautiful to realise that the grief would turn at some point and there would be ‘new life’ to appreciate. He also felt that it was unhealthy to get ‘stuck in grief’ and so saw the process as worthwhile even though it could be uncomfortable or painful:

“I was grieving the loss of the dream of having a, an art gallery and a studio in Woodstock, grieving the life that I had pictured that I was going to live. What's beautiful, is that if I allow for that grief to happen, and move through it, there is always a new life at the, at the turn of that grief. Some often people get stuck in grief. And that's, that's like, yeah, very unhealthy place...” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

Some participants also acknowledged the role privilege could play in relation to loss and grief. For example, a participant described how easy it was to forget and become complacent:

“My fear is that those that are privileged enough, will think that everything's returned...as it was, which wasn't a good place to start. But I think that it's likely you're going to have huge waves of effects. You know, like, once it's over, there's still going to be huge effects on employment incomes. And I think maybe it's something that kind of keeps us aware of that would be useful, so that we don't sort of become complacent and think, like, everyone's now fine.” [CAN participant 7, white, female, interview]

She described how those that were of better means could behave as if everything was okay because they could afford to. Essentially, they wouldn't experience the same level of loss as others which could lead to complacency. She argued that returning to how things were before the pandemic was not a good thing alluding to the issues of inequality that existed before the pandemic.

In another example, it was important for a participant to express that while he was aware that his perspective may be viewed as privileged, he agreed with the perspective that the world was not in a good place before the pandemic. He felt that we have been obligated to grieve both death and our way of life because of it:

“And I feel like yeah, there is a grieving on a mass level taking place in this planet, so much death. And I can't help but feel that it's necessary in some way. Like I know, it's like a, that can be a privileged comment...And it's like, yeah, we're being forced to, maybe on a mass level not only grieve the death of fellow human beings, but again, on a larger scale grieve the death of that way of life that we thought was, we were living, like, everything is fine.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

He was implying that the pandemic would have long-lasting effects on society and that the grief and mourning might help people to dislodge their complacency.

The quoted texts demonstrate various degrees of grief that participants experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a collective, participants mourned loss of life, loss of friendships, and loss of ‘how things used to be’. This commemorative project provided the participants with a platform to mourn and grieve together. As a participant surmised, it’s necessary to experience and acknowledge grief to be able to move forward.

4.6 Heightened Awareness of Social Inequity

Addressing distrust in government and food security

These findings identified another reason that motivated ‘everyday people’ to participate in Woodstock’s CAN. Having already been aware of social inequalities such as the lack of food security in South Africa, participants expressed their distrust in the government and felt propelled to act as they didn’t feel that they could rely on government entities to assist and support their community during the pandemic. They felt that to make a positive impact, they had to work together and develop their own support structure to meet basic needs, the most important being access to food.

The participants' narratives revealed two inter-related sub-themes: i) "Lack of trust in government"; and ii) "Addressing food security". They described feeling concerned over the inadequate information and support provided by the government during the early days of the pandemic. In part, this fueled their interest in forming and joining a Community Action Network to respond to these needs. The most pressing challenge they identified was the lack of food security, which was a glaring social inequity before the pandemic, and one that was exacerbated by the lockdown as it was a basic need that was not being met. The government didn't adequately address this issue before the pandemic and the participants (as citizens) didn't believe that the government would do anything about it during the pandemic, which is what led to action.

4.6.1 Lack of Trust in Government

This sub-theme highlights the participants' distrust in the government. Participants were not hopeful in the President's pronouncements, and they didn't feel that they could rely on the government to care for its people. As a result, participants expressed how they decided to rely on each other because they lived together in the same area, shared similar concerns, and felt that they were best placed to make a positive difference because they genuinely cared. Overall, participants felt they could keep their community functioning during the pandemic without government support because they had more knowledge and long-standing relationships.

Participants were concerned at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic by the social inequities that they had witnessed, and specifically described a growing lack of trust in the South African government to provide the support that people needed:

"So when the President announced that we were going to have a lockdown, I felt that it was quite important for us, as a community to rally together and put some form of support structure in place. Because you know, the lockdown ...very vague..."
[CAN participant 6, coloured, female, interview]

"There was no help from any government organisation except for the Woodstock CAN which came on board and gave us sanitisers and donated quite a lot of things towards us and trained us and made sure that we were clean with our hands, were doing all the thing." [CAN participant 3, black, male, interview]

Many participants agreed that they felt like they could not rely on the government. As is seen from the examples above, a participant felt that the lockdown that the President announced and implemented for all residents of South Africa during the pandemic was unclear. She immediately felt that to find more structure and guidance, they as a community had to look to one another to establish support systems. This is validated in the second example, where a participant described how he lived in an occupied hospital with hundreds of people, and that there was no assistance from the government but rather from Woodstock CAN. He emphasised how Woodstock CAN became their support system by, among other things, providing sanitisers, donations, and training.

Participants felt strongly that it was part of their responsibility to band together in the absence of adequate government provisions, to fight social inequity as a collective. By coming together, participants found alignment and shared purpose and were better able to respond to community needs than had they been working alone. Working together as a collective also gave the group greater legitimacy and they were therefore taken more seriously:

“If you see something, it is your responsibility in your community to step up and change that thing that’s bothering you. To think that somebody else is doing it is just another way of looking away and thinking the problem goes away. But unfortunately, it doesn't. And I believe in the way that we've we have been serving the last year stuff that communities can function without the government, they can function without all support, we can take the power back, because we have more knowledge.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

“...more, you are able to mobilize the community to put together the community to make activity and more the local council or the city come to speak with you. Because the moment that you have the community, they said, Okay, we need to speak with them in some way. And also is a way to building autonomy.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, interview]

In these narratives, participants demonstrated two key aspects of what prompted them to act and ‘take matters into their own hands’ during the pandemic. Firstly, a participant makes the argument that it was their responsibility as members of their community to ‘step up’ and make a difference if they noticed something was not right or could be improved. The suggestion was that to ‘not act’ was irresponsible, as the hope was that someone else would ‘step up’ or that the problem would go away on its own. In contrast being decisive would show how communities could self-sustain themselves and function without the support from formal entities such as the government. It would also demonstrate how communities were able to respond to gaps to meet their needs. This realisation and act were empowering.

Secondly, a participant recognised becoming more active and organised as a community would force formal entities such as the government to acknowledge them and seek engagement. This would be a more proactive approach to interacting with government by making them reach out instead of vice versa. His use of the word ‘autonomy’ again signals the empowering nature of taking efficient and decisive action together. These two examples give an indication of what fueled participants’ actions and thoughts during the pandemic as many participants agreed that they had to look to one another because their strength lay in their knowledge and abilities as a community. Overall, participants realized they were empowered if they did not rely on the government and focused on being self-sustainable in terms of addressing issues themselves.

Participants expressed their dissent with the President and lack of faith in the government in relation to the televised addresses he was doing during the pandemic. When South Africa was in hard lockdown, which was one of the strictest in the world, President Cyril Ramaphosa would conduct regular live television addresses, called the ‘State of the Nation Address’, which he used as a platform to communicate to the country updates on COVID-19 rules and regulations, as well as share the latest number of deaths and infections (Department of Social Development, 2020).

“One of the Feminist activists I work with found them very annoying and was like just feels like a patriarchal father framing it as ‘family meetings’ but actually being really patronising and um..not collaborative.”[CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, workshop]

“What was coming up for me in that specific moment was a bit of irritation actually. Um I was kind of like having this internal voice going I don’t want a flippin’ candle - I want more action.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, workshop]

“The more he tried to speak the more I just saw lies lies lies. And I thought - oh what are we doing, why are we listening to him, and we’re just forced to hear cause we needed more info. And then he’ll invite all these people and the next day they’ll change what they decided the day before and then readjust everything again” [CAN participant 3, black, male, workshop].

As is evident in the quotes from the three participants above, the group overall found the Presidential addresses to the Nation during the lockdown to be tedious and tiresome. For some, the annoyance lay in the patriarchal nature of the addresses by calling them ‘family meetings’, giving the image of the male, head of the house, speaking to his family. A participant suggested that this gave the impression that there was no room for others to share their opinions, which signified a lack of collaboration and a ‘top-down’ approach. It was also patronising because others – community, society – couldn’t voice or raise their concerns; it was only the President’s voice, therefore implying that only what he had to say was important. For others, the ‘family meetings’ were irritating because they lacked action, or it felt like the President was just talking and people were forced to listen because they needed some kind of leadership and guidance from those in higher office. Participants also did not trust the President’s words because the message would keep changing, which meant that he was not a reliable source of information at a time of great uncertainty.

Participants also expressed measures of frustration at only being told what to do and the need to be ‘obedient’:

“...but I agree uh the framework is we working for you, we take care about you, we will decide what is better for you uh you please be obedient, follow the rules.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, workshop]

“From my privileged position - it’s quite tempting to believe him, like be comforted and believe that these things will come.” [CAN participant 7, white, female, workshop]

As described above, the first participant reiterates the patronising tone mentioned earlier of a father or parental figure instructing others on what to do and to be obedient in following rules. At the same time, the second participant recognised her privilege as a white woman and realised that she felt comforted with being told what to do and the various promises that were made. She wanted to believe the President but understood his lack of delivery wouldn't greatly affect her. These examples demonstrated the overall sentiment shared by participants of not resonating with being obedient, even though for some- the idea may have felt comforting.

Overall, participants heavily doubted whether the government and President of South Africa could be relied upon during the COVID-19 pandemic. This doubt and distrust encouraged the participants to work together because they knew their community best and felt that they were equipped with their own resources and relationships. The participants expressed that they felt it was necessary to take charge and take initiative in caring for one another.

4.6.2 Addressing Food Security

This sub-theme specifies how participants worked together to address the challenge of food security during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. Participants were under the impression that as nothing had been properly done by formal institutions prior to the pandemic to resolve food security within communities, during the pandemic the situation would be significantly worse as the country was forced into a sudden lockdown. Participants were aware that due to loss of income and employment, not everyone would be able to buy groceries in bulk and were also aware of people who already lacked access to food, such as the homeless community, would struggle to survive during the pandemic if they did not get food. Participants shared how they worked together using resources, contacts, and their shared passion, to come up with the solution of feeding schemes and soup kitchens to feed large numbers of people every day. Participants shared how the community became more innovative in identifying spaces that were no longer functioning due to the lockdown, but that could be converted into food preparation or storage units. Participants then self-organised further by receiving donations and distributing to different parts of Cape Town, not only Woodstock.

Understanding that food security was already a fundamental issue due to the country's social inequity, and was likely to get worse if not addressed, the Woodstock CAN decided to focus most of their energy and resources on feeding schemes to provide food to those who were not

working, couldn't afford food and/or were homeless. For example, a participant described how they were able to effectively mobilise around feeding schemes by developing soup kitchens, usually operating from businesses that were closed during the pandemic:

“We started feeding between eight and twenty thousand people a day. So, and we're still doing it. Yeah. So what happened is Woodstock brewery converted their boiler pots into soup vessels. And we can make up to 4000 litres of soup....But they're basically a massive distribution unit. And they support about 150 different feeding schemes across the Western Cape.” [CAN participant 2 , white, female, interview]

With the example above, the participant explains how a brewery in the suburb started repurposing their boiler pots to boil soup instead of brew beer as her business was shutdown due to lockdown restrictions during that period. The brewery's resources enabled them to feed thousands of people. In another example, a participant's art studio was no longer operational during the pandemic., and he offered his closed down studio/gallery with a kitchen and his time. His studio/gallery became a site for storing and cooking food:

“Because I had so much capacity, my studio became a storeroom for food. I didn't make I made little tiny pieces of art in my room in Observatory but my studio became a work of art of storing food. Tons of potatoes and onions and yeah, so yeah, that was the story - I had this space. I was just in the right place at the right time I feel.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

He, like many other participants, was very effective at being active because he was able to utilise what he could and who he knew. These examples demonstrated the actions of most participants as they looked at what they had available and innovatively found solutions to achieve greater impact within their community.

By mobilising around food security and creating a means for others to eat, participants learnt that feeding was a form of action. For example, a participant specifically observed that there was a difference between noting a problem versus noting a problem and acting to solve that problem:

“This is maybe the word solidarity, is one and the other is action. Is not just I'm so sorry that you have a problem but is action. We prepare food, we collect food, we collect money we try to solve some problem, we give our time.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, interview]

The use of the term ‘solidarity’ by this participant underscores how the Woodstock CAN formed a strong bond around feeding schemes. Together, they identified an issue, found a solution and actioned it. Through the feeding schemes, participants also realised it wasn’t only a means to an end, but also a relational process: As another participant noted, feeding and sharing food with others was a good way to develop a first form of connection, however, for it to be sustainable, it needed to go beyond food:

“I personally feel is that feeding doesn't fix things. You know feeding just allows me to build relationships good enough to really infiltrate the sustainable ag social issues...reoccurring in my neighborhood.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, interview]

In the example above, the participant highlighted how she was able to develop relationships of trust by providing food to others which was the foundation from which she could do greater community work to help to tackle other issues. This demonstrated how camaraderie could be built through food, which is a basic human need, and providing food from a place of care could be helpful in building authentic connections. These examples demonstrate how participants realized not only did they have the chance to create positive impact by actions and solving issues, but they also realized that through their actions they could build authentic connections.

Participants shared that during the feeding schemes that were run by community kitchens, they intentionally did not take photos of people receiving the food. There were many visuals of people preparing the food and distributing it, but barely any of people receiving it. This was done to preserve dignity and respect, and foster trust. Participants agreed that it was not necessary to capture visual evidence that people were doing what they said they would do in the community kitchens. They also did not want to make the people receiving the food feel lesser than or like props for ‘community work’:

“...you don't need pictures as proof that people are doing what they say they're doing. That's not how community work works. And it's not how this community works.”
[CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, focus group]

As per the example above, participants were considerate and sensitive in their actions of community work. They did not see the need of taking media as proof of their work because they relied on trust. In addition to describing the actions they chose to take, some participants also described how the process of ‘stepping up’ and helping those around them, caused them to question their intentions and acknowledge their privilege in a way they hadn’t before with regards to community work. Specifically, white participants spoke emotionally about their activism work during lockdown and articulated conflicted feelings while reflecting on their realisations.

“Because I just as like, a privileged white person, I just don't feel that I can take initiative and like, do something like that I decide. And I'm the like...I'm just too scared I'm gonna do harm, or like, just be useless or like annoy people waste their time.” [CAN participant 7, white, female, interview]

“And I'm so privileged, you know, I thought I was privileged but it's like f&!@,. I'm so privileged. And there are so many layers to me even...help in the beginning, that I had to unlearn as a white person and working with [name], who is a very confrontational man, he would just straight up call me out on some of my white savior Bullshit, like trying to fix something or trying to be the voice for him, as opposed to being the channel for his voice to be heard. It was like, so much learning and unlearning.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

The referencing of ‘white guilt’, or ‘white privilege’ or the need to ‘unlearn’ demonstrated significant self-awareness and sensitivity to the participants’ role in community work. It also demonstrated their awareness of power and positionality. Through their reflections, they questioned if South Africa’s racial history was a reason why they did the work they did or felt like it ‘wasn’t their place’ to speak up and act, and that instead they should give others the space and voice to. As per the example above, a participant was directly confronted by an individual who challenged him to not be his voice but rather a channel for his voice to be heard. He was

forced to question his actions, intentions and behaviours to find a better way to support and empower those around him, hence needing to ‘unlearn’ what he thought was right.

The narratives show that participants recognised that food security was a significant challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa due to the country’s inequality. They recognised that not everyone would be able to purchase food, and many could then get sick or die. Participants felt compelled to act and work together to gather food donations, make food, and distribute it to those in need. Participants remarked on their ability to mobilise and rely on what they had available, which was resources and relationships. Some of the participants also shared their insecurities with regards to the origin of their community work being linked to their guilt and privilege as white people in South Africa.

4.7 Agency Development through Collaborative Video

Reflecting on the participatory research method of collaborative video, and its impact

Participants engaged in commemorative practice through their work for Woodstock’s CAN and this research study. Collaborative video was the tangible tool participants selected to reflect on, process, and unpack their experiences of community work during the pandemic. Through this research project, participants were able to tell their stories in their own voices and showcase what they felt was important to remember from this period.

Notable from participants’ narratives, based on the broader theme of agency development through collaborative video, were two inter-related sub-themes. These were i) ‘Using an arts-based method in research’; and ii) ‘The impact of utilising an arts-based method as a tool for collaboration and social innovation’. These sub-themes demonstrated how video, as the chosen method for participatory engagement, empowered participants to tell their story in their own voice.

4.7.1 Using an Arts-based Method in Research

This sub-theme outlined how participants used the arts-based method of collaborative video as a means to connect and work together in telling their story. As a group, participants collaborated on an hour-long documentary commemorating their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The online workshops helped participants to realise that thinking through the

framework of the video with intention was an important part of shaping the story and getting contributions and input from others.

As described in the methods section, participants were given the option to choose their preferred arts-based approach to commemorate their activities during the pandemic. In debating what was the best method to encapsulate their experiences, participants' main rationale for the use of the video format and the benefits of such an approach—given the context and topic—were that video could reach and include more people, and it could be a rather intimate and authentic portrayal of a person's lived experience:

“...it's like coming in from these almost more private journal like video expressions. There's quite a unique ability to express, especially the deeper side of what we all went through. Which I feel is incredibly beneficial to this.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, workshop]

Referring to the 'journal like video expression', this participant highlighted how the video recordings had captured rather intimate and vulnerable recollections of each individual. The interviews, which were the founding basis of the video, were recorded on Zoom in the participants' home or work environment. This setting was quite personal and provided a deeper insight into what the participants experienced during the pandemic.

Participants also felt that the video format allowed for more opportunities in terms of storytelling as it could be done in different ways and foster wider engagement online:

“Advantage to video is also not necessary something product that is closed...So is also something that allow different thinking to happen.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, workshop]

As per the example above, participants agreed that it was important that the video was accessible to several people and could feature several stories, hence video was a perfect medium to do so as it was more open.

In addition to being excited about creating a video, participants defined what a meaningful collaborative video process should look like. For them, it was clear that the video should be

inclusive with diverse representation, and that the questions asked must be intentional as they were key in driving the narrative of the video:

“We’ve got amazing content... We must just always be careful, that you know, ja, that we just keep, that whatever we do, represents and considers everybody.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, workshop]

“It’s about the questions you choose and how you get people to tell the story.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, workshop]

Participants gave feedback on the video while it was being created and were very vocal about what needed to change. This is fundamental to participatory research where power is shifted to participants. It was important that participants felt heard and that their feedback was included, otherwise this collaborative video would not authentically represent participant experiences. Participants practiced agency in shaping the narrative of the documentary as is seen from the examples below.

After watching the first edit of the video (Workshop 4), participants shared a varied range of emotions, from being overwhelmed to feeling moved and inspired. They also clearly expressed that the video at that stage was too personal, focusing on each participants’ individual story instead of focusing on the work of the broader CAN:

“So I felt quite overwhelmed watching it, I must say like, it was just long, and it was intense... So I think my main discomfort - because it was definitely discomfort - was that it felt about our, it felt like it was about us, and our individual stories. And as much as we all have our own stories...It's not why the CAN did what it did. So, I feel like the orientation, the orientation feels uncomfortable...” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, workshop]

Overall, participants suggested taking more time in the editing process and as per the example above, finding a balance of ‘less I and more us’. Participants felt the focus or orientation of the video needed to be worked on to be more inclusive of the broader story beyond the seven participants. They practiced agency in being very clear that the video was too personal and

needed to change. Their feedback was decisive, and everyone agreed that the video at that stage was not satisfactory.

Participants also reflected on the privilege that came with how the project was conducted through Zoom, implying that those that did not have a laptop or cellphone, or access to wifi or data, were excluded from the process:

“So, the, the way in which the project has been initiated, is already in itself. privileged, right, because we can be on Zoom, and we can be in this way. And so automatically, it was going to mean that when people were going to be excluded... So I think that this is actually a challenge to us... If those people's voices aren't in it, it just doesn't feel true to for me... but it really does feel like some voices, especially from the community mobilizing perspective are missing.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, workshop].

“I I think that the material needs a couple other people... the pool of the interview is too little too small.” [CAN participant 4, white, male, workshop]

In the excerpts above, participants identified that voices were missing, and more people were needed in the video to truly capture the essence and spirit of the Woodstock CAN as a whole. Zoom was identified as a privileged platform that only those with laptops, cellphones and data could access, which posed a challenge to the group to find ways to include other people who didn't have access, even at this later stage.

It was very clear from their feedback that the video had to go through another round of editing. Echoing the sentiments of the group, other participants felt that it was important for the video to be simple, and suggested what else could be done to improve it:

“For me, I can hear everyone from the point of view what they're saying. It's actually great. The idea of ...simple. Like that idea. And then what's important is the contents like the, let's say...opening statement.” [CAN participant 3, black, male, workshop]

Participants clearly directed what would happen next with the video. They wanted less focus on their individual stories, more people to share their stories, and to keep it simple. Essentially, how they were choosing to commemorate was as a collective. The video editor and I had to

implement this feedback to the best of their ability in order to ensure that the participants felt heard, and we were capturing their story in the way that they wanted it told.

After their feedback was implemented and an updated version of the video was shared (in Workshop 5, as per methodology chapter), participants were very pleased with how their suggestions and recommendations had been incorporated. Specifically, the video was grouped into themes (Woodstock, commemoration, celebration, self-organising, relationships) making it easier to follow and understand the purpose of the video. The video also included three additional participants who had been recommended by the group, and decreased the appearance of the original participants so that the focus was no longer on their individual stories:

“I love the energy. It really showed us what we did or what we started doing as a CAN.” [CAN participant 6, coloured, female, workshop]

“So really, thank you so much. I feel like everybody's voices kind of found their place. And the way you kind of themed it and the way the stories flowed into each other... The stories just spoke to each other powerfully and talk to the themes that we all spoke about when we initially had conversations when Diana interviewed us. So, thank you so much. I just feel like it was right, if that makes any sense”. [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, workshop]

As per the examples above, participants were happy with the ‘energy’ of the video and how the stories flowed better than the previous video edit. They expressed being happy with how all the parts had found their place and the dynamic of their work was captured. They also enjoyed the inclusion of the three Woodstock CAN colleagues they had recommended. For example, one of the new additions to the video was a voicenote from one of their Woodstock CAN colleagues who was involved in mask-making.

“During the pandemic, the sense of Ubuntu was fantastic. People from all colours of the rainbow came along and made a fantastic contribution to help, especially the underprivileged, and all our frontline workers, and people who needed food security. And we also need to congratulate all our community champions, all people out there doing their thing for the community, all our community activists” [CAN participant 8, coloured, male, video].

The participant above provided a fresh perspective to the video by attributing the CAN's work to South Africans' spirit of Ubuntu of helping one another regardless of where people are from. He also felt it was important to congratulate community champions and activists who played a fundamental role in ensuring people were cared for and fed. Despite his contribution only being added towards the final stage of the video process, this participant's perspective was welcomed as he was very involved in Woodstock CAN and contributed his insight which affirmed what other participants had already shared in one way or another.

Overall, participants were satisfied with how they and the CAN were represented and only had minor edits and recommendations. One such recommendation was to restructure the video order so that it started with the commemorative section (because that was how the project began – when I invited the group to commemorate), and concluded with the celebration section:

“Well, if it was about commemoration, why do we end with commemoration? Why don't we begin with commemoration that this is this video in itself.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, workshop]

All the participants agreed with this recommendation. They felt that as the video was about commemoration and the whole process was commemorative, it made sense that the video should start with what they shared about commemoration to set the tone for the rest of the narrative.

Another of the participants also felt that it was important to add further content to one of the new voices in the video:

“we need some more footage... not not him speaking...but simply because I know that there are images of proof of the great work that was done with the masking and that. So maybe we can replace a bit of that poster with some beautiful pictures as well, and it will just make his talk a little bit more exciting and interesting.” [CAN participant 6, coloured, female, workshop]

This recommendation was accepted by the group and demonstrated how even though they were generally happy with the video, they were still enthusiastic about sharing ideas on

how it could be improved. As the researcher, I didn't know about the photos that the participants referenced and as the group had decided an additional participant needed to be included, they knew there was more material that could make the video more dynamic.

The provided narratives demonstrated that participants significantly influenced the direction of the video. Their input in this participatory research study played an important role in what and who was included and excluded in a video that commemorated their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, participants demonstrated agency because they controlled and influenced the story they wanted to tell, in their voices, and were trusted as capable of doing so. Participants had the space to express themselves freely and share their insights, ideas, and critiques. Many times, during the process, the project could only proceed if the majority of participants agreed on a specific aspect.

4.7.2 The Impact of Utilising an Arts-based Method as a Tool for Collaboration and Social Innovation

This sub-theme encapsulates how the video, an arts-based method, could be used in research not only for collaboration, but as a social innovation tool. Participants felt that the stories of their experiences of the Woodstock CAN during the COVID-19 pandemic were inspiring and therefore needed to be shared widely so others could learn from them.

Participants expressed that the video provided a clear tool and platform through which to share their unique story with a wider audience. Through visual media and facilitation, participants were able to weave their stories together and document a moment in time. They wanted to inspire others based on their experiences during the pandemic and what they had learnt from their CAN work:

“I think so many people still don't know that CANs exist. Um, it's like, it's something that is I feel, I feel like it's such a unique approach that South Africa experienced in comparison to all these other countries. And I feel like the story is inspiring, like, needs to be shared and listened to.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, interview]

“If we tell this story right, this will be a very powerful tool for people to watch and actually really understand why it's different than just another, you know, NPO or another community project.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, workshop]

Overall, the participants felt that what they experienced during the pandemic and how mobilised was a unique response to a health crisis. As the excerpts demonstrate, participants felt that it was vital for more people to see and hear their story because it was inspiring and could be used as a tool to understand how the CAN work was different from other community orientated initiatives.

Participants also shared that collaborating on a video offered them the opportunity to pause and reflect on their experiences. Not only were they going back to their past in sourcing images and videos to tell their part of a larger story, but they were witnessing and observing snippets from others – a single moment captured from different perspectives. Overall, participants agreed that there was a therapeutic nature of this arts-based commemorative project. For example, a participant compared the process to therapy due to the profound reflections that occurred during the creation of the video. She specifically identified that this video process forced her to reflect on the collective's experiences, even the difficult experiences of the pandemic:

“You made us reflect. Which means that was difficult for me, it's like going to therapy, we have to reflect on every aspect and it's not always easy...But I guess that was for me, it's like it's a private space. And it's a space that exists between me and the people on the street, for instance. And no one needs to understand it, but it's very difficult, like to make people actually understand.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, workshop]

She indicated that through the medium of video, she was able to share and express a part of her life visually which could be hard to describe and discuss in conversation because of the personal nature of the work. Another participant expressed that the process of reflecting and commemorating in such a manner enabled her to experience a deep sense of relief by processing emotions during a difficult time:

“This video in itself is in a form commemoration and has been incredibly cathartic and I don't think we realised that. Being able to share my story with Diana, hear everyone else's story, the fact we watched everything. Incredibly beautiful process.” [CAN participant 1, mixed race, female, workshop]

In reflecting on the experience, the video editor and participant similarly described feeling honoured and grateful to witness the group's stories:

“I felt so honored to be able to witness like each of your journeys in this whole process, I felt like I was like, able to tap into each person's unique story in such a vulnerable way. So I'm just like, very grateful for being able to witness each of you. And I guess the difficult part is trying to find what the what was, collectively, what we wanted to express. And then also what came through because I feel like there's also so much gold and so much of the other stuff that was shared, but it wasn't relevant. And that's been a really powerful process as a, as a collective editing team to see like...relevant and what is not relevant.” [CAN participant 5, white, male, workshop]

In the example above, the participant reflected on what the other participant had previously expressed regarding the cathartic nature of the process. However, he also shared that it was powerful to work as a collective to identify what they all felt was relevant and discard what wasn't. This act of working together creatively to tell a story and therefore shape the narrative and visuals, enabled and empowered participants. As per these three distinct examples, participants experienced a form of release, catharsis through the commemorative process of collaborative video.

In the final online workshop, we discussed where the final video would be screened. As the researcher, I thought we would only screen the final video online. However, participants disagreed; COVID-19 restrictions had eased and they felt that it was an opportunity to engage in real life with the broader community:

“The one I just want to mention...everyone likes this is the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education, because they, I know they do screenings. I don't have contacts. There's, I don't know if they want, would want us to pay for anything, but that could be also a good way for other people that are interested in activism to see this.” [CAN participant 7, white, female, workshop]

“But the drive-in place, the new drive-in place. I've never been there...That's such a nice place, just because then we can again include the homeless, not just the moment

we go on certain platforms, it is a privileged platform. Zoom is a privileged platform.

Not anybody's got access to that.” [CAN participant 2, white, female, workshop]

Participants suggested two locations and two screenings, which the group agreed on. The first option was at an activist centre with the intention that other community activists would attend, and the other option was a local drive-in cinema with the hope that the homeless community would attend. These locations were chosen because they were easily accessible to ensure the video would be viewed by as many people as possible because art should not be exclusionary or restrictive. Thus, it was decided that both screening events would be free to enable more people to attend. The participants also agreed that an online version of the video should be available on YouTube after the screenings to continue raising awareness of the CAN's work.

Summarily, the captured texts demonstrated that creating the collaborative video had a profound effect on the participants. Some reflected on the cathartic nature of the process, while others were grateful that they had a tool that they could use to show others their community work. Some expressed the value of taking the time to pause and reflect. Participants wanted the video to reach as many people as possible to hopefully inspire, educate and raise awareness. They therefore decided that not only would the video be uploaded online, but that they would also screen the video in different locations in Cape Town to share their collective's story with different audiences to spark dialogue and ideas. Participants demonstrated agency in the process, through shaping the course of the video and how it was shared.

To conclude the video creation process and provide the narrative of the collaborative video, participants cocreated a poem (see prompts in Appendix) which was part of the audio of the video. With each stanza below, I unpack the poem in relation to the research findings.

Woodstock

People and place collide, creating a unique place to reside

The place where I found home

Where everybody is somebody

Where anyone can belong

A place where the streets are filled with stories and history.

Diverse cultures, religion and arts.

*Complex, confusing, problematic
and yet extraordinarily alive and full of positive energies.
I love Woodstock*

This excerpt of the poem corresponds with ‘Empowerment within place’ with the subthemes of ‘Woodstock as a site of historic and ongoing community action and resistance’ and ‘Shared common purpose for overcoming diversity’.

Woodstock, and the role of community and place, featured prominently as a theme raised by the participants. Specifically, participants described Woodstock as an important site of community organisation and relationship-building, both of which were considered essential for the development of community initiatives. As highlighted in the poem, participants described Woodstock as a site of complexity and contradiction, filled with diversity and history, and deeply interconnected through its people, activities, and spaces. Participants were of the view that Woodstock embodies a strong sense of community, a community in which anyone from any socio-economic background could belong. Overall, participants attributed Woodstock’s history of community action to the community mobilization of the Woodstock CAN. They acknowledged that although community action and organisation were already occurring before the CAN, the CAN did spark new initiatives, ideas and relationships that would continue post/outside of the CAN. Participants also reflected on Woodstock’s diversity as one of the reasons the Woodstock CAN was as efficient as it was in addressing certain community challenges.

*We remember what it feels like to connect, collaborate and love
The people, their stories
We remember a group of strangers with the same concerns
and passions coming together to assist the community
We remember the love and support we found
We remembered. We remember. We will remember.*

This excerpt of the poem corresponds to ‘Commemoration during a pandemic’ with the subthemes of ‘Commemoration and what we choose to remember’ and ‘Exploring layers of grief during the pandemic’.

Participants described how commemoration was the act of intentional remembering. In the poem, participants express the different aspects of the pandemic that they would like to remember. Commemorating their time through the arts-based method of video enabled participants to connect with their own activism and help them to make sense of their involvement, intentions, and concerns. As participants each shared their experiences from the pandemic within the Woodstock Community Action Network, they established what the act of commemoration meant to them and explored different levels of grief and loss. Participants were able to unpack their positive and negative associations with ‘commemoration’ and reflect on what it meant to them and why. Through the practice of commemoration and in this commemorative project, participants were provided with the platform to celebrate and acknowledge their achievements and community action during the pandemic. However, participants also realised they had a great deal to mourn and a lot of grief to process due to the tangible and intangible trauma that the COVID-19 pandemic caused.

*I found a group of people with whom i feel in community, connected and seen
Who aligned my heart, passion and purpose
People who helped me find myself, in a time when I never knew i was lost,
Who work together for the benefit of the community,
Who care about community
Beyond the attitude of asking public institutions to solve problems,
We must ask for spaces.
Don't give up hope, the end is in sight.
If we stick together, we'll win this fight.*

This excerpt of the poem corresponds to ‘Heightened awareness of social inequity’ with the subthemes of “Lack of trust in government” and “Addressing food security”.

As highlighted in the poem, a central theme that emerged was the participants' strong sense of community. Their relationships and interactions enabled them to see and understand themselves better as individuals, i.e. 'who aligned my heart, passion and purpose'. As the Woodstock Community Action Network, participants came to the conclusion they could not ask public institutions to solve their issues and address their concerns, such as food security. Rather they needed to source the resources to help them solve their own community issues. Participants felt motivated to succeed if they relied on and supported one another. They were driven to act because they believed that they could not wait for others to solve their community issues. As a result of their distrust of the government, participants banded together and came to the conclusion that because food security was an issue before the pandemic, it would be a greater challenge during the pandemic. Participants described how they worked together to address food security to ensure people in their communities could still eat for however long the pandemic's lockdown would last.

Together, we act

Together we make things happen

We cared, we gave, we shared

We try to meet each other's needs

Like the threads of an owl feather, we learnt to fly together

This excerpt of the poem corresponds to 'Agency development through collaborative video' with the subthemes of 'Using an arts-based method in research' and 'The impact of utilising an arts-based method as a tool for collaboration and social innovation'.

In this part of the poem, participants reflected on how they drew their strength from one another. As a collective, they were able to work together, accomplish more, and have an impact on their community while sharing the fundamental life experience of living through a pandemic. They made reference to the threads of a bird's feather and flying together, implying how by each person doing their part, they could work together towards realising a common goal—a 'zoomed in' perspective to realise a broader 'zoomed out' effect on society as a

whole. Collaborating and working together on a video inspired participants of the Woodstock CAN. Selecting an arts-based approach to capture their experiences during the pandemic allowed participants to reconnect and demonstrate rich relationships, even in a time of remoteness and tell the story from their perspective.

And so,

We celebrate what it means to be in community,

In a world where disconnection and disenchantment is rife

We celebrate this breath and the next

We celebrate the proactive energy of the collective,

The kindness economy, where the currency is love

We celebrate the positives, the small but important things that bind us together.

We celebrate Our Woodstock

This excerpt of the poem corresponds with ‘Addressing mental health and wellbeing challenges’ with the subthemes of ‘Isolation and fragmentation during the COVID-19 pandemic’ and ‘Using commemoration to improve mental wellbeing’.

From a place of disconnection and disenchantment, the poem highlights that the participants, as individuals, sought connection, and sought the need to reflect and focus on the positive aspects they drew from their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The repetition of the word ‘celebrate’ suggests that the participants felt strongly about positively honouring and acknowledging community, life, collective energy, and Woodstock. The phrase ‘kindness economy, where the currency is love’, links economy and currency, finance and materialism, with care and love, which is how the community was able to find a way to persevere during the pandemic. Participants experienced and observed various mental health challenges and struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic, and described how this commemorative project with the Woodstock CAN provided the platform to share, and unpack how they were impacted. Their challenges were one of the reasons they agreed to participate in the commemorative project; they saw it as an opportunity to reconnect with members of Woodstock CAN who they missed,

they could share what they had learnt, and in the process were able to navigate different challenges that they had experienced and hadn't necessarily expressed.

4.8 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Woodstock CAN, established in a suburb with its own history of activism, became a space where like-minded individuals in a neighbourhood came together to make a difference in their community from the 'ground-up'. Without any formalisation or government support, a community mobilized and pro-actively dealt with problems that arose as they went along. A collaborative video project was the arts-based method selected to commemorate the Woodstock CAN's experiences and was a way in which to create a visual narrative together. Participants were invited to not only contribute to conceptualising the narrative, but also to the content of the video. Through this medium, it was possible to understand and develop a narrative in the voices of those directly affected or experiencing a particular situation. As a result, the main themes that emerged from this research study were: 1) Addressing mental health and wellbeing challenges, 2) Empowerment within place, 3) Commemoration during a pandemic, 4) Heightened awareness of social inequity, and 5) Agency development through collaborative video.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this research study, and considers how the findings relate to existing literature. The discussion elaborates on the research objectives which were ‘Explore social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics’ and ‘Unpack understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis’. It is structured into: ‘Ubuntu and critical consciousness in community mobilisation’ and ‘Commemorative agency for social innovation’. This chapter concludes with a diagram outlining how the concepts of critical consciousness, Ubuntu, commemorative agency and social innovation are connected as well as descriptive overview explaining the diagram. The diagram demonstrates how commemorative agency lies at the overlap between Ubuntu and critical consciousness and all three concepts lead to the development of social innovation.

5.2 Ubuntu and Critical Consciousness in Community Mobilisation

According to Nussbaum (2003), and to reiterate, Ubuntu, is an African philosophy translated to mean “A person is a person because of others” (p.2). Engaging with the participants of this research study from the Woodstock CAN, revealed how they practiced compassion and consideration of others. An example of this is from the first finding where participants spoke about using this commemorative research study as a means to address mental health and wellbeing challenges. This relates to Ubuntu because it demonstrated how intentional interventions, and the practice of commemoration enabled participants to find greater meaning and joy for themselves. ‘I am because we are’ is a reminder that we are all interconnected, and we must therefore respect the past in order to honour the future: “African culture has a gift to give the world because of its capacity to find the place of the common good both in the present and in relation to the past” (Nussbaum, 2003, p.4).

As a philosophy, Ubuntu encapsulates five principles, namely establishing trust by listening to and supporting others; developing efficient community response; encouraging shared humanity; relearning the practice of compassion; and sharing wealth and resources fairly (Nussbaum, 2003). Through both their collective engagement in community mobilisation in the

Woodstock CAN during COVID-19, and their engagement in the process of commemoration research participants enacted the principles of Ubuntu. The five distinct principles of Ubuntu in relation to Woodstock CAN's participants' activities and this participatory research study are outlined below (Nussbaum, 2003).

Ubuntu principle 1: Listening to and supporting others through processes that establish trust, equality and respect in relationships

Listening to and supporting others was the *modus operandi* at the meetings of Woodstock's CAN and in the online workshops while collaborating on the commemorative video. Participants were encouraged and supported through the research process to feel comfortable enough to open to each other. Everyone's insights the research process to feel comfortable enough to open to each other. Everyone's insights and feedback were respected, which showed a strong sense of trust that enabled them to feel they could be vulnerable. This principle spoke to both the CAN work and the commemorative process. For example, as presented in finding two where participants discussed their shared purpose for overcoming diversity and finding five, where participants described the effects of using an arts-based method in research.

Ubuntu principle 2: Developing helpful, sustainable and fair community response
The commemorative video highlighted the stories of Woodstock CAN's participants and their community response during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were able to reflect on their community response and what prompted it, and what their hopes were for the future. This principle spoke to their involvement in the CAN work only and was not a finding from their involvement in the study itself. For example, as presented in the subthemes of finding two where participants discussed Woodstock as a site of historic and ongoing community action and resistance, and finding four where they described how they were addressing food security.

Ubuntu principle 3: Emphasising common humanity

Participants' narratives and the commemorative video strongly reflected the 'common purpose' that led them to act and not to wait for assistance from the government and formal institutions. The 'common purpose' for the majority of the group during the hard lockdowns was the basic human need for food and realising through the Woodstock CAN and for the commemorative research project that it was at the core of their community mobilisation initiative. This principle spoke to both the CAN work and the commemorative process. Examples from findings are the subthemes of finding one where participants described using commemoration as a means to

reconnect, finding three when participants spoke about exploring layers of grief during the pandemic, and finding five where participants described the impact of utilising an arts-based method as a tool for collaboration and social innovation.

Ubuntu principle 4: Re-learning how to practice compassion and justice to understand how to organise resources differently

Through the process of collaborative video, participants identified what was most important for them. Their participation as Woodstock CAN members also meant that they were confronted by social inequality and injustices, and as a group, worked together to try to establish new and innovative ways to share resources fairly. This principle spoke the CAN work. For example, participants unpacked their lack of trust in government in finding four.

Ubuntu principle 5: Distributing wealth fairly and ensuring access to basic services (food, housing, health, education)

The commemorative process highlighted how, according to the participants, wealth distribution and equal access to basic services was severely neglected by the government during the hard lockdowns of the pandemic, which is why community groups such as the Woodstock CAN felt that it was their responsibility to act and look out for their neighbours. The perceived inaction to address the basic needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in society was a principal motivation behind working together and mobilising as a community. This principle spoke to the CAN work. Examples from findings are the subthemes of finding two where participants acknowledged Woodstock as a site of historic and ongoing community action and resistance, and finding three where participants spoke about commemoration and what we choose to remember.

In sum, the Ubuntu philosophy is grounded in community care, action, and mobilisation to support others. The Woodstock CAN aligned itself with McCabe's et al. (2020) perspective that organisations that partnered during the pandemic continued to engage with one another, and relationships from the pandemic were still in place, which in some instances led to the development of other projects. For example, one of the participants transformed her volunteer work into a registered NGO, the District Six Foundation, as a means of formalise her

community work to affect greater change and achieve greater impact. The spirit of Ubuntu that she experienced within the organisation inspired her to ‘pay it forward’, i.e. pass on the goodwill that she experienced, and run her own NGO to continue to affect change in her community.

Mould et. al (2022) also argue that mutual aid coupled with vulnerability can help to establish a site of resistance where new ways of unifying and supporting are created opposing oppressive state-led versions of resilience, which “too often narrate a vulnerable subject as passive, helpless, individualised and ‘in need’ of charity versions of aid” (p.874). The principles of Ubuntu outlined above counter this notion by suggesting that citizens are active participants who can be empowered to create change through their show of compassion and empathy. A key finding was that participants realised that they could effect change on their reality by working together with a common purpose. In doing so, the CAN was able to establish its own ‘site of resistance’ through community mobilization and enacted the spirit of Ubuntu. This emerged from finding four where participants described their lack of trust in government; and finding two where they described their shared common purpose for overcoming diversity.

Similarly, there are parallels with community response for the HIV epidemic. In their 2010 study focused on community mobilisation in the HIV response, Campbell and Cornish (2010) document how collective action was highly effective for the following reasons: 1) Community-based organisations are able to reach more people and create more sustainable interventions as they draw upon human resources that are familiar with the issues; 2) Grassroots community volunteers and members have been found to be extremely capable in running prevention and care programmes; and 3) Being a part of a community organisation creates an opportunity to develop a stronger sense of agency which can result in positive changes in behaviour as people work as a collective to tackle problems.

These findings have relevance to the benefits of the work of Woodstock’s CAN during COVID-19 identified by participants in this study. Firstly, the Woodstock CAN was effectively drawing upon members’ networks to reach more people, access resources, and authentically engage to ensure interactions were sustainable. Secondly, on a grassroots level, people from diverse backgrounds, education levels, etc., were working together to come up with solutions and implement them. Thirdly, the Woodstock CAN demonstrated a high level of engagement with over 100 members happy to volunteer for the benefit of their community (Scheepers et al.,

2020). As Campbell and Cornish (2010) observe, “effective and empowering community mobilisation cannot take place in the absence of a supportive social environment” (p.1570). As outlined in finding two where participants identified Woodstock as a site of historic and ongoing community action and resistance, the Woodstock CAN formed a supportive social environment, as members experienced it as an extension of Woodstock’s spirit of community care and compassion. Additionally, they situated their understanding of this supportive environment across time as well, recognizing Woodstock as a site of historic and ongoing community action and resistance. Trust based on personal connections develops over time and can create an environment where a sense of community and social cohesion exist, which makes it easier to catalyse community members who are willing to act together for the common good (Mccarthy et al., 2004).

The findings also demonstrate the presence of the principles of Ubuntu in the participants’ self-awareness in their consistent reflections on their race and privilege in relation to others as per finding five where participants described using an arts-based method in research. They also reflected on the participatory research method of collaborative video, and its impact, questioning who was being represented and why, to ensure inclusivity. Participants were practicing greater sensitivity and care in relation to others and recognising their humanity as they worked towards a common goal.

In Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ (1970), he states that “men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p.12). This infers that by being critical and conscious of an individual’s role and way of being in society, reality ceases to be viewed as immobile or impossible to change, but rather as fluid, adaptable and offering up new opportunities. For Freire, dialogue was important to the process to ensure equality and fluidity between the individual and society. The collaborative video process brought study participants into dialogue with one another and the researcher. In doing so, they became more aware of the conditions of their reality. The

commemorative process and collaboration in the making of the video developed their critical consciousness as participants undertook a six-month process of engaging online to document and discuss their experiences during the pandemic. For example, as per finding three where participants unpacked commemoration and what we choose to remember, participants realised their agency in choosing what and who they wanted to commemorate.

Together, the participants unpacked why and how they essentially became activists overnight and engaged in community mobilization in response to the sudden circumstance of the pandemic. The main reasons that they identified was their mental health challenges and lack of trust in the government; they felt compelled to act, as they believed that no one else would. Participants were able to identify the active role that they played together as a group in order to positively respond to the COVID-19 crisis, and in doing so, participating in a process of conscientisation. This was realised through the commemorative process because participants practiced agency as they controlled the narrative and told their story in their own words, and semi-directed the research process. For example, participants described the effects of using an arts-based method in research, in finding five, and decided who would be included in the video as well as what was missing.

According to Freire (1970), “the point of departure must always be with men and women in the “here and now,” which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they intervene. Only by starting from this situation – which determines their perception of it – can they begin to move” (p.85). Had the participants taken a passive role during the pandemic, perceiving it as something that was being ‘done to them’ and that they therefore had no influence over, they would not have been able to mobilise and innovate the way they did. However, the study’s findings demonstrate that participants were able to understand that their reality was fluid and locate their agency. Although there were certain aspects beyond their control, participants were still able to influence their reality and therefore affect change.

Commemorating their experiences during the pandemic through the collaborative video arguably acted as a tool to spur participants’ process of critical consciousness. Participants, in their critical reflection, specifically noted tensions around race, privilege, and access while

creating their video. Participants demonstrated awareness of the complex power dynamics of their work and advocated in ways that aimed to shift power through both the research encounter, and the process of video development. This was important because participants recognized historic injustices of inequality as per finding four where they discussed addressing food security. This recognition is a form of critical consciousness about history and the ongoing nature of reality in their context.

Participants also demonstrated agency in the collaborative video process. An example of how the process of collaborative video undertaken in this study shifted power was that participants were adamant about the need to include a more diverse range of voices and perspectives in the final video as opposed to only their own which resulted in more inclusivity. As a result, the video was altered to reflect their preferences. Participants were also mindful about the importance of a woman of colour introducing the video because it was important to set the tone of the video as coming from an underrepresented member of society. In interviews, participants also critically reflected on their social position and privileges related to race – for example referring to white guilt and white privilege – demonstrating critical self-awareness. One white participant reflected on a fellow CAN member of colour calling him out on speaking on his behalf like a ‘white saviour’. He was forced to reevaluate his approach and behaviour to change the way he engaged and interacted with the community. In his view, he had to unlearn what he thought was helpful and find a better way to empower others. Participants also critically reflected on their motivations for community work and in doing so, realised their agency in enabling and practicing more inclusivity and sensitivity within their activism. This is evidence of the fact that participants, through their work for Woodstock CAN, were already responding to the conditions of their reality and the social injustices in their community. The video provided a tangible means by which to raise awareness and reflect on this reality and how they responded to the injustices that they observed.

As Freire (1970) states: “The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity” (p.85). The findings of this study demonstrated how collective action and working in solidarity with others was a powerful tool in response to a crisis. The commemorative process of documenting the lives and experiences of Woodstock’s CAN members by collaborating on a video was a means or process through which to grow together in fellowship as the participants critically engaged in understanding and

unpacking the issues they faced and observed. This was evident through finding five where participants described the impact of utilising an arts-based method as a tool for collaboration and social impact, as participants realised that what they experienced during the pandemic was worth sharing with others.

According to Watts et al. (2011), critical consciousness consists of three components: i) Critical reflection, which is the “moral rejection of societal inequities...that constrain wellbeing and human agency” (p.46); ii) Political efficacy, the “perceived capacity to effect social and political change by individual and/or collective activism” (p.46); and iii) Critical action, described as “individual or collective action” once people “feel that they can create change” (p.46). In this study, the practice of commemoration was engaged with as participants critically reflected on their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, while political efficacy was unpacked in the participants’ assessment of what conditions led to their collective activism. Participants’ critical action was also analysed in understanding how they engaged in community mobilisation to elicit change within their community during the pandemic.

In conclusion, Ubuntu and critical consciousness were suitable theoretical frameworks for this research study because they addressed the research objectives of ‘Exploring social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics’ and ‘Unpacking understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis’. The strengths of these frameworks lay in the fact that because this research study took place in South Africa, it was important to find a relevant framework that spoke to and represented the country’s culture, history, and shared value system, hence Ubuntu. Also, the significance of focusing on collective memory and commemoration meant that Ubuntu was well placed to understand why and what society chose to capture in order to learn for future generations.

In relation to critical consciousness, the participatory nature of the research study ensured that participants were at the forefront of capturing their narrative while supported with the tools and guidance to unpack and analyse their lived reality. Exploring participant engagement and activity through the lens of critical consciousness inspired a broader realization that participants were not only engaging in commemoration in real time, but their initiative was directly contributing towards social innovation within their community. The main limitation of these frameworks is that the research study was perceived within the theory of these concepts only,

which meant that there could have been further nuances that could have evolved if different frameworks guided the study.

5.3 Commemorative Agency for Social Innovation

Community Action Networks are a social innovation as their purpose is to “bring residents from varied backgrounds into collective action to find solutions to COVID-related issues” (Scheepers et al., 2020). As more people became unemployed and could no longer provide for their families, many of the CANs around South Africa created ‘task forces’ to deal with the issue of food shortages instead of waiting for the government to act. According to Unger (2016):

“The social innovation movement cannot change constitutional arrangements. It can, however, launch experiments and ideas in each of the areas covered by these needed institutional changes, experiments prefiguring the direction that it proposes. Or it can commit itself to initiatives that, by compensating for the omission or paralysis of government, evoke the missing agenda. True to character, it can show how not to wait for salvation from on high” (p.247).

Essentially, this is what the CANs achieved during COVID-19. They collectively identified various issues around the COVID-19 pandemic which could not be solved through normal means and processes, and which could not be resolved by one entity, such as the government, alone. Hamann et.al. (2020) observe that the Community Action Networks began to develop partnerships with various established organisations, government entities, and key stakeholders as their role in efficient local organising was recognised.

Community-led infrastructure and support groups specifically aimed to aid vulnerable and marginalized groups that were not necessarily supported by formal organisations, and did provide significant assistance (McCabe et al., 2020). Communities recognised the value in the networks that they had created, taking initiative, and creating projects that spoke directly to their needs. They developed agency, realising their individual strengths combined created greater capacity to achieve what might have otherwise been impossible. There was also the realisation that this didn’t need to be limited to the pandemic but could be extended post-pandemic, addressing issues of memory and sustainability.

McCabe et al. (2020) observed that for some community groups, responding to a crisis led to

greater social cohesion which affirmed that they were making a positive difference in their community because they were available when needed. This kind of reflection creates a sense of unity and pride within a community as feel they can rely on one another to act and for support when necessary, as is seen by the work of the Woodstock CAN.

The emphasis on social innovation as a process for social change enables a clearer differentiation between the main actors, their environment, and their interactions, thereby offering up a deeper understanding of cause and effect (Pue et. al., 2016). The framework developed by Pue et. al. (2016) unpacks the social innovation process according to two main engines: agentic and structural. They explain that 1) The agentic aspect of social innovation starts with a social entrepreneur developing a socially creative method to implement an idea addressing a social problem, while 2) The structural aspect of social innovation focuses on how society responds through the emergence of the idea and how it is adopted (Pue et. al., 2016).

In this research study, the agentic engine was the researcher – the catalyst and facilitator – of a collaborative video that addressed commemoration and community mobilisation in a pandemic. The structural engine consisted of commemorating Woodstock CAN by collaborating on a video that functioned both as a cathartic experience for the participants and a tool with which they could share their story with the public and activists through screenings and by publishing the video online. Participants of this research-based commemorative project were able to engage with the video in a reflective manner that influenced them at multiple levels, including as individuals, as well as within an organization (their CAN). This was demonstrated through the socio-ecological framework model in the findings chapter outlining how the different themes were connected.

The process of making the video became a socially innovative tool to practice agency, storytelling, and commemorate a shared lived experience in a time of crisis. This was evident from finding five as participants described the impact of utilising an arts-based method as a tool for collaboration and social innovation and practiced agency in shaping the collaborative video. Regarding commemoration during COVID-19, Tollerton (2022) suggests that it is essential to acknowledge the experiences of those suffering from the long-term impacts of the virus; recognise how the pandemic has impacted communities; and celebrate the hardships and successes of those that did their best in lessening the impact of the virus for themselves and their communities.

In an example of a remote participatory research study, Marzi (2023) used participatory video to document the realities of women in Colombia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Marzi (2023) found that participatory video was an effective research method that magnified participants' voices, enabled skills development, produced an enriching final product, and proved that researchers and participants did not have to be physically present and in the same space to undertake research. Smartphones and regular online workshops for “knowledge exchange, learning and democratic dialogue and discussion” (Marzi, 2023, p.517) were essential for the success of the project. This research study draws many parallels with Marzi's (2023) study. An outline of each of Marzi's main findings and how this research study relates is provided below (Marzi, 2003):

Marzi found that being able to film around the day-to-day responsibilities of her participants required extra care and planning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and enabled participants to feel more comfortable.

This research study found that the issue of social distancing was important to respect in the context of the pandemic, and therefore with the online format, significant attention was paid towards being as flexible and patient as possible while maintaining clear communication. It was necessary to work as closely as possible around participants' schedules and to provide one-on-one briefings if one or two could not join the group sessions.

Marzi found that participation in the editing process was empowering for the participants, as it enabled them to take ownership of the content that was being produced. In this research study, it was essential for participants to feel included and proud of the content that was created as a collective because they produced the material and decided how it would be structured and displayed. Throughout the research study, participants felt that they were part of the process. As described in the findings chapter, participants were able to directly guide the process, specifically the editing of the video according to what they wanted to include, exclude, and where they wanted it shown.

Marzi found that by switching from researcher to more of a facilitator and taking instructions from participants, the traditional hierarchy of power between the research team and participants was shifted and power was shared. This research study found that as the researcher, it was sometimes difficult to ‘trust the process’, as it was easy to experience some loss of control when each workshop was created based on what participants had shared in the previous workshop

and ensuring their input was included at all stages. Sometimes the research process would pivot in a direction that had not been envisaged or necessarily planned for. However, through this process, participants practiced agency in telling their story, in their own way. This reflects Marzi's identification of the hierarchy of the research process and the need to be open to sharing power to truly and authentically 'shift power' in the way in which a story is told. An example of this is when participants insisted that I be included in the video even though I had not planned to be. They strongly argued that as I had brought them together to commemorate Woodstock's CAN and COVID-19, and that I needed to be a part of the commemoration. Having watched the first draft of the video, participants also clearly expressed that it needed to be redone, and that I needed to reach out to other people that they recommended to ensure the video was inclusive of more members from Woodstock's CAN. Participants also decided the video needed to be screened in person in two different locations to attract different audiences and make it more accessible.

The findings demonstrate that although I as the researcher perceived that I was commemorating Woodstock's CAN through a collaborative video with its participants, the participants had already been commemorating their experiences through their work in the Woodstock CAN. Similarly, as participants became aware of their reality through their work in Woodstock's CAN, the video was a means to tangibly highlight their awareness of society. This demonstrates how participants were engaging with commemoration and critical consciousness at the same time.

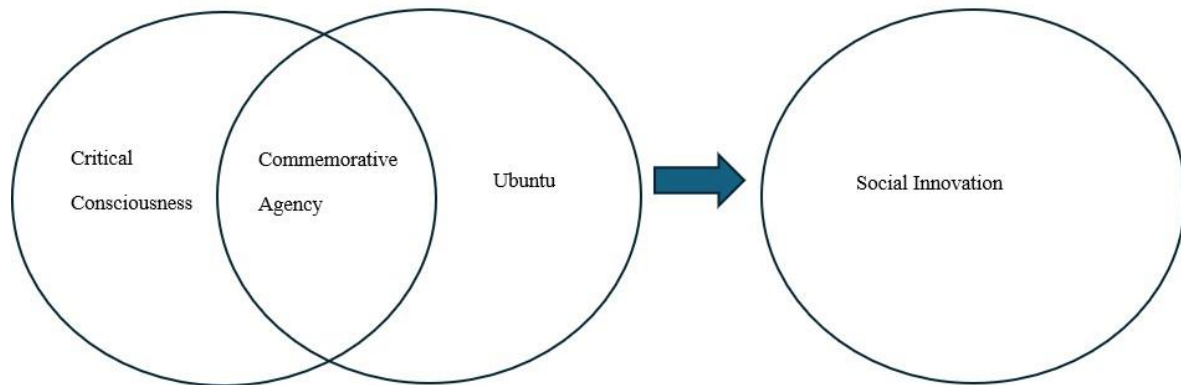
In analysis, it was challenging to unpack how commemoration applied to the research process and how it applied to their involvement in the CAN. Commemorative agency was already encapsulated by the CAN: the structure, connecting to others, and creating together while remembering. The video was a more tangible form of commemoration and a tool that revealed what participants were already involved with. In other words, the video highlighted a longer arc of commemoration, which was more visible and tangible, and could be embraced as healing and an instiller of critical consciousness. The collaborative video acted as a tool for social innovation.

Through the process of creating a collaborative video, participants demonstrated their belief that communities need to be included in activities, projects, and innovations that are created to benefit them. This was made clear as the participants dictated who needed to be in the video

and what needed to be included and excluded as they knew their community and story best. Participants realised that the video provided a medium through which they could share their work and passion for community upliftment instead of trying to have to explain it. Describing community work to people who are not familiar with a particular context can be challenging, and so participants were of the view that showing it through visual media such as the video enabled the key messages to be better understood. The participants demonstrated that they knew and understood their environments the best, and that using creative methods for them to unpack, express, and solve issues within their spaces is beneficial to authentic social change occurring from the ground up. Using collaborative video as an arts-based tool demonstrated how together, participants were able to connect and develop critical consciousness as a collective. This was made evident through finding four where participants developed a heightened awareness of social inequity and finding five where they practiced agency in shaping their story.

Through the participatory process of the commemorative project and by highlighting the work of Woodstock’s CAN, participants demonstrated both their self-awareness, and their awareness of their reality in relation to others. The explicit act of making the collaborative video supported their implicit conscientization with their social conditions and experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and work within Woodstock’s CAN. This reflective practice enabled participants to develop commemorative agency whereby participants were empowered in telling their story, documenting their past, reflecting on what was important to them, and deepening their understanding of themselves in relation to others. From findings, I have defined commemorative agency as a concept which is a combination of commemoration, Ubuntu, and critical consciousness whereby an individual or organisation is able to practice remembering a past or present event or person in relation to their own existence. As Eyre (2007) outlines, the process of commemoration after a collective tragedy provides commentary on broader changes in society—the possibility that things may not feel or be the same again, echoed in COVID-19 news reports with the constant referral to “the new normal” (p. 442).

Figure 15: Diagram of how the Concepts of Critical Consciousness, Ubuntu, Commemorative Agency and Social Innovation are Connected



As the diagram above outlines, commemorative agency lies at the overlap between Ubuntu and critical consciousness. All three concepts lead to the development of social innovation.

The findings of this participatory study—empowerment within place, commemoration, heightened awareness of social inequity, and agency development through collaborative video – are reflective of commemorative agency for social innovation. Commemorative agency recognises that one aspect of a broader story is being captured which is influenced by an individual or organisation’s role in their community or society. Commemorative agency drove positive change within this research study as participants felt empowered to commemorate their activism through dialogue. Ubuntu was recognised as a key philosophy as participants engaged in the principle of ‘I am because we are’ by enacting their shared humanity. Given the tool of video to express and commemorate their experiences, participants were able to capture a powerful moment in time with sensitivity, inclusivity and the hopes that their story would reach and impact others. Essentially, the reflexivity of video, artistic reflection, enabled participants to explore deeper layers of critical consciousness. Commemorative agency is linked to social innovation because if society begins to practice it with more intention, it can drive positive change in addressing societal challenges. As is evident from the findings, participants were given the opportunity to document a moment in time with intention, share their story, and reflect. This sets the precedent of engaging in social innovation and commemorating historic points of community mobilization in crisis. This can provide insight for future research and practice of how to become better equipped in reflecting and learning from our past to influence our future.

5.4 Chapter Summary

The findings highlighted the role that citizens play in times of crisis and the instigation of critical consciousness through community mobilization. Participants were able to mobilise through community response to act in driving positive change. The findings demonstrated how action could spur processes of ‘conscientisation’ to conditions of reality in relation to an individual’s own identity and experiences. By engaging in dialogue, as participants did during the Woodstock CAN meetings and throughout the commemorative project, participants became more aware of the social conditions of their reality. Participants began utilising their creative powers to change or effect change on the conditions that surrounded them. As such, the Woodstock CAN was a social innovation because it was a powerful and innovative response that both challenged and tried to address systemic inequality. At the same time, collaborative video emerged as a social innovation tool that could be utilised to commemorate, practice agency, tell stories, and effect change.

Commemorating and capturing a moment in time by including active participants—specifically community activists – in a video, was a way in which to practice Ubuntu (caring and considering oneself in relation to others and vice versa), provide a space for healing and critical consciousness, and create a social innovation through a visual medium that could be accessed widely and potentially used for learning purposes.

The next chapter will provide the conclusion and recommendations of this research study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“COVID-19 itself, as a mass death event, presents a major challenge to social order – and will remake that order in ways that may not yet be visible or imaginable. The choices made today, technocratic, narrative, and commemorative, including those that are stop-gap or ad-hoc, will be part of this process of remaking. This is true for all aspects of the pandemic, but particularly so in relation to death, wherein the fact of change, absence, and loss is impossible to deny and is therefore socially and politically central. How each society chooses to narrate, manage, and commemorate death in the COVID-19 pandemic will thus play a key role in shaping the post-COVID-19 world” (Millar et al., 2020, p.58).

6.1 Introduction

The conclusion chapter begins with an overview of the main findings of the research study, followed recommendations for future research. The practical implications of the research study are also highlighted, including how it could assist practitioners with addressing the identified social challenge of commemoration during a pandemic. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study.

6.2 Overview

This research study utilised the participatory research tool of collaborative video to gather insights from a Community Action Network that mobilized during the COVID-19 pandemic. By collaborating on a video remotely (as the group could not meet in person given the risk of infection), participants were provided with the opportunity to tell their stories in their own voices during an unprecedented and challenging time. Through this process, participants shared what community and commemoration meant to them and how the community came together to address social challenges on the ground.

This research study made tangible what participants were already engaged in- a form of commemoration practice. Through documenting their story through visual storytelling, this study provided participants with the space to reflect and practice agency in communicating their experience. Further, it demonstrated power and value of research co-creation through visual

participatory methodologies. Findings suggest that commemoration is important in order for true change to happen in society in the long term. In addition, the process of participatory research and collaborative video in engaging with community heroes/activists was unique and a powerful approach in terms of capturing a story and empowering participants through their own agency. The video was an acknowledgment of the people, their stories, and their activities during a very difficult, strange time.

By rallying together and sharing resources, communities can create and establish new ways of connecting with and supporting one another. This especially applies in a time of crisis or tragedy, where commemoration and the arts can play a fundamental role in uniting people, remembering the past, and informing the present.

The research question was ‘What are the experiences and perceived effects of a community organisation engaging in a commemorative arts-based process for social innovation during a pandemic?’, and the research objectives were ‘explore social innovation and community mobilisation in pandemics and epidemics’ and ‘unpack understandings of commemoration and the role of arts in times of crisis’. The research findings present the following:

- CAN as a social innovation, was already engaged in its own form of commemorative practice; the video provided a tangible means through which to commemorate, and therefore acted as a social innovation tool in practicing agency and collaboration.
- There is a connection between the African philosophy of Ubuntu, critical consciousness, and community mobilisation.
- Action can spur a process of awareness to conditions of reality in relation to an individual’s own identity.
- Critical consciousness can develop through community action and the role that citizens play in times of crisis.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly the lockdowns and the social inequality that this brought to the fore, led to community mobilisation efforts such as CAN.
- The video has the potential to lead to future engagement, awareness, education, and discussion around community mobilisation in times of crisis and how governments and communities can improve their ability to work together.

6.3 Contributions to Literature, Methods, and Practice

6.3.1 Contribution to Literature

This research adds to existing knowledge on community mobilisation and response in times of crisis, drawing attention to Community Action Networks during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also adds to existing knowledge on video collaboration as a commemorative and social innovation tool, and as a method of engaging communities remotely during times of crisis and exploring the effects of this process on participants. Not much is known about the ways in which participatory research during a pandemic might contribute to commemorative practice, memory making and knowledge. The making of the video also demonstrated how the use of smartphones for remote collaboration has become ubiquitous; the full extent of how they can be used to produce research through participatory video merits further consideration (Marzi, 2023).

Lastly, this research adds to literature on South Africa's COVID-19 response during the pandemic. Knowledge gaps exist in terms of why and how these 'everyday/ ordinary people' in the CANs mobilised without any assistance from government, including the communities' motivations and experiences. It also focuses on their personal experiences of involvement and commemoration.

Commemoration in 'real time', as an event or crisis unfolds, is usually overlooked as a means for participants to process what is going on, as well as to capture, educate and raise awareness about particular issues. Using video collaboration and documentation, this study unpacked these two areas of community mobilisation and commemoration while doing so remotely.

6.3.2 Contribution to Methods

This process-orientated study provided a unique opportunity to explore commemoration both in real time and retrospectively. The participants and I engaged remotely due to 'stay-at-home' lockdowns and social distancing safety precautions instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created a meaningful opportunity to adapt participatory research to an online/ virtual environment.

The participatory research centred on the arts-based method of video collaboration. The completed video was screened in October 2021 to an audience of friends and family of

participants and people who had engaged with Woodstock's CAN or were interested in finding out more about it. Video as an art form allowed the content-heavy topic to be visually represented, and to subsequently reach more people because it can be shared online and simultaneously viewed remotely by several individuals. For participants, the process was as much empowering as it was reflective

6.3.3 Contribution to Practice

A new framework model and guide (see Appendix) has been designed so that other organisations or researchers could apply and/or adapt it to their work for remote commemoration with various groups and communities around the world. Such a model and guide would be useful to communities seeking to collaborate on a video that tells their story and concerns about specific issues, in their own words. The video would serve as a tool for both documentation and commemoration. The collaborative video framework includes:

- Introduction
- Advantages and Challenges
- Process Outline Overview
- Session Overview
- Key Learnings and Recommendations

See praxis model in the Appendix.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Given the unique context of this research study, below I outline some recommendations to consider for future research.

Emergency/temporal response: The sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that this research study was conducted with an organisation that sprang up as an emergency response to

a crisis. I recommend similar research should be conducted over a longer period with an established organisation.

Woodstock: The research was conducted in the suburb of Woodstock, in Cape Town, South Africa. The country, city, and suburb have strong ties to apartheid and resistance. I recommend research should be conducted in a different city or suburb of South Africa, or outside the country that would indicate how much place and space factored in and influenced the findings of this research study.

Societal challenge: The study was impacted by the restrictions of the pandemic and its effects on people, society, business, etc. I recommend that a similar research study using an arts-based method for commemoration should occur in relation to a different societal challenge, e.g. land redistribution, flooding, etc.

6.5 Chapter Summary

Participants were provided with a platform to process and reflect in sharing their experiences through conversations with peers. Activists are always caring for others, therefore creating spaces in which activists can be cared for is essential to make their work sustainable.

While this commemorative project highlighted one community's response to activism on a surface level, it also dove into South Africa's deep systemic issues tied to class and race, which directly speaks to access and government support. In some ways, the pandemic unearthed issues of systemic social inequality—housing, healthcare, food security – and brought them to the forefront of discussion and news.

In the case of Woodstock's CAN, participants expressed that they while they couldn't rely on the government, they could rely on each other, and opted to put their many differences (race, class, wealth) aside to work together. They were able to find similarities in their differences to look out for their community. These connections established a strong form of social capital, which wouldn't have existed before this time of crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected us all individually in different ways, but it was also a collectively shared experience that could be a stepping-stone into new and interesting arts-based collaborations and forms of community mobilisation in times of crisis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval



Faculty of Commerce

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UCT Commerce Faculty Office

11 03 2021

Diana Ocholla
Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town
REF: REC 2021/03/011

**The potential of remote community mobilisation and commemoration,
using art-based methods, in a pandemic**

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Mar-2022 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.



2021.03.11
17:25:09 +02'00'

Jacques Rousseau

Appendix 2: Consent Form

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM:

Participant name: |

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Diana Ocholla** as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MPhil Degree at the Graduate School of Business. I understand that the research is designed to gather information about **'The potential of remote community mobilisation and commemoration, using art-based methods, in a pandemic'** and that I will be one of approximately 14 people being interviewed for this research.

Background and purpose of the research

Hi, I'm Diana Ocholla and I've been living in Woodstock since 2016. I've been a Woodstock CAN member since October 2020 and it's been incredible seeing and learning about the work Woodstock CAN does and continues to do. I'm studying my Master's degree at UCT and focusing on commemoration, the arts, and community mobilisation during a pandemic. My intention is to build on the work Woodstock CAN has started by working together on a collaborative arts project to commemorate our experiences during this bizarre time. I think this research will address the issues around emotional and social functioning by exploring the benefits of commemoration in a pandemic using art-based methods. Drawing upon my expertise and knowledge of drama studies, dance training, performances and facilitation, I shall conduct participatory research workshops to cocreate an idea that we can implement together. Furthermore, I'd like to compare what I learn from working with Woodstock CAN, to a community

orientated project by Iziko Museum to explore the effects on participants and their relation to their respective communities.

Why get involved?

- This collaborative creative project is an opportunity to inspire ourselves and others;
- Can learn more about our community by working together creatively;
- Beyond developing a Master's thesis, I intend to develop a collaborative practice framework that can be adapted to suit other communities and countries around the world. This collaborative practice framework will include workshop designs and guidelines, community engagement processes, ethical considerations, and key learnings. This framework will be supported by a mini documentary and both will be housed on a website accessible to the public.

What next?

- Once you sign the consent form, we'll have our first of four online workshops to create an idea we can implement together as a group
- I'll conduct a 1:1 interview with you
- Once the workshops end, we'll take 2-3 weeks to implement the idea
- I'll conduct a 1:1 interview with you and record you for the mini documentary
- I'll provide you with a surprise pack as a token of my appreciation for your participation
- You'll have a chance to review final video content and thesis content and provide feedback if you like

Confidentiality and data protection

I'll keep all your personal information, photos, videos, and audio recordings in a file storage platform approved by the University of Cape Town. The signed consent form will also be stored safely.

Ethics approval

Ethical consent for the study has been approved by the *UCT Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee*.

Participation and confidentiality (please mark below with an 'x')

Timeframe	Question	Yes	No
BEFORE	I have read and I understand the information sheet for this research project, have had a chance to ask questions and I am happy with all answers received.		
	I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary.		
	I understand that I will not be compensated.		
	I understand that I may withdraw at any <u>time</u> , but need to inform the researcher in writing.		
	I understand that I can request my identity remains confidential.		
	I am aware of who will have access to my information and understand how my personal information will be stored and what will happen to it at the end of the project.		



DURING	I understand the researcher shall be conducting interviews, observing, and collaborating on arts-based approaches as part of this research project.		
	I agree to attending all sessions arranged with the group and will inform the researcher if I cannot attend.		
	I agree to being interviewed at the start and at the end of the project for maximum 1 hr each time.		
	I agree that video footage can be recorded of me outside my home/business and a short 5-10min interview can be conducted for the mini documentary which will be available online.		
	I understand that the time commitment will be approx. 8hrs of active engagement and +- 3 weeks of on/off engagement depending on the project. <u>So</u> in total, maximum 2 months of engagement.		
	I understand that it is my decision if I want to meet online or in person given the current COVID-19 situation.		
	I agree that should I meet in person with the researcher, it will be <u>outdoors</u> and COVID-19 protocols will be followed.		
	I shall not hold the researcher liable for any damages or loss.		
AFTER	I understand that the content I contribute towards may appear in a thesis, a mini		

	documentary available online, and a website dedicated to this research project. Should anything else arise, the researcher will contact me for my approval.		
	I understand I can review final thesis content and video footage and provide feedback.		
	I understand that I may be contacted regarding a media publication about my participation in this research project.		
	I agree for my contact details to be kept securely so I can be re-contacted and/or invited for future studies.		

Consent

I consent to participate in this research project, based on the terms outlined above.

Signed by participant

Date

Signed by Student

Date

Should you have any queries about any of the content above, please contact:

Diana Ocholla +27 76 200 6180 dianaocholla1@gmail.com	Dr Lesley Gittings <i>Diana Ocholla's Supervisor</i> lesley.gittings@gmail.com
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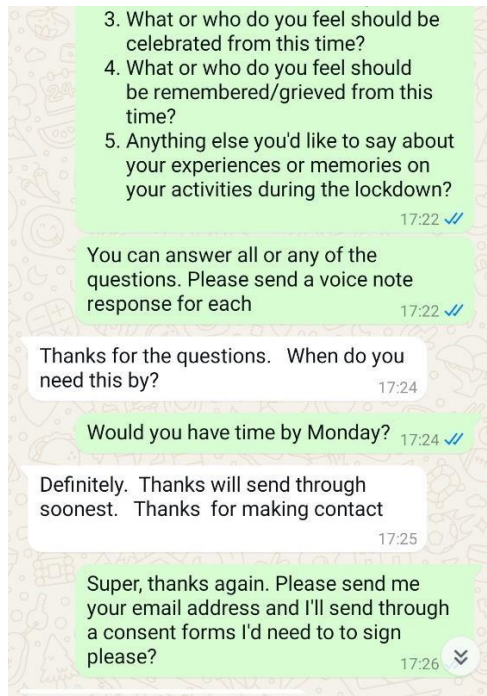
Appendix 3: Interview Questions

- Tell me a little about yourself?
- What does the word commemoration mean to you?
- How did you get involved in Woodstock CAN?
- What work did you initiate or contribute towards as part of Woodstock CAN?
- What or who do you think should be celebrated about this time?
- What or who should be remembered/ grieved?
- What is your dream or wish for Woodstock's future?
- Anything else you want to share regarding memories or experiences from the pandemic?

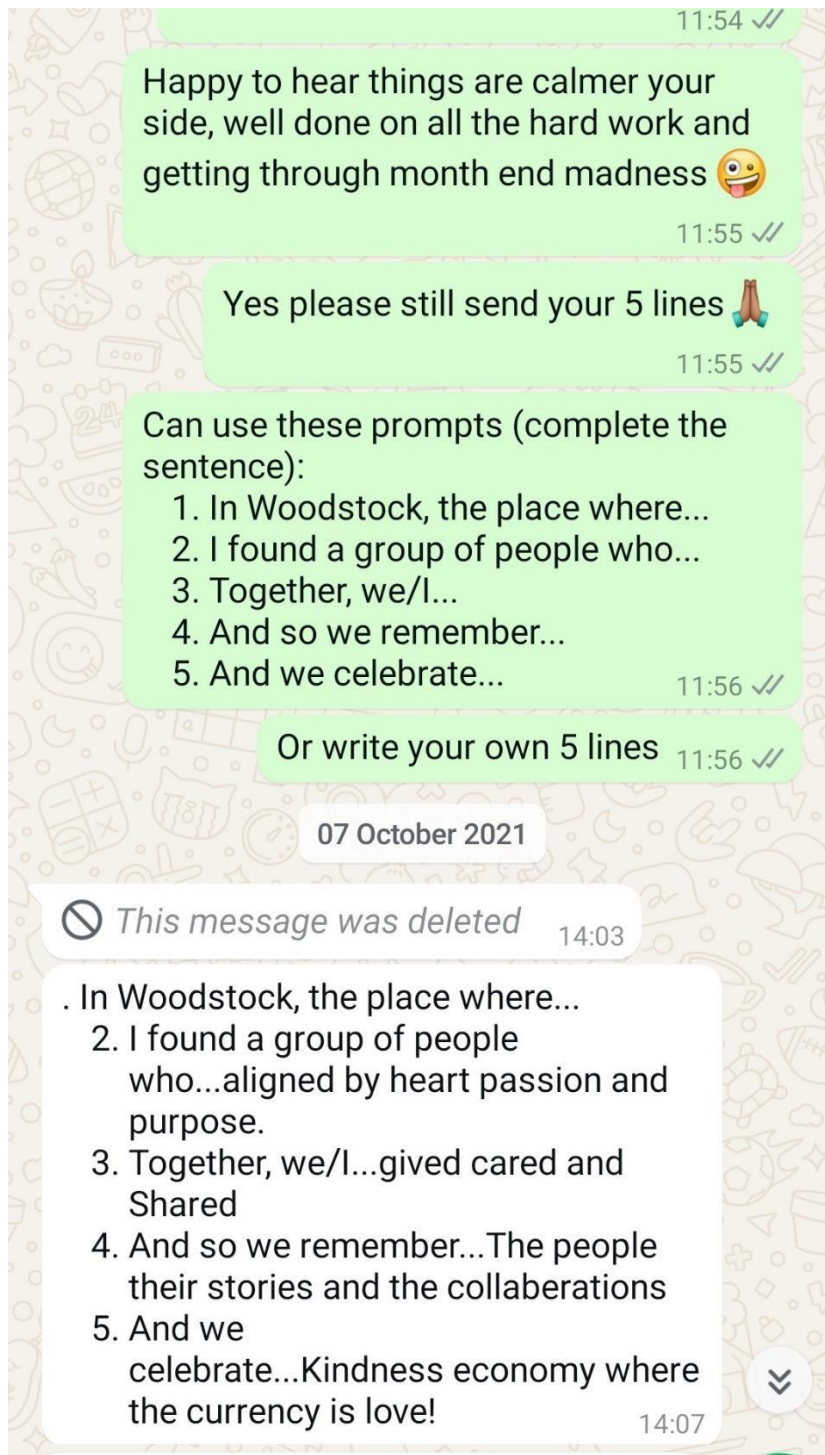
*Ask follow up questions where relevant

Appendix 4: Recruiting Additional Participants








Appendix 6: Poem Prompts



Appendix 7: Surveys



Woodstock Commemoration Project

B I U  

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Woodstock Commemoration Project. Please complete this quick survey by Sunday, 28 March.

What's your name?
Short answer text

What's your email address?
Short answer text

Are you available for an intro meeting on Zoom next week?

Yes

No

Maybe

If yes, what is a suitable day and time (please select all that apply)

Tuesday, 30 March, 4pm-5pm

Tuesday, 30 March, 5pm-6pm

Tuesday, 30 March, 5.30pm-6.30pm

Wednesday, 31 March, 4pm-5pm

Wednesday, 31 March, 5pm-6pm

Wednesday, 31 March, 5.30pm-6.30pm



Woodstock Commemoration Project

B *I* U ↺ ↻

Please complete this quick survey so we can finalise decisions on some aspects of the video/screening. Thank you.

What should the 'call to action' be at the end of the video?

- No 'call to action'
- Donate to Woodstock Resident's Association
- Find out more information here
- If in Woodstock, join CAN
- Other...

Where should we screen the video? (Choose as many as you like, but we'll only go with 2 to start with)

- Go Drive in (they've quoted R2000)
- Tshisimani activist centre
- Community building where we can project onto a wall (i.e. Woodstock Community Hall)
- Cissie Gool
- Inyathelo (venue of Cookbook launch)
- 196 Victoria
- Online
- Other...

Appendix 8: Screenings Posters

TOGETHER WE CAN

*Video screening commemorating
Woodstock CAN's response during the
COVID-19 pandemic.*

Date: 14 October 2021

Time: Doors open 5.30pm, video starts
at 7.30pm-8.30pm

Cost: Free

Place: GoDriveIn, 346B Victoria Rd, Salt
River. Bring your car, park and watch OR
bring picnic blanket, sit and watch.

REGISTER HERE:
<https://bit.ly/2YiEnCl>



TOGETHER WE CAN

*Video screening commemorating
Woodstock CAN's response during the
COVID-19 pandemic.*

Date: 15 October 2021

Time: 6pm-7pm

Cost: Free

Place: Tshisimani Centre for Activist
Education, 1 Batten Ln & Main Road,
Mowbray

REGISTER HERE:
<https://bit.ly/3A2vOca>



Appendix 9: Media Coverage

Mini documentary celebrates Woodstock's COVID-19 community heroes

27 OCTOBER 2021 | STORY NIÉMAH DAVIDS. PHOTO UNSPLASH. Read time 5 min.



UCT master's student Diana Ocholla said the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the true spirit of ubuntu among residents, who often went above and beyond to support those in need.

"And so, we celebrate what it means to be in community – in a world where disconnection and disenchantment is rife. We celebrate this breath and the next; we celebrate the proactive energy of the collective, the kindness economy where the currency is love."

UCT News survey

Please take a moment to give us your feedback.

Do you access UCT news content via:

- campus communications
- social media
- UCT News site
- UCT student site
- UCT staff site
- UCT main site

SUBMIT

Most read

→ Lessons from the Springboks: 'They are unapologetically South African'
11:31, 31 January 2025

→ SA's rare succulent plants are threatened by illegal trade – how to stop it
09:00, 31 January 2025
REPUBLISHED

→ Excitement as UCT welcomes more than 4 000 first-years
15:35, 5 February 2025

UCT News [Link](#): Published 27 October 2021



UCT Masters student showcases community heroes of Woodstock in mini-documentary



Published by Ashleigh Nefat on November 4, 2021

Cape Town etc. [link](#): Published 4 November 2021

Appendix 10: Research Budget

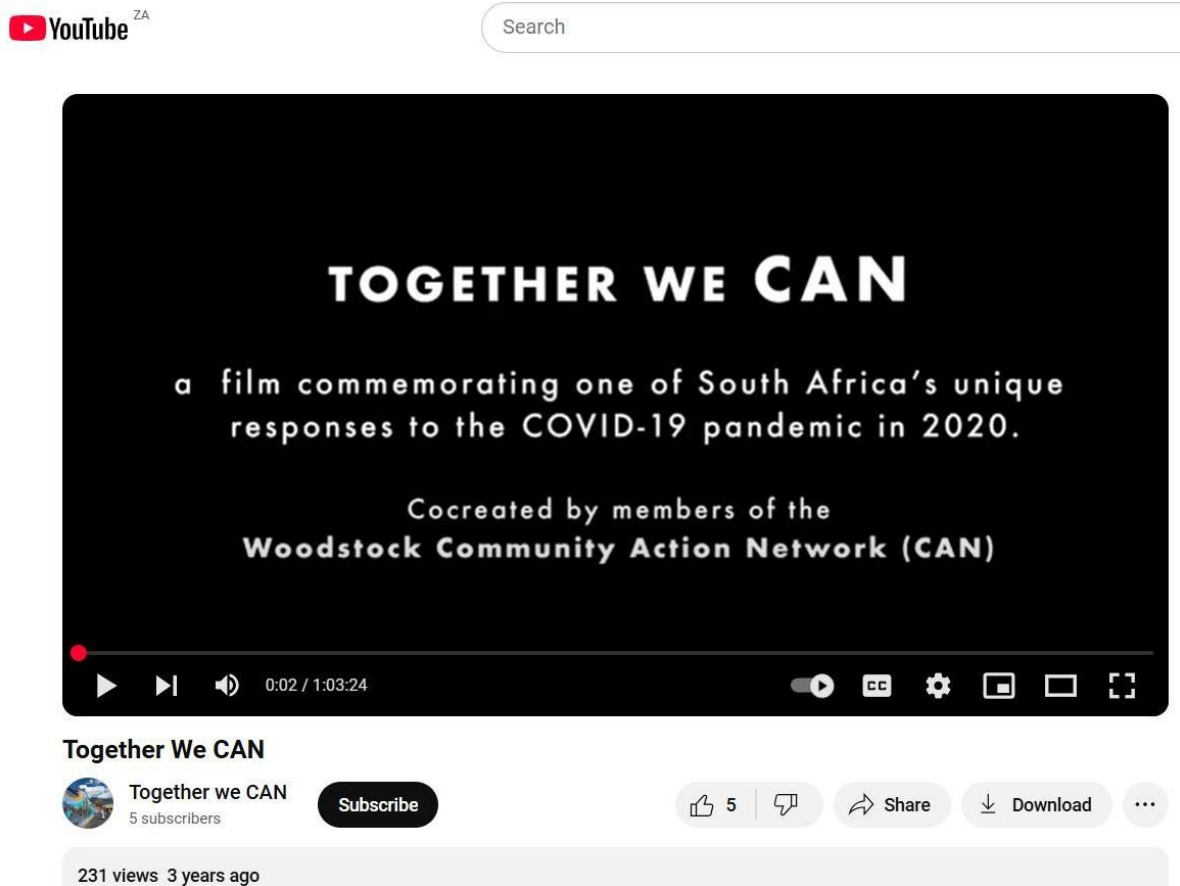
- Video editing (approx. 30hrs): R6000
- GoDriveIn Roadhouse hire: R2000
- Samoosas and juice for screening: R250
- Drinks at focus group chat: R150
- Appreciation gifts for the group: R1400
- Facebook video boost: R200

Total: R10 000

Appendix 11: Focus Group Questions

- What were the screenings like for you?
- What was a challenge and highlight for you of the whole process?
- What did you learn?
- What feedback did you get from friends/family who watched the video?
- What would you suggest happens next with this video or research?

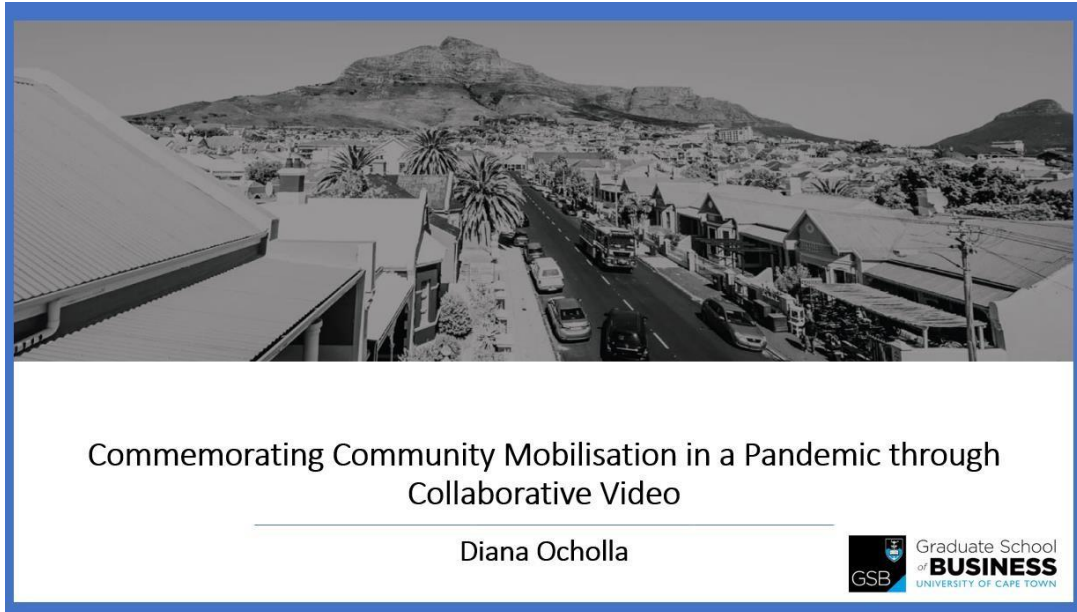
Appendix 12: YouTube Video



The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the YouTube logo with a 'ZA' superscript. To its right is a search bar containing the word 'Search'. The video player itself has a black background with white text. The title 'TOGETHER WE CAN' is prominently displayed at the top. Below it, a subtitle reads 'a film commemorating one of South Africa's unique responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.' Further down, it says 'Cocreated by members of the Woodstock Community Action Network (CAN)'. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a progress bar at 0:02 / 1:03:24, and icons for volume, closed captions, settings, and full screen. Below the video player, the channel name 'Together We CAN' is shown with a profile picture, 5 subscribers, and a 'Subscribe' button. To the right are buttons for 'Like' (5), 'Dislike', 'Share', 'Download', and a menu icon. At the bottom left of the video area, it says '231 views 3 years ago'.

YouTube video [link](#): Published 11 November 2021

Appendix 13: Research Dissemination



Presented online (2021): Royal Anthropological Institute, and the Folklore Society conference themed ‘Creativity during the Covid Lockdown’.



Presented in Bloemfontein, South Africa (2024): Social Innovation Indaba, themed ‘People-Powered Change’.

Appendix 14: Collaborative Video Praxis Model

Access the pdf [here](#)



Introduction

Where were you when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred? What did you feel? What were you afraid of? What did you document from that time?

This model's objective is to support other organisations or researchers with a guide that can be adapted to remotely commemorate with various groups and communities around the world in times of crisis. Such a framework is useful for communities seeking to collaborate on a video that tells their story and concerns about specific issues, in their own words. The video can serve as a tool for documentation, commemoration, and hopefully social change.



Graphic: Jenny Soderbergh

Advantages and Challenges

Advantages:

- Video is an accessible media form for participants to access and for it to reach more people through online distribution and sharing
- Many people can contribute to the final outcome
- Commemoration in relation to any crisis is a form of documenting lived experiences in real time with the hope that it can lead to change and/or be learnt from
- Engaging online means that participants can be located anywhere in the world

Challenges:

- Access to data and laptop/phones to participate
- Some form of training on video use is a necessity before engaging in a collaborative video project
- Facilitating a group online during a crisis over a long period of time requires significant sensitivity and patience



Graphic: Jenny Soderbergh

Process Outline Overview

10 STEPS Collaborative Video in Times of Crisis: A Guide for Remote Commemoration

01. Research and understand a crisis impacting a community.
02. Connect with a community that is experiencing the crisis. Learn as much about them upfront, i.e. where and how they operate, who are the main leaders/participants, how often do they meet, how do they communicate.
03. Join one of their meetings or invite them to an introduction meeting where you explain who you are and what you do, as well as invite them to participate in commemorating their experience.
04. Prep consent forms as well as ethical guidelines to dictate the terms of your research project and to have at hand in case anyone will need to be recommended for mental health support or require additional resources/support.
05. Form your group and request consent forms to be signed before the workshops begin. Also ensure the group is aware of the time commitment and confirm availability for the first workshop.

06. Prepare timeline and content for 1-to-1 interviews and minimum five workshops and one focus group over the space of 3-6 months. Adapt the timeline and content when necessary.
07. Sessions should include: Kickoff/Introduction meeting, One-to-one interviews, Five Workshops, One-to-one video briefings, Screenings, Focus group.
08. Post the final video online and gather any additional feedback through comments, surveys, etc. Share the video with local media and any community agencies who would benefit to know more. Post on social media.
09. Write a report with your process, findings, recommendations.
10. Share report with participants, send "thank you" gift/message.

By Diana Ocholla

Session Overview

- A) Kickoff/introduction meeting (getting to know the group, explaining collaborative video in more detail)
- B) One-one-interviews (semi-structured in-depth interviews)
- C) Workshop 1 (Discuss video styles, brainstorm on video theme, discuss who should be included)
- D) Workshop 2 (discuss draft video transcript/storyboard done by video editor and facilitator based on one-to-one interviews and what came from workshop 1)
- E) Workshop 3 (discuss updated video storyboard)
- F) Video briefings (one-to-one video briefings explaining and discussing different individual contributions based on their selected interview edited clips)
- G) Workshop 4 (provide feedback on video draft 1)
- H) Workshop 5 (provide feedback on video draft 2)
- I) Host screenings
- J) Host focus group, closing discussion with the group

Key Learnings and Recommendations

Before

- Incentives: It may also be helpful to provide an ethical incentive for participation, e.g. a certificate of completion, skills development, etc.
- Access and inclusivity: It is important to consider access and inclusivity in future studies or interventions. An option is to offer payment for data upfront for mobile phones as a possible means to engage more participants. Training for platforms such as Zoom could also be provided so that more people are familiar with it.
- Budget: Ensure there's budget to pay the video editor, venue screenings, snacks, data.

Key Learnings and Recommendations

During

- **Crisis research:** Conducting research in a crisis necessitates sensitivity in considering the mental wellbeing of the participants. Important to balance flexibility, empathy and patience, while ensuring the process is steered to completion.
- **Participant attendance:** Keep everyone informed and try to be as accommodating as possible. For instance, providing different date options works well.
- **Interactivity:** Make online sessions fun, creative, interactive so participants can engage more fully and are interested in the process.
- **Length:** Conducting a project over 3-6 months felt like it contributed towards greater depth being captured. However, it can be difficult keeping a group engaged over a long period of time online.
- **Group size:** A group of 7-15 is advisable with the option to include other voices/stories that the group engages with or that sends in additional material to contribute towards the larger project. Having a main group of 7-15 is manageable especially for long term engagement online.
- **Inclusivity:** Find different, innovative and creative ways to incorporate more material/voices from the beginning, such as submitting videos, letters, and photos through a platform link.
- **Video editor:** Ideally someone who is a part of the research project should be the video editor. However, if using an external video editor- they should be part of the process from the beginning. The reason is that going through the intimate and vulnerable process of capturing each individual's story means that a strong form of trust is established- inviting a third party who was not a part of the journey from the start means that some of the nuance might be lost and the video editor may not capture the stories accurately.
- **Work process:** Accommodate for 'in between' work happening between the main facilitator and video editor and make notes throughout the process

Key Learnings and Recommendations

After

- **Video feedback:** Send out a survey to attendees who attend or view the screening of the final video, share a feedback form in the YouTube caption, and have a document to store any associated feedback from the project.

Contact

For anymore information about this research project or collaborative video guide, please contact:

Diana Ocholla

dianaocholla1@gmail.com

Thank you!

