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# Multicultural influences on the personal identity of University students

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**Multicultural influences on the personal identity of university students**

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**Date: 29 May 2017**

DECLARATION

I, Mndawe Dumisile Miranda, declare that the research project submitted as a requirement for completion of the Master of Arts in Research Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand is my own work and has not been previously submitted elsewhere.

**SIGNATURE: ……..** **DATE: ……..**

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to:

- My family for providing me with the necessary support throughout my academic and social life; and the work was done serves as a dedication to myself, as it is a clear demonstration of hard work, determination, and effort in completing the research project.
- Myself for the hard work, effort, and determination put into completing the research project

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In part with acknowledgment, I would like to give credit to the following people:

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the study

In the university setting, students are confronted with an environment that consists of individuals from diverse regions. This diversity offers them the opportunity to interact with individuals from different cultural as well as social backgrounds. As a result, this diversity will prompt them to examine how their own cultural beliefs and values differ or similar to those of others. This kind of exposure contributes to the development of certain aspects of their individual self. The study aimed to explore how different cultural values and beliefs influence the personal identity of students and how these are negotiated in the university campus. Most individuals encounter challenges in successfully achieving a sense of identity which results in them experiencing psychological and social problems. However, the inability to fulfil a resilient sense of identity may result in the individual experiencing a disorganized sense of self and psychosocial functioning (Syed, 2010). Research on identity development has been previously conducted. However, a large amount of focus has been placed on the relationship between identity development and identity processes (e.g. Howarth et al. (2014); Klimstra et al., 2013; Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013; Doumen et al., 2012). Thus the current study aimed to provide insight on other social contexts that are contributory to identity development, focusing specifically on multiculturalism within the university environment.

In their recent work, Howarth, Wagner, Magnusson, and Sammut (2014) state that the intersectionality of identities, societies, and cultures necessitate the discussions of these aspects with reference to how they intersect in the process of identity formation rather than focusing on identity formation in individuals as isolated from social context. In making this statement, Howarth et al. (2014) argue that identity should not be studied as separate from the social context. In considering that the Post-apartheid South Africa has transformed to be a more globalized country, particularly the diversity in Higher Education Institutions, is a good example of the intersection of identities, societies, in addition to cultures (Howarth et al., 2014). University institutions in a Post-apartheid South Africa have grown to be more and more diverse, in which individuals come to interact with other individuals from different cultures and societies to that of theirs. As a result, they are confronted with the tension of reflecting on their own identities (Howarth et al., 2014). Further research focusing on addressing the societal and cultural structures of individuality as well as cultural associations

will have significant applications in understanding the formation of an identity in time and space. Moreover, an investigation of the political and institutional limitations affecting the progression of cultural identities is necessary. Howarth et al. (2014) posed a question that further research should examine ‘‘what happens when negative stereotypes and expectations filter into the social identities and self-expectations of young people and people appear to reject all strategies of cultural maintenance and cultural contact?’’ (p.30). The essence of this question captures the intentions of the current study.

Youth experiencing identity conflicts are often left experiencing difficulties in achieving a sense of identity (Klimstra et al., 2013). On the contrary, other youth may have a solid and consistent basis for less complex identity formation processes (Klimstra et al., 2013). Thus a further in-depth understanding of multicultural influences on the personal identity of students could assist those with limited access to such information. As a result of youth not being able to find relevant meaning in the development of identity; their establishment of a sense of identity is negatively affected (Berzonsky, 2011). According to Adams, Van de Vijvera, and De Bruin (2012), taking into account that personal identity is grounded in interactions with others; the studies on identity ought to examine how individuals understand their personal identity as well as how they understand the identity of other individuals. Furthermore, Adams, et al. (2012) highlighted that factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, personality, in addition to multicultural backgrounds may possibly have an impact on the fundamental dynamics of identity, thus these factors necessitate the importance of examining these aspects. The majority of literature (e.g. Klimstra et al., 2013; Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013; Doumen et al., 2012) available on identity formation focuses predominantly on providing information on the relationships of identity formation (focusing specifically on how interpersonal relationships affect identity; the relationship between identity processes and identity formation; how personality is contributory to identity formation, etc.) in addition to identity progressions. A number of studies (e.g. Adams et al., 2012; Meeus et al., 2002; Berzonsky, 2011) have a limited focus on multicultural influences on the personal identity of students. It seems important to promote the development of healthy identity development by highlighting the role of multicultural influences on the personal identity development, in order to generate more understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, a wide variety of studies (e.g. Meeus, 2011; Klimstra et al., 2013, Doumen et al., 2012) on interpersonal identity development have mainly employed quantitative designs for studying individuals’ identity statuses which may not clarify certain difficulties and underlying forces of these

developments which are well represented through qualitative inquiry. The identified gaps in these studies add weight to the application of the topic addressed in this study.

### 1.2 Significance of the study

In their study of female Muslim students attending a South African university; Albrecht, Jacobs, Retief, and Adamski (2015) state that the particular context of the university in a post-apartheid South Africa provides the ultimate setting to study how a host of cultural orientations and identifications impact the values, identities, and dress practices of students. Furthermore, they highlighted that future studies should consider qualitative methods for the purpose of gaining deeper insights into the question of identity and values of students from different universities around South Africa as well as students from universities overseas. Vincent and Idahosa (2014) found that in the post-apartheid South Africa, university students who identify with the minority groups in the university environment tend to experience difficulty adjusting to a socially diverse setting and those who view the university setting as supportive as opposed to it being socially isolated successfully adjust to the environment. Adams et al. (2014) acknowledges that future studies should seek to explore how intercultural interaction accompanied by aspects such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, personality might have an impact on the fundamental dynamics of identity. Furthermore, exploring the ways in which intergroup interaction and other intercultural experiences, could contribute to the understanding of individuals' identities and their intergroup relations. Similarly, Peters and Lahman (2014) point out that there is a necessity for attempts to explore what has been described as the complexity of identity that for all individuals is the interconnection of gender, age, race, culture, nationality, religion, orientation, etc. Furthermore, they explain that the connections turn out to be even more complex when two or more key cultural positions such as race or gender are overlapped by one individual concurrently.

In the contemporary South Africa, the effort to manage diversity in university institutions has led to a transitional period of change in which institutional cultures and identities are questioned (Kamsteeg & Wels, 2012). In other words, as a result of intercultural contact, existing identities are challenged by other dominant identities. Vincent and Idahosa (2014) found that student participants in their study experienced the question of identity as influential in academic success. These students perceived themselves to be outsiders in their first encounter with the university setting, with the sense of isolation from its leading identity. The identity constructions that exist in students entering universities, such as the incentive to

learn, cultural values, beliefs and university experiences, are confronted with the diverse identities of other students in the environment (Kamsteeg & Wels, 2012). Vincent and Idahosa (2014) highlight that some studies have found self-concept to be influential on how students manage and deal with certain situations at university, which also affects their academic success (Burton & Dowling 2005; Drew & Watkins 1998; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). The discussion on multicultural influences and personal identity is addressing the greater complexity of how different cultural values and beliefs have an influence on the personal identity of university students. The information that was generated from the study could be utilized as an educational medium to assist youth experiencing identity conflicts by providing them with in-depth meanings of how to engage in active identity development and awareness of how diverse cultural values and beliefs contribute to their individual values and beliefs. Furthermore, the findings in this study can be utilised by student support services within the university, aimed at assisting students with the circumstances arising in the university campus and other personal difficulties that students may need assistance in managing.

Christiaens (2015) notes that the Student development theory has made efforts to understand how the social transition to university impacts a student's identity. Furthermore, highlighting that further literature has to take into account how a student's identity development in university is informed by the social and cultural position of their upbringing. Christiaens (2015) gives an instance of how the development of a student from a rural area and that of a student from an urban area would differ when additional identity dimensions are taken into account. As a result, indicating that utilizing rurality as a case study urges the field to continue challenging and expanding identity models toward more inclusive theories of student identity development. An in-depth exploration of how youth view and experience the process of identity development may provide valuable information to others who are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood and are experiencing identity confusion or conflicts. The results from the study may also be utilised as a medium for psychosocial competence and raising awareness. Gaining an insight into what others perceive of identity formation and their experiences may encourage a better understanding of this process as vital in the movement towards becoming more psychosocially competent and raising awareness of individual differences in a given society.

In addition to the study that were previously done that focus on identity formation, the current study adds to scholarly work in the discipline of psychology by shedding some light into other aspects of the social setting that are contributory to identity formation. The focus on multiculturalism as a factor that may play a role in an individual's constructing an identity offers a new direction from which identity processes can be evaluated. The focus on the identity formation in the university environment provides a platform for other scholarly works that can focus on additional factors within the university that may add to the findings of the current study and identity new insights in this regard. In addition to the study findings being used as an educational medium for students who are in the process of forming an identity, the study findings can be used as a tool to improve student support services within the university that are focused on improving and maintaining student well-being. The detailed accounts of students' experiences in the university campus can be used as a guide for other students who encounter difficulties in forming a sense of belonging.

### 1.3 Aims of the proposed study

The purpose of the study was firstly to explore how different cultural beliefs and values influence the personal identity of students, and secondly, how personal identity is negotiated in the university campus.

### 1.4 Objectives of the study

- The study aimed to explore how students experience multiculturalism within the university campus.
- To explore students self-concept in relation to other students from diverse backgrounds.
- To explore students' views and experiences of student cultures within the university campus.
- To explore students' experience of parental involvement as contributory to their identity development.

### 1.5 Defining key concepts

(a) Personal identity is the set of goals, values, and beliefs which an individual develops in the socio-cultural context as well as one's psychological and social characteristics (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). With regard to the study personal identity denotes

the individual values and beliefs of university students and the way they distinguish themselves with regard to students with distinct values and beliefs.

(b) Culture is the customs and principles that are mutually shared by individuals in a distinct geographic setting (Boyd & Chung, 2012). In the study culture refers to the diverse cultural contexts (such as institutional culture, social groups within the university, and peer relationships) that students identify with.

(c) Multiculturalism refers to the demographic setting reflecting the cultural diversity within a society (Johnston, 2015). In the study multiculturalism refers to the different societies in which students belong.

(d) Student culture: in the study 'student culture' refers to the diverse ways of living around campus at the University of the Witwatersrand.

# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Personal identity

Adams et al. (2012) refer to identity as comprising of the facets of personhood, thus giving the instance of culture, gender, age, as well as the traits that define the person such as preferences concerning life partners, work, or interests. In addition, it encompasses the composite communication between various internal, social, and contextual mechanisms, which are involved in defining the individual as a composite being (Adams et al. 2012). Equally, personal and social identity features influence individual behavioural adoptions as they establish their identity within their social frameworks (Adams et al. 2012). Personal identity is perceived as the unique self-identification of an individual in relation to their lives. These self-identifications serve as the driving force for rendering ourselves as intelligible beings and this kind of accounts of identity are as a result shaped by the cultural, institutional, as well as individual points of social being (Loseke, 2007). Adams et al. (2012) state that researchers should seek to generate principal information set which emphasizes the intense exploration of personal identity and also the ways in which socioeconomic position, as well as additional demographic facets, contribute to identity formation. In addition, Meeus (2011) highlighted that previous research has shown that personal identity advances gradually in the course of adolescence.

Loseke (2007) argues that with the contemporary industrial or post-industrial societies, achieving a sense of personal identity is very challenging. This may be the result of identities no longer being embedded in religious conviction, community, and family; modernism divides human existence into a variability of fragments and individuals are exposed to different environments which do not support preceding identities. Klimstra et al. (2013) state that personality is one of the most significant factors influencing individual differences in the process of identity development. Furthermore, when individuals progress from childhood to adolescence, they now have to independently make critical life choices without relying on their parents, which means they must progressively establish a well-defined set of commitments in different extents (Klimstra et al. 2013). Achieving a sense of identity requires the individual to construct comprehensible influences among life proceedings, and accounts of identity allow for the creation of coherence (Loseke, 2007). In order to fully understand others, individuals use their understanding of the other people's narratives as a

resource to make sense of their own personal beings and unique others. In this regard, those experiencing identity crisis wilfully search for narratives to create a sense of their own complexities (Loseke, 2007). However, these individuals do engage in the process of constructing their individual narratives of personal identities and in addition employ the understanding of others' stories as a resource to achieve this. According to Bamberg (2011) defining identity often relies on the self-representations, such as mental constructions about one's self with regard to what they identify with and how others identify them. Meeus (2011) states that studies on the dynamics that influence individual differences in the approach used to address identity formation are practically absent.

### 2.2 The University climate

Cross and Johnson (2008) describe the university setting as a formal and informal environment where learning, teaching, and living is involved. Furthermore, explaining that the life on campus entails interaction between the environment and the university community (such as staff, students, and other internal stakeholders) as mediators of change. In this regard, it is an environment that presupposes conditioning, negotiation, contradiction, change or disruption by and between individuals that share it and experience it. Kamsteeg and Wels (2012) observe the university setting as an integration of interactions and discussions that enhance and re-enhances awareness. Furthermore, the academic communities have come to be more different in their structure. This diversity is in the form of gender, culture, religious belief, philosophy etc., in addition, it is considered to be an advantage in academic performance. Riddell and Weedon (2014) state that the period spent in university is considered to be a critical time in which an individual forms a personal identity. Thus, for most individuals the period spent at a university could encompass identity exploration without restraints. Similarly, Syed (2010) explains that entering university is often considered to be an experience that contributes to an individual's consciousness of themselves, as this provides the opportunity for students to be aware of certain aspects of themselves and others through experience with diverse outlooks, beliefs, and customs of existing. In contrast, Vincent and Idahosa (2014) report that studies (e.g. Burton and Dowling 2005; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005) have shown that the perception of one's self, facilitates how students deal with the university environment and deal with complex situations at the university.

Peters and Lahman (2014) argue that in a progressively global world, students in higher education are exposed to diverse cultures through exposure in different environments, being members of multicultural families, or relating with people from varied cultural backgrounds. Thus one's perception of themselves and that of others are affected by these different group affiliations. Furthermore, Vincent and Idahosa (2014) state that an individual's self-concept is a contributory factor to their capability to learn and deal with learning situations. Thus pointing out that an emerging body of literature (Boughey, 2008; Pym & Kapp, 2011; Soudien 2009) has emphasized the significance of personal identity as well as the role it has in students' ability to engage successfully within the university context. Boughey (2008) studied how an individual's identity influences their ability to engage with the texts they come across at university and argued that the students' identities outside the university and their understanding of the outside context affect their learning ability. Pym and Kapp (2011), together with Soudien (2009), highlighted that students make reference to their previous experiences in creating new coherent positions when they enter university. Vincent and Idahosa (2014) point out that the inquiry of identity emerged as an important feature of the students' experience of achieving at the university. When individuals enter the university their cultural values and beliefs, and school experiences are confronted with the new identities imposed by other students and lecturers with diverse cultures. According to Boughey (2008), most students enter university with identities that in most cases are incongruent with the university's ideal typical student. In addition, Soudien (2009) highlights that peer relationships play a crucial role in students' identities by providing the space and comfort where they can 'try on' new identities.

Narsee (2004) argues that the notion of diversity and multiculturalism in the university context is a significantly growing discussion in the academic contexts. Furthermore, Narsee (2004) explains diversity to be related to culture, race, class and gender, while these also extend to other differences such as socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and religious background. Gorski (2000 as cited in Narsee, 2004) speaks of multicultural education which is an approach for transforming higher education, this means that the diverse cultures of students are recognised to establish a process of 'curriculum democratisation' by incorporating aspects of these cultures such as values, beliefs, and other aspects into the curriculum. In addition, Gurin et al. (2002 as cited in Narsee, 2004) highlights that a 'multicultural curriculum' as encompassing content, methodology, and societies illustrations of the content takes account of theories, facts, contributions and views of individuals with

differing race, gender, culture, language, social class, religious conviction, sexual orientation and political beliefs. This raises the question of whether the curriculum is contributory to students' negotiation of an identity.

Parkinson and Crouch (2011) found that students who are second language speakers and were from rural secondary schools which are poorly resourced and cannot afford varsity-related learning practices had more accommodating to make as compared to those from well-resourced secondary schools and are not second language speakers. A study from Archer (2008 as cited in Parkinson & Crouch, 2011) found that students take on new identities based on their study fields while also maintaining an identity as members of their respective communities. This study provides a clear demonstration of how retaining continuity between different identities can be beneficial for students. Parkinson and Crouch (2011) found that the notion of culture was frequently raised, which was understood by students as denoting beliefs (including religious beliefs), attitudes, values, cultural practices, and social relations. They found that students affiliated themselves both as members of their community with a shared identity and also as students paving a path for themselves in education and towards employment. Students perceived that discontinuity or change from one's culture is impossible.

### 2.3 Culture and identity

In their study, Jensen and Arnett (2012) suggest that in the current globalizing world, youth and emerging adults rarely grow up being familiar with only a single culture; rather they gradually are in contact with individuals from diverse cultures. Furthermore, as a result of globalization constructing a cultural identity in adolescence has come to be further complex. Cultural identity formation refers to the process of integrating an individual's different racial, cultural, and national cultural groups into either one identity or multiple identities. These involve the exploration of a sense of self through self-introspection of oneself and also looking at contextual variables such as culture and the process of creating one's own culture that aligns and influences one's sense of self (Peters & Lahman, 2014). In addition, Jensen and Arnett (2012) emphasise that a cultural identity comprises of the fundamental capacities, which are significant to the development of youth's personal identity. These fundamental capacities denote beliefs and values; affection (interpersonal interactions), and labour. Thus, the latter influence the youth's choices of attaining a distinct sense of identity in the culture where they reside and it also involves deciding which cultures they identify with. The process

in which an individual assumes significant values and customs of a single or multiple cultural groups is referred to as constructing a cultural identity (Jensen & Arnett, 2012).

Globalization is seen as impacting the formation of a cultural identity prominently during adolescence and early adulthood. According to Jensen and Arnett (2012) the period between adolescence and early adulthood in a lifespan with exposure to distinct cultural principles and conducts, that is a result of the navigation of numerous cultures, results in the cultural identity formation of youth being more diverse. Individuals exposed to diverse cultures may feel the need to fit in with the mainstream cultures, while also experiencing a feeling of similar pressure to identify with their original culture. Peters and Lahman (2014) describe culture as a context within which individuals conduct themselves according to values that are deemed acceptable, thus these values are assimilated in their everyday lives. Furthermore, explaining that cultural diversity in an educational setting is an aspect in considering how students behave and learn; also there may be tensions in the educational setting as a result of what students may be asked to do with regard to acculturation. Weedon (2004) argues that identity is at the core of contemporary discussions since globalization, an advance in social movements, as well as forms of identity politics among other factors.

Weeks (1990 as cited in Weedon, 2004) defined identity in terms of establishing a sense of belonging, and in the process identifying what makes individuals common and what differentiates them from others. The sense of belonging entails the relationships an individual forms with others and the complexities involved in the interactions. Identity depends on multiple factors, from gender, race, class, to the values we share with others or that are distinct from those of others that have a bearing on the sense of belonging. Weedon (2004) states that an additional way of understanding identity in a variety of contexts is hypothesising identity in terms of subjectivities that can account for an unconscious, irrational as well as emotional dimensions of identity. This subjectivity consists of a person's conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotions, and desires. In the post-modern period, identity and culture are considered fundamental topics. The contemporary world of globalisation and the social movements has put into question the taken-for-granted concepts of identity and belonging. Furthermore, in the modern era, people from diverse cultures have come into contact with each other; thus negotiating difference includes concerns of conflicting cultures and values as well as the impact these may have on identity.

According to Weedon (2004), postcolonial Western societies are encountered with conflicting notions of how individuals should live, in terms of gender norms, religious practices, and dress styles. Additionally, institutions such as schools, the health services, and social services are urged to address diversity with the interests of taking into account difference. Fay (1996) explains that most of the characteristics that define who we are derive from other individuals. Individuals use culture as a model on which they not only identify and compare themselves, but also as a tool for constructing own their identities. Fay (1996) describes the self as being social, as our shared and individual meanings are made possible by the presence of others. He gives the example of certain social practices and socially recognised forms of personal commitment are not possible without others, as others are crucial in forming our typical intentions and actions. In addition, characteristic to becoming a person is relatively the process of attaining a set of norms and ideals that define a person's role in an array of social relations. Weedon (2004) states that these identities may be socially, culturally as well as institutionally given, providing the example of gender wherein social and cultural practices construct discourses in which gendered subjectivity is established.

As part of being inserted within particular discourses, individuals constantly engage in forms of subjectivity and identity until the point in which these are experienced as part of life. Other identities are assumed through actively engaging in the processes of identification, thus providing an example of being part of a social club or religion, and may encompass a conscious counter-identification contrary to institutionally and socially given identities as well as the meanings and values they appear to characterise. An example that is provided is that of gay and lesbian forms of identity that constitute shared signs and symbols to show variance from heterosexual custom. In his work, Weedon (2004) points out that identity is made evident and understandable to others through cultural practices in addition to cultural signs and symbols. Thus understanding how the concepts of identity and subjectivity work in social settings governed by power relations of class, gender, sexual, racial and ethnic privilege and disadvantage requires grounding the theoretical basis by problematizing. According to Weedon (2004), distinct theoretical approaches to subjectivity and identity will produce different forms of analysis and of knowledge.

## 2.4 Narratives of identity

### The life story model of identity

The life story model of identity, proposed by Dan McAdams (1985, 1993, 1996), holds that identity is constructed in the form of a narrative, comprising of a setting, scenes, character, plan, and theme. Youth living in modern social worlds begin to recreate the personal histories, thus perceiving the present with the anticipation of the future in terms of an adopted and developing life stories, an integrative account of the self that offers contemporary life with some degree of psychosocial harmony and purpose (McAdams, 2001). Narratives are significant grounds of ways of understanding both the modern society and history (Weedon, 2004). Narratives also function as sources of social and cultural values. Additionally, they are significant to individuals' everyday interactions, however in narrating their experiences individuals attribute meaning to them and in the process adopt the position of knowing, seemingly autonomous subject (Weedon, 2004). Thus they come to be subjects through interpellation, by way of narrating their experiences to others and in the narratives of others. Individuals experience their sense of self differently, as a result of historical change and vary from one society to another.

The role an individual plays in society comes to be part of their identity, their perception of themselves, and how others perceive them (Billington, Hockey, & Strawbridge, 1998). These roles are culturally constructed, thus they are passed across generations. Seeing identities relative to forms of roles and relationships links them to social expectations. People are responsible for constructing to reconstructing roles, and however dominant social expectations are, people are constantly modifying the roles (Billington et al., 1998). As a result, each role is adopted according to a basic character and located in a set of culturally defined social relationships. The notion of role is, therefore, helpful in associating personal identities with the social life. In addition to narratives, bringing order, and meaning to a person’s everyday life; narratives also reflexively, provide structure to individuals’ sense of selfhood. In narrating life stories to others, individuals are also creating a narrative identity for themselves (Smith, 2008). These individuals may possess different narratives of their identities; the narratives may be associated with different social relationships or membership in different environments. The continuity of the different narratives leads to a sense of contained unity and firmness.

Narratives are constructed through social experiences and an individual’s view of those experiences. This means that narratives are co-constructed by the individual in cooperation with the cultural environment within which the individual's life is embedded and given

meaning. The life stories of an individual comprise of cultural beliefs and customs, as well as assumptions about gender, race, and class (McAdams, 2001). Narratives are understood within certain cultural structures, and they also distinguish and individual from other people. The difference is determined by their self-defining narratives, in ways that are not different to how they differ from each other on other conventional psychological characteristics such as traits, motives, intelligence, and so on. Through narratives, people make sense of their social lives and consider forms of living that are distinct from their own. Thus by empathising and identifying with the narratives or life stories of others, individuals initiate the exploration of new forms of identities (Weedon, 2004). Narratives can be affirming when the individual recognises shared values and experience, which are important to identity and identification.

McAdams (2001) highlights two ways in which identity is configured. First, integration of identity occurs in a variety of roles and relationships that illustrate a particular life in the here and now, a process referred to as a synchronic sense. Secondly, identity integrates in time, which is diachronically integrating. It is necessary for identity to integrate these types of contrasts so that even though components of the self are disconnected in time, they can be conveyed meaningfully and collectively into a temporally structured whole. McAdams (2001) refers to identity as relating to a certain aspect of an individual's understanding of themselves and a way in which the self can be organised or constructed. When an individual successfully engages synchronically and diachronically with integrations of a meaningful psychosocial role and it provides them with some degree of harmony and purpose, they engage in a successful process of constructing their identity. The life story model holds that identity is continually constructed across the adult years. Thus narratives advance and transform across the life course, reproducing different on-time and off-time events and changes. Culture plays a major role in the construction of identities, thus the synthesis of cultural accounts and discourses defines an individual's identity from one moment to the next. Every moment of discourse carries with it a different expression of the self (McAdams, 2001). Through these narratives individuals define themselves, in order to clarify the stability in their lives and convey this to others (Smith, 2008). The process of narrative identity construction is dynamic and takes place in a transitioning social and personal context. Thus personal narratives play a role in the formation and reconstruction of a personal identity.

In her study of academic achievement among black disadvantaged students, Dass-Brailsford (2005 as cited in Vincent & Idahosa, 2014) found that individuality (sense of agency), family

support and institutional support are major aspects affecting academic performance. With most students from underprivileged societal and educational backgrounds, these dynamics compound with their sense of an enforced negative identity in a setting where the majority are economically, socially and educationally privileged. However, Vincent and Idahosa (2014) found that students found ways to discard this enforced identity, thus developing an identity for themselves as rightfully belonging in the academy regardless of their sense of alienation from its dominant culture. The students who participated in their study entered university with identities which in most cases are different from the ideal university student. Furthermore, students who experienced alienation from the identity dominant in the university environment devoted themselves on extracurricular (such as, sports, peer relationships, school functions) features of university life where they established some degree of belonging.

### 2.5 The intersectionality of race, class, language and gender

The university climate provides students with a context in which the values and literacies in that environment have to be accommodated, which in turn influences their own sense of identity. This is because students negotiate their identities with others; the identity embodied by an individual requires others to recognise it. Biscombe (2014) conducted a study on the aspect of being ‘Othered' in spaces of learning in South Africa. She found that in most cases a student's identity in the university context may be altered by the dominant identities of others and thus affect the learning experience. Furthermore, she highlighted that dealing with this nuance of being ‘Othered’ is particularly a complex phenomenon within multicultural contexts of learning. The identity of an individual is altered in time and space in order to adapt and fit in with the current situation and social norms. In South Africa, this is seen as a result of the diversity in language, ethnicity, culture, race and socio-economic circumstances. The study found diversity to be a positive factor that would contribute to student’s learning experiences, as the different knowledge backgrounds and perspectives will contribute to the learning process.

Souden (2008) points out that while many studies on the disintegration of identity in South African Higher Education exist, there are a limited number of studies focusing on the ways in which identity formation takes place. Thus, bringing awareness to the different levels of education in South Africa commonly share the country's prejudiced history; as well as the factors of inequality in the social, political and economic contexts. The university setting,

however, presents itself as a specific and diverse environment. This difference is understood through acknowledging that contact between students from diverse cultural backgrounds who bring their own understanding in the setting has influential possibilities on others. Souden (2008) points to the work of Attewell and Lavin (2007) which provides descriptions of the ways in which enrolling in higher education potentially changes the lives of students. The experience of diversity in the primary or secondary levels is seen as experienced differently in higher education as it may intersect with other everyday experiences. The construction of a personal identity and some form of independence is seen as the most valued objectives in higher education process as compared to other aspects of an individual's social life. A particular instance of this is the idea of social class which is confined to individual achievement, and as such constructs how race in higher education is experienced in different ways.

Souden (2008) uses the work of Omi and Winant (1986) to explain this. In their work, it is evident how the intersection of race and other social dynamics continues to form different social structures in which race and its relative social aspects often change in dimension. Thus in this intersection of race and other social dynamics, one factor may exist in supremacy, obstruction or over-determination over the other. Furthermore, the subject of race and gender in higher education appears to be a complex one. In the post-apartheid South Africa gender, in relation to race, is seen as playing a role in defining the character of the academic setting as well as the forms of identity developed by students. Souden (2008) explains that in understanding the experiences of higher education as a whole, social class should be taken into consideration. Social class is seen as accounting higher education being selective in who is accepted or not and as such forms a more diverse racial demographical context. Similarly, a recent study from Singh and Bhana (2015) found race and class to continually play a role in student identity formation which also affects the social structures in the university setting. Furthermore, higher education contexts in the post-apartheid are seen as presenting students with a platform in which they can negotiate and form different ways of connecting with each other.

Irrespective of students forming social cohesion, race continually plays a role in student identity formation and this is a result of the intersection of social class, culture, historicity and political aspects (Singh & Bhana, 2015). Pattman (2007) found that in addressing student's identities in general, the aspect of race and sexuality was frequently raised in discussions not

particularly focused on these aspects. Furthermore, he explained that because the group of participants was diverse, it was particularly difficult to focus on student identities without addressing 'race'. This shows that the notion of gender, race, and culture are potentially intersecting in different spaces. In her study of first-year students' experiences of diversity, Wilson-Strydom (2014) found that students' experiences of transitioning to the tertiary level were tied to diversity, most students encountered diversity as conflicting and others found it to be contributory. These experiences are seen as different and contradictory, as students' explanations of diversity in the university varied significantly. Similar to a previous study from Narsee (2004), Wilson-Strydom (2014) found that the issue of race difference and intergroup contact were highlighted as the most conflicting experiences of diversity. The work on diversity provides a clear picture of the intersectionalities characteristic of the university context, such as differences in belief systems, race, class, and gender. Pattman (2007) states that there is an overlap between students' constructions and experiences of 'race' as a marker of identity, peer relationships or socialisation, and student culture on campus; and their positioning in a post-apartheid South Africa as represented by the concept of a 'rainbow nation' in which there is no longer racial segregation.

In Wilson-Strydom's (2014) study the intersectionality of race and language became apparent as students expressed their experiences of diversity in relation to language. The students found it difficult to adapt in a diverse environment in which individuals come with their own cultural difference in terms of language and practices. In addition, the experiences of students in this study were not only in relation to students, in some instances it was experienced with lecturers who were different from them and also the university curriculum in which students encounter diverse ideas and literacies. To understand the difficulties of students' transitioning to a more diverse university context, Wilson-Strydom's (2014) study included understanding experiences of diversity from secondary school learners and comparing it to that of students entering university, she found that the reasons students experienced diversity as complex was a result of prior experiences in secondary level in which they had little opportunity to interact with individuals different from them. The complexity of diversity is further compounded by limitations of socially embedded beliefs associated with language, culture, and socio-economic background which are evident from the differences in schools attended by students. Thus students enter university with pre-existing constraints of ignorance and socially embedded expectations which explain students' negative experiences of diversity when entering university.

## 2.6 Parental involvement and religion in identity development

Religion is seen as playing a major role in student's resilience and success in the academic setting. Barret (2010) identified individual characteristics, parental involvement, peer relations, the environment and socialisation experiences as affecting an individual's academic performance. From a young age, children are socialised towards a specific religious belief system; this positioning influences an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviours in the context of that particular religious system and can serve as influencing behaviour in other contexts outside the family, such as educational settings. Sharma and Guest (2013) found that for some students, being at university led to them questioning the religions they have affiliated with. Because of the diverse religious groups in the university setting, students are often confronted with negotiating their existing religious beliefs and practices. Furthermore, Sharma and Guest (2013) found that in most cases the university curriculum led to students re-evaluating their religious views, which creates personal conflict and a disruption in their student experience. For most students, religious faith grows stronger when they enter university and others become more open to other religious views. Studies show that students hold multiple identities (religious, academic, cultural, social) and these identities intersect in the diverse context of the university environment. Sharma and Guest (2013) state that pre-existing religious beliefs and practices provide students in a diverse and multicultural university with a sense of familiarity in which they are able to establish relationships with other students who affiliate with that same religion. Furthermore, they found that the religious involvement of students serves as a means of coping with the diversity and novelty encountered in university life. The university context is identified as a space in which students not only strive for academic attainment, the beginning of varsity leads to students searching for places they assimilate with. It is composed of multiple activities associated with academic, leisure and domestic life.

Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman (2010) describe religious involvement as offering a diverse sacred worldview and continual identification, which is different from association with other social groups. Thus, this may be a clear indication of the continuity and influence of religion on students in the university context. Religion is seen as not static but carried with the individual in different social spaces, and as such, religion builds a sense of continuity between the lives of students at home and in the university. In order to adapt to the changes in identities and the environment, students employ existing religious resources, such as religious

beliefs or practices, to cope with the transition. However, for others, the resulting transition to independence, leads to them dissociating from any form of existing religious practices. Sharma and Guest (2013) highlight that certain religious groups in the university have precise criteria for those who affiliate with it, which can be seen as not being exclusive of those who are foreign such practices, and as such this highlights the significance of group dynamics in developing a sense of identity. Because of the university setting results in identity negotiation, religion becomes more salient to students, as it provides a space in which they can maintain a familiar sense of identity and offers a sense of belonging. Student' religious involvement, which is in most cases fostered within the family contexts, helps position them in the social and religious spaces existing in the university environment, as they negotiate a sense of who they are and who they want to be.

### 2.7 Habitus and the politics of belonging

Yuval-Davis (2006) describes belonging to be symbolic of an emotional attachment and feeling ‘at home'. She discusses that social psychology research has a focus on the need for individuals to conform to specific social groups that match their preferences and those that they belong to, thus their interpersonal relationships are impacted by their affiliation with particular groups. Yuval-Davis (2006) states that Manuael Castells (1998) maintains that the modern society has changed to a society for networking in which effective belonging has moved from the civil societies of nations and states into reconstructed defensive identity societies. As part of the forms of capital that have a bearing on individual development, Bourdieu identified social capital (which is constituted by social connections or duties) and the cultural capital (which are personified and adopted by individuals). Edgerton and Roberts (2014) utilise Bourdieu’s discussion of habitus in understanding the forms of cultural capital and its practices. Habitus is seen as originating from family upbringing and is evident in the positioning of individuals in the social structures. Habitus is defined as the learned or internalized traits that are a result of an individual’s family upbringing which is oriented towards the social location.

The intersectionality between habitus and belonging is displayed in the preference of student's affiliation with social structures that are a match to their pre-existing identification with particular social networks in the diverse university context. Belonging is observed as an act of self-identification or identification by others. Individuals can identify solely with a single identity category; however, the social locations they form part of are constructed along

multiple axes of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006). A good instance is the university environment, in which differences in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, and religion exist, and thus such these social division intersect and constitute each other.

According to Edgerton and Roberts (2014), Bourdieu referred to habitus as the 'socialized subjectivity' or subjectivity conditioned by structural conditions, giving the instance of parts of society occupying the same space will share similar habitus. Habitus plays a role in setting restrictions to an individual's sense of agency and possibility; it involves perceptual schemes of what is morally acceptable given the individual's positioning in a stratified society (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Yuval-Davis (2006) discusses that emotions and perceptions continue to be redefined as an individual moves space and time, thus the individual self-concept and identities become more dominant in situations that warrant identity negotiation. The manner in which an individual orients themselves in particular social locations stem from the interrelation of their habitus and the cultural capital dominant in such space. Thus an individual's behavioural practices are a result of their habitus and cultural capital co-operating in a particular social location (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014).

Social structures intersect and exist at different levels, with smaller social structures, such as family, formed in larger social structures, such as within educational contexts. The dispositions of habitus are evident in the behavioural patterns of an individual and are conveyed in language, nonverbal communication, lifestyle, values, individual views, and modes of reasoning. The constructions of belonging are evident in repetitive practices relating to both cultural and social spaces, thus associating individual and collective conduct (Yuval-Davis, 2006). These practices are essential for the construction of identity narratives and attachment. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) highlight that habitus has been critiqued for being very deterministic paradigm that it confines individual agency, improvement, and transformation. Thus providing the instance that due to the differences in socioeconomic structures, individuals from disadvantaged social structures are socialized into dispositions that influence their perceptual structures and behaviours in relation to that. Habitus is not seen as a fixed construct, thus depending on the extent of an individual's response to different experiences and situations its properties are subject to change.

## 2.8 Identity in Interpersonal Relationships

Fay (1996) explains that forming an identity occurs in the process of relating one's self to others, thus being aware of the feedback they receive from others and the response to them on this basis. For instance, individuals engage in the cycle of awareness- response- self-awareness. This sort of awareness and response affects the individual's emotions, rational and motivations. Thus in this way, our identities derive from associations we establish with other people. Therefore, identity formation in individuals is relatively a process of self-differentiation which involves distinguishing one's self from others, and connecting to and identifying with others. According to Meeus et al. (2002) interpersonal relationships are seen to be significant social contexts for youth identity formation. Youth acquire knowledge of their self-concept and the role they play in the social setting through identity exploration in numerous collective environments. Through establishing their associations with others, individuals concurrently engage in the development of identity. The identity control model provides a beneficial method evaluating the ways in which regular communications among individuals and significant others generate active identity progressions which motivate identity formation (Meeus et al., 2002). According to this theory, identity is developed through daily interactions where youth obtain social feedback that is significant to the process of identity development. Thus the individual interprets the feedback obtained to form self-awareness of how others identify them and their behaviour and also comparing the feedback with one's present account of themselves or individual beliefs.

Congruent social feedback of one's individual beliefs and strengthens the identity. Alternatively, feedback that is incongruent can prospectively disrupt that individual belief and as a result the individual may endorse behaviour that is aimed at restoring consistency in an individual's personal self-description and social feedback. Additionally, this may lead to the individual modifying their individual beliefs to associate with the social feedback. Meeus et al. (2002) explains that the identity preservation and modification may promote mutually both healthy and unhealthy development. They argue that studies should seek to identify how social relationships encourage personal identity formation. Furthermore, emphasising that the majority of researches that focused on personal identity formation have mainly employed quantitative designs which may not clarify particular complexities and dynamics of identity formation which are better captured in qualitative studies.

## 2.9 Research questions

1. How do students experience different cultural values and beliefs as part of their personal identity negotiation in the university campus and in the curriculum?
2. How do students perceive and negotiate student culture in the university campus as part of negotiating personal identity?
3. How do students negotiate constructing their personal identity in relation to their childhood experience and parental involvement in negotiating an identity?

# CHAPTER 3
# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research

The research adopted a qualitative approach through the application of qualitative techniques for the purpose of exploring the role of multiculturalism in the personal identity development. Maree (2007) explains that qualitative research is centred on the ways in which individuals and collective groups interpret and understand the social world in addition to constructing meaning based on their experiences. Furthermore, its focus is to examine and understand individuals from their own social and cultural backgrounds, that also have a bearing on their behavioural tendencies aimed at the meaning and understanding they attribute to these contexts. This approach was applied to assist the researcher in getting insight into the matter under study from the participants' perspective. The qualitative approach allows for the exploration of realistic occurrences and phenomena and places these occurrences into perspective. This type of approach was appropriate for the research as the researcher was interested in students' experiences of multiculturalism as influential in their personal identity development.

### 3.1.1 Research design

The design implemented in the proposed study was an interpretive research design. Babbie and Mouton (2001) highlight that the design of a study provides an outline of the research process that the researcher will follow in conducting the study. This research design is suitable for the study because it enabled the researcher to generate different insights into and advance knowledge of the role of multiculturalism in the personal identity formation. Furthermore, this type of design advocates that individuals are the driving force of the meanings they attribute in making sense of the social world, thus they continually engage in the interpretation, generation of meaning, description, and rationalisation of daily actions. Terre Blanche, Durkheim, and Kelly (2006) emphasise that interpretive research rests on providing direct explanations, as well as providing a description of the interpretation and understanding of an individual. The implementation of this kind of design allowed the researcher to establish the meaning of the data that was generated in the context of the individual participant's precise communicative meanings. The design was advantageous in that it allowed the researcher to function as the main tool for both collecting and analysing

the gathered information. This type of design allowed for the integration of meanings and experiences that individuals attach to the social environment.

Through qualitative research, researchers are able to gain insights into the worlds and experiences of individuals from their own context. Interpretive research is based on the premise that knowledge about a certain phenomenon is gained through individuals' social structures such as language, consciousness, and shared experience. This type of design is aimed at producing an understanding of the social context of a certain phenomenon and the way in which this phenomenon is influenced or may influence the social context (Rowlands, 2005). It is particularly suitable for the current study in that the focus of this research was on understanding how different cultural beliefs and values influence the personal identity of students and how these are negotiated in the university campus. The interpretive research considers the individual's experience of the social world as subjective and that it is best understood from the interpretations and meanings of the individual rather than the objective assumptions of the researcher. Human beings are seen as being actively engaged in trying to make sense of their experiences of the world through continuously interpreting, creating and giving meaning to these experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### 3.2 Exclusion and inclusion criteria of the study

Participants suitable for the study were currently enrolled university students in the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of the Witwatersrand. The student's ages ranged from 18 to 25 years of age as this is the point when some individual are still undergoing an identity change. The age groups are suitable as these individuals are knowledgeable as well as have had the chance to experience the university, thus they are suitable for providing an answer to the research questions. Taking into account the criteria of participants suitable for answering the research questions, students who did not meet the requirements of the criteria were not included in the study.

### 3.3 Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling method to select and recruit possible participants at the University of the Witwatersrand. Maree (2007) describes purposive sampling as a method in which the researcher chooses to select individuals to participate in the study based on the individuals defining features so that they are suitable individuals to provide the relevant

information for the proposed study. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select individuals who functioned as adequate sources of information to provide answers to the research questions. The researcher purposely selected those who possess features that make them characteristic of the population. By purposely selecting participants the research used snow balling as a way of obtaining the number of participants required in the study. The snow-balling included searching for potential participants using information from other students within the university who are familiar with students from the Faculty of Humanities, currently enrolled in their second year at the University of the Witwatersrand. Saturation was determined by reflecting on the interviews that were conducted to ensure that the research questions were answered and more information was obtained. Participants were sampled till saturation was reached. The sample consisted of seven students who are currently in their second year as they have had an experience of the university environment and for this purpose they are suitable. The sample size consisted of two men students and five women students from different 'cultural' backgrounds.

### 3.4 Procedures and Instruments

The data collection method that was employed in generating data on how university students view and experience multicultural experiences on their personal identity formation is semi-structured interviews, thus aiming to add to current literature and build on new knowledge. De Vos et al. (2011) explain that semi-structured interviews are utilised to gain detailed descriptions of an individual's perceptions of a certain phenomenon. The semi-structured interviewing data collection method is suitable for the study as it allows the individual participants to express themselves without restrictions of the structure of the interview by using a set of pre-set questions about the subject matter. The research study employed an interview guide as a guide for probing and prompting during the course of the interviews. Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005) describe an interview guide as a list that contains themes and aspects of these themes which are a component of the phenomena studied that guide the interviewer in the interview process. The researcher asked open-ended questions as they permitted participants to express their views without any restriction and allowed the researcher to probe further to generate more understanding. The interview guide was not be used as a dictator in the interviews, rather as a guide for the researcher to probe for additional responses; be it that the participants did not do so themselves. Interviews were based on the premise of individual views or accounts of a particular phenomenon. This type of data collection method provides a flexible platform that enables the researchers to follow up on an

interesting aspect of the accounts that participants make and probe further to gain a more clear and descriptive picture of such an account (De Vos et al., 2011). During the interviews, the researcher assumed the role of a passive interviewer for the participants to be more comfortable during the discussion and for them to define how the interview discussion proceeded rather than confining the interview session to a structure of asking questions and recording answers. In order to establish rapport during the interviews, the interviewer began by introducing the research study and its purpose so that participants were informed of the nature of the research or interview questions.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Terre Blanche, Durkheim, and Kelly (2006) describe the data analysis process as involving the interpretation and elaboration of the generated data constantly as a way of breaking it down and constructing its meaning in the process. The method of analysis that was employed to analyse the data gathered is thematic analysis. The specific thematic analysis method employed was interpretative phenomenological analysis, in which the focus was on understanding how students make sense of the experience regarding being in contact with other students from diverse backgrounds. Larkin and Thompson (2012) wrote that in order to conduct an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, it is necessary for the researcher to collect comprehensive and insightful accounts of individuals, for the purpose of capturing the narrative experiences of participants. This type of method allows for the interpretation of these detailed accounts of individual experiences.

The researcher aimed to capture the meanings students attach to their experiences within the university campus, and thus giving voice of students' experiences of a multicultural university and making sense of these experiences through offering an interpretation that is grounded on the accounts made by students. Braun and Clarke (2012) define thematic analysis as a method that is systematically used to identify and organise themes in the data and to determine patterns of meaning across data. They explained that there may be multiple patterns of themes in a set of data; however, the purpose of using thematic analysis is to identify those that are relevant to the focus of the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2012) state that the process of analysis provides an answer to a question, thus in research it is only during data analysis that an answer to a specific question becomes apparent. Alhojailan (2012) states that thematic analysis is appropriate in studies that aim to understand the influence of a certain variable on the current practices or experiences of individuals. This

method was suitable for analysis of the findings as the study aimed to understand how students experience the diverse cultural values and beliefs in the university context as influencing their personal identity.

The flexibility in relation to how thematic analysis is used allows for potentially organised and detailed description of accounts of data. The researcher aimed to give detailed accounts individual experiences, meanings, as well as the reality of the participants as part of the ways in which broader social context impinges on the meanings they make of that experience. In the thematic analysis, the researcher may choose to employ either an inductive or a deductive approach in the analysis process (Alhojailan, 2012). In an inductive approach the researcher focuses on the content of the data and thus the themes that are generated are derived from the content of the data itself. In contrast, employing a deductive approach means the researcher approaches the data set with pre-existing concepts or ideas that can be used in coding and interpreting the data. Thus the themes are not directly linked to the content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). As it was likely to be impossible to employ only an inductive approach, the researcher approached the data using both the deductive and inductive approach by using extensive generalisations and theories to ensure that the themes generated were directly linked to the data set and also looking at themes that come from the data itself. Thus a template analysis was employed in organising and analysing the data gathered. By ensuring that the themes are a result of the data set, the quality of the data and the voice of the participants were not lost during the process of analysis and interpretation. This type of method allowed for making rich and detailed descriptions of complex data, which were used to gain more insight and discover the relationship in what participants are saying. Braun and Clark (2006) offer phases of employing thematic analysis that guide the researcher on how to go about analysing the data. The thematic analysis steps that guided the researcher in the analysis process are described below:

**Step 1: Familiarising yourself with your data**

Familiarisation involves immersing one's self with the data gathered to the point wherein one is familiar with the complexity and extensiveness of the content. The researcher engaged in immersion through active recurrent analysis of the data while evaluating for meanings and patterns in the data. Immersion in the data allowed the researcher to identify the system of interpretation that supports the data. However, since the researcher was working with verbal data that was audio recorded in interviews, the data was transcribed in order to conduct the

thematic analysis. During this process reading and re-reading the textual data while highlighting the parts that are of interest is of utmost importance. Making notes of the data allows for approaching the content of the data critically and analytically while thinking about what the data means. This involves looking at the sense that participants make of their experience and how they reveal the contexts of their environment, rather than just identifying the surface meaning of the data. The focus of this phase is on becoming familiar with the content of the data while making note of the potential aspects of it that may be of relevance to the research question. The note-taking during this process functions as a memory aid for coding and analysis

**Step 2: Generating initial codes**

Braun and Clark (2006) describe coding as identifying elements of the data that appear interesting to the analyst for the purpose of assessing the information in a meaningful way with regard to the phenomenon studied. The researcher used a marker to highlight fragments of the text and writing notes on the texts to indicate potential patterns. During this process, the research was focusing on labelling the data using codes that are relevant to the research question. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that it is possible to do coding at either the semantic or latent level of meaning. As such codes provide a summary of the content of the data, the meanings participants hold, and also the interpretation of the data content. Through these codes, the meaning that underlies the data content can be identified. Some codes are seen as reflecting the meanings that participants make and others are considered to reflect the researcher's conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Coding means that labelling aspects of the data that the researcher comes across in the data that is potentially relevant to the research question.

**Step 3: Searching for themes**

This step involves organising the codes into possible themes in addition to comparing altogether the significant coded text extracts in the identified themes. The researcher worked with searching themes by evaluating the text and established what categorising principles rationally underlie the material. The researcher evaluated the relationship between the codes and themes to identify overarching themes and subthemes under each. During this process the researcher shifts from codes to themes that are important in capturing the meaning of the data and are relevant to the research question. In most cases, the themes are seen as emerging from the data, which would require the researcher to actively engage with the data during analysis

to generate the themes, using an inductive approach. At this stage, the researcher's focus was on constructing the raw material into an analysis that allows for identifications of the similarities and overlaps between the codes. Generating themes means bringing together that codes that seem to share a common feature to reflect and describe a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data. In addition, in this phase, it is also a good time to begin examining the relationship between themes and how they fit together in telling a story about the data.

**Step 4: Reviewing themes**

In this phase, the researcher engaged in the refinement of the themes and identified themes that are coherent patterns and those that are not relevant or do not fit there. The researcher evaluated the validity of the identified themes in relative to the data set to assess whether it reproduces the meanings that are apparent in the entire data set. During this process the researcher reviews the developing themes in relation to the data codes and the data set, to check for quality and verification. In reviewing the themes in relation to the data, this is for the purpose of determining whether the themes generated meaningfully capture the entire data set while reworking or discarding themes that are not relevant to the research question.

**Step 5: Defining and naming themes**

This phase involves the final refinements of the themes. The researcher defines and refines the themes to be presented in analysis. Furthermore identifying the essence that each theme represents, and determining the aspects of the data that each theme captures. This will be done by providing a detailed analysis of each individual theme. Defining a theme means identifying what is unique and specific to that particular theme. During this phase, the researcher defined the focus and purpose of a theme and assessed whether the theme builds on a previous theme while producing coherence in telling a story about the data. This phase involves thorough analytic work; this is done by critically presenting interpretations and conclusions from the analysis that provides detailed accounts of the data. The researcher then focused on interpreting the data and presenting its connection to the research questions and evidence from other scholarly work that has been done in the field.

**Step 6: Producing the report**

This phase entails the ultimate analysis and report writing. This is for the purpose of presenting the brief, non-repetitive, logical and interesting interpretation of the story the data tells in a manner which reveals the quality and legitimacy of the analyst. The report produced

offers adequate confirmation of the themes in the text to validate the occurrence of the theme. The purpose of producing a report is to provide a detailed story about the data based on the researcher's analysis. The final report should ensure that the themes are presented in a logical and meaningful manner that connects them in a way that the themes build on previous themes to tell a coherent story about the data.

## 3.6 Ethical Considerations

### 3.6.1 Informed consent

De Vos et al. (2011) describes obtaining informed consent as presenting the participant with self-determination and the opportunity to decide whether to be involved in the research study on the premise of having been provided with accurate and complete information about the research project. In consideration of providing the accurate and complete information about the research project, this means that participants were not provided with information that is misleading or inaccurate that may have coerced them into involuntarily participating in the study. All details concerning the research project were not falsified or misrepresented to potential participants and important information was not withheld from participants as well. The researcher followed and conformed to ethical guidelines throughout the research process. The participation of individuals in the research process should be voluntary, considering that they have been given the adequate and relevant information about the purpose and process that will occur in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This is for the purpose of ensuring that the individuals selected to participate are legally and psychologically capable of consenting. In ensuring this, the researcher initially provided an information sheet detailing the purpose and procedures that were undertaken in the course of the study and obtained the written informed consent from the individuals who participated in the study. The informed consent for both participation (Appendix C) and audio recording (Appendix D) of the interviews was obtained from participants. The information sheet containing all the relevant information concerning the study is included in Appendix B, which highlights the purposes of the study and the procedures involved in the study, was provided to participants read and ask for clarity and additional information were necessary before volunteering to participate.

### 3.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

To ensure confidentiality and privacy the information gathered in the course of the research study was only accessible to the researcher and her supervisor, thus the research findings are presented in a confidential manner with the aim of protecting the identity of participants.

Their identifying personal details were not presented to ensure their anonymity. To ensure that the names of participants are not included in the presentation of the findings, pseudonyms were used to refer to participants. The results are presented in a private and confidential manner, which means the details that may identify participants are not presented to the readers.

### 3.6.3 Beneficence /Protection of participants from harm

Taking into account that the research topic may be of a sensitive nature, to avoid causing any discomfort or emotional harm, potential participants were provided with an information sheet detailing the procedures that will unfold in the research project. The purpose of including the information sheet was to ensure that by voluntarily choosing to participate in the study, participants have been thoroughly informed beforehand about the purposes of the study. Participants were provided with details for further professional assistance from which they can consult with and seek the assistance of dealing with negative outcomes arises during the research project. Taking into account also issues that existed prior to participation in the research project that emerges during the course of the study. Because some of the information generated during the study may be of a sensitive and personal nature and may be revealed in confidence to the researcher, ensuring the anonymity of participants was accounted for, and ensuring that no harm occurred as a result of disclosing the personal details of participants.

### 3.6.4 Protecting the rights of the institution involved

As the participants of the study are University students, a letter of permission directed to the Registrar of the university was sent in order to obtain the permission to conduct the research project (see attached on Appendix E). All adequate information was provided to participants using language that is comprehensible in order to obtain their appropriate written informed consent. Prior to the interview, the researcher informed participants of what the research purports to do, thus allowing them the opportunity to ask questions related to the study for further information.

## 3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness means that the quality of the work presented is authentic and credible by representing explicitly the perspectives of the research participants. In qualitative research, scholars are obligated to ensure trustworthiness during the period of the research project.

Cope (2014) employs four criteria presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to illustrate how this can be achieved: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

### 3.6.1 Credibility

This term refers to the degree of truth in the data presented based on what participants have said and the interpretation and representation of this by the researcher (Cope, 2014). To ensure credibility the interpretations of the data must be accurate and representative of the descriptions made by the participants themselves (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). This means that the data that is presented is not the result of the researcher's bias and influence. To ensure credibility the researcher attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible during the interviews to avoid the emergence of discomfort in the participant that may influence their responses. The researcher was aware of her own personal experiences or prior knowledge that may result in bias when engaging with data analysis or during the collection of the data. For the credibility of the data collected an interview schedule was utilised to ensure that the information gathered directly addresses the research questions. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the results were presented with reference to findings from previous studies by highlighting the similarities and differences in the research findings.

### 3.6.2 Dependability

Dependability means that the results of the study are replicable in other studies of a similar nature (Cope, 2014). In order to promote dependability, the procedures and processes undertaken in the study are highlighted in detail demonstrating the events that occurred during the research project, which also allows for future research to replicate the findings of the study. The procedures undertaken in the study include research approach (which was qualitative in nature); the research design, the data collecting and analysis method are highlighted in the methodology section for reference. The interview schedule was used as a guide during the interview sessions to allow for the participants to freely express their views and experiences. The interview sessions were audiotaped with the permission of the participants and the audio recording were transcribed to allow for analysis of the recorded data. Providing a detailed description of the methods provides readers with a clear picture of the research practices that were followed and lead to an understanding of the methods and their effectiveness.

### 3.6.3 Confirmability

Confirmability denotes that the researcher is able to show that the data represented is directly related to the responses of the participants and not the researcher's own biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014). This can be done by providing a detailed description of how interpretations and conclusions were reached, and demonstrating that the findings have been derived from the data. An alternative way of demonstrating this is by providing direct quotes from participants that illustrate a developing theme. To ensure confirmability, the findings are presented in a way that demonstrates that there is a connection between the data and the conclusions that are made. This was done by providing participant quotes in relation to the interpretation of the meaning of what was stated. Member checking was done through requesting feedback from participants, pertaining to their experiences with the research process and general additions or suggestions that they may have.

### 3.6.4 Transferability

This term means that the findings of the research allow for the application of the conclusions to other contexts (Cope, 2014). The results of a study are considered to be transferable if individuals outside the study or the audience readers are able to relate the results of the study to their own experience. Transferability is possible when the researcher has provided detailed descriptions of the findings which will allow the readers to understand how these findings are applicable to other contexts (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). As different universities have tended to become more diverse over the years, comprising of students and staff members who come with different values and beliefs, the results of this study may be transferable to other university settings or to the members of that particular institution. Furthermore, the reported experiences of the participants may be applicable to the experience of other students who come into contact with different people with different cultural values and beliefs from their own.

## 3.8 Reflexivity

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) describe reflexivity as the process in which the researcher constantly reflects on their personal beliefs and insights that could possibly have an impact on the research study, as well as the possibility of affecting the data collection and analysis process. In the process of reflexivity, the researcher acknowledged that her own personal values and beliefs, in terms of the ways of living she identifies with in addition to being a student in a diverse university and with her own religious beliefs, may be a relevant factor in

the study and is important for striving for objectivity and neutrality. This allowed for the reflection of possible preconceptions with regard to the study. Though the researcher has some understanding of identity development, probing further about the role of multicultural issues as part of the personal identity development of university students consolidates and extends that knowledge. The researcher acknowledges that she may have had prospects of what data to generate from the participants during the interview sessions and data analysis phase, thus through reflexivity, the researcher was aware of any possible preconceptions. This process allowed for objectivity and less researcher influence in the course of data collection and analysis. Lietz and Zayas (2010) state that in order to ensure the credibility of the data, the researchers in qualitative studies need to manage bias and this is done through being reflexive. Through reflexivity, the researcher was able to build self-awareness with regard to her own influence in the research project. This means that the researcher was willing to acknowledge that her actions and decisions may unavoidably have an influence on the meaning and context investigated. This process of reflecting on the researcher's standpoint is particularly important during the analysis process. The process of reflexivity occurs at different points in time during the research study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). The points at which reflexivity occurred was during the data collection and data analysis process, as well as during the presentation of the results to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the findings presented. It enhances the quality of trustworthiness and credibility of the research data.

### 3.9 Dissemination of Research Findings

The results of the research study can be made available to participants if they so desire. The research findings could be published in a Journal.

### 3.10 Limitations of the study

The researcher acknowledges that identity is not constant, thus is it always changing with the settings an individual is exposed to. In addition, taking into account that other individuals may be in the process of identity development. The researcher is aware of the potential influence she may exhibit in the course of the interview; with the likelihood that it may influence the responses of participants. Because interviews take extensive time the participants to be interviewed may be limited in numbers.

# CHAPTER 4
# RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

## 4.1 INDIVIDUAL SELF-CONCEPT

The conclusion made by Vincent and Idahosa (2014) that self-concept is found to be contributory to how students manage and deal with particular circumstances at university, which also affects their academic success, are in line with the findings of this study. In order to fully understand each student from their own point of view, each student was asked to describe how they perceived themselves. The results of the current study show that each student's self-concept is positive and this view is congruent with their sense of belonging within the university environment. Thus, their adjustment to the more diverse university is achieved without difficulty or complexity. Adams et al, (2012) description of identity as involving the intersectionality of various internal, social, and contextual mechanisms which are involved in defining the individual as a complete being, is evident in the students' perceptions of themselves as their descriptions detail the connections between the individual self and the society as merged entities. The students perceived themselves in relation to their roles as individuals in society and their internal experience of their being. This is evident in the descriptions made by participants:

Participant 1 (Female): *"I see myself as an outspoken person, as a person who likes having fun. I am ambitious and I have things I want to achieve in life. I see myself as a person who can interact with different people. I am a God fearing person and as a unique being in life"*

Participant 2 (Female): *"I am kind of a serious person, I love studying and I am just attracted to wisdom and knowledge. So I cannot separate myself from my studies in the sense that when I see myself I see an intellect, I see an argumentative person and an enthusiastic person about knowledge"*

Participant 3 (Male): *"well I see myself as this simple person, is easy to get along with and always want to be happy, and just be who he is"*

Participant 4 (Female): *"I see myself as a selfless young woman who doesn't let challenges derail her from achieving her goals and that is because I believe nothing worthy comes easy"*

Participant 5 (Female): *"I feel like I have grown up like personally, I have grown up. The way I perceive things now is changing, I see things differently as compared to when I was still in high school, we did not take things seriously, we were just academically oriented, by the time you are here at varsity, you tend to realize that not everything is about academics only. I think the way I perceive things has changed"*

Participant 6 (Male): *"I'd say I am bubbly, open minded, very expressive and approachable. I am just a chilled person I guess"*

Participant 7 (Female): *"How I see myself is something that kind of scares me for some reason, but I see myself as a force to be reckoned with being that because I aspire to be a successful legal practitioner, probably in the family law field or maybe in the criminal field, but then again I would describe myself as a powerful introvert, hard worker, intelligent and beautiful"*

The self-descriptions of students in this study extend Bamberg's (2011) view of the description of an identity as relying on the self-representations of individuals, which are in the form of perceptual constructions about one's self with regard to what they identify with and how others identify them. Students not only strive towards academic attainment in the university context, it is a space in which first entering students search for places which they can identify with and establish a sense of belonging, thus the university environment is composed of multiple activities associated with academic, leisure and domestic life. These aspects of the university environment were highlighted by the students interviewed in this study. The self-concept of students is seen as playing a major role in their adapting and dealing with the diverse setting of higher education, which comprises of other dominant identities that are different from theirs. Their self-concept defines who they are and as such constructs an identity in the university environment.

## 4.2 STUDENT IDENTITIES

Yuval-Davis (2006) discusses that individuals can identify solely with a single identity category, however, the social locations they form part are constructed along multiple axes of difference, which explains the multiple student identities identified in this study, with students identifying with different social structures on campus and outside the university. Similar to the findings of Sharma and Guest (2013) and Yuval-Davis (2006) that students possess multiple identities (religious, academic, cultural, social), the results of this study show that students identify with different social structures, with each upholding an identity in the diverse context of the university environment. To explain the process in which individuals maintain multiple identities, Weedon (2004) writes that additional identities are adopted through actively engaging in the processes of identification in different social structures, thus students form counter-identification contrary to institutionally and socially given identities as well as the meanings and values they appear to characterise. This explains how students in the current study affiliate with different structures within the university and establish a sense of belonging in that particular social group. This finding highlights the intersectionalities inherent in student identities, as these different identifications continually influence the other. Individuals come to university with pre-existing social or interpersonal relationships, thus when students move in time and space they form attachments in the social structures they affiliate with at that particular time. The results of the study show that students possess multiple identities upon entering the university environment, with some identities formed within time spent in the university campus. These identifications are found to intersect in the university environment, as students find themselves in the university campus, they form different attachments in the diverse fields of campus life. These identities exist in spaces such as in the lecture halls, on the university residences and in the social structures inherent on campus (e.g. religious and social clubs). The multiple student identities are highlighted by the work of Vincent and Idahosa (2014), stating that students entering university possess identity constructions that pre-exist from their social structures, such as the incentive to learn, cultural values, beliefs and university experiences, which are in turn confronted with the diverse identities of other students in the environment.

### 4.2.1 Academic identity

Archer's (2008 as cited in Parkinson & Crouch, 2011) finding that students take on new identities based on their study fields while also maintaining an identity as members of their respective communities, is consistent with the findings in this study as students appeared to

maintain continuity between different identities within the university context. The majority of the participants highlighted their role as students in an academic environment, with the purpose of fulfilling their life goals. In the learning process and striving towards academic success, students form for themselves an intellectual identity. This is evident from the statement made by Participant 2 (Female):

> *"When you come to university, you get exposed to a lot of things and you get to know a lot more. and for me high school was just cram and pass then get out of there, now university requires me to put myself and integrate my work with myself and with my environment, so it has changed a lot in how see myself"*

Students not only form an academic identity, however, it also intersects with their personal identity and social identities. These identifications co-exist in the university setting, with each dominating in social structures that are directly associated with such an identification.

### 4.2.2 Social identity

The continuity of cultural and religious involvement brings with it a pre-determined social identity for students, as they continually identify with the social groups or structures that match their preferences and their own self-concepts. Pym and Kapp (2011), together with Soudien (2009), found that students make reference to their previous experiences in creating new coherent positions when they enter university. Similarly, students in the current study demonstrated how previous experience can be incorporated within current social spaces, to deal with and manage circumstances in the university setting. Excerpts from Participant 2 and Participant 6 illustrate how the social identity is established:

Participant 2 (Female): *"well I think because am from a family of six and I am the second born, when you are in that environment where you are six you get introduced in terms of numbers, they forget your name, so you have to have your distinct character and stand by it so that when they know that this is number two, they know that number two is that one who does this and that. So they don't just assimilate your character to your sibling's characters"*

Participant 6 (Male): *"I think being a firstborn holds a lot of weight in being the person that I am right now and in the way that I perceive life because being a first born you cannot get away with doing much or blaming it on someone else. The way I perceive things I*

*am more responsible and it's because of the way I grew up, I had younger brothers who were like a mess, so they still had the options for shifting blames. My childhood, It really played a big role in being the type of a person I am"*

Students leave home with dispositions that define the family and social backgrounds they form part of, these dispositions are displayed in their behavioural repertoires in the university climate. The majority of students highlighted their role in the social structures as having a bearing on their self-concept and response to the diverse environment of the university setting. The social structures that student identify with outside the university context continue to influence them in the structured setting of the university. This was highlighted by Billington et al. (1998) in discussing that the role an individual plays in society comes to be part of their identity, their perception of themselves, and how others perceive them.

### 4.2.3 Religious identity

The majority of the participants explained their religions to be a part of who they are and play a major role in defining them as individuals. This is particularly an interesting finding as for the students interviewed in this study are affiliated with different religions, however, the manner in which they identify with their religions are similar. This finding demonstrates the different aspects that define students on campus. An example of a religious identity is evident in these statements:

Participant 1 (Female): *"Back then I did not have much understanding about my religion and maybe I did not also take it that seriously. Then it was just a part of my life and now it is my life and not just a part of it. The knowledge and understanding I have now is not the same is back then, it has improved"*

Participant 3 (Male): *"well for me my religion has influenced my life as a whole, actually my religion is my life basically and what I meant by that is that I practice my beliefs on a daily basis, so it's basically who I am and it has become my life now"*

Participant 5 (Female): *"I wouldn't say culture has played a role in the way I see myself, but more of religion, I see myself as a Christian before anything…I feel like religion has played a major role in my well-being as compared to culture itself*"

Parkinson and Crouch (2011) found that in their data the notion of culture was frequently raised, which was understood by students as denoting beliefs (including religious beliefs), attitudes, values, cultural practices, and social relations. However, in this study religion and culture were defined as separate constructs, with culture seen as denoting a link to the ancestral world and religion defining one's affiliation to a specific church. The findings of the current study, however, support Parkinson and Crouch (2011) finding that students associate themselves both as members of their community with a shared identity and also as students paving a path for themselves in education and towards employment. Similar to these findings, students in this study perceived that discontinuity or change from their religion is impossible, as religion is their life. Some of the students, however, admitted to not identifying with any religious structures, but it is evident that some aspects of religion play a role in influencing some aspects of their lives. This is observed in the statement:

Participant 6 (Male): *"I don't think that personally religion and culture has a huge impact in the way that I see myself, maybe because I am not big on following religion and culture. I do a lot of self-introspection, so with religion and culture it's more of the same thing, but like I said because of its interpretation people have decided to separate them over the years. So I come to realize that I have a lot of qualities that would be considered as okay and something I take from one culture or from one religion that the other one does not have, and so it's like a mixture of different religions and cultures. In as much as I can say there are some things that I follow from that, there is no specific culture of religion that has an impact on who I am"*

Ysseldyk et al. (2010) highlighted that the resulting transition to independence in the university setting often leads to students dissociating from any form of existing religious practices. In this case, students use other existing social structures they identify with to achieve a sense of belonging. The demonstration from students' responses of how religion is constructed as an identity extends Peters and Lahman's (2014) description of culture as a context within which individuals conduct themselves according to values that are judged acceptable and integrate these values in their everyday lives.

### 4.3 UNIVERSITY CLIMATE

Students enter the university with expectations of how the environment will be and the university curriculum as a whole. However, upon entering university, their misconceptions

and expectations are clarified and corrected as they adjust to the diverse context of the university campus life. This is particularly pertinent for most of the students interviewed in this study as they expressed that they had expectations and assumptions upon entering university for the very first time. Cross and Johnson (2008) describe the university setting as a formal and informal environment where learning, teaching, and living is involved. This is evident from the descriptions made by the students in this study that a university campus is a place in which one can learn and freely or independently live their lives as they wish, without any restrictions.

### 4.3.1 Belonging

Upon entering university, students strive to find social structures with which they achieve a sense of belonging. Students in this study highlighted that with the differences on campus they search for a social group with the same lifestyle as their own to fit in. Syed (2010) explains that entering university is observed to be and experience that impacts an individual's awareness of themselves, as it offers them the opportunity to be mindful of certain aspects of themselves and others through experience with diverse views, beliefs, and customs of living. This self-introspection warrants students to find themselves and in turn, find a sense of belonging. Vincent and Idahosa (2014) findings show that students in their study perceived themselves to be outsiders upon first entering the university setting, with the sense of isolation from the dominant identities in the environment. However, in this study it was found that students enter the university to find other social groups they identify with, thus establishing a sense of belonging and successful adjustment within the diverse context of the university environment. These statements highlight the belonging defined by students:

Participant 1 (Female): *"I think people hang out with people of the same culture, you would see a group of Muslim people together, a group of white people together, a group of black people together, it's sort of that culture. And you do find interactions between people of different races and cultures, which also exists"*

Participant 3 (Male): *"I thinks, even though we have different cultures and religious beliefs on campus, those groups are mainly to recruit people and if you believe in a certain religion and they get to recruit you then you become a part of them and you perform whatever you perform with them and be a part of them. I think the aim is to sort of create small families"*

Participant 4 (Female): *"There is a wide variety of religious, academic and social societies on campus to an extent that each student can easily find one to belong to and I think that such arrangements were made available to help with the transition to university life which is a good thing"*

Participant 6 (Male): *"people who are Christians stay together, people who are Indians stay together, people who are white stay together, black people stay together and in as much as we are all different, our differences sort of will confine us into a certain group. I don't think people on campus, in lecture halls and at Res actually get to a point where they associate with people of different beliefs, they look for people with similar beliefs to theirs"*

The intersectionality between the social structures and belonging is observable in the preference of student's identification with social structures that are a match to their pre-existing identification with particular social networks in the diverse university context. This was also highlighted in Yuval-Davis (2006) 'Politics of belonging' that forms of belonging are evident in repetitive practices relating to both cultural and social spaces, thus associating individual and collective behaviour. These practices are essential for the construction of identity narratives and attachment. In her study of being 'Othered' in spaces of learning in South Africa, Biscombe (2014) found that in most cases a student's identity in the university context may be altered by the dominant identities of others and thus affect the learning experience. However, the findings of the current study found that while students acknowledge the existence of other identities in the university setting, these differences made them form deep connections with their own individual self and maintain their own pre-existing identities as they interact with others.

### 4.3.2 Diversity on campus

In her study of first-year students' experiences of diversity, Wilson-Strydom (2014) found that students' experiences of transitioning to higher education are associated with diversity, with most students finding diversity to be conflicting, while others found it to be contributory. In the current study, students find the diversity in the university campus as contributory to their own individual growth, to which majority of the students identified as leading to them being 'open-minded'. In addition, the study found diversity to be

contributory to student's learning experiences, as the different knowledge backgrounds and perspectives will contribute to the learning process as well. Students' experiences of diversity in the current study contradict the findings in Wilson-Strydom (2014), who found that the subject of race difference and intergroup contact were emphasized as the most conflicting experiences of diversity, as they experienced diversity to be a positive factor, which influenced self-introspection and acceptance of others within the diverse university setting. As observed in the statements:

Participant 4 (Female): *"Diversity is always a good thing in my eyes because it helps you come out of the comfort zone and to appreciate how people with different sexual orientation, different mother tongues, and different family background can share the same environment and grow together, academically and socially"*

Participant 7 (Female): *"Diversity is a nice thing to have, because having different people you get to learn different things about different people, but I also have a problem with diversity because as much as they say the rainbow nation and diversity is supposed to bring us together, if feel like it's one of the things that actually separate us as people, especially when you see in class. People would rather hang around people who are the same with them than those different from them"*

Participant 2 (Female): *"You know in humanities it is one of the departments where you get to meet a lot of different people and we are all from different cultures. It has been interesting to learn about others and to understand what you do differently from them why you do it differently. It hasn't been a frustration it has been an interesting learning journey"*

Participant 3 (Male): *"we come from different family backgrounds and that plays a role in diversity. Diversity, for me in think it's a good thing, you get to experience what other people out there believe. I think that diversity helps you strengthen your religion or your beliefs. Diversity is a good thing because if we were, all the same, we wouldn't learn anything from each other. So if we are all different and we believe in different things that way you get to learn and try to strengthen your belief accordingly"*

Diversity is perceived as a 'good thing' as defined by the students interviewed in this study. They see this exposure as playing a major role in how they now view people who are different to them. Kamsteeg and Wels (2012) observe the university setting as a connection of interactions and discussions that enhance and re-enhances awareness. This awareness is defined in this study as students achieving open-mindedness. Fay (1996) describes the self as being social, as our shared and individual meanings are made possible by the presence of others. The findings of this study are consistent with this conclusion, as students identified the differences in the university campus as contributing to their own individual growth within the context of the university setting.

### 4.3.3 Individual differences

Loseke (2007) found that students use their acceptance of the other students' narratives as a resource for constructing a sense of their own personal beings and unique others, thus engaging in the process of constructing their individual narratives of personal identities and in addition employ the understanding of others' stories as a resource to achieve this. Similarly, Syed (2010) describes entering university as an experience that contributes to an individual's consciousness of themselves, as this offers students the opportunity to be conscious of certain aspects of themselves and others through experience with diverse views, beliefs, and customs of existing. This finding is in line with the results of the study. Students highlighted how the university is composed of diverse students with different preferences in terms of lifestyle, sense of dress, beliefs, and values as well as sexual orientations. The results show that majority of the students were not affected by the large difference in the university campus as they are accepting of others' differences while being aware of their own differences. The difference is seen as defining the students as individuals from different familial and social backgrounds and maintains a positive influence on their own self-concept. Participant 1 (Female) said:

> *"Interacting with other people and seeing the way they are has made me realise that my life is different from them. You see how different you are from others. And even back in high school, it has always been like that, I was different from the people I interacted with. Well I look at people with different religions and think about my life it motivates me to live my life even if I can think about what if I was that person"*

Other participants highlighted that:

Participant 5 (Female): *"I feel like these differences on campus in some way has impacted how we see each other because if there weren't any differences you would feel like you are more important and more human than others. When you are in such an environment of variety, you learn to respect other people's differences"*

The findings of this study contradict the conclusion by Vincent and Idahosa (2014) that university students who affiliate with the minority groups in the university environment tend to experience difficulty adjusting to the socially diverse setting and those who view the university setting as supportive as opposed to it being socially isolated successfully adjust to the environment. The findings call into question, the issue of social change and the transformation and decolonisation of the university and the curriculum.

### 4.3.4 Adjusting to the academic curriculum

The university curriculum was found to be different from that in secondary school, thus most students explained how they found it difficult at first to adjust to the university curriculum. In addition, the philosophy and science of the university curriculum are observed to be in conflict with the religious beliefs of the majority of students. This conflict is terms of how the curriculum understands the social environment and how it is defined by religion. This is highlighted in the work of Peters and Lahman (2014) that there may be tensions in the educational setting as a result of what students may be asked to do with regard to acculturation. This was expressed by students that in most cases the curriculum conflicts with what they believe in, which is demonstrated by these statements:

Participant 1 (Female): *"There is a contrast in most parts, it makes me question if whether the course is for me or not. It makes me think about the difference there is between the two, so I may feel this way and then the curriculum says something different and perhaps you end up having to justify things that you do not even believe in or having to make an argument in an objective manner rather than being subjective. So I have to put my religious beliefs aside"*

Participant 3 (Male): *"at some point the curriculum you may find that is in conflict with your beliefs, but you have to understand that is just what I written in the books. so I may study if it is something I have to study but for me, I know what I believe and I know*

*what I am learning, so for me, there's that difference. It doesn't really affect me to that extent that I start maybe to doubt myself. So if it is something I have to learn I will learn it"*

Also adjusting to the diverse environment of the university and the academic curriculum was highlighted by students:

Participant 4 (Female): *"Adjusting to the workload from the university academic curriculum was hard at first, and that resulted in me failing some of my first year courses, but looking back at that experience, I see that it has changed me for the better, because now I know from experience that there is such a thing as failure in life and what matters after that is how you get back up on your feet and it has humbled me in a way"*

Participant 5 (Female): *"In life there are stages, but let me condense these stages into three parts. Before varsity, what happens is, because we grew up in an environment where you are conditioned to think that success only through this formal education. But when you come to varsity, you tend to realize that this is not the case, you can live a decent without going through formal education. So before varsity, we are not that well-grounded in terms of thinking"*

These statements highlight that the university curriculum is different from that of secondary school and requires that students adjust to the teaching method used in higher education. Sharma and Guest (2013) found that in most cases the university curriculum led to students re-evaluating their religious views, which creates personal conflict and a disruption in their student experience. Participant 4 (Female) stated that:

*"It's been a wonderful experience really, it gives me a chance to learn about the different religions and cultures that exist outside mine and considering that I am a Christian being exposed to such diversity and remaining a Christian still after that experience has deepened my faith and love for my religion, because I got a chance to question and assess my religion in contrast to other existing religions"*

It is clear that the exposure to the different sociocultural practices in the university campus, particularly religion, does not affect the students' existing beliefs and values, thus it deepens

their connections to what they believe in. These findings differ from Sharma and Guest's (2013) findings that most students find themselves questioning their own religious beliefs and practices, following contact with other students from the diverse religious groups within the university setting. While other students experienced the religious diversity as deepening their own existing beliefs when they enter university and others become more open to other religious views. The current study found that while students do acknowledge the existence of diverse religious groups within the university, interaction with students from different religious backgrounds facilitated awareness of how diverse the university setting is and this difference did not lead to them deviating from and questioning their existing religious beliefs and values.

### 4.3.5 Independence

Similar to Souden's (2008) finding that the construction of a personal identity and some form of independence are observed to be the utmost valued objectives in Higher Education progression as compared to other aspects of an individual's social life. In the current study students highlighted that the university context offer a space in which they can mature intellectually and mentally in addition to being independent. The university is defined by students as a free environment, in which anyone can be who they want to be free of any judgment or restrictions as compared to the home environment. Students expressed how they have to be responsible for their life decisions and behaviours as they now have to be independent in the university setting, with no parental control or restrictions. This was expressed by participant 4 (Female) that:

> *"I am more open-minded about things and I am a lot more independent considering that I do not live under the care of my parents"*

The university climate promotes the independence of the previously dependent students, who now has to take control of the steering wheel of their life, thus university life is contributory to the construction of a personal identity, as students have to define themselves in the more diverse setting of the university. Riddell and Weedon (2014) also highlight the subject of independence within the university context, as they describe the period spent in university as possibly involving identity exploration without restraints. This was highlighted in the statement made by students in this study that:

Participant 4 (Female): *"I have become more of an extrovert than an introvert in that I now socialise with people around me more and I no longer fear trying out new things, maybe it's because I no longer live under the care of my rather strict parents"*

Participant 6 (Male): *"I appreciate varsity life in the sense that with religion and culture are the things that you get from home; those are the things that are instilled in you from whatever they believe in at home. So as soon you grow up, you get to go to varsity and get to meet new different people. And, you get to know about other religions and other cultures. It really helps you discover yourself as a person. So, I really think that those experiences with other people have been really helpful and helped me grow as an individual. Because in the past I was sort of limited to one thing and that doesn't help you grow as an individual"*

Participant 7 (Female): *"The transition from high school to varsity is different, because in high school it's more like you have a very strong support base compared to when you are here because when you are in varsity, especially if you are moving far from home it's more or less like you are starting over"*

Students find the transitioning to varsity as endorsing some form of self-exploration and promoting independence and responsibility. For the majority of students, moving away from home provides them the opportunity to be in control of decision-making, as they are now in their own space. This independence is observed to give students the platform to define and redefine themselves in social structures.

### 4.4 STUDENT CULTURES IN THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

The current study found that students find belonging in the different student cultures within the university setting, such as religious membership on campus, sports, and interpersonal relationships. The student cultures identified in this study are in terms of lifestyle, leisure activities, and religious environment. These student cultures intersect with the student identities individuals form for themselves, as they define themselves in terms of the activities they engage in on the university campus.

### 4.4.1 Lifestyle

In terms of lifestyle, students reported that they appreciate the different lifestyles in the university campus, however did not feel pressure to fit in with those different from their own. This finding contradicts the conclusion by Jensen and Arnett (2012) that students exposed to diverse cultures may feel the need to fit in with the dominating cultures, while also be subjected to a feeling of similar pressure to identify with their original culture. As compared to the rules and laws exercised in secondary school, the university setting is experienced as one that does not enforce behavioural patterns on students, as it affords them the freedom to be who they desire to be. One student described it as being at liberty to do anything" to explain the difference between being at home and being away from home:

Participant 1 (Female): *"Well on campus I think people are free here; the university environment is a free world. you know back in high school there are rules such as no smoking and a preferred way of dressing and restrictions, but in the university setting people are at liberty to do whatever they want and for most people this is a place away from home, so most people meet with unfamiliar face and they get to explore things that they were not given the opportunity to do back at home and they adapt to that lifestyle and they feel like it is what they want"*

Similar to Kamsteeg and Wels (2012) observation that the academic environment has come to be more different in its structure; in which diversity is in the form of gender, culture, religious belief, philosophy etc. In addition it is considered to be an advantage in academic performance; the lifestyles as defined by students comprises of expressed sexual orientation, and sense of dress. One participant highlighted that being at university has improved her sense of fashion, evident in the statement made by participant 4 (Female) that: *"it has helped me improve and grooming my sense of fashion, because you learn a lot from others".*

### 4.4.2 Leisure activities

Students in the university environment define 'having fun' in different ways, with some students finding entertainment in the religion and others finding entertainment in the campus environment in general. Pattman (2007) highlighted that there is an intersection between students' constructions and experiences of 'race' as a marker of identity, peer relationships or socialisation, and student culture on campus, however in this study religion as a marker of identity was found to intersect with students' socialisation and the student cultures on

campus. Sharma and Guest (2013) explained that the religious involvement of students serves as a means of coping with the diversity and novelty encountered in university life. This is true for some students who highlighted that their church functioned as a form of entertainment for them, thus they do not engage in other activities in the university campus. Students explained that:

Participant 1 (Female): *"My lifestyle is very much different from that of others here on campus, firstly you get the in-thing that a lot of people do when they get on campus and sort of have fun. Fun for them is obviously going out to clubs and music performances and drinking alcohol and that's totally the opposite of what my fun is. My fun type of is church; it's hanging out with my church mates"*

Participant 4 (Female): *"There is a wide variety of religious, academic and social societies on campus to an extent that each student can easily find one to belong to and I think that such arrangements were made available to help with the transition to university life which is a good thing"*

Singh and Bhana (2015) found that higher education contexts in the post-apartheid are seen as presenting students with a platform in which they can negotiate and form different ways of connecting with each other. The leisure activities students engage in offers them the opportunity to interact with other students who are different from them.

### 4.4.3 Religious involvement

Sharma and Guest (2013) state that previous religious beliefs and practices, provides students in a diverse and multicultural university with a sense of familiarity in which they are able to establish relationships with other students who affiliate with that same religion. This was highlighted by students in this study, who explained that they found a sense of belonging from the religious groups formed within the university campus. The majority of the students explained that when they come to the university, they affiliate with their religions substructures which are also found on campus, and most of these substructures recruit other students who do not identify with particular religious structures. These religious structures are seen as offering students a sense of belonging and familiarity, as they find themselves in a different environment that warrants the continuing identity negotiation. This is evident in these statements:

Participant 2 (Female): *"Well I wouldn't say culture per se, it's just that in describing myself I am from a ZCC church going people but I am not really deep in it. But I guess in describing myself I would say I belong to their religion. But culture wise I don't go about having that specific culture or belonging to that culture"*

Participant 4 (Female): *"They are both very important to me, reason being because they influence our conduct in society and in a positive way. Religion being like that one person you can lean on when you have problems, then together with culture they can give you a sense of belonging"*

The results of this study challenge Loseke (2007) notion that in the contemporary industrial or post-industrial societies identities are no longer rooted in religious conviction, communal and familial structures; with modernism dividing the society into a variability of fragments; consequently the different environments which individuals are exposed to do not support preceding identities. With the majority of students highlighting that they found religious structures that are substructures of the main religions, the conclusions made by Loseke (2007) is redefined. By demonstrating that student identities are also rooted in religious conviction, the findings of this study shed light to understanding the intersectionality of religion and other social structures. Similar to Parkinson and Crouch (2011) findings that students identified themselves both as members of their community with a shared identity and also as students striving towards academic success and employment, students continue to identify with the cultural practices outside the university setting as discontinuity or change from one's culture is perceived to be inevitable. Students see the difference within the university context as strengthening their identification with certain social structures they form part.

### 4.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT

The findings in the current study demonstrate the role of parental involvement in influencing how students perceive themselves and the diverse environments they find themselves in. Family structures are found to be influencing how students adapt and conduct themselves within the university context, and they also have a bearing on students' identities. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) explained that 'habitus', learned behaviour resulting from an individual's family upbringing which is oriented toward the social location, plays a role in setting limitations to an individual's sense of agency and opportunity. This is because it involves

perceptual structures of what is morally acceptable given the individual's positioning in a hierarchical society.

### 4.5.1 Socialization from childhood

The majority of students in this study found their family upbringing as contributory to their current self-concept and the response to transitioning into a more diverse environment. The results of the study show that the parenting styles or parental involvement continue to influence the behavioural patterns of students even outside the home, in the absence of the strict parental figure. According to Edgerton and Roberts (2014) habitus plays a role in setting restrictions to an individual's sense of agency and possibility; which was voiced by the majority of the participants that their parental influence affects their behaviour in the university context; thus habitus involves perceptual schemes of what is morally acceptable given the individual's positioning in a stratified society. This is evident in the statement made by Participant 1 and Participant 4.

Participant 1 (Female): *"Well my family, particularly, my mom is a very strict person, so you don't just do things as you want. So there are those laws in the family or in the household that you live by. and I can say some of them, even now, I still live by them, even though I am not at home and my mom is not around, she doesn't see me but because it is how I grew up and I have learned to realise that it was in my best interest and that she was not just being the tough-love type of mom, it is just something that benefited me"*

Participant 2 (Female): *"my childhood is the core reason of who I am and what I do and why I am like this because my mom is a very strong person, she is the first born of six kids also, so her character is strong and she doesn't force it against you but she wants you to know who you are and define yourself in that same way. And for me, I had to find a way to define who I am. And my childhood has built who I am in the sense that I am a very competitive person and it happens when you are the second born of six kids"*

Participant 4 (Female): *"I grew up isolated mostly, I never used to play with other kids most of the time and that taught me to appreciate my own company and to be more independent. And, I taught myself self-discipline, I guess that had a negative impact on me because sometimes I find myself failing to understand why some people are too*

*wild or ill-mannered but then again I know that we are all born unique and that means that I am not supposed to judge anyone for anything"*

Klimstra et al. (2013) found that when individuals transition into early adulthood, they now have to independently make critical life choices without relying on their parents, thus which gradually establishing well-defined sets of commitments in different levels. The essence of the argument made by Klimstra et al. (2013) has a bearing on the results of the current study as the majority of the students interviewed in this study, highlighted that their parents' involvement, particularly the mother's role, had an influence on who they have grown up to be and their approach to life in the university context. Edgerton and Roberts' (2014) discussion of habitus informs students' experiences of family values as influencing who they are and the way they perceive themselves, thus habitus intersects with the social structures students affiliate with in the university campus, as this match to their pre-existing identification with particular social networks.

### 4.5.2 Religion in the home

Sharma and Guest (2013) found that student' religious involvement is in most cases fostered within the family contexts and aids in positioning them in the social and religious spaces existing in the university environment, as they negotiate a sense of who they are and who they want to be. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) found that social structures intersect and exist at different levels, with smaller social structures, such as family, formed in larger social structures like in educational contexts. The dispositions of habitus are evident in the behavioural patterns of an individual and are conveyed in language, nonverbal communication, lifestyle, values, individual views, and modes of reasoning, this is the result of the socialization of children into specific roles and moral standards of behaviour. Similar to the findings in the work of Edgerton and Roberts (2014), the results of the study show that the religious beliefs of these students are rooted from their family upbringing and continue to play a major role in their lives on campus. This is evident in these statements:

Participant 6 (Male): *"religion and culture are the things that you get from home; those are the things that are instilled in you from whatever they believe in at home. So as soon you grow up, you get to go to varsity and get to meet new different people. And, you get to know about other religions and other cultures. It really helps you discover yourself as a person"*

Participant 7 (Female): *"My religion and culture are more on how I grew up at home. With culture, we never really practiced it so to say, so I don't necessarily have a view on culture, it's something that there but it's something that never influenced me in any way. Religion, on the other hand, my dad is a pastor. So, I grew up in a religious family and religion it's more like the building blocks of my life, it's something that's foundational and it's something that I strongly believe in"*

Similarly, Sharma and Guest (2013) discussed that because the transition to university context leads to identity negotiation, religion becomes more salient to students, as it provides a space in which they can maintain a familiar sense of identity and offers a sense of belonging. Student' religious involvement, which is in most cases fostered within the family contexts, helps position them in the social and religious spaces existing in the university environment, as they negotiate a sense of who they are and who they want to be. The results of this study are consistent with their work, thus showing the continuity of religion in time and space. Religion is seen as not static but carried with the individual in different social spaces, and as such, religion builds a sense of continuity between the lives of students at home and in the university. Similar to Barret (2010) finding that children who are socialised towards a specific religious belief system which positions an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviours in the context of that particular religious system and can serve as influencing behaviour in other contexts outside the family, such as educational settings.

# CHAPTER 5
# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore how different cultural beliefs and values influence the personal identity of students and how these are negotiated in the university campus. The findings of the current study extend work previously done in understanding identity development in relation to the society. In this study, the major themes that emerged from the data were student culture, such as the activities students engage in on the university campus and the university campus life in general; student identities in terms of the social structures they identify with in the university setting. Also the parental involvement and religion as contributory to the negotiation of personal identities within the university emerged as themes. The study found that students maintain multiple identifications within the diverse environment of the university, which are associated with establishing a sense of belonging in different social structures. These identities are observed to be dominant in particular social structure from which they stem from and also intersect with the additional identifications. These findings are a clear demonstration of the continuity in students' social and religious identities, while allowing for the constructions of other additional identities arising from the membership of students in specific social groups within the university. In discussing work from other scholars of the need to develop understanding of stereotypes and social identities, a question was posed by Howarth et al. (2014) 'what happens when negative stereotypes and expectations filter into the social identities and self-expectations of young people and people appear to reject all strategies of cultural maintenance and cultural contact?'' (p.30). The current study found that students enter the university with pre-existing identities in which the social structures from which they were established are formed within the social structures in the university environment, thus students achieve a sense of belonging by continually identifying with these structures when transitioning into university. Similar to Sharma and Guest (2013) who found that religion is not static and is continual; the findings from the current study shows that religion continually influences students' response to the diverse environment of university life and offers them some sense of familiarity. Students continue to construct their identity with reference to other dominant or non-dominating identities they encounter on campus. These identities are used as a tool for building on students' existing identities and constructing new identities resulting from participating in the student culture in the university campus. Sharma and Guest (2013) described religious involvement as

providing a different sacred worldview and continual identification for students, which is different from association with other social groups. Thus, this may be a clear indication of the continuity and influence of religion on students in the university context. The findings of this study in line with the conclusion made by Sharma and Guest (2013) provide an answer to the question posed by Howarth et al. (2014). Furthermore, Christiaens (2015) highlighted that further literature should consider how a student's identity development in university is informed by the social and cultural position of their upbringing. The current study found that students' upbringing and childhood plays a major role in their personal identity development as it informs their adjustment in a multicultural university with diverse cultural values and beliefs between students and lecturers while maintaining their own personal cultural values and beliefs. Similar to the findings from Barret (2010) that individual characteristics, parental involvement, peer relations, the environment and socialisation experiences as affecting an individual's academic performance; this study found that the factors identified by Barret (2010) are contributory to students' negotiation of a personal identity in the university environment. The continuity is also observed in students' background, in terms of their upbringing, cultural values and beliefs, and parental involvement; as these factors continually influence students' participation and way of living in the university. Adams et al. (2012) highlighted that in view of personal identity as grounded on interactions with other individuals, current work on identity should explore both in what way individuals understand their personal identity as well as in what way they understand the identity of other individuals. The current study found that students positively perceive themselves as unique beings living in an environment where each person brings their own differences, thus this difference is experienced as contributing to their own personal growth without conflicting with their existing personal values and beliefs. In their study Adams et al. (2014) highlight that studies documenting the ways in which intergroup interaction and other intercultural experiences may be contributing to individuals' identities and their intergroup relations are necessary. The current study found that students experienced the differences on campus as contributing to their own personal growth and maturity, as well as to their approach to life in general. Students explained the differences as playing a role in how they perceive themselves and other students they come into contact with, thus leading to them being accepting of others' differences while appreciating their own differences. The findings in this study provide a clear demonstration that childhood experiences, such as following the religion of their family and parenting styles within the home, as influencing their behaviour and self-concept outside the context of the family and in the university context. In short, the findings

of the current study highlight the role of multicultural influences on the personal identity development of students. The conclusions made in this study show the intersectionalities in the university context, social structures, and students' identity development.

### 5.2 Recommendations for further research studies

The following recommendations are presented on the basis of the findings of this study:

i. Religion was found to be contributory to students' personal identities as compared to culture, thus future studies should seek to extend these findings by exploring the role of religion on self-concept.
ii. Furthermore, in understanding the different social structures influencing the negotiation of student identities, studies focusing on rurality and urbanisation as influencing personal identity will serve as a resource for understanding the how these factors influence students' identification within the university environment. The focus of the current study limited exploration of these factors, thus the findings of the study were limited to the focus on multiculturalism.
iii. In this study, religion and culture were perceived as separate aspects of the society, with religion relating to church involvement and culture denoting traditional practices such as rituals and ancestral connections. Thus, further research exploring how social change is may be playing a role in how culture and religion are perceived by youth.
iv. As a result of the study focusing on current university experiences, the findings are only limited to the university context, however, prior secondary school experiences were highlighted by participants. Longitudinal studies documenting the transition from secondary school and into Higher Education could be beneficial in understanding the factors influencing identification and negotiation in the university setting.
v. Future studies should seek to explore the issue of diversity as influencing the self-concept of students in the university setting. The current study demonstrates that multiculturalism is seen by students as encompassing diversity, thus this provides a new direction from which future studies may focus on.
vi. The gaps highlighted by Christiaens (2015), among other authors such as Adams et al. (2014), that further studies should explore factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, personality, in addition to multicultural backgrounds that may have an impact on the fundamental dynamics of identity; were not all addressed in the current study's findings, thus further researcher is needed that focuses on examining these aspects.

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**Appendix A**

**Psychology**
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Fax: 086- 553- 4913

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**Interview Schedule**

Interview questions

1. How would you describe the way you see yourself and how has it changed since you came to varsity?
2. Can you tell me if the way you conduct yourself now has changed or advanced since you have been in varsity as compared to high-school? How has it changed?
3. With regard to the academic curriculum, describe how it may have shaped or challenged your own personal beliefs and values?
4. What do you think about the different cultural ways on campus, such as religion, gender orientations, lifestyle habits or the society in general?
5. How would you describe the impact that the different ways of life on campus may have or had on your way of being?

**Appendix B**

**Psychology**
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**Information Sheet**

I am Dumisile Miranda Mndawe, a Masters student in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As a requirement of the program I am in the process of conducting research on the 'Multicultural influences on the personal identity of university students'; for the purpose of understanding how diverse cultural values and beliefs influence the personal identity of students. Your involvement in this study would be valuable in responding to the inquiry of the research, thus I am inviting you to partake in the research study.

Participation would entail an interview, which will take place at a place convenient for you at the University of the Witwatersrand, also considering the time of your availability and the interview will last for one-hour maximum. In the account of your consent, the interview session will be recorded so that accuracy of the responses you have provided during the interview is ensured. The audio recorded interview session will then be transcribed. The only people who will have access to the audio tapes are my research supervisor and me, which will be deleted after completion of the research study. With regard to the presentation of responses, your name will not appear anywhere on the transcripts and responses will be anonymous. A fictitious name or number will be assigned to your interview responses in the presentation of the data. Be aware that participation in this study is absolutely voluntary; thus in the case where you are not comfortable with some of the questions asked, you are under no obligation to respond and you may decide to withdraw at any period of the research study.

If you have any arising questions or for additional information, before you make an agreement to participate in this study; you may contact me on the details provided below. Your participation would be greatly appreciated and would contribute immensely to

understating how multicultural issues influence the personal identity of university students at the University of the Witwatersrand.

**Dissemination of Results**

At the end of the study, the results will be made available to the participants if they so desire. Furthermore, the research report could be published in a Journal.

In the likelihood that this research raises any issues that you find distressing, feel free to go to the Emthonjeni Centre which offers free counselling and also to enquire about their services (011- 717- 9140).

Thank you.

**Contacts**

Researcher: Dumisile Miranda Mndawe (Miranda.mndawe@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Kiguwa Peace (Peace.kiguwa@wits.ac.za)

**Appendix C: Participant consent form**

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This is to confirm that Ms. Dumisile Miranda Mndawe has briefed me about the purpose of the research study.

- I have been informed of what my contribution to this research requires ☐
- I was informed that involvement in the study is voluntary ☐
- I have been informed that in the course of feeling uncomfortable to answer some questions I may choose to not respond to them ☐
- I have been informed that I may withdraw from the research study at any period without consequence ☐
- I have been informed about the measures that will be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of my identity ☐

Signed: _____ at: _____

Participant's signature: _____

**Appendix D: Participant's Consent Form for Audio-recording**

**Psychology**
School of Human & Community Development
**University of the Witwatersrand**
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011- 717- 4500/2/3/4
Fax: 086- 553- 4913

I _____ confirm that I have read and understood the information provided on the information sheet for the study being conducted by Dumisile Miranda Mndawe. I acknowledge that the interview session will be audio-taped and thus give consent for the recording of the interview session. I understand the researcher and the supervisor will be the only people with access to the audio-taped material and I understand the audiotapes will be deleted in the completion of the study.

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Date

**Appendix E: Permission Letter to the Registrar**

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa. Telephone: +27 11-717-4500/2/3/4. Fax: +27-11-717-4559

To: The Registrar

Date: 2016-06-03

Dear Sir / Madam

**Re: Permission to conduct a qualitative study on diverse cultural influences on youth's personal identity development at The University of the Witwatersrand**

This is a formal letter requesting your permission to conduct a qualitative study into on cultural influences on youth identity development campus at the University of the Witwatersrand. The study will include the experiences of students' members at the university about the influences of diverse cultural values and beliefs on identity. Participants will be selected through purposive sampling procedures, whereby any individual interested in participating and who responds to the public advert will be interviewed. Given the diverse cultures on campus, the study aims to explore how different cultural beliefs and values influence the personal identity of students and how these are negotiated on campus. Participation of students in the study will be voluntary and with no prior consequence should they wish to withdraw at any time during the data collection. No personal information will be required of the selected participants.

Should you have any queries my contact details are provided below.

Kind Regards,

_____

Dumisile Miranda Mndawe

MA Psychology in research and coursework

Tel: +27 72 669 1222

Email: miranda.mndawe@gmail.com