

**EXPLORING MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN
BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS**

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ABSTRACT

South Africa, just like most African countries, is a country rich in social, political and economic history due to colonisation, specifically the apartheid system. The current socio-political and economic climate of the country is said to influence the process of identity development and formation during adolescence. Therefore, the main aim of the study was to explore the various identities that black adolescents are exploring given the context of the country. Additionally, the aim of this research was to explore the methods in which adolescents utilise to develop their identity and the challenges encountered during this process.

The study made use of three data collection methods; a Short Reflective exercise, a Nominal Group Technique and Focus Groups. Data was analysed using thematic analysis to generate main themes and sub themes. The main themes discussed in this study revealed that adolescents experiences multiple aspects of their identity, which exist in a complex interwoven system influenced by both external and internal factors. The main challenge was the difficulty in integrating the dominant westernised/individualistic ideology with the collectivistic ideology that adolescents are raised according to. Overall, the study indicated that the majority of the participants had a positive self-concept and a positive outlook with regards to their future. Recommendations emphasise the need for further research that would be based on the South African context to further explore black identity and to gain contextual information that can be used to combat some of the social issues that the South African youth is challenged with.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore types of identities among black South African adolescents. Additionally, the aim is also to explore the experiences and challenges that adolescents are faced with during identity formation. Lastly, external influences of identity development were also explored. In this chapter, a general orientation to the study and an overview of the research process will be provided

1.1. Context and rationale of the research

With the introduction of the Apartheid system in 1948, Black South Africans were subjected to oppression and racial segregation (Adams, Van de Vijver, & De Bruin, 2011). The apartheid system implemented laws and policies that were aimed at racial, political and economic discrimination and segregation between Black South Africans and White South Africans (Adams et al., 2014; Adams et al., 2011; Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010; Wolpe, 1979). These laws included the Population Registration Act (1950), which distinguished between different racial groups. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Amendment Act (1950) which opposed marriages or sexual relationships across racial lines. The Group Areas Act (1950) and Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953) that ensured segregation of living spaces, public facilities and resources across the different racial groups. The Bantu Education Act (1953) that assured that Black South Africans received substandard education. The Extension of University Education Act (1959) that prohibited blacks from attending white universities. The Pass Laws legislation (1952) that required Black South Africans to permanently carry identification documents, which as a consequence limited the freedom of movement of Black SA (Adams et al., 2014; Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010).

In an effort to maintain economic, political and social supremacy of the white groups, the Population Registration Act (1950) registered four racial populations; White, African, Coloured and Indian, the latter three further classified as black (Adams et al.,2014; Adams et al., 2011; Finchilescu & Tredoux,2010; Vandeyar, 2008). Each of these categories are further subdivided into ethnic groups that have different characteristics, such as culture, traditional practices and language (Adams et al., 2011).

The purpose of apartheid policies ensured that Black South Africans (including Indian and Coloured people) were segregated from the White South African (English and Afrikaans speaking) in an attempt to ensure that racial groups had minimal contact hence the economic and political foundations of apartheid were preserved (Durrheim & Dixon, 2010; Finchilescu & Dawes, 1998). The segregation laws meant that the White South Africans lived in upmarket urban areas and inner cities with access to resources and job opportunities whilst the black racial groups were forced to live on the outskirts in townships and informal settlements. This meant that they were moved far from their places of work and had to spend time and money on travelling, and time spent travelling impacted on time spent with family, which subsequently led to family fragmentation and conflict (Durrheim & Dixon, 2010; Franchi & Swart, 2003).

The apartheid era laws and policies were met with resistance and opposition from the black population in the form of peaceful marches and protests, later which turned into violent riots, led by groups such as African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), United Democratic Front (UDF) and others. This resistance was met with further repressive actions by the apartheid government through its police force using extreme violence, torture, shooting causing serious injuries, and incarcerations without trial, and extrajudicial deaths

(Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). Period of unrest ensued international recognition and anti-apartheid campaigns around the world (Lodge, 2012). Apartheid policies were also met with scrutiny and condemnation from foreign organisations such as the Commonwealth and the United Nation (Lodge, 2012). Opposition from foreign organisations meant that South Africa was placed at a political and economic disadvantage with other countries in the form of economic sanctions and a ban of cultural, sporting and educational connections (Lodge, 2012). The apartheid government was placed under pressure, and eventually a series of negotiations between the apartheid government and the ANC along with other political activist groups took place. The economic sanctions against South Africa were from 1986 and were lifted in 1991. Negotiations led to the dismantlement of apartheid system and an introduction of democracy in 1994 (Thomas, 1995).

The years following 1994 are known as the post-apartheid era where a new democratic South Africa was introduced and an emphasis on national transformation was implemented (Adams et al., 2011; Eaton & Louw, 2000; Durrheim & Dixon, 2010; Norris et al., 2008). A predominately Black government had a monumental task of transforming South Africa into a democratic country. Starting with mobilising resources such as affirmative action for the purpose of the economic advancement of Black groups and changing all policies such as segregation between racial groups (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). Transformation did not only occur in a political and economic level but also on a social sphere as integration across racial lines was encouraged (Steven & Lockhat, 1997). A new democratic country had many implications for South Africans of all persuasions and ages, due to the radical change in political leadership and ideological structures (Finchilescu & Dawes, 1998). It meant that South Africans had to go through an ideological shift to accommodate the new political, economic (although little), racial and social change (Adams et al., 2011). Steven and Lockhat (1997) state

that the socio-political and economic history of South Africa and the consequences of it had a major impact on the psychological processes and identity development of Black adolescents. The history of South Africa and the current climate is crucial in understanding the identity development of Black adolescents. As the result of apartheid, the identity of the black population in South Africa has been tarnished with negative connotations and psychological consequences associated with being Black. Habib (1997) stated that some inequalities and results of these inequalities cannot be undone. Majority of Black adolescents are also faced with psychological consequences that are the ruminants of the apartheid era (Habib, 1997). Issues of racism, inequality, poverty, and lack of access to resources, poor quality of education and low employment rates were still persistent among the black population post-apartheid era (Van Jaarsveld, 2000). These psychological consequences include self-destructive behaviour through the abuse of substances and higher levels of depression due to the low unemployment rate among the black population. Additionally, Wilson and Ramphele (1989) noted poor academic performance due to disadvantaged education and lack of resources was also noted as being one of the psychological consequences that black adolescents are faced with. There has not been much change in the current state of socio-economic and psychological struggles of black youth in South Africa. This ultimately leads to fewer prospects for economic and social advancement among black adolescents (Wilson & Ramphele, 1989).

Paradoxically is the fact that the transformation of the country post-apartheid era encourages Black adolescents to dream big and have high expectations of their future prospects, whilst the resources and the means available to them in order to achieve this success is sometimes unattainable (Steven & Lockhat, 1997). Furthermore, this transformation is an opportunity for Black adolescents to redefine their identity to accommodate the dominant ideology, values,

and norms, most of which have not changed since the apartheid era and are still characterised by the dominant Western culture (Steven & Lockhat, 1997).

The political history of the country, the apartheid-legacy and the new democratic society is the context in which these adolescents have to explore and find their identities. It is suggested that black adolescents in South Africa should be conceptualised as experiencing multiple and sometimes contradictory social realities, the ultimate outcome would be an integration of these identities (Steven & Lockhat, 1997).

1.2 Theoretical perspectives underpinning the study

This qualitative study was done following a constructionist paradigm. Social constructionist is based on the idea that perceptions about 'reality' or 'truth' are based on meaning and value systems and the degree of sophistication that individuals have of these perceptions (Mertens, 2010). Furthermore, constructionist theorists believe that knowledge is socially constructed by the individuals who are part of the research process. The aim of research is thus to understand the complexity of the world that research participants live in, from their point of view (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). For the purpose of this research, constructivism paradigm was utilised to gain an understanding of the process of identity development and formation among adolescents. The approach is helpful in gaining a unique understanding of adolescents' identity development from their point of view, while considering the context in which they live in. This study was also explorative and descriptive in nature (Salkind, 2008). Explorative research is conducted to for the purpose of examining and obtaining new insights and ideas about a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, this study was conducted using a case study approach (Yin, 2012).

In this study, several theoretical perspectives were considered in order to conceptualise the construct of multiple dimensions of identity. We first explore Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development. Erikson (1968) described eight psychosocial statuses, during which an individual experiences a moratorium (an identity crisis) and has a task of choosing between two critical tasks such as identity vs role confusion during adolescence. The aim is for the individual to identify and to integrate all components of identity.

Marcia's (1980) ego identity status theory builds on the work of Erikson. He proposes four ego identity statuses; Identity achievement, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity diffusion. Marcia (2010) stated that exploration of different value systems, vocational options and commitment are integral during the process of identity formation.

Departing from the individual identity proposed by Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980) the Social Identity theory and Collective Identity highlight the social concept of individual identity. Theorists such as Phinney and Ong (2007) Tajfel and Turner (1986) are explored in this study. These theorists are complimented by the collective identity theory by Eaton and Louw (2002). A contrast between individualistic identity and collectivistic identity will be made in this study.

As part of the social identity theory and collective identity, ethnic identity will be explored. Phinney (1989) describes ethnic identity as a set of characteristics, norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and cultural practices that a particular social group adhere to.

Adams et al., (2012) model of identity development was used to explore identity development in the South African context. He conceptualised identity using four broad dimensions namely; the relational orientations, attributes, situations, and ideologies (Adams et al., 2014).

Lastly the Jones and McEwen's (2000) multiple dimensions of identity development is used as an overarching theory to highlight the various identity types that individuals explore. The main

argument of this theory is to highlight the idea that an individual can express more than one aspect of identity depending on the context and time that the individual exists.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the study

Researchers suggest that the complexity of developing an identity as an adolescent in the now democratic South Africa should be explored (Adams et al., 2011; Eaton & Louw, 2000; Durrheim & Dixon, 2010; Norris et al., 2008). In South Africa identity development is complicated due to the rich South African political history and the multicultural and diverse population that exists in the country (Adams et al., 2014). In the South African context, adolescents are exposed to various ideologies, norms, values, and behaviours, which may pose as one of the challenges that they are faced with during the process of exploring and forming an integrated identity (Eaton & Louw, 2002). The aim of this research was to explore the multiple dimensions of identity and the contextual factors that influences. Such exploration will help gain insight into the experiences of South African adolescents, it is important to consider their experiences during the dynamic process of identity development.

Additionally, the research aimed to explore the challenges encountered during identity exploration and the methods in which adolescents utilise to form and develop their identity. The following research question was investigated: What are the multiple dimensions of identity that adolescents associate with? To assist in the exploration of this research question, the following questions were asked:

- What does identity mean to adolescents?
- How do adolescents define themselves?
- Which aspects of identity are the most prominent during adolescence?

- What influences identity formation during adolescence (Parents, society, or personal experience)?

1.4 Value of the research

Adolescence is said to be a period of physical, psychological and social transformation (Arnett, 2001; Christie & Viner, 2005). Due to rapid transformation adolescence is said to sometimes be characterised by defiant behaviour, conflict with authority (including parents and teachers), and reckless behaviour that can be harmful to the individual and to others (Papalia & Feldman, 2011). Identity development is said to be at the crux of adolescence, and can be accompanied by confusion, frustration misunderstanding of ones self and being misunderstood by others (Arnett, 2001; Christie & Viner, 2005). This study aims to improve the understanding of the South African youth with regard to the development of multiple dimensions of identity and various dynamics of development that adolescents have to undergo during their transition to adulthood. Being able to understand the nature of identity development in a multicultural South Africa is beneficial for the growth and development of the South African youth. Such an exploration will help gain insight into the experiences of black South African adolescents, as it is important to consider their experiences during the dynamic process of identity development.

1.5 Delineation of chapters

The following chapters will include a literature review, the methodology used, the results generated by the data and discussions, lastly conclusion, limitations and recommendations of this study are presented. Aspects of each chapter are further highlighted below.

Chapter two is an overview of literature related to adolescence as a developmental phase, including various descriptions, and developmental changes. Thereafter the concept of identity will be conceptualised and theories of identity development will be explored. These include Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory, Marcia's (1980) ego identity status theory, Adams et al., (2012) model of identity development among South African adolescents, and Jones and McEwen's (2000) multiple dimensions of identity development.

Chapter three will be a discussion of the methodology used in the study. The research aims and questions will be explored first. This will be followed by a description of the research design, participants and sampling procedures, data collection; data analysis and ethical concerns and trustworthiness will also be presented.

Chapter four will focus on the presentation of results generated by the data and the analysis of the results. Themes from the short reflective exercise and the nominal group technique will be presented first, followed by themes generated from the focus groups.

Chapter five will provide an overview of the key findings of the results chapter and an integrated discussion of the main themes will be provided.

Chapter six will be a conclusion that will draw the study together as well as the presentation of the limitations and recommendations of the study.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the South African context of which this study is based. This was followed by the theoretical perspectives underpinning this study. The aims and objectives of the study were given, followed by the value of the study. The chapter concluded with the delineation of the chapters.

Chapter 2

Literature review

This chapter provides an overview of adolescence as a developmental phase, including various definitions of adolescence and the different developmental changes and challenges that occur during this phase. This overview will serve as foundation to better understanding and conceptualising identity exploration and formation during adolescence. Thereafter a definition of identity, and the theories of identity development will be discussed. In the presentation of this chapter, the South African context is discussed and the theory of multiple dimensions of identity is also explored.

2.1 Adolescence

There are numerous definitions of adolescence in the literature. Adolescence has been defined as a developmental phase that starts roughly at the onset of puberty and ends when the individual attains full growth and maturity in the biological, psychological and social domains (Boyd & Bee, 2014). Adolescence can also be defined as the process of physical and psychosocial transformation where change can occur rapidly or slowly, and the duration of this stage is not the same for every individual (Boyd & Bee, 2014). This stage is characterised by the onset of puberty, identity development and exploration, a focus on peer relationships, defiant behaviour, conflict with authority (including parents and teachers), reckless behaviour that can be harmful to the individual and to others (Papalia & Feldman, 2011). Furthermore adolescents are expected to adhere to certain norms and beliefs, conform to social roles, develop mature relationships, and choose career paths (Bandura, 2001; Geldard & Geldard, 2004; Sigelman & Rider, 2006). These characteristics are frequently associated with the period of

adolescence however, it is important to note that adolescents experience adolescence differently based on different contexts and personality styles (Arnett, 2001; Geldard & Geldard, 2004; Papalia & Felman, 2011). Development is said to traditionally occur in four different domains namely; biological domain, social domain, psychological domain and cognitive domain. For the purpose of this study the social and the psychological domains are further highlighted.

2.1.1. Social Development

Social change that occurs in the adolescent's environment affects and is affected by internal change (Arnett, 2001; Christie & Viner, 2005; Hartman, 2002). An interaction occurs between internal physical and psychological changes and the external social changes (Christine & Viner, 2005). The successful negotiation between these factors depend on the occurrence of each at the appropriate time (Christine & Viner, 2005). Social contexts such as culture, social group norms, and traditions are important considerations for the understanding of adolescent development (Gullotta & Adams, 2005). Adolescent social development in South Africa occurs within the South African history of racial and cultural segregation (Bray et al., 2010). Therefore, social exploration and development varies among adolescents depending on their context (Bray et al., 2010).

Many changes are experienced in this domain including change in responsibilities, social roles, education and social expectations (Christine & Viner, 2005). Furthermore adolescents experience an emotional separation or independence from parents for the purpose of developing a social identity, forming interpersonal relationships and for effective functioning in the society (Brown, Bakken, Ameringer, & Mahon, 2008; Steyn, 2006). Although there is

an emotional separation that is said to occur during adolescence, family still plays a big role during development in adolescence (Wolfe, Jaffe and Crooks, 2006). It is also reported that adolescents are more likely to focus on relationships with peers including friendships and romantic relationships as opposed to relationships with parents (Arnett, 2001; Heaven, 2001). Individuals in their late adolescent phase prefer romantic relationships and strong connections with peers who share the same interests in them (Arndt, 2014; Ryan, 2001). During this stage of development, peer group acceptance is of great importance (Arndt, 2014).

It is also reported that school teachers are important influences during the process of development (Arndt, 2014; Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Freeman, 2004). Relationships with teachers are believed to be a contributing factor in adolescent's school success and positive individual development (Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Freeman, 2004). Characteristics of relationships with teachers that were associated with positive influence in adolescents included fairness, positive regard, support and a non-judgemental attitude (Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Freeman, 2004). Development in the social domain is important as it facilitates the growth of social interactions and social skills between adolescents and their families, peers and other significant individuals (Larson & Wilson, 2004).

2.1.2 Psychological development

Adolescent's psychological development is characterised by personality and cognitive development, mood swings, challenges with self-esteem and confidence, and a negotiation and change in interpersonal relationships (Boyd & Bee, 2014; Gullotta & Adams, 2005). Adolescents are tasked with integrating physical and social changes into their development, and this can have implications on their psychological state (Christie & Viner, 2005; Sigelman

& Rider, 2006). Identity development is considered to be the main developmental task that adolescents are faced with (Christie & Viner, 2005). According to Erikson's (1968) psychosocial stages of development, adolescents strive to develop a stable ego identity during the identity versus role confusion stage of development. An unsuccessful navigation between identity versus role confusion leads to identity crises, where an individual experiences difficulty in developing a stable sense of identity necessary to progress to adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Schwartz, 2001). Adolescents are faced with the task of developing a sense of 'self', which can be an integration of personal and social identity (Christie & Viner, 2005). During this developmental process adolescents may experience challenges with the successful integration of the developmental domains, therefore this may add to the complexities of navigating adolescence (Christie & Viner, 2005).

2.2 Definition of identity

Identity is a commonly used term and is defined differently in various disciplines. Ultimately identity refers to "who or what am I?" or "who or what are we?" questions (Adams, 2014). Boyd and Bee (2014) define identity as a series of unique characteristics and how these characteristics are demonstrated in various social contexts and life stages. Identity also entails a process of defining the self in the context that the self exists, such as familial, cultural, traditional or social backgrounds and contexts (Josselson, 2005). Furthermore, identity refers to an individual's awareness of themselves as a unique person and with a specific role in society (Louw & Louw, 2007). Marcia (1980) described identity as an internally constructed self-structure that consists of ideologies, beliefs, abilities, and self-perception. Similar to Marcia's definition, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) viewed identity as both consisting of personal attributes and social factors. When identity is considered in the social context, it refers to attributes of an individual that is related to the individual's membership to a group, including beliefs, values,

rules and expectation of that particular group (Adams et al, 2014; Fearon, 1999; Phinney & Ong, 2007). When identity is viewed from a personal perspective it includes aspects of an individual that are unique and distinguishes them, this includes personality attributes and interests (Adams et al, 2014; Fearon, 1999; Phinney & Ong, 2007).

2.3 Theories of identity development

Identity development is considered a central developmental task during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). It is said to occur during the adolescence years, although a number of researchers have suggested identity development occurs throughout the life span. (Arnett, 2001; Boyd & Bee, 2014; Marcia, 2010; Sokol, 2009). In the paragraphs to follow various identity development theories are explored, this will provide context with which identity development during adolescence can be understood.

2.3.1 Erikson's psychosocial theory

Identity as we come to know it is mainly derived from the writings of Erik Erikson during the 1950's (Fearon, 1999). Erikson used a combination of individual biology, psychology and social recognition to explore and understand identity which he coined "ego identity" (Kroger, 2007). Ego identity refers to both the conscious sense of being unique and the unconscious need for continuity of experience (Kroger, 2007; Louw & Louw, 2007). Erikson indicated that vocational decision-making, identification with ideological values and sexual identity, relationships, religion, politics, unique value system, social responsibility and emotional independence from parents all form part of the foundational structures of an individual's ego identity (Kroger, 2007; Louw & Louw, 2007).

According to Erikson (1968) individuals during adolescent years transition from childhood to adulthood. The old identity no longer suffices a new identity needs to be developed, one that is capable of preparing the adolescent for new roles (Erikson, 1968). Erikson is of the view that identity development begins at an early age when a child becomes aware that he/she is a unique individual and is separate from their parents (Erikson, 1968). During adolescence, individuals strive to develop a continuous, stable and integrated image of themselves, which is referred to as ego-synthesis (Erikson, 1963 in Louw & Louw, 2007; Weiten; 2010). Furthermore, an integration is said to occur when an individual combines both personal and cultural value-orientations, this integration is referred to as the socio-cultural identity. Individuals are also expected to establish a gender role identity, where they identify with the socially constructed role of femininity and masculinity (Christie & Viner, 2005). Moreover, during this process of adolescents, individuals often are tasked with choosing career paths based on their abilities and achievements (Erikson, 1963 in Louw & Louw, 2007; Weiten; 2010).

Erikson (1968) refers to identity crisis as a critical turning point in a person's life, where one needs to navigate between two critical tasks in order for development to proceed. Erikson denotes that successful or unsuccessful resolution of earlier stages may directly affect the resolution of later stages (Sokol, 2009). Role confusion means that adolescents may be confused about who they are and where they are going (Sokol, 2009). Adolescents experiencing role confusion may also question their view of themselves, their purpose and their direction in life, which may lead to anxiety and hostility towards roles and values (Louw & Louw, 2007; Sokol, 2009; Weiten, 2010).

2.3.2 The ego identity status theory

Marcia (1980) conceptualised identity as an internally constructed structure that houses an individual's values and beliefs systems, perceptions, ideologies and individual history. Individuals strive for a stable well developed structure, the more the structure is stable the more the individuals develop a stable identity and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. A less developed and stable structure leads to individuals doubting their existence and meaning in life and rely on external validation of self (Marcia, 1980).

Building from the work of Erikson, James Marcia proposed the theory of ego identity, which has played a huge role in the conceptualisation of identity development (Marcia, 1980). Marcia developed an identity-status model that includes four statuses that adolescents have to undergo in order to define themselves (Kroger, 2007). These statuses are associated with different personality aspects, life experiences and types of interpersonal interactions (Kroger, 2007). Marcia focused on how individuals use the process of exploration and commitment to select their unique pathways regarding issues that they face during adolescence (career choice, value system) (Boyd & Bee, 2014; Kroger, 2007; Louw & Louw, 2007; Marcia, 2010). Marcia (2010) deemed exploration of different value systems, vocational options and commitment to be the foundation of identity formation.

Identity achievement, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity diffusion are the four ego statuses proposed by Marcia (1980). These four statuses are defined by the presence or absence of crisis or commitment in two areas of individual development; ideology and vocation. A crisis in this case refers to a decision making period and commitment refers to the

extent of personal investment (Marcia, 1980). *Table 2* is the criteria for Marcia's (1980) identity statuses.

Identity achievement is characterised by individuals who have already experienced a crisis and in the process of making a commitment about a direction in life (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980). With regards to personality, individuals in this status are said to be highly motivated, and have high levels of self-esteem, are more extroverted and show high levels of internal locus of control (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980).

An individual in the foreclosed status shows less or no evidence of crisis but has already committed to certain directions in life before exploring different pathways (Sandhu & Sharma, 2015). These directions are mainly based on the influence of parents or family members with which adolescents identify. Individuals in the foreclosed status show high levels of conformity and agreeableness. Adolescents in this category aspire for change and are less anxious. They are not open to new experiences and they utilise the external locus of control (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980).

Individuals in the moratorium status experience a crisis, and are in the process of exploring and experimenting with different adult roles and values, and have not yet made a commitment. These individuals are seen to be in a process of finding an identity, which can be highly anxiety provoking which is a key feature of this status (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980)

Individuals in the diffusion category do not seem to be interested in finding themselves and their unique values and roles (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980). These individuals may or may not experience a crisis and show lack commitment and this may be due to a care free perspective in life or a serious pathology (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980). Diffusion adolescents show a lack of autonomy, they are easily influenced by peer pressure and are usually shy and self-focused.

These adolescents are more likely to show signs of psychological impairment (Kroger, 2007; Marcia, 1980)

The structure of identity is constantly being evaluated and changed by the individual, elements are added and discarded as the process of identity formation moves along (Marcia, 1980). Adolescents are said to often follow a common pattern during their journey to self-discovery; individuals begin in the foreclosure and diffusion status, there after they go through the period of moratorium followed by the achievement status (Louw & Louw, 2007).

2.4 Identity development in South Africa

For a majority of individuals in South Africa, identity is rooted in the social, political and economic discrepancies between four main ethnic groups namely: White, Black, Coloured and Indian (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). These discrepancies are a result of the systematic segregation (favouring the White population) during the apartheid era which led to an unequal access to material resources, discrimination of basic human rights and limitation of intergroup relations (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). In South Africa identity development is complicated, identity for Black South Africans is said to be influenced by the traditional aspects that existed before apartheid, and then further reinforced by apartheid through segregation (Adams et al., 2014). This may pose as one of the challenges that Black South African adolescents are faced with during the process of exploring and forming an integrated identity (Eaton & Louw, 2002).

During the post- apartheid era, the political landscape of South Africa has gradually changed. This is due to the fact that resources of the country are now accessible to all South Africans, intergroup contact is promoted and encouraged, economic advancement of the previously disadvantaged groups is occurring and discriminatory laws have been banished (Norris et al.,

2008). However for a majority of the Black South Africans the disadvantages caused by the apartheid system still prevail. These disadvantages include unemployment, disadvantaged education, poverty and poor living and health conditions (Adams et al., 2014; Adams et al., 2011; Durrheim & Dixon, 2010). Alberts, Mbalo and Ackerman (2003) suggest that Black South African adolescents are most likely to be aware of issues related to poverty and socioeconomic ills due to their family backgrounds and lived experiences. As a result these adolescents develop and accept a sense of responsibility and desire to alleviate and improve their family situations. This is among the various challenges that Black adolescents are faced with, as it consequently affects their perception of their existence in the post-apartheid era (Alberts et al., 2003).

Black South Africans are also faced with the task of making sense of their identity in the larger context of a democratic South Africa. A change in the socio-political climate of the country has an influence on how various identities such as ethnicity, race, gender, education, career/job, ideologies, personality traits (interests, likes and dislikes), peer relationships and family relationships are explored and developed (Adams et al., 2014; Durrheim & Dixon, 2010). This section of the thesis examines the exploration and formation of identity during the on-going socio-political transformation that South Africa is currently undergoing.

2.4.1 Types of Identities in South Africa

With end of the apartheid regime, the newly elected democratic government had the task of integrating the country (Adams, 2014). It was evident that the country lacked a commonly accepted national identity that would lead to reconciliation and a sense of nationhood (Bornman, 2010). A national identity termed ‘the rainbow nation’ was introduced as means of

reconciliation (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). Researchers Davidio, Gaertner and Saguy (2007) supported this notion and proposed that a national identity reduced the chances of prejudice between the racial groups. However the notion of forming a national identity together with the already existing collective or ethnic identity and may be a challenge for adolescents to integrate (Bornman, 2010). Furthermore, it is believed that racial groups that perceived themselves as holding more power will identify with national identity easily as compared to a racial group that is marginalised (Bornman, 2010). Bornman (2010) examining national identification, concluded that Black South Africans identified more with their ethnic identity as compared to their national identity. Thom and Coetzee (2004) propose a concept of dual identity crisis. They argue that black adolescents not only experience individual identity crisis but also a national or a cultural identity crisis. This is due to the fact that although it is argued that black South African adolescents tend to associate strongly with their ethnic and collectivistic identity, it is noted that a gradual integration of the western and modernised culture is evident (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Norris et al., 2008; Thom & Coetzee, 2004). Although this dual crisis is notable, Thom and Coetzee (2004) proposed that black South African adolescents develop a higher level of identity development when compared to their white peers. A possible explanation is that black adolescents had to develop strong cultural and ethnic identity as a way of responding against discrimination during the apartheid era (Thom & Coetzee, 2004).

2.4.1.1 Social Identity theory and Collective identity

Social identity theory maintains that an individual's self-concept consists of a social component that relates to being a member of social group and attaching emotional significance to that membership (Tajfel, 1981). The 'self' is therefore said to be in part defined by belonging in a

social group (Bornman, 2010). Social identity and collective identity is sometimes used interchangeably.

Eaton and Louw (2002) maintain that individuals from collectivistic cultures describe themselves according to their social group's identity as opposed to individualistic cultures that focus on personal and unique attributes that make individuals different from another. Furthermore, individuals from a collectivistic culture conceptualise their identity based on social, traditional and cultural aspects of their background or surrounding (Adams et al, 2012). In South Africa, 'indigenous' individuals are considered collectivistic and individuals that belong to Western ethnic groups are considered individualistic (Adams et al., 2012; Eaton and Louw, 2010; Eaton and Louw, 2002; Norris et al., 2008). Identity exploration may be influenced by the characteristics and attributes of the social group that an individual belongs to (Trepte, 2011). This is due to the fact that individuals tend to internalise the qualities of the group that they belong in an attempt to shape their behaviours and attitudes to match the chosen social group (Turner, Hogg, Oeks, Reicher & Wetherell, 2011). This has an influence on how the individual is viewed and how an individual views members that belong in their group and out group members (Turner et al., 2011).

Membership of a social group offers a sense of belonging, development of social boundaries that enhance an individual's ability to define others, fosters a sense of 'self' through others, and affects psychological well-being through social support (Ashford & Mael, 1989; Thom & Coetzee, 2004). Although black adolescents are more closely associated with the collectivistic culture, Steven and Lockard (1997) hold that due to exposure to the westernised culture that is

still dominant in South Africa, a shift towards an integration of western/individualistic identity is noted among black adolescents.

2.4.1.2 Ethnic identity

Ethnicity refers to the characteristics, norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and cultural practices that a particular social group adhere to (Adams et al., 2011; Phinney, 1995; Verkutyan, 2005). Cockley (2007) defined ethnicity as a set of shared characteristics, behaviours and attitudes among a group of people who share a common ancestry, history, and language. Thus it can be concluded that ethnic identity forms part of an individual's social identity. Phinney and Ong (2007) assert that ethnicity is not chosen; rather it is determined by the family one is born into. Therefore it is assumed that an individual is born in a family with pre-existing expectations to adhere to the ethnic practices and beliefs that the family practices (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Tajfel, 1981). However, ethnic identity is viewed as a concept that constructed over time by an individual based on their contexts, and perspective of the ethnic group that they belong to (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Cockley (2007) further argues that ethnicity is not rigid but is flexible and liable to change based on personal choice.

Ethnicity is said to be constructed through and an individual's knowledge, commitment and experience of their ethnic group (Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Tajfel, 1981). Individuals are expected to have an ability to label their ethnicity through a process of self-categorisation. Additionally individuals are expected to form an emotional attachment and commit to their ethnic identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Individuals are also expected to go through a process of exploration of their ethnicity as a way of gaining knowledge and experience of their ethnic group. Exploration can be in the form of attending and participating

in ceremonies and cultural events. Exploration can also take the form of listening to stories told by elders and asking questions (Syde et al., 2013). Similar to social identity, individuals with a salient connection to their ethnic identity tend to have a stronger sense of belonging, use their ethnic identity as a protective factor against discrimination, and have improved psychological well-being (Harris & Findley, 2014).

There has been an ongoing debate about the use of the terms ethnicity and race, as a result these terms are often used interchangeably. Cokley (2007) proposes that race is a term used to categorise groups of people according to physical appearances such as the colour of their skin rather than cultural characteristics. However, race is said to not be limited physical to appearances and ethnicity to cultural characteristics (Yoon, 2011). According to Burgess, Harris and Mattes (2002) South Africans are most likely to identify themselves according to their racial category, then by their ethnic identity (determined by culture and language), followed by their religious identity, and lastly by their personal category. An emphasis on racial differences remain, and ethnic identity is associated with race (Phinney et al., 1990; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Negative racial discourses among black adolescents were noted as a result of the history of racial discrimination towards black people (Gaganakis, 2006). A negative view on an individual's race may result in a negative view of an individual's ethnic identity (Gaganakis, 2006). This seems to suggest that black adolescence experience challenges during their ethnic identity development due to the socio-political history of the country.

Based on this literature, it is speculated that one of the challenges that black adolescents face is an integration of individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Thom & Coetzee, 2004). Research shows that an ideological shift is noted among black adolescents with regards to their pre-existing collectivistic framework (Steven & Lockard, 1997). However research also

maintains that black adolescents tend to favour their collective and ethnic identities when compared to a national or dominant western culture (Bornman (2010). Additionally due to the history of racial discrimination, Black adolescents tend to have negative narratives about their racial identity. This ambivalence is evidence that further research is warranted to investigate the challenges and navigation process that Black adolescents in South Africa are faced with during the process of exploration and formation of identity.

2.4.2 Adam's model of identity

Adams et al. (2012) studied the self-descriptions of adolescents across the Black, Coloured, Indian, and White ethnic groups in South Africa. He proposed that identity development can be conceptualised using four broad dimensions namely; the relational orientations, attributes, situations, and ideologies (Adams et al., 2014). The relational orientation dimension is informed by relationships with others, the attribute and ideological dimensions are informed by the usage of language and words, and the situational dimension is informed by the contexts of behaviour (Adams et al., 2014).

Relational orientations are rooted in the concept of individualism and collectivism. Identity is based on personal attributes such as personality, personal accomplishments, gender, abilities and dispositions (Adams et al., 2012; Eaton & Louw, 2010). Whereas collectivistic cultures are strongly rooted in relationship with others, group membership and acceptance (Adams et al, 2012). Individuals consider the social contexts that they are placed in and depend on members of the social group for guidance (Adams et al., 2012). This notion is captured in expression of the concept of *Ubuntu*, which is an African concept that an individual exists through the existence of others (Adams et al., 2014)

The Attribute dimension refers to dispositions that are considered stable personality attributes (Adams et al., 2012). This dimension places emphasis on the development of personality traits, individual's unique traits, personal goals and a sense of independence. Adams et al., (2014) argues that this dimension is likely to be salient in individualistic and western cultures.

The situational dimension is similar to the attribute dimension, as it is also related to personality. In this dimension, the context in which personality is considered is important (Adams et al., 2014). Here, adolescent identity development is viewed within the context of their upbringing and current lived experiences. In this dimension an individual is considered as a social being, whose personal attributes are externally influenced by their context and environment (Adams et al., 2014; Adams et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is argued that this dimension is associated with non-Western collectivistic cultures.

The ideological dimension refers to the cultural, religious, spiritual and social aspects of identity. This dimension focuses on the social groups that an individual uses to distinguish themselves. This includes cultural, ethnic, traditional and religious groups that form part of an individual's social identity (Adams et al., 2012).

Adams et al.'s (2012) study provides a good foundation of the conceptualisation of identity development in South Africa. A model by Jones and McEwen (2002) offers a similar conceptualisation of identity development, but highlights the concept of multiple dimensions of identity that exist simultaneously and can occur across contextual influences and time.

2.5 Multiple Dimensions of Identity; The Jones and McEwen Model

Increasing attention has been given to socially constructed identities over the years. Researchers such as Phinney (1990, 1992), Pope and Reynolds (1991) and Deaux (1993) have all contributed to the growing body of knowledge regarding identity development. However,

there is a general lack of identity models that recognises existence of multiple intersecting social identities (Cole, 2009).

According to Pope and Reynolds (1991) little attention has been given to identities related to sex, age, religion or sexual preferences and how these identities affect identity development. Pope and Reynolds (1991) argue that identities of minority groups are often viewed in a narrow and limited manner and this due to the lack of literature done on identity development models and theories of diverse populations. In their study of multiple oppressions, Pope and Reynolds (1991) found that to fully understand the identity development of oppressed groups, alternative, flexible and nonlinear frameworks should be considered. Additionally, they concluded that identity should be viewed as multiple dimensional, as this view is the link to accepting, embracing and appreciated various ways in which people present themselves. This study provides evidence of the complexities of understanding the identity development of individuals from a multicultural background and how this gap in literature warrants further research.

Deaux (1993) proposes a similar idea to multiple social identities. He proposed that individuals view these multiple social identities in a hierarchal structure, depending on the context that an individual exists in. Social identities such as nationality, race, ethnicity and culture are usually at the top of the hierarchy and have more profound influence on the individual's attitudes and behaviour (Deaux, 1993). Identities such as interests, age groups and professional groups are usually at the bottom of the hierarchy, and have less influence on behaviours and attitudes (Deaux, 1993). Identities that are believed to have less influence on an individual's behaviour have been neglected by research (Phinney, 2008). Phinney (2008) however, maintains that studying multiple social identities is a complex process since one has to consider the multifaceted and changing nature of these identities over time and context. Jones and McEwen's (2000) study builds from these aforementioned studies, but offers a more dynamic

construction of multiple intersecting social identities, the salience of these identities and the influence of contextual factors.

Jones and McEwen proposed an identity study centred on ten lesbian college students. The purpose of the study was to explore how lesbian college students perceived their sexual identity, and how the other dimensions of identity (such as gender, race, and class) interact with these perceptions. From this study, an identity model was developed, that highlights multiple dimensions of identity. The concept of multiple dimensions of identity is viewed as the development and expression of more than one aspect of identity (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007; Deaux, 1993; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Pope & Reynolds, 1991). Multiple dimensions of identity refers to the notion that an individual's identity is made up of the core self and multiple social identities such as race, age, gender and ethnicity that are influenced by contextual factors (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Identity is then considered to be defined internally by self and influenced externally by external factors (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Josselson, 2005; Louw & Louw, 2007). In their study Jones and McEwen (2000) proposed a conceptual model that represents the multiple dimensions of identity and the influence of multiple dimensions of identity on the continually constructed and developing self. At the core of the model is the 'self', it comprises of the individuals' personality and unique attributes such as preferences, characteristics, abilities, and interests internally defined (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The self can be likened to the non-collectivistic part of identity. The core self is surrounded by of multiple intersecting dimensions, such as race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality and culture (Jones & McEwen, 2000). These outer dimensions are said to be influenced by contextual factors such as society, family, media, teachers, and friends. These dimensions can be considered to form part of social identity or

collectivistic identity, as they are related to the membership of a social group (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007).

According to Jones and McEwen (2000) the multiple dimensions of identity are interrelated with each other, therefore a change or development in one dimension influences a change and development in the other dimensions. One cannot consider these dimensions in isolation, as they form part of a systematic relationship that is in constant interaction and negotiation with the core self (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). The salience of the different dimensions of identity differs as the individual interacts with the contextual influences such as career path, current lived experiences, social factors, and family background. These contextual influences play a major role in how individual develop their identities. The salience of each dimension is also considered in the model (see *Figure 1*), as the authors understand identity to be continuous and flexible instead of rigid and linear (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Jones and McEwen's (2002) model highlights the importance of considering adolescents as continuously developing throughout their developmental span. This thesis focuses on highlighting the various identity dimensions that black South African adolescents explore. An emphasis is placed on the notion that adolescent identity is broad and continuously evolving and changing. The focus of thesis is on the manner in which South African adolescents explore and develop their identity in the South African context. Finally, this research will also focus on the navigation of the multiple dimensions of identity that adolescent's experience, including the social identities that are often neglected in research.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter gives an overview of the definition of adolescents and the critical developmental processes. This is followed by the theories of identity development and identity development in South Africa is discussed. Lastly, Jones and McEwen's model of Multiple dimensions of Identity is explored.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methods employed in this study. The chapter will start with an overview of the description of the research design and approach that was utilised. This will be followed by a description of the procedures that guided sampling and recruiting the participants. Thereafter, an account of the data collection and analysis will be provided. Lastly, a description of the relevant ethical consideration and procedures that were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study will be provided.

3.1 Research design and approach

3.1.1 Qualitative research

Significant progress has been made over the past years to establish qualitative research designs as recognised research methods (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Researchers are now focussed on gaining a deeper understanding of human behaviour, rather than what mere numbers and statistical models can provide (Howitt, 2010; Neuman, 2014; Stirling, 2001). Furthermore, qualitative researchers consider research methods that focus on the experiences and perceptions of individuals (Howitt, 2010).

Qualitative researchers are explorers of the lived experiences of individuals. The main aim of qualitative research is to understand the participants of the study and to consider the unique characteristics of specific individuals and the settings in which they are located (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Qualitative research involves attempting to interpret phenomena in terms of

the different perspectives brought forward by participants (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Howitt, 2010). Qualitative researchers thus tend to focus on the perspective of the individual and their individuality; they are most likely to use methods that will get them as close as possible to the lived experiences of their participants (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Howitt, 2010).

Qualitative research was suitable for this research study because the dimensions of identity are unique to each person and by using qualitative methods the researcher could gain personal insight into the individually constructed ideas and realities of adolescents in their natural setting. This research study followed an explorative, descriptive design. The aim of exploratory research is to obtain original information in order to gain new insights into a particular phenomenon, whilst descriptive designs aim at describing, analysing, defining and explaining the phenomenon (Niewenhuis, 2007; Patton, 2007).

3.2 Participants and sampling strategy

For the purpose of this research, a purposive sampling strategy was used to select Black South African adolescents in the late adolescent phase. Purposive sampling was used in this study because the researcher was interested in adolescents that were able and willing to give account of their experiences with regards to their identity development. Adolescents were selected

because of the demonstrated importance of the phase of development in terms of individual and social identity.

Participants included in study were Black South African adolescents from a high school in the Mangaung area of the Motheo district. The sample included both female and male adolescents in their late adolescent developmental stage that were willing to provide information related to the purpose of this study. For the purpose of this research, the age range was inclusive of adolescents that are still attending school and are older eighteen.

Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that selects participants purposively for their capability of providing in-depth information regarding the phenomena at hand (Patton, 1990). The aim of purposive sampling is to select cases that have the capacity to provide the researcher with in-depth and expert information pertaining to a specific phenomenon (Deyvers & Frankel, 2000; Patton, 1990). The researcher was interested in the perceptions of late adolescents (between the ages of 16-22). This is because late adolescents have arguably already experienced most of the identity developmental challenges presented during this phase. For this reason early adolescents (between the ages of 14-15) were excluded because of the possible lack of exposure their age group is assumed to have experienced (Louw & Louw, 2007).

The participants included in this sample consisted of a total 21 males and 30 females. Originally the researcher planned on including an equal number of male and female participants to have equal representativity. However, there were fewer males available in each class, thus making the female participants more than the male participants. The participants were of diverse ethnicities and therefore spoke different indigenous/African languages. All the discussion and writing were conducted in English because the researcher's home language was not one of the predominant languages (Setswana and Sesotho) spoken in this school. Although

the preferred language for data collection was English the researcher encouraged the participants to express themselves in the language that they felt comfortable with. Fortunately the researcher had an understanding of both of these languages, therefore making it easy to translate data to English for analysis.

3.3 Method of data collection

This study involved two phases of data collection. The first phase comprised of a short reflective exercise and the nominal group technique, the second phase involved focus groups.

3.3.1 Reflective exercise

Using reflective exercises is a technique of exploring emotions and experiences through narrative writing (Levine, Kern, & Wright, 2008; Ortlipp, 2008). Reflective exercises usually include two phases, namely reflection and narrative writing. During reflection, participants are encouraged to think explicitly about their perspectives, assumptions and life experiences. After this, participants write these thoughts, assumptions and experiences as they come to mind (Hargreaves, 2004).

Reflective writing aims at allowing participants to be free and flexible by not constricting them by asking questions that require direct answers. Therefore, participants are free to write anything that comes to mind in relation to a particular phenomenon (Ortlipp, 2008). In this case it involved participants engaging in reflective narrative writing that focused on the description of identity and aspects of their identity that are the most prominent in their current developmental phase.

According to Hargreaves (2004) reflective writing can increase self-awareness, insight and deeper understanding of one's self. However, a disadvantage of reflection and writing is the possibility of a participant discovering uncomfortable aspects about themselves that they were not aware of previously (Hargreaves, 2004). Another limitation would be the difficulty that participants whose first language is not English to express themselves fluently in English (Zannini, Cattaneo, Brugnolli, & Saiani, 2011).

This study made use of reflective writing because reflective writing allowed participants to explore and write their perceptions and assumptions about how they saw themselves and what aspects they valued the most. Furthermore the participants shared their thoughts directly as they came to them without the researcher asking them leading questions that would in turn confined their thinking. In this study participants were encouraged to express themselves in their preferred language. All participants wrote all their reflective essays in English. Participants used this instruction to guide their writing; on this page, write down aspects/features/characteristics that your identity is encompassed of.

3.3.2 The nominal group technique

The aim of a nominal group technique is to generate individual ideas that can be used for brainstorming, problem solving and prioritisation of ideas that are discussed and ranked by the group at a later stage (Dobbie et al., 2004; Harvey & Holmes, 2012; Gallager et al., 1993). Harvey and Holmes (2012) claim that the nominal group technique is mostly used for its unique ability to capture the views of participants in order to get an understanding of their perceptions on a given topic.

The nominal group technique (NGT) is a structured procedure that provides rank ordered

feedback about a group of individual's perceptions in a defined area of interest (Dobbie, Rhodes, Tysinger, & Freeman, 2004; Gallagher, Hares, Spencer, Bradshaw, & Webb, 1993).

The advantages of the nominal group technique include accumulating ideas and reach consensus in problem solving ideas (Gallager et al., 1993). Additionally the nominal group technique provides participants the opportunity to engage in creative expression, critical self-reflection and the generation of ideas from different perspectives which produces high quality and in-depth information (Gallager et al., 1993; Harvey & Holmes, 2012).

Another advantage of NGT is that it values the views of all individuals thus representing accounts and experiences of all participants. Furthermore NGT minimises the impact of unhelpful group dynamics and promotes equal participation by all individuals and prevents one sided influence from the more vocal individuals (Harvey & Holmes, 2012; Hiligsmann et al., 2013). It also reduces pressure to conform to group opinion, in this way individual and group voices are heard (Harvey & Holmes, 2012; Hiligsmann et al., 2013).

The disadvantages of the NGT are that there is a possibility that some participants may be reluctant to share ideas in the group because of fear of being judged based on their opinions. Secondly participants may not have the confidence to express themselves in a group setting (Dobbie et al., 2004; Gallager et al., 1993).

In this study participants were divided into 3 groups of 23 learners. For each group participants were asked make use of the short reflective exercise to guide their responses. Next the participants were asked to share their ideas with the facilitator and the group. Following this, the ideas were listed and the participants had a chance of voting for the ones that were prominent in their lives.

The use of both the short reflective exercise and the nominal group technique provided the study with an individual voice and a group voice for better understanding of a specific idea. This data collection method provided the researcher with ranked dimensions of identity that participants associate with. The ranked order was particularly valuable as it provided the researcher with an indication of the salience and importance of multiple dimensions of their identities and for Focus Group discussions.

3.3.3 Focus Groups

According to Acocella (2012), a focus group is a non-standardised information gathering technique that is based on conducting an informal conversation or discussion with a group of participants. Focus groups can also be viewed as a form of a group interview that aims at gathering qualitative information about a particular topic (Bader & Rossi, 2002). The main aim of the focus group is to facilitate an interaction and a discussion between the participants and to use that interaction to collect quality information in a short time period (Acocella, 2012). This participant interaction is a vital component of focus groups, and it includes the dynamics that are involved in the conversation between participants (Belzile & Öberg, 2012).

The researcher also uses a set of pre-established questions to guide the conversation in order to reach the aims the research (Acocella, 2012). Therefore, participants should also be of similar attributes such as developmental phase, or same interest group but not necessarily the same opinions. It is important to have a level of heterogeneity, the goal is to have heterogeneity in experiences but homogeneity in the sample (Acocella, 2012). Homogeneity is important to foster an interaction where all participants feel comfortable to share their opinions without the fear of getting judged as everyone is on the same level.

Another factor that is important in collecting rich data is that the participants involved are

interested and have some knowledge and are cognitively able to provide information about the research topic. It is important to pick participants that considered knowledgeable in the specific phenomenon and have direct experience of the topic (Acocella, 2012).

The strengths of focus groups includes gaining in-depth and a wide range of information about the research topic through participant interaction (Acocella, 2012; Belzile & Öberg, 2012; Bader & Rossi, 2002). Furthermore participants are able to build on the views of other participants in the group, which encourages individual reflections (Belzile & Öberg, 2012).

In this study, focus groups were used to explore the manner in which Black adolescents conceptualised and developed their identity. Selected participants from the nominal group technique session were divided into 3 groups of 6 participants. Semi- structured and open ended questions were asked to the participants and the facilitator encouraged an in-depth discussion of each question. The questions asked focused on addressing the research question and the aims of the study. The following questions were asked:

- What does
- How would you define your identity?
- What influences your identity exploration and development?

3.5 Procedure

Permission to conduct the current study was obtained from the Free State Department of Education, the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Humanities of the University of the Free State and the school's principal. Further ethical approval was obtained from Research Proposals and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of Rhodes University.

The aim of the Short Reflective exercise was to allow participants to explore and reflect on

their experiences and to produce their thoughts and ideas using narrative writing. Participants were arranged in groups of 16, the groups consisted of both male and female participants. Participants were asked to take a moment and reflect on themselves and their lived experiences. Next, participants were asked to write down the aspects and features relating to their individual and social identity in a form of a mind map or free writing. This reflective writing was in preparation for the next step, which was the nominal group technique.

At the onset of a nominal group, each participant is given a piece of paper and a pen to jot down their ideas (Harvey & Holmes, 2012; He, Cerin, Huang, & Wong, 2014). The researcher utilised coloured markers and a flip chart to scribe. Due to space, participants were not able to sit in a circle, therefore participants were asked to remain seated in rows. During the first step of the NGT, the facilitator begins by asking an explicitly constructed and applicable question related to the research topic such as; 'what are the most prominent aspects of your identity?' At this point the group does not function on group dynamics yet, but as individuals in order to take into account the perceptions of everyone in the group (Dobbie et al., 2004; Gallagher et al., 1993; Harvey & Holmes, 2012).

This is followed by the Silent step in which each group is assigned a flipchart to scribe. Participants are allocated about 15 minutes each to write their ideas or suggestions with regards to the question on a piece of paper. Each participant is required to write down their ideas without conferring with other participants (Dobbie et al., 2004; Gallagher et al., 1993; Harvey & Holmes, 2012).

Step three is the Round-robin phase. Here participants are given a chance to present their ideas one idea at a time. The process of presenting follows a form of a round robin cycle. No

additional comment or discussion is allowed during this stage so as to prevent outspoken individuals from influencing the decisions of the whole group. If two participants present an idea that is similar to what has been given before, the facilitator then puts these two ideas together. Participants can skip a turn if they do not have anything to say at that moment (Dobbie et al., 2004; Gallagher et al., 1993; Harvey & Holmes, 2012).

The following step is the discussion or item clarification step. The group clarifies vague ideas and arranges them into themes. Elimination of ideas is not allowed in this step. A list of the themes is then drawn by the facilitator from the most popular to the least popular. The discussion takes about 30 min, where each item is reviewed, discussed, clarified and disputed. This step allows the facilitator to identify the plurality of perceptions (Dobbie et al., 2004; Gallagher et al., 1993; Harvey & Holmes, 2012).

The last step is the voting step. The top ten items that are considered to be important are chosen from the list of ideas on the flip chart. A point system is used to vote on the items that are of priority. Ten points are awarded to the most important and one point to the least important. The facilitator organises the list from the most important as reflected by the points to the least important. The number of points allocated is written next to each item (Dobbie et al., 2004; Gallagher et al., 1993; He et al., 2014; Hilgsmann et al., 2013). Following this, the researcher randomly selected 8 students from each group for a discussion about the top ten ideas that were considered to be the most important for that particular group.

During the focus groups, the researcher began with a discussion on the purpose of conducting a focus group and the reasons why the focus group was to be recorded. Participants were asked to keep everything discussed during the focus group confidential. Participants were asked semi-

structured open ended questions that aimed at addressing the process of identity exploration and development. The researcher also allowed the participants time after the focus group to ask questions and discuss any further enquiries that may have arose as a result of the research topic. In this time the researcher also conducted a debriefing discussion, in addition the researcher left details with the headmaster in case there learners require professional counselling.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis method for both of the data collection methods was done by means of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a simple approach to data analysis that examines emerging themes to summarise the content of the data (Howitt, 2010). Fereday and Muir-Conchrane (2006) stated that this method of analysis can also be viewed as an investigation of common themes that are relative to a phenomenon being researched. Through thematic analysis the researcher is able to work data into meaningful categories that make it easier to derive meaning (Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Stirling (2001) thematic analysis includes principles, structures and techniques of various analytic methods.

Thematic analysis produces categories of reported themes that arise from data. A theme reflects a pattern or something prominent about the data with regards to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is up to the researcher's judgment to decide what constitutes a theme. In addition, multiple occurrences of a concept works as a guide to determine what are considered/deemed to be overall themes (Joffe, 2011). However, the quantity of the theme is not the only indication of the overall themes. Themes should also reflect significant meaning with relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

One of the advantages of using thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is not derived from any epistemological framework and can be applied across a number of frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore the lack of clear guidelines and rules means that this method is not limited and whatever the researcher decides on is acceptable. According to Howitt (2010), this advantage can also be seen as a disadvantage in that since there is no specific criterion that is used to decide on the themes. This means that there is a lack of a clear and consistent method and structure of data analysis (Howitt (2010).

Braun and Clarke (2006) proposes six stages of thematic analysis namely; (1) familiarising the researcher with the data, (2) generalising initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes and (6) producing report. These phases are not rules but are guidelines to conducting a thematic analysis. Moreover as stated before, analysis follows a back and forth process instead of a linear process.

Phase one, familiarising the researcher with the data involves 'repeated reading' of the data in order for the researcher to be familiar with the depth and breadth of the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase the researcher read and re-read the notes that were collected from the learners during the discussing phase. During the second phase of thematic analysis, the generating of initial codes begins. This involves the development of a list of initial codes from the data that appears to be meaningful with regards to the phenomena. Data is therefore categorised into meaningful and manageable segments. According to Stirling (2001) it is important to take note of each category and make sure that there are clear and rigid boundaries to avoid the overlapping of ideas. The researcher goes through the data and carefully selects data that appears to be prominent and developing patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Conchrane, 2006).

Coded the data phase three, the search of themes can begin. This phase involves sorting the codes into possible themes. This means that the researcher pays attention to each code and attempts to find meaningful connections between the different codes to establish a prominent theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, the selected themes must be specific enough to be meaningful to one idea and they must also be broad enough to relate to other codes within the theme (Stirling, 2001).

When these themes are generated, the researcher proceeds with phase four, reviewing themes. This phase consists of two levels. The first level involves reviewing coded data, this includes taking a closer look at each code in each theme and deciding whether they form a salient pattern or not (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second level focuses on the validity of the themes with regards to the data as a whole. It is in this phase that the researcher attempts to code additional data within the already established themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Conchrane, 2006)

In the fifth phase of thematic analysis, defining and naming themes, the researcher has to go through a process of first defining the data which is carefully describing and interpreting the contents of the data. Secondly the researcher refines the data to explore the core of the established themes (Stirling, 2001). Furthermore, the researcher analyses the data within these themes. During this process sub-themes may emerge, this means that the researcher may discover a theme within a theme; this is mostly common for large and complex themes. When the themes have been successfully defined, the researcher can give significant names to each of these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The last phase is producing the report. This is writing and summing up of all the data collected

and concluded from the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data analysis for all the data collection methods followed a similar thematic analysis process. The data collection methods included in this study yielded different data sets. However, from the data sets emerged distinct patterns which made it possible for the researcher to derive main and sub themes. During the first step raw data for the short reflective exercise, the nominal group technique and the focus group was collated electronically in the form of a Word document. For the short reflective exercise, data was captured in a form of paragraph essays. For the nominal group technique data captured in a ranking order. Lastly focus groups were transcribed electronically and presented according to the process of the discussion. Throughout the first step the researcher read and re-read the raw data whilst noting down initial ideas.

This step was followed by systematically tabulating and grouping responses of each participant according to identified codes with similar ideas such as behaviour, personality and interests. For the focus groups responses were tabulated according to the questions.

From the previous stage, potential themes started to emerge as codes were analysed to form broader themes. These potential themes were also tabulated and organised according to similar ideas.

The next stage potential themes were reviewed and conceptualized and compared against to the overall study and data set. Finally the themes were further refined and defined to clearly reflect the data set.

3.6 Ethical considerations

According to Allan (2011), research is only valuable if it benefits the society and its people. Good ethics produce valuable research (Silverman, 2013). It is crucial for researchers to follow rules and guidelines to ensure that the individuals participating in a study are treated

cautiously and are assured the protection of their dignity and safety (Silverman, 2013).

All participants have the right to autonomy; it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that each participant is fully aware of the risks and limitations involved in the study (Allan, 2011). Participants must partake in the study out of their own will (Allan, 2011; Hammersley & Traianou, 2014). In this study learners were given a thorough explanation of what the study entailed. Furthermore, the learners were given a chance to decide whether or not they wanted to continue with the study.

Obtaining consent from participants is important because by doing that the researcher is giving the participant the opportunity to decide whether they want to be part of the study or not. Moreover, a consent form assures the researcher that the participants have read and understood the information provided by the researcher (Allan, 2011; Silverman, 2006). Willing participants gave informed consent, specifying the voluntary, confidential and anonymous nature of participation in the research. The researcher was clear and transparent to ensure that the participants were not tricked into doing something that they do not want to. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable.

The researcher must not continue with the study if the participant feels exposed and uncomfortable with the data collected (Allan, 2011). This then ensures that the participant's right is respected. The researcher conducting this study was aware of this aspect and made sure that all the participants were comfortable with continuing in the study (Allan, 2001; Silverman, 2006; Stangor, 2011).

3.7 Issues of trustworthiness

Trustworthiness evolved in an effort to create criteria that measured up to the conventionally used reliability and validity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). With the aim of making the method of trustworthiness equal and parallel to the standards applied in quantitative methods, researchers had to adopt and apply principles from quantitative research such as reliability, validity, generalisability and replicability (Marshall, 1985). In the process of ensuring rigor, researchers followed certain standards to establish trustworthiness. These standards include credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility aims to ensure that the findings of a study are in accord with reality (Martens, 2010; Shenton, 2004). Credibility in this study was ensured by conducting structured reflective writing and nominal groups. Questions were explained by the researcher to make sure that all the participants understood what they are being asked. The researcher also familiarised herself with the culture by consulting appropriate documents and thoroughly observing the participants. Triangulation is the use of different methods to ensure valid results. In this study, the method of triangulation was used by focusing on the strengths and the quality of data that both the short reflective exercise and the nominal group technique produce (Houghton et al., 2013; Shenton, 2004).

Transferability is concerned with the external validity or generalisation of the data (Shenton, 2004). The dynamics of the study were extensively and thoroughly explained to ensure the true representation of the context of the study. This will hopefully enable the reader to understand and relate to the phenomenon described with the events that happen in their lives.

Dependability refers to the belief that the methodology used is explicitly explained and is clear (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Shenton, 2004). Dependability was ensured by describing the context of the study and its implementation accurately, explaining what was done during data gathering and reflecting on the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken (Martens, 2010; Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability assures objectivity of the study (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability was ensured through the use of triangulation to compare results found in both the reflective exercise and the nominal groups (Houghton et al., 2013; Shenton, 2004).

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter an overview of the methodology used in this study to address the research questions was presented. A detailed report of the research rationale, aim and questions was given. After that a description of the research design and approach was also presented in this chapter. This was followed by a presentation of the research participants and sampling procedures. The data collection methods and the data analysis method were given. The chapter concluded with the discussion of the ethical considerations and the procedures of trustworthiness that were followed.

Chapter 4

Findings

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the multiple dimensions of identity that black South African adolescents subscribe to. This study further explored the various identity formation strategies employed and the challenges adolescents negotiate during the process of identity development and formation. Furthermore, the identity exploration and development of these adolescents was considered in their local context and that of broader South Africa. Adolescents in this study come from the Motheo district, geographically this district is considered the central point of economic and industrial development in the Free State province (Arndt, 2014). Particularly the high school from which these participants were drawn from, consists of students that come mostly from working class households. The school has few resources, such as textbooks, school furniture (desks, chairs, chalk boards), and poor infrastructure. The surrounding area of this school is an economically developing township, with a combination of small and big businesses. However, it was noted that although this township was in the process of developing, the majority of the township continued to be influenced by the difficulties that prevails a result of the burden of race, class and gender-based inequalities. These difficulties include the family backgrounds of these participants. Majority of these participants come from blended families, and were raised by family members including aunts, uncles and grandparents. As mentioned in the literature, these types of families are a result of the consequences of apartheid's separate development and family separations by migrant labour. A combination of this local context, and the aforementioned broader socio-political South African context is the framework that these participants develop their identity.

The chapter firstly presents the themes generated from the short reflective exercise. This is then followed by the ranked presentation of themes as generated by the nominal group technique and then finally the key findings from the thematic analysis conducted on the focus group transcripts. Verbatim extracts are used as the evidence for the emerging themes.

4.1 Short Reflective Exercise

The main aim of the Short Reflective Exercise (SRE) was to obtain a narrative account of adolescent's perception of the concept of identity, including the various types of identities that are available for them to explore and identify with. After an in-depth familiarisation and immersion in the data and the consequent analysis, the following themes were identified: Personality traits, Interpersonal relationships, Ambitions, Religion, Ethnicity, Interests, and Gender/Sex. The findings of the main themes and subthemes are presented in *Table 3*. *Table 3* illustrates various aspects of identity that participants associate with. The main themes are broader categories of identities and the subthemes are the types of identities that fall under these categories. *Table 3* is an illustration of the multidimensional and complex structure of the concept of identity. Each of these themes and subthemes will be further explored later on in this chapter.

Table 3

Themes and subthemes of participant’s reflective accounts of the identity exploration.

Main Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1: Personality Traits- personal or individual identity and the aspects of personal identity that participants deem as significant and that they strive to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual qualities • Values • Emotional and Behavioural patterns
Theme 2: Ambitions- refers to long-term goals, dreams and future expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career prospects • Education
Theme 3: Ethnicity- the manner in which participants perceive their ethnic identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race • Nationality • Culture
Theme 4: Interpersonal relationships- aspects of social identity and social expectations or responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendships and Romantic relationships • Family
Theme 5: Interests- these include activities that participants are involved in during and after school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra mural activities
Theme 6: Gender/Sex- Social constructed and biological assigned categories that participants use to define themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female/Male
Theme 7: Religion- aspects of identity that give participants a sense of belonging and direction. This also refers to the aspects of identity that participants use to make sense of their lived experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral compass and sense of belonging

4.2 Nominal Group Technique (NGT).

The aim of the NGT was to provide a rank ordered presentation of the various identities that adolescents associate with. This rank ordered presentation was informed by the short reflective exercise. To reiterate, NGT also aims to attain the collective voice regarding the salience and importance of various identities that these participants associate with. *Table 4* provides a rank ordered presentation of the various aspects of identity that participants associate with as established in the SRE. This study made use of 3 NGT groups. As seen on *Table 4*, different NGT groups present with different rankings of types of identities. Therefore, it may prove to

be difficult to ascertain which of these identity types is most salient across all participants. This study considers that identity development is a complex process and the salience of each dimension of identity will differ from person to person and from group to group. Therefore, the study will consider these rankings separately and will not make comparisons between the groups.

Table 4

Rank ordered presentation of aspects of identity from the 3 nominal group technique groups.

The number of votes for each aspect of identity is given in brackets.

NGT Group 1	NGT Group 2	NGT Group 3
Education (24)	Gender (24)	Ambitions(24)
Confidence (23)	Uniqueness (23)	Future goals (22)
Self-esteem (22)	Ambitions (22)	African (21)
Family (21)	Ethnicity (20)	Peer relationships (19)
Ambitions (20)	Peer Relationships (18)	Sports (18)
Kind (19)	Culture (17)	Education (17)
Respect (18)	Personality traits (16)	Ethnicity (16)
Peer Relationships (17)	Sexuality (13)	Kind (15)
Hard worker (15)	Sports (12)	Extrovert (12)
Sports (14)	Confidence (8)	Uniqueness (10)

4.3 SRE and NGT Key Findings

The nominal group technique was used to rank the various type of identities in order to give an indication of which identities were more prominent for participants. To reiterate the nominal group technique was informed by the short reflective exercise it is therefore not unusual for there to be similarity in the themes. Key findings of the combination of these themes is given below. In NGT 1, the themes ‘respect’, ‘kind’, ‘hard worker’ where grouped together under the main theme ‘personality traits’. In NGT 2, themes ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ were grouped together under the main theme ‘gender’. ‘Ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ themes were also grouped

together under the main theme called 'ethnicity'. Finally, 'personality traits', 'uniqueness', 'confidence' were grouped under the main theme 'personality traits'. In NGT 3, 'ambitions' and 'future' were grouped under the main theme 'ambitions'. Lastly the themes 'extrovert', 'kind' and 'uniqueness' were groups under the main theme personality traits. After the process of refining and defining themes with the aim of organising them according to similar ideas, nine main themes emerged. The nine main themes represents all the categories and subthemes mentioned above, therefore none of the themes were omitted, rather to restate, themes with similar ideas were grouped together to form a main themes.

The first theme identified was 'Personality Traits', which has specific focus on individual identities. The participants described themselves, according to their physical and emotional characteristics, and their behavioural and emotional patterns. Uniqueness and individuality was emphasised and prioritised.

The second theme identified was 'Ambitions' here participants focused on their careers, their ambitions, their dreams and what they aspire to be in the future. Overall participants had a positive outlook for their future aspiration and were determined to being successful. They saw education as an avenue to attaining eventual success and acquiring their dream jobs or careers.

The third theme identified was 'Ethnicity', in this theme participants placed importance on racial identity. Their racial identity was viewed in a positive light, participants expressed pride and confidence in relation to being 'black' Participants also placed significance on nationality, both as South Africans and Africans. Other prominent factors included culture, language, beliefs, traditions and values.

The forth theme identified was 'Peer relationships', the focus of this theme was interpersonal relationships. Participants emphasised friendships with peers and romantic relationships with

their romantic partners. Interpersonal relationships seemed to play a major role in their lived experiences, as participants shared accounts of receiving advice from their friends and relying on their friends for support.

The fifth theme that was identified was 'Family', with important focus of the relationships within the family structure. Participants viewed family as a support system and an external source of motivation. Participants reported family as part of the reasons for wanting to achieve success, both due to the pressure from family members to succeed, but also as an external locus for success. A need to achieve success can be related to the ongoing issue of poverty that a majority of black South Africans are challenged with as a consequence of the effects of apartheid policies.

The sixth theme was 'Interests', for most participants this included activities that were done outside of school premises such as neighbourhood sports. However, this also included activities that were part of the school requirements such as debate club. Overall, participants expressed value in being part of a team and feeling a sense of achievement in partaking in extra mural activities.

The seventh theme was 'Education', here participants focused on future prospects of going to university as means of achieving the success. Participants reported having to work hard in high school with hopes of eventually getting accepted at a higher education institutions.

The eighth theme 'Gender', for participant's gender referred to being born a girl or a boy and meeting social expectations of being male or female. Particularly male participants associated being male with strength and muscularity.

The final theme identified 'Religion'; this theme was associated with hope, faith, meaning, values, and beliefs. Participants reported turning to religion to make sense of the various challenges that they face, for example being orphaned or having a difficult upbringing.

4.4 Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to gain contextual and in depth information on the various strategies utilised and challenges that are experienced during the process of identity exploration and development. Focus groups were also used to further discuss the types of identity previously identified in SRE and NGT, in depth and in detail.

4.4.1 “The identities that I am exploring”

This theme highlights the descriptions of the types of identities that participants associate with. The main aspects of identity included personality traits, physical appearance and values and advice given by elders that participants internalise.

In the following two extracts participants highlight the personality attributes that form part their identities. Notable was the fact that, participants expressed a sense of confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness when describing their identities. Extract 1 and 2 are illustration of how participants generally described themselves.

Extract 1

Palesa: My identity describes me, I am a free kind of talkative person, and I speak what is on my mind. And I am really shy, especially to the people that I really don't know, the people that I first meet I am quiet like you [pointing at another learner] I am quite quiet [FG 1]

Lerato: Okay, my identity; I am kind, I am always smiling, I am friendly. But what I hate most are people who take advantage of me [FG 1]

Extract 2

Mapula: My name is Mapula, I am doing Grade 11. I am a hard worker and learner, I always believe in myself [FG 2]

Itumeleng: I am very short tempered, I talk too much. I love proverbs, especially perseverance, I don't like people telling me what to do [FG 2].

What was also common throughout the discussions was that physical appearance and presenting ones self in a way that others can easily understand were considered significant aspects of identity. In extract 3 and 4 participants emphasise the importance of how the individuals present themselves to the external world and how the individual is perceived.

Extract 3

Karabo: I think identity is (.) how a person looks or how the person introduces himself or herself towards the world [FG 1]

Extract 4

Tshego: I do agree with Karabo *neh* (.) identity describes you, as now as I see you, you see me. Even though you don't know my name, but when you see me, you see that through me, how am I, how do I do and all that stuff [FG 1]

Participants also identified with and found importance in the advice and values given to them by their elders, including family and teachers. Extract 5 and 6 are an illustration of both participants reflecting on the advices and values given by their family members and that form part of their self-descriptions.

Extract 5

Lebo: I am Lebo I stay with my aunt and little sister. I am a talkative girl, I love to talk too much. My aunt always advises me to go to school every day, every

opportunity you get you have to use it every day, my aunt always tells me that
and that is who I am [FG 2]

Extract 6

Thabo: I think what makes me who I am today is respect, and always taking every
person seriously. Also advises, I think when you take advice from parents and to take
it seriously I think that is important [FG 2]

It was noteworthy that when describing their identity, participant's referred to more than one
aspects of their identity. Prominent types of identity included Christianity, education,
relationships (friendships and romantic relationships and familial relationships, such as being
a daughter, son, niece or nephew).

Extract 7 and 8 is an illustration of how religion is used as a way to accept certain aspects of
an individual's self. It was also noted that many participants used religion as a guidance for
certain behaviours and as a coping mechanism.

Extract 7

Mapula: Yes and I love church, I also believe in God and I know that whenever God
is here, everything is going to go well, in everything I do [FG 2]

Katlego: Learner (male): I like the way I am (.) because this is how God made me
[FG 3]

Interviewer: Okay, so religion or spirituality is important for you?

Katlego: Religion (3) yes religion is important for me [FG 3].

Extract 8

Lebo: (...) also my identity as a Christian, how I should act as a school learner [FG 2].

There was also a consensus among participants with regards to the value of peer relationships and of belonging to a peer group, Extract 9 highlights the value that participants place in group identity. It was evident that being part of a peer group not only provided a sense of belonging and togetherness but it also provided a sense of security.

Extract 9

Kgomotso: In this school, we do not fight ourselves, but we fight those who fight us.

Just two weeks ago there was a fight between our school and the school next to us, none of our learners were afraid to come to school because we came together and supported each other. We have a motto that we must never fight each other, but we fight those who fight us= [FG 3].

Katlego: =We do condone a learner from the school next door messing with one of us, we never stand by and watch (.) we get involved [FG 3].

Overall, personality traits such as, physical appearance and values of altruism internalised from elders and parents were considered integral parts of identity. It was also evident that participants regarded religion, education and interpersonal relationships as aspects of their identity that they associated with.

4.4.2 Challenges encountered in the process of exploration

The second theme explores the challenges that adolescents experience in the process of their identity exploration and formation. This theme helps to demonstrate the complexities of identity development among adolescents and their attempts of navigating through these challenges. Participants highlighted challenges, including peer pressure, being misunderstood by peers and adults and the integration of lesson learnt from elders and their current lived experiences as adolescents.

Extract 10

Palesa: //I think why people don't get to really understand who I am (.) is because I don't respond quite well to nonsense I am just who I am, it describes me, so people don't quite understand who I am. They really struggle to understand the person that I am. They really want me to become the person that I am not. They will be like "you are always angry" (2) it is not that I am always angry, if I am walking alone, I am always quiet, and why must I always smile? (3) even if I am walking alone? Come on! [FG 1]

Itumeleng: Ma'am you know these girls of today they just want to play us like guitars but the problem is with them [FG 1].

Lerato: Yes (2) when we say jump you must say how high= [FG 1]

Tshepiso: // for me I don't think that is the issue. The issue is that guys really like to control //Yes Ma'am as I was saying, I don't think that is the issue (.) the issue is that when it comes to guys they are living that 1976 method (4) where our grandparents used to live. Our grandparents used to tell us that "my women listens to me". So these young kids, these born frees they live in that century and this is 2015, the 21st century; no women likes to be controlled [FG 1].

The above interaction Palesa shares her frustration of not being understood or perceived correctly. This challenge also highlights the challenges of meeting behavioural and emotional expectations from others. The second challenge that can be noted is related to a difficulty in understanding peers, especially peers belonging to the opposite sex as mentioned by Itumeleng. Tshepiso relates the problem to the difficulty of integrating what is learnt from grandparents with the reality of how things are in the 21st century.

Participants also expressed struggling with peer pressure with regards to balancing social pressures and the lessons that they are taught by elders.

In Extract 11 and 12 Prudence and Kgomotso express their past challenges with peer pressure and ‘bad friendships’ that led them to behave in ways that did not match their true identities. Noteworthy was the fact that in both cases participants showed an ability to overcome the challenge of peer pressure and reported learning from their past mistakes and essentially learning to become themselves. It appeared that this process was done through awareness and mindfulness of the challenges that participants face and ultimately at the end of the experience a lesson is learnt.

Extract 11

Prudence: (...) I do have someone like that (.) before I was adopted I was living in a neighbourhood where you go to clubs and stuff like that. Whereas I was telling myself that I am not this kind of person (.) I was changing who I was. (...) Because when you get into a situation (2) your options are limited and your friends are bad influence (.) they go to clubs and you are left alone. (...) So I told myself I need to focus on my school work and forget about friends. I had a bad experience with friends (.) and I just decided to be myself [FG 3].

Extract 12

Kgomotso: Yes the same thing happened to me (.) I had friends that where bad influences, they were smoking, so I joined them. We were smoking when I was doing grade 9, I did not attend classes (.) I went with my friends and we were bunking classes everyday so that we can go and smoke (2) and after smoking we do not bother going back to class (.) we went back home. So when I failed grade 9, it was 2012, and then I repeated grade 9, I saw that the way I was doing things was not right. So I had to change my attitude and my friends. It was hard for me to change (.) it was really hard. Someone advised me here at school (.) but this person is no longer here, I took his advice and

after sometime I changed and I told myself that those friends are not good friends, I am not going to deal with them anymore. [FG 3].

Overall, it can be gathered that adolescents experience a number of challenges during the process of identity development. Including difficulty in being understood and understanding peers, difficulty in integrating lessons learnt from elders with the current reality of a modern society, and dealing with peer pressure.

4.4.3 Factors that inform my identity

The third theme provides insight into the strategies and factors that inform identity formation that adolescent's experience. These strategies included internalising a value system, sharing personal experiences with peers, and learning lessons through metaphors that are continuously shared by elders.

Extract 13

Prudence: For me (.) firstly I was never interested in God, but that pastor (3) the parents that adopted me are pastors so I found myself believing in God. They try and encourage me to (2) I didn't believe much in God but when I started staying with them (2) I adapted. I have to believe I am a born again, I had to believe in God, and I had to do this and that. So it is my adoptive parents that made me feel this way about God. That God is there in everything that I do, to believe in Him and to know how He works and what He does [FG 3].

From this statement, it can be seen that adolescents may have to sometimes assimilate to the beliefs and values of their caregivers, whilst in the process of finding their own values and beliefs. It can be noted that values play a big role in shaping the development and exploration

of identity, as adolescents strive to live up to the lesson. It was also noted that adults use value systems with the aim of building a strong positive self-image, confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. The above Extract also re-emphasises the role played by religion with regards to identity development.

Maintaining a value system was also congruent for other participants who reported lessons they learnt from parents and grandparents. Extract 14, illustrate the significant role played by family members in imparting values and beliefs, and subsequently guiding the identity formation process.

Extract 14

Lihle: (...) And as for my mom (2), she taught me how to fight for something that I want (.) to believe in myself [FG 3].

Extract 15

Lunga: Teachers have the most influence, it is because we spend a lot of time with the teachers and we only spend weekends at home. We spend eight hours at school, so it would make sense [FG 3].

Prudence: Yes the teachers, then the parents and then the peers [FG 3].

As seen from extract 15, another source of influence that was discussed were teachers. It was also noted that teachers fulfilled roles of parents at school, imparting similar value system, with the aim of providing guidance for learners to follow a path that would lead to success at school and in later years. Teachers were said to have more influence because participants spend more time at school.

As ascertained before religion was a type of identity that participants identified with. Here religion was also seen as influencing the manner in which participants develop their identity. There was a general consensus among participants that religion played a major role in shaping identity development. Religion was also associated with altruistic values such as self-sacrifice, selflessness, and kindness.

Extract 16

Lihle: In everything that you do (.) do it for God's praise, do things without expecting things back (.) just help the people around you that need help that maybe you can provide them, do you understand? Do not do things because you want to entertain people [FG 3].

Extract 17

Karabo: I love who I am (2) because God made me who I am as a person [FG 1].

Extract 18

Lebohang: Some of our teachers always motivate us, also the members of the church, the leaders of my church. Then I have a support group of orphanages, where we tell our stories and they give us advice on how to live and they motivate us and everything.

As seen especially from the last extract, there are many sources that influence identity development. The main sources of influence include parents and grandparents, teachers, religion and religious values and various social groups that participants belonged to.

4.5 Key findings of the focus group

Three themes were extracted from the analysis of the focus group discussions. They relate to the aims of the study in that they highlight in detail the various dimensions of identity explored and the strategies used to form these identities. Secondly these themes explore the challenges

that are encountered during the process of development, which may give insight into how adolescents experience the process of adolescence and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. The first theme “the identities that I am exploring”, explored aspects of identity that are currently the most prominent for the participants and individual aspects that best describe their identity. It was noted that that most participants not only focused on individual characteristics but also aspects of identity related to their social identity, including being part of a family or being part of a church group. Overall for most participants, identity refers to personal attributes, preferences, behavioural and emotional patterns, and overall lifestyle including career choices, friendships choices and general life decisions. Additionally, participants were congruent in the opinion that identity depends on the individual’s context of their upbringing, and various life experiences. Identities that were most prominent included individual identity (personality traits, physical appearance), social identity (religion, education, interpersonal relationships and in-group identity) and the internalised values of altruism taught by parents and teachers.

The second theme ‘challenges encountered in the process of exploration’ explored the challenges that adolescents experience during identity formation. It is important to explore the challenges that are encountered by adolescents during the process of identity formation as it may give us insight into the experiences of adolescents which may therefore provide an understanding into the resulting behavioural, emotional and psychological patterns that adolescents are associated with during the adolescence phase. Prominent challenges included peer pressure, frustrations of not being understood and understanding others, especially the opposite sex, pressures of meeting social expectations, integrating lessons learnt from elders in a continuously changing society and listening and following advices form parents and teachers.

The last theme ‘Factors informing my identity’ presented the external factors that shape an individual’s identity. Here unsurprisingly emphasis was placed on various influences such as

parents, family members and elders. Additionally, teachers were mentioned as playing a big role in the exploration and development of identity. Participants also mentioned life experiences as part of the aspects that influence their identity development.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter a brief summary of the context of this study is given. This is followed by the findings derived from the short reflective exercise, the nominal group technique and the focus groups. A summary of the main findings of each data collection method was given after each section.

Chapter 5- Discussion

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the dissertation and to consolidate various elements of the research. The discussion section of this chapter is guided by the themes that emerged from the data presented in the previous section

To reiterate nine main themes were identified from the analysis of the SRE and the NGT namely; Personality Traits, Ambitions, Ethnicity, Peer relationships, Family, Interests, Education, Gender, and Religion. The themes gleaned from the focus groups were ‘the identities that I am exploring’, ‘challenges encountered in the process of exploration’ and ‘factors informing my identity’ The following section provides an in-depth discussion of identity formation and the challenges encountered in the process of development. The researcher will move between the literature review and the data analysis in an attempt to consolidate the findings.

5.1 The identities that I am exploring

This theme explores participants' self-descriptions, including the narratives used to describe the concept of identity and how it is conceptualised by different individuals. When asked to describe themselves, participants described their personality traits using words like “kind” “caring” and “unique”. A common theme throughout the discussions was the importance of being unique and different as an individual. Most participants shared aspects of their personality that they deemed unique as compared to others.

Erikson's notion of the development of ego identity during identity formation in adolescents relates to the descriptions of intrapersonal characteristics (such as self-definition or personality traits) given by participants. Participant's emphasis on uniqueness and individuality seem to be associated with Jones and McEwen's (2000) concept of the 'core self'. Jones and McEwen's (2000) idea that identity comprises of a core self that is made up of individual identity (which includes personality traits and unique attributes). Furthermore as mentioned above this focus on personality, the self and traits that set individuals apart is also in line with Adams et al., (2014) idea of the attribute dimension, which places an emphasis on the importance of development of unique traits and personality attributes as part of identity development during adolescence. It was noted that these discussion were more in line with the individualistic aspect of identity.

In their self-definitions, participants also reported on the social aspect of their identity as related to external factors or membership to a particular group, such as family, school, neighbourhood, religion and peer relationships. Primarily participants expressed a need to be understood as a unique individual within a group and at the same time as a member of a social group. This is supported by literature which highlights that identity is inclusive of social contexts such as group membership, which fosters a sense of belonging and a sense of sameness (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Verkuyten, 2005). This aspect of identity that is in relation to others is evident of the theory of social identity (Bornman, 2010; Tajfel, 1981). Louw and Louw (2007) further states that one seeks to be seen as a unique individual that is existing in a community which possesses similar beliefs and values. This theme was consistent with the concept of interdependence, which is associated with the collectivistic identity perspective (Adams & Dzokoto, 2003). According to Adams and Dzokoto (2003) in collectivistic perspective societies/cultures/context emphasis is placed on interdependence

between an individual and their community as a form of identity exploration and development. Since it is understood that familial, social, ethnic, cultural, traditional and religious attributes play a significant role in the development of identity (Adams et al., 2014, Adams et al., 2012, Eaton & Louw, 2000).

The emphasis placed by participants on these attributes to describe who they are not a new findings. It is also notable that the ideas in this theme correspond with the situational dimension proposed by (Adams et al., 2014). The Situational dimension links personality attributes that an individual possesses with contextual factors (Adams et al, 2014). In this case as part of their identity, participants placed emphasis on their individual characteristics, that are shaped and influenced by their external factors.

It should be noted that participants' reflections of their self-concept in relation to social identity included the concept of altruism. The focus was on personal dispositions or attributes that made them appear in a positive light such as kindness, selflessness, modesty and humility. This may be explained as being related to a need for social approval from peers and social acceptance from adults (Gerald & Gerald, 2004). Overall a striving towards a sense of positive self-concept was noted and it was discussed as being encouraged and reinforced by external factors, particularly religion, and caregivers like parents and teachers.

The 'Identities that I am exploring' theme highlights the emphasis of both individual and social identities. Theorists such as Bornman (2010), Eaton and Louw (2000), Norris et al. (2008), and Thom and Coetzee, (2004) propose that black adolescents are traditionally associated with the collectivistic culture which places emphasis on group identity, shared responsibility and mutual benefit. As mentioned before, participants reported both individual and social identity as

equally important aspects of their identity. This may be an indication of a shift in the perceptions of adolescents as a result of the multicultural South African context in the post-apartheid era. It is proposed that an ideological shift towards an integration of both individualistic and collective cultures among black adolescents is noted (Bornman, 2010; Brown et al., 2002). As seen throughout the discussions, the importance of a collective identity still remains and continues to be encouraged by parents and the societies that participants come from. However, individual identities are continuously being integrated to an overall identity that may be reflective of the transformation of the South African context and its current social and political climate of self-enrichment.

The findings of this study support Erikson's (1968; 1983) study as it is evident that participants are in the process of experimenting with these different identities with the aim of committing to certain choices and decisions in life. Additionally, looking at Marcia's (1980) four identity statuses, participants in this study seem to be moving between the identity foreclosure status and identity achievement status. During the discussions, it was evident that some of the behaviours and attitudes that participants expressed as part of defining their identities, were strongly influenced and mostly chosen by family members, which bears a similar resemblance to the foreclosure status. Additionally, participants reported that their identity development has been influenced by personal experiments which have been subsequently used to guide behavioural and emotional preferences, this is associated with aspects of identity achievement status.

Overall, when participants were asked to describe their identity, their first response was an emphasis on individual identity inclusive of personality traits, physical characteristics and

unique attributes. Upon further discussions participant's added social aspects of identity including family and friends and contextual aspects of identity including family background, school and neighbourhoods. It was notable that different participants placed importance on different aspects of identity. This is in line with Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity, specifically highlighting the fact that identity dimensions differ in their salience for each individual depending on context and time. It should be noted that based on the findings above, an existence of one ideological structure does not equal to the nullity of the other (Bornman, 2010; Brown et al., 2002; Deaux, 1993). These ideological structures or aspects of identity can exist simultaneously and in an integrated manner (Bornman, 2010; Brown et al., 2002; Deaux, 1993; Jones & McEwen, 2000). According to Erikson (1968; 1983) participants are going through a process of moratorium, which is a process of experimenting and committing to identity components with the intension of integrating and identification of these components.

5.2 Ambitions and Education

According to Adams et al. (2011) and Norris et al. (2008), as a result of the socio-political and economic transition that occurred post-apartheid, South African adolescents are now exposed to a shift in their perceptions of the way in which they have been positioned in society and their future prospective. This corresponds with the agency and hopeful nature that was noted in the way participants perceive their careers and future prospective. The focus of this theme was on participant's future goals, dreams and success related to wealth, material possession and career attainment. Based on the discussion with participants, a desire to be successful, the importance of self-advancement and material possessions were suggested. Some parts of South Africa particularly disadvantaged areas, remain under resourced, little has changed in neighbourhoods

such as these with regards to poverty, unemployment and access to resources since the new democratic rule (Adams et al., 2011; Durrheim & Dixon, 2010). The emphasis on self-advancement and attainment of success can be related to the desire to overcome poverty, which was a consequence of the apartheid era. Future ambitions, seems to suggest mind sets are indicative a positive view of the future. It appears that participants are redefining their social realities and possibilities to what the future in a democratic South Africa promises.

It was evident that the meaning ascribed to formal education (completing high school and pursuing higher education) by participants was the result of lessons and values imparted to them by parents, elders and teachers. A desire to improve the circumstances of their families and communities (which can also be linked to their collectivistic identity) through education was noted. Tertiary education is also important for personal advancement and success related to career attainment.

This suggests that some adolescents place emphasis on education due to expectations of their families. It was noted that the saying; ‘make friends with your books’ was reported multiple times by participants and it may suggest that as an attempt to impart guidance and the value of education, parents and teachers urged adolescents to focus only on their books, in order to attain good academic results.

In response to the past oppressive laws, education has been one of the main agendas that the new democratic government focused on, as means of black advancement and empowerment (Norris et al., 2008). This possibly explains the strong emphasis that participants, parents and teachers place on the value of education, especially higher education. Additionally education is deemed as a key to improving material conditions through job attainment and economic

success, which parents encourage, and consequently their lived experience are redefined and improved.

5.3 Family

Interactions, interconnectedness and interdependency between individuals and their social systems was another key theme (Wolfe et al., 2006). Particularly membership to an immediate social group such as a family was emphasised. Family plays a role in imparting values, beliefs, advice and principles, these guide behaviour and decisions, as well as shapes the 'self' and the way the world is viewed (Turner et al., 2011). Parents and extended family members teach their children life lessons through personal life experiences, storytelling, metaphors and analogies. An absence of biological parents as a result of death or migrant work was noted during the discussion, as a result participants reported relying heavily on the guidance and support from extended family members or caregivers. Overall key values such as perseverance, determination, ambition, and kindness constantly were encouraged by parents and families as means to assure a strong sense of self, to encourage good behaviour and attainment of future prospects.

A sense of responsibility was noted in the narratives of the expectations that their parents and teachers have. Alberts et al., (2003) suggest that Black South African adolescents are most likely to be aware of issues related to poverty and socioeconomic ills due to their family backgrounds and lived experiences. As a result these adolescents develop and accept a sense of responsibility and desire to alleviate and improve their family situations (Alberts et al., 2002).

5.4 Ethnicity and Religion

Social identity included ethnicity and religion as significant aspects of identity among participants. Racial identity (specifically being black), nationality (both South African and African), culture, language, and traditions were themes that were used to describe ethnic identity. Positive constructions about ethnicity, especially being black or being South African were noted among participants. Participants reported that they were proud of being a black person in South Africa, and to belong to their specific ethnic groups such as Sesotho or Xhosa ethnic groups. It was evident that it was important to explore their ethnic identity and to form their identity around the beliefs, values and traditions of their particular ethnic group. Through in-group identity adolescents are safe to explore and discover their identity, with the protection of a sense of belonging that buffers discrimination and segregation (Adams et al., 2014; Harris & Findley, 2014; Norris et al., 2008). Participants reported that guidance with regards to identity is received from the traditions, norms, rituals, values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the ethnic group that they belong to. These values and beliefs are then incorporated to identity to achieve sameness with others in ethnic group and to also enhance one's collective identity. Furthermore, participants generally had a positive attitude and a sense of confidence and security about belonging to their ethnic groups. According to Adams et al. (2014), ethnic identity is an important aspect of identity in South Africa, this is a result of reinforcement of ethnic identity by the laws and policies of discrimination and segregation during the apartheid years.

As mentioned by Burgess et al., (2002) South Africans are most likely to identify themselves according to their racial category, this is followed by their ethnic identity (determined by culture and language), and this is followed by their religious identity, lastly by their personal

category. However, it seems that there is a discrepancy in the order of the types of identities that South African adolescents subscribe to. The findings suggest that adolescents seem to identify themselves first according to their personal attributes, followed by their social identity (including ethnicity and religion). Additionally the findings confirm a positive view of national, racial and ethnic identities among these black adolescents, as opposed to the possibility a negative view of these identities proposed by writers such as Gaganakis (2006) and Phinney et al. (1990).

According to Adams et al. (2012), individuals belonging to non-western cultures tend to place an emphasis on cultural, religious and traditional factors that consequently have an influence on identity development. This is due to the collectivistic identity and culture that is mainly adopted by non-western cultures. For these individuals, religion plays a role in one's sense of belonging, sense of shared values and commitment (Adams et al., 2012; Hardy, 2005; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Additionally, this theme is in accordance with the ideological dimension (Adams et al., 2014) that emphasises the religious, spiritual, traditional and social aspects of identity exploration and formation. It is reported that Black South African adolescents are likely to structure and conceptualise their identities according to the ideological dimension (Adams et al., 2014). This is partly because for these adolescents, identity is mainly rooted in these ideological concepts such as religion, spirituality and culture that existed before apartheid and was further reinforced by the apartheid regime that legalised segregation (Adams et al., 2014). Adams et al., (2014) theory is seen to support the participant's heavy reliance on religion in relation to the development of their identity.

Belonging to a religious group, maintaining their spirituality and relationship with religion, and using religion as a guide to discovering their identity, and their purpose in life was important for participants. For most participants, religion seemed to be a concept enforced and encouraged by parents or caregivers. This means that participants had to incorporate religion into their identity from a young age, and for many participants this appeared not to be a choice that they were given. As mentioned above, religion is perceived by participants in different ways, depending on what was instilled by families during childhood, and what is still being instilled as they continue to grow. Participants agreed that religious teachings and values are used to guide decisions-making, behaviour and the development of morals and desirable characteristics. Participants also reported finding acceptance of their lived experiences as black adolescents living in South Africa, as well as their identity pertaining to preferences, personality types and future goals. Furthermore, religion was used as a coping mechanism to face difficult and challenges times. Participants were comforted by the knowledge that there is a higher power that is there to protect them, support them and provide good and favourable things in their lives.

5.5 Peer relationships and Interests

Meaningful relationships with friends were considered important, as these relationships provided a platform to share lived experiences and common interests, gain support, and to receive guidance and advice (Wolfe et al.,2006). Interpersonal relationships also provided participants with an opportunity to learn from each other through sharing their lived experiences in coping with academic, social and familial pressure and other developmental challenges associated with being an adolescent. Central to many participants was the

importance of having friends that were non-judgemental, accepting and understanding (Arnett, 2001; Heaven, 2001).

Romantic relationships were reported by participants as one of the main challenges during identity development. Participants reported struggling to understand the needs and expectations of their romantic partners during relationship interactions. Participants reported avoiding romantic relationships as a result of factors including; disapproval from families, a focus on friendships and academic pressures. However, a sense of desire among participants to be in romantic relationships was emphasised. It is suggested in research that adolescents are likely to be involved in romantic relationships during their late adolescent phase (Arndt, 2014; Ryan, 2001). Participants from this study ranged in ages and were in different phases of adolescents. Most of the participants were in early adolescents and may explain why romantic relationships were not the focus, rather a desire of the future. Additionally, individuals that are in their early adolescence may still be prohibited to be in romantic relationships by their families. Overall peer acceptance is said to be the main concern during early adolescence (Arndt, 2014).

The theme 'interests' highlighted that participants enjoyed being involved in activities that were not related to their academics. These activities include sports, poetry, dance and singing. These activities were shared and discussed with a sense of pride and accomplishment. The importance of being in a team and supporting and being supported by fellow team members was emphasised. Research suggests that adolescent's value belonging to a group with a sense of shared goal, group unity, shared responsibility and mutual benefit. As mentioned before themes such as belonging in a group, accomplishing a shared goal or group identity are themes that are associated and encouraged in collectivistic cultures (Alberts et al., 2003; Eaton & Louw, 2000; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Verkuyten, 2005).

5.6 Gender

Males and females have different socially prescribed responsibilities, behaviours and roles that they are expected to adhere to (Bray et al., 2010). During adolescence social development is of utmost importance, as adolescents are expected to assume socially constructed gender roles. This assumption of social roles is related to an expectation of adhering to a collective identity and a desire to belong in a particular cultural or ethnic group (Christine & Viner, 2005; Gullotta & Adams, 2005). Conforming to the heteronormative social roles of being male and female is fostered and encouraged by cultural and traditional ideologies for the purpose of social development (Drukker et al., 2003; Geldard & Geldard, 2004).

Regards the experiences and identity development processes; males and females were not compared, as there was commonality between these sexes. However, participants did emphasise that gender roles were an important aspect of their identity. When referring to gender participants focused on the aspects of their identity related to the social categories of being male and female. Both males and females subscribed to traditional heteronormative gender roles. Males emphasised masculine roles such as strength, being a 'man', expectations from family to assume responsibility to provide and protect. Females emphasised feminine roles such as being feminine, which is inclusive of maintaining preferred physical appearance, being lady like and doing domestic chores. Both groups reported an expectation from family and society to adhere to certain social roles associated with their gender categories. However, it was noted that participants had a sense of pride in their discussions of gender roles. It was apparent that both males and females subscribed to gender roles traditionally associated with their gender.

5.7 Challenges encountered in the process of exploration

Adolescents are said to go through a time of rapid change a transition to adulthood which is described as period of storm and stress (Arnett, 2000; Christie & Viner, 2005; Erikson, 1968). During this phase of transition, individuals may struggle to understand themselves and may be misunderstood by others (Arnett, 2000; Josselson, 1987; Kroger, 2007). Challenges arise when adolescents do not feel understood as unique individuals, with a sense of autonomy and emotional independence (Brown et al., 2008; Steyn, 2006). Participants reported experiencing challenges of not being perceived the way they are portraying themselves. Participants expressed that they are not being understood as unique individuals with unique personality dispositions. Particularly male participants expressed difficulty in understanding the communication from their female counterparts during social interactions.

Contradictory was the fact that uniqueness and independence is usually associated with individualistic cultures as opposed to interdependence and group identity that is associated with collectivists cultures (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Thom & Coetzee, 2004). Therefore it can be assumed that particularly black adolescents in South Africa may experience persisting challenges with regards to feeling misunderstood as unique and emotionally independent individuals by their parents or others in their lives due to the fact that their parents may come from an exclusively collectivistic culture that may not encourage individualistic characteristics such as uniqueness and independence.

Another challenge expressed by participants was the difficulty in integrating lessons learnt from elders and their current modern and westernised environment, which is closely related to

the ideological conflict between individualistic and collectivistic cultures as mentioned previously. The challenge of integration is evident across different developmental domains and is in conjunction with existing literature that highlights the evidence of a gradual shift among South Africans towards an integration of ideologies and challenges that may be faced by individuals as a result of the ideological shift (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Stevens & Lockhart, 1997; Norris et al., 2008). Although participants expressed the challenges encountered during the process of integration, it was noted that participants remained positive about their identity development and were eager to learn through personal experience and the experiences of others.

Peer pressure was also reported to impose challenges related to the process of identity development. Theorists (Brown, 2004); Gardner & Steinberg, 2005; Steinberg, 2008; Stice & Whitenton, 2002, suggest that as a result of the need to belong and to gain a sense of acceptance, adolescents are likely to engage in risky behaviours, such as drinking alcohol, doing drugs, and having unprotected sex. Participants reported being peer pressured to engage in 'bad behaviours' such as experimenting with illicit drugs and alcohol, going to clubs and not attending classes. However participants reported learning from their own mistakes and listening to their elder's warning as a way of coping with peer pressure.

5.8 Factors that are informing my identity

The main sources of influence on identity formation and development were family members and teachers. Teachers and family members played a prominent role in the process of identity exploration and identity formation. The context and familial background of the participants has influenced their identity construction. It may seem that the family's role in the development of

identity is to impart cultural and traditional ideologies that they themselves were expected to adhere to. A certain value system is imparted on them by caregivers. This value system is meant to guide behavioural, cognitive and emotional patterns and to encourage moralistic and altruistic individuals (Turner et al., 2017). This value system can be viewed as a tool kit in which individuals can refer back to as a form of guidance.

Teacher and learner relationships are considered an important aspect of identity development, as teachers are tasked with not only the duty to teach academic knowledge but to also provide guidance and support to learners (Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Freeman, 2004). Teachers had the most influence on social identity development, as adolescents spend the majority of their time at school. Teachers seem to play the role of parents at school, with the goal of reinforcing and encouraging similar values that adolescents are imparted at home. School provides an opportunity for participants to explore their social identity through interpersonal relationships with peers. Teachers have different ways of guiding and supporting students. Some teachers use discipline and fear as a way to correcting bad behaviour. Another method is to impart life lessons is open communication, positive reinforcement (incentives or favourable treatment) and the use of an understanding and non-judgemental attitude towards students.

Participants reported that sometimes they are treated with inconsistency and unfairness. This leads to feelings of rebellion and stubbornness, where adolescents refuse to be cooperative and to follow rules. Participants reported responding well and learning more from being openly communicated with, and being treated with dignity, respect, fairly, and not judged. Positive relationships between teachers and learners, characterised by acceptance, fairness and support

are most likely to foster strong and positive adolescent development (Anderman, 2002; Anderman & Freeman, 2004).

5.9 Chapter Summary

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that adolescents consider multiple aspects such as personality traits and religion when defining their identity. These multiple aspects of identity do not exist in isolation of each other but are complexly interwoven and exist simultaneously. The relationship between these aspects of identity is important to consider when understanding the lived experiences of adolescents in their exploration and development.

In summary participants place emphasis on both individual and social identity as forming part of their self-descriptions. Participants also associated with multiple dimensions of their identity such as ethnic identity, religious identity, gender identity, collective identity (family), educational identity, and interpersonal identity. There were various challenges noted during the process of identity development, including being misunderstood, peer pressure and difficulty in integration collectivistic and individualistic characteristics as a result of the current South African context. Furthermore participants reported family members and teachers as playing a major role in influencing the process of identity exploration and development.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In this chapter, the research study will be concluded by reviewing the most prominent findings of the study. Furthermore, the limitations to the current study will be discussed. Followed by the recommendations for future research relating to multiple dimensions of identity.

6.1 Summary of the significant findings

The findings were utilised to generate main themes. Overall eleven themes were discovered and discussed namely; ‘identities that I am exploring’, ‘ambitions’, ‘education’, ‘family’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘religion’, ‘interpersonal relationships’, ‘interests’, ‘gender’, ‘challenges encountered in the process of exploration’ and ‘factors that are informing my identity’.

The dominant theme was personality attributes which was emphasised during the discussions about what identity meant to the participants. Participants primarily focused on individual identity and uniqueness. Participant’s emphasis on uniqueness and individuality was associated with their personal reflections of the ‘self’. Upon further discussion it was noted that participants also added external factors as part of their identity. External factors such as membership to a particular group, including ethnic groups, family, school, neighbourhood, religious groups and interpersonal relationships. Although there was a focus on personality traits and individuality, participants still found the importance of their collectivistic identity, membership and acceptance in a social group. This suggested that adolescents attempt to incorporate both of these aspects of their identity. Overall there was a positive sense of self-concept among the majority of participants.

Regarding other aspects of their identity, participants discussed various factors that form their self-descriptions. As part of their identity description participants mentioned desires to achieve success and other future prospects. Participants placed emphasis on future self-advancement through careers and the attainment of material possessions. The overall shared desire was the attainment of status jobs, career and opportunities. Although there are still a limitations in resources that are accessible to this population of learners, they expressed enthusiasm and optimism regarding their future prospects and possible success.

Another prominent aspect of identity was education. It was found that for a majority of participant's education was seen as means to transform and improve current lived experience for the adolescents and their families. For participants, good academic performance in school meant acceptance to higher education establishments and that meant attainment of desired professions. It was indicated that this process was necessary for the purpose of socio-economic advancement of both the individual and their family. As seen above, participants expressed positivity and optimism about education even though unemployment rates are still high, and the quality of education itself posed as a limitation. It is notable that hopefulness especially regarding the future prospects was a common theme among all participants. A sense of positive attitude concerning their self-development, lived experiences, and their future prospects was prominent.

Regarding family, participants were clear of the value that family and extended family have as part of their identity and self-descriptions. It was noted that relationships that participants maintained with their families played a role in imparting a set of values, beliefs, and principles. These values guided behaviour and the decision making process, as well as shaped the

individual's identity and perception of the world. Various methods are used to guide the development of identity, including the use of analogies, metaphors, story-telling and use of personal experiences. A common theme among participants regarding the responsibility and pressure to develop and live according to the expectations of family members. As mentioned above, improving and advancing the family's socio-economic conditions through academic excellence and career attainment is a responsibility that a majority of these participants have been given by families. This may seem as additional motivation by participants to work hard and to succeed.

It was found that a majority of participants reported a strong ethnic identity. Participants placed significance on race (specifically being black), national identity (both South African and African), culture, language, and traditions. It was evident that participants had a positive view and took pride in their ethnic identity. A positive view of ethnic identity was attributed to the collectivistic identity promoted and encouraged by family members and the ethnic group that participants belong to. Additionally findings confirm a positive view of national, racial and ethnic identities among these Black adolescents.

Another aspect of identity was the value of religion in identity formation. It was found that religion had multiple purposes in adolescents' lives including development of a moral standing and a value system. Furthermore participants reported relying on religion to ascertain meaning and purpose in life. It was also found that religion was used as a coping mechanism, to explain and accept the happenings in life. The value of religion was however determined by the background and ideological beliefs of the individual's family.

Meaningful and intimate relationships were desired and valued by participants. It was found that interpersonal relationships functioned as means to share experiences, life challenges, and to share advice and gain support. Participants reported that friendships offer non-judgemental and understanding attitudes as opposed to family members. Peer relationships were seen as an opportunity to bond with peers over similar interests. Partaking in extra mural activities was found to be significant in exploring social identity. It was noted that participants placed value in being part of a team or being part of a group with a common goal as opposed to having individual interest.

It was also found that romantic relationships were an important aspect of identity exploration. Participants reported having difficulty in understanding and interacting with the opposite sex in romantic relationships. Male participants reported not knowing what females require from them, and female participants reported not being understood and misperceived by their male counterparts. For these participants however, friendships were more prominent and preferred in this period of their lives. Both male and female participants identified with the traditional expectations of being male or female. These expectations include the social constructed roles of masculinity and femininity. Participants had positive narratives associated with these social roles and reported being proud to adhere to these roles. It was found that these roles are determined and influenced by their family's cultural and traditional ideologies.

Participants also reported challenges faced during the process of identity exploration was not being understood during social interactions, and not being accepted as unique individuals. Another challenge was the difficulty in integrating lessons learnt from families, with the dominant western culture. Lastly participants reported being challenged with two kinds of peer pressure. Positive peer pressure encouraged good behaviour such as studying and associating

with good friends. Negative peer pressure encouraged non defiant behaviour such as experimenting with drugs and banking classes.

Lastly, factors that influence identity were explored. Three external factors namely; parents (family), peer pressure and teachers were identified. Parents use various methods such as imparting pre-existing ideologies and value systems. This value system is meant to guide behavioural, cognitive and emotional patterns and to encourage moralistic and altruistic individuals. Participants reported being influenced by teachers as they spent the majority of their time with teachers during school hours. It is evident from discussion that teachers play the role of second parents with regards to reinforcing values encouraged at home to ensure academic excellence and career attainment. Teachers used discipline and open communication as means of encouraging preferred behaviour.

The results of this study were found to be consistent with existing theory. The findings were consistent with Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity. It was confirmed that adolescents experience various aspects of their identity, such as individual identities, collective identities that influenced by both external and internal factors. As these external influences (including individual contexts and the broader South African context) change, a change in the development of identity is noted. Consistent with the above mentioned findings it was notable that a majority of adolescents in this study were in the process of discovering their identity through self-introspection, which includes the exploration of career prospects, interest, values, and ideologies. This process continues where adolescents add or discard elements of their identity in an effort to construct a consistent whole. This may suggest that identity is not rigid, but is continuous and flexible throughout development. According to

Marcia (1980) these participants are mostly in the exploration phase, where a process of investigating different identities is emphasised.

South Africa has undergone many changes, and these changes have subsequently had an impact on the way adolescents define themselves. Results from this research suggest that identity development of black South African adolescents in a democratic South African is a complex process, as these adolescents have to balance the havoc related to the adolescent phase with the gradual transformation of the country. It can be assumed that the challenge of integration is evident across different developmental domains and is in conjunction with existing literature that highlights the evidence of a gradual shift among South Africans towards an integration of both individualistic and collectivistic ideologies. Overall, as mentioned before a striving towards a sense of positive self- concept was noted, participants reported having a positive sense of self and a positive outlook on the world. Participants also reported being proud of being a Black adolescent in South Africa, with big hopes and dreams concerning their future prospects.

6.2 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of the study relates to the theories used for the purpose of this research such as Marcia (1980), Erikson (1968), and Jones and McEwen (2000) were based on western populations, which may not be a true reflection on South African population. Although these theories proved useful in determining similar categories and information, the relative emphasis and perhaps some of the more negative views of adolescents were not reflected on this study. Therefore the use of these theories to understand South African populations should be interpreted with caution.

The second limitation was the in-depth interaction with the literature review, participants and the researcher's personal goals, view points and beliefs may have influenced the discussions and interpretations concluded in this study. Therefore, this study can be viewed as co-construction by both the researcher and the participants. Considering this fact, discussions and interpretations of this study may not to be the absolute reflections of the participants.

The third limitation was the fact that participants came from similar backgrounds and similar context, therefore data produced is homogenous in nature. Homogeneous data may not be reflective of the majority of the target population, due to limited variations found in the lived experiences of the sample. Therefore generalisation and representativeness may be compromised.

Lastly, the language barrier was a limitation to the study. The researcher conducted the research in English, although the researcher had limited understanding of Sesotho and Setswana languages the challenge was still evident. Participants struggled to express themselves fluently in English, and had difficulty in understanding the concepts of the research. The researcher

tried to minimise this limitation for encouraging the participants to express themselves in their mother tongue and later translating the data into English.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Several recommendations for future research in multiple dimensions of identity can be considered. Firstly, it would be beneficial for more research to be done in South Africa, for South African population and considering the South African context. The relevance in theory would strengthen the discussions and conclusions of this study. Secondly, to enhance the quality of the research it is recommended that the research is conducted in the participant's mother tongue and the interviewer should be fluent in the language or for a translator to be present, to encourage participants to express themselves in a language they feel comfortable with. Thirdly, the exploration of multiple dimensions of identity post-apartheid era is important in the understanding of the lived experiences of South African Youth. Therefore it would be informative to repeat this study with other respondents from different racial and ethnic groups.

Finally it is clear that South Africa is undergoing gradual change, and with that change multiple challenges are faced by adolescents and the general population. Challenges such as family conflicts and fragmentation, teen pregnancies, the HIV/Aids epidemic, alcohol and drug abuse, school dropout and unemployment, challenge the youth of today consistently. Therefore, research on the lived experiences of adolescents with regards to identity formation is of great importance, as this is a very formative period in an individual's development. Further research and exploration should be done to build on existing research and this current study to further supplement our knowledge and help us engage and understand the challenges faced by adolescents in South Africa. This would aid in the interventions to combat some of the

challenges faced by adolescents daily. As external factors were regarded as a significant influence in the exploration and development of identity. Further research would also aid adolescents in the process of exploration and formation of identity to assure a smoother sailing through this challenging period. Interventions such as mentorship programs, psycho-education programs, career guidance and career fairs, are significant to enhance their understanding of themselves and the context that they are developing in.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial development

Age (Approximate)	Psychosocial crisis
Infant- 18 months	Trust vs. Mistrust
18 months- 3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt
3-5 years	Initiative vs. Guilt
5-13 years	Industry vs. Role Confusion
21-39 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation
40-65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation
65 and older	Ego Integrity vs. Despair

Table 2

Criteria for identity status

Identity status	Identity achievement	Identity moratorium	Identity foreclosure	Identity diffusion
Crisis	Passed crisis	In crisis	Crisis little or non-existing	Crisis can be present or absent
Commitment	Present	Present but not clear	Present	Absent

Figure 1

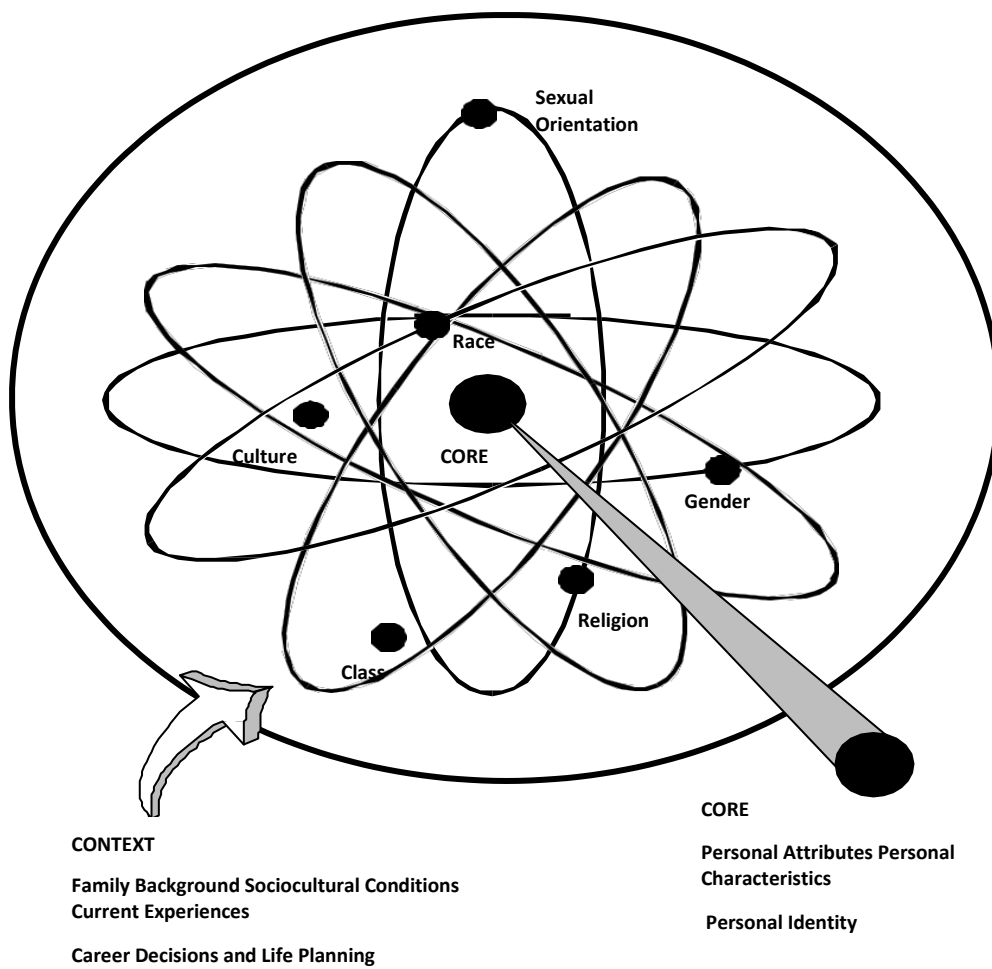


FIGURE 1.
Jones and McEwen's Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INFORMATION LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Principal

RESEARCH PROJECT: MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Since 1996, the Department of Psychology at the University of the Free State has had a valuable relationship with your school. The students of our Department have visited the learners on Monday mornings during school terms for short counselling sessions. Under the auspices of this project, we are conducting a research study about the multiple dimensions of identity development among adolescents. This study will consider the complexity of developing an identity as an adolescent in the now democratic South Africa.

The aim of the study is to focus on the learners' perceptions, experiences and challenges in developing multiple dimensions of identities. This study will improve the understanding of adolescents with regard to their developmental process as they transition into adulthood.

Ethical clearance for this study has already been gained from the Research Ethics committee of the Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State. The Free State Department of Education has also authorised this study.

With this, we would like to request your school's participation. The study will entail a 90-120 minute session where learners will be asked to share their ideas in a reflective group session. Approximately 50 learners between the ages of 18 and 22 will be included in the study. Four groups of six participants each will be conducted. All focus groups will be tape recorded for the convenience of the researcher. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and learners may withdraw from the study at any point without any explanation. The study will be conducted in a confidential manner and all responses will be respected.

Please feel free to contact me or the supervisor of the study should you require any further information.

Thank you in anticipation.

Ms M. Buso

Cell. 0766324296

Prof. L. Naudé

Cell. 083 262 4048

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR LEARNERS PARTICIPATING IN SHORT REFLECTIVE EXERCISES AND NOMINAL GROUPS.

Dear Participant.

Thank you for your interest in partaking in this study. The aim of this study is to focus on the learners' perceptions, experiences and challenges in developing multiple dimensions of identities. The information gathered will be used in a study that will be looking at the multiple dimensions of identity development in adolescents.

You will be asked to partake in a short reflective exercise which will be exploring your overall perception about the multiple dimensions of identity that you experience. The next phase of the study will make use of a nominal group technique. In session you will be asked to rank these multiple dimensions of identity with the class. At the end of the nominal group session there will be a class discussion that will be intended at hearing your perceptions, challenges and experiences regarding identity development in a new democratic South Africa. . The discussion will be recorded

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Your identity will remain anonymous and the final research will not reveal any participant's name.

Please feel free to contact me or the supervisor of the study should you require any further information.

Ms M. Buso

Cell. 0766324296

Prof. L. Naudé

Cell. 083 262 4048

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.

Gender	Female	Male
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Age	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
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Ethnic Group	Sotho	Pedi	Tswana	English	Afrikaans	Other (Specify)
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SHORT REFLECTIVE EXERCISE DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF THE STUDY – TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION REGARDING IDENTITY.

Take a moment to think about who you are and everything (everyone) that influence your identity how do you see yourself? Which aspects of your identity can you think of? What things would you say describe who you are the most? On the reverse side of this page, write down the factors/aspects/features that your identity encompasses of. This can be in a form of a mind map.

NOMINAL GROUP ACTIVITY

I would like to ask you some questions about the multiple dimensions of identity that you pointed on the previous session. The aim of this activity is for the group to discuss ideas that you wrote down on the last session and to rank these aspects from the most important to the least important. After that we will have a discussion around the following question:

- What does identity mean to you?

FOCUS GROUPS

In the last session we spoke about identity, and how we define our identity. In this session I would like to have a more detailed conversation with surrounding the aspects of your identity.

I would like for you to answer the following questions

- How would you define yourself?
- Which aspects of your identity would you say are the most prominent in your life right now?
- What are the challenges that you encounter during identity exploration.
- What influences your identity formation (Parents, society, experience or yourself)?

TRANSCRIPTION CONVERSIONS

Symbol	Meaning
Round Brackets (like this)	Where doubts arise regarding the accuracy of the material
Square Brackets e.g., []	To clarify something to the reader
Forward Slashes / /	When there are noises, words of assents and others
Equals sign =	Indicates the absence of a gap between one speaker and another at the end of one utterance and the beginning of the next utterance
Round brackets with a number inserted e.g., (2)	Indicates pauses in speech with the number of seconds in round brackets
Round brackets with a full stop e.g., (.)	Indicates pauses in speech lasting less than one second
Colon e.g., ::	Indicates an extended sound in the speech
Underlining e.g.,	Indicates emphases in speech content

APPENDIX C

February 2017

Rhodes University

The Psychology

Department

Grahamstown

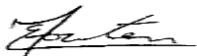
6140

To the Chairperson of the RPERC:

The study “Exploring multiple dimensions of identity in South African adolescents” was first registered at the University of the Free State where it received ethical clearance from both the ethics board of the university and the Free State Department of Education. During the time at UFS the student worked under the supervision of Professor Luzelle Naude and made good progress. The student however desired to pursue a Counselling Master’s degree and applied and was accepted to Rhodes University. Prof Naude agreed in principle that the student can register and complete the study with a supervisor at Rhodes.

As such we are seeking ethical clearance from RPERC, so that the student can complete her degree, being aware that it is problematic to provide ethical clearance after data has been collected. We want to ensure the committee that we intend to continue to adhere to and work in the parameters of the ethical standards specified by the UFS and the Free State Department of Education and well as those prescribed and specified by RPERC. Please see ethics protocol for specifics.

I hope this will meet with your favorable approval. Sincerely,



Elron



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RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

05 May 2017

Masimbulele Buso
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Masimbulele,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2017/09

This letter confirms your research proposal with tracking number PSY2017/09 and title, *"Exploring multiple dimensions of identity in South African adolescents"*, served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 03 May 2017. The RPERC notes that the project is being supervised by Mr. Elron Fouten, a staff member in the Department. The project has been given ethics clearance.

Please note that should your project require consent from institutional gatekeepers, the RPERC requires that you submit written confirmation of this consent. Kindly also ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Werner Bohmke
CHAIRPERSON: RPERC