EXPLORING THE INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES OF AFRICAN ADOLESCENTS IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

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DECLARATION

Student number: 55763952

I declare that the dissertation: **"Exploring the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools"**, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or have quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE: DATE: 10 July 2018

(Ms MRM Thamaga)

ADDITIONAL DECLARATION

Student number: 55763952

I further declare that I submitted my dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted parameters for originality.

SIGNATURE: DATE: 10 July 2018

(Ms MRM Thamaga)

I, Professor Cheryl Ferreira, declare that I considered the originality software checking report obtained by Mangakane Rebecca M Thamaga and that her dissertation meets an acceptable standard of originality.

SIGNATURE DATE: 10 July 2018

(Professor Cheryl Ferreira)

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in selected secondary schools in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. The empirical investigation used a qualitative, phenomenological collective case study design. The framework for the study was provided by constructivist theory and African indigenous knowledge and was justified by an extensive literature study. Purposive sampling was used to select forty-two learners from Grades 8 to 11, thirty- three of whom were from African initiated churches, eight belonged to various Christian denominations and one was an atheist. The most significant finding was that the indigenous religious identities of adolescents are not adequately accommodated and supported in South African secondary schools. Accordingly, recommendations were made for affirming adolescents' indigenous religious identities in the implementation of RE in the classroom.

KEY WORDS: adolescents' identities; indigenous religious identity; African indigenous knowledge; religion education.

KAFUSHANE NGOCWANINGO

Lolu cwaningo lwenziwa ngenhloso yokuhlaziya nokuhlolisisa izimo nezici zobunjalo bentsha empisholo esesigabeni sokuthomba (*adolescents*) elandela izinkolo zomdabu noma zendabuko efunda ezikoleni ezingamasekhondari ezikhethiweyo esifundazweni saseMpumalanga, eNingizimu Afrika. Lolu cwaningo obelugxile ezintweni eziphathekayo nezibonakalayo lwasebenzisa idizayini yocwaningo lwezigameko ekhwalithethivu ebhekisisa isigameko ngasinye ngenhloso yokuhlaziya izimo kanye nezinto ezinokufana okuthile phakathi kweqoqwana lwezigameko ezimbadlwana (*phenomenological collective case study design*). Uhlaka locwaningo kwahlinzekwa yitiyori egxile ekutheni abantu bakha ulwazi kanye nokuqonda kwabo ngokususela ezimweni abadlule kuzona futhi abahlangabezane nazo ezimpilweni zabo (*constructivist theory*) kanye nolwazi lwendabuko lwase-Afrika, futhi lokhu kwasekelwa kwaphinde kwafakazelwa ngohlaziyo olubanzi lwemibhalo ephathelene nezihloko ezihlobene nalokhu. Kwasetshenziswa indlela yokukhetha ababambiqhaza ngokubheka izimo nezici zabo kanye nezinhloso zocwaningo (*purposive sampling*) futhi ngaleyo ndlela kwaqokwa abafundi abangama-42 abafunda iBanga lesi-8 kuya kwele-11; futhi abangama-33 kulaba bafundi ngabalandeli bamabandla endabuko

ase-Afrika, kanti abayisishiyagalombili bebevela emabandleni obuKhrestu ahlukahlukene, futhi bekunomfundi oyedwa ongumhedeni (ongakholelwa kuNkulunkulu). Umphumela osemqoka kakhulu owatholwa ocwaningweni wukuthi azibhekelelwa futhi azisekelwa ngokwanele nangokugculisayo izimo nezici zobunjalo bentsha esesigabeni sokuthomba elandela izinkolo zendabuko efunda ezikoleni ezingamasekhondari eNingizimu Afrika. Ngenxa yalokho-ke kwenziwa izincomo zokuthi kumele zibhekelelwe izimo nezici zobunjalo bentsha esesigabeni sokuthomba elandela izinkolo zomdabu ekufundisweni kwesifundo sezenkolo (RE) ekilasini.

AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA: izimo nezici zobunjalo bentsha esesigabeni sokuthomba (*adolescents' identities*); izimo nezici zobunjalo babantu abalandela izinkolo zendabuko (*indigenous religious identity*); ulwazi lwendabuko lwase-Afrika; isifundo sezenkolo.

CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

"Here is a tree rooted in African soil, nourished with waters from the rivers of Afrika. Come and sit under its shade and become, with us, the leaves of the same branch and the branches of the same tree."

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Our attitudes, behaviours, worldviews and experiences are influenced by our various social identities, including ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic class, ability, religion and spirituality. Banks and Banks (2010:37,43), Gay (2013:65), Allen, Hubain, Hunt, Lucero and Stewart (2012:5, 16) and Ferguson (2014b:29) acknowledge that as teachers working in different learning environments with learners from diverse backgrounds, we should be mindful of our own and others' cultural heritage, identities and religious belief systems, as these affect our lives and our interactions with each other in our school communities. Given that our schools reflect the socio-cultural and socio-political context in which we live, Sefa Dei (2012:106-107), Nieto and Bode (2012:40) West-Burns & Murray (2016: 60-61,63) and Jackson-Barret & Lee-Hammond (2018:88,99), underscore the necessity for teachers to create affirming classrooms for learners in societies with diverse cultures, ideologies and belief systems.

Multicultural and religious education implies that we teach all learners with fairness and equity so that they feel accepted and valued, and consequently empowered to learn at their highest potential (Gay 2013: 67; Nieto & Bode 2012:40). This is also encapsulated in the Department of Education's National Policy on Religion Education (2003), hereafter referred to as 'the Policy'. Within the framework of the policy, public schools are given an educational responsibility for teaching and learning about religion and for promoting these equitably within the curriculum (Policy 2003). This therefore implies that school policies and practices should take cognisance of learners' cultural and religious identities in order to provide safe and nurturing learning environments. Such environments enable learners to have meaningful experiences free from coercion, discrimination and prejudice (Cohen-Malayev, Schachter & Rich 2014:20). In South Africa, chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996,

recognises peoples' cultural and religious identities and defends their freedom to express them.

I am a teacher and over the years I have engaged with various communities on youth development and diversity awareness initiatives related to self-awareness, family origins and heritage. Some of these activities were undertaken as an afterschool enrichment project. My interest was the extent to which the learners and youth related their identity to African tradition and heritage. I realised that as a result of inadequate knowledge and understanding, they were not always able to relate to the deeper (metaphysical) understanding of the beliefs and practices associated with African traditional cultural-religious practices.

My interactions with the learners and youth revealed apparent conflicted religious identities. This conflict arises from the marginalisation of their traditional religious beliefs and practices in the face of the competing dominating Western and Christian meanings that they experience in their everyday lives.

According to Sefa-Dei (2012:106) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2011) on indigenous issues, identification with their heritage and the development of a clear cultural identity is important for adolescents and young people, and studies confirm that cultural affiliation correlates with self-esteem and general well-being (Wexler 2009:268). Historically, contact with western culture through the education system and the churches and the general western orientation of media, resulted in a shift in the African's way of life culturally and in their outlook in general (Mogoboya 2011:4).

More noteworthy, I have noticed that in recent years a greater number of in and out of-school adolescents are now affiliating with African initiated churches (AICs) and embrace aspects of indigenous spirituality. Moreover, many adolescents are exposed to and engage with the traditional spiritual music associated with AICs through the various media and the use of modern technologies.

According to Hanley and Noblit (2009:24), music forms an aspect of culture that is associated with a person's social identity in the same way as certain forms of entertainment, dress codes, food and other factors are. Adolescents' social development is therefore influenced by their personality, values and identity status, as well as their cultural identity.

The growing interest in AICs indicates a need among adolescents to reconnect with their heritage. This might be because of the resurgence of movements aimed to achieve the African Renaissance mooted by President Mbeki in 1998 and the attendant initiatives from various African-centred institutions. Examples are the Eskia Institute, Kara Heritage Institute, Icamagu Institute, Umsamo Institute, as well as various community-based organisations throughout the country. Coupled with these initiatives are the education activities of the AICs, such as the Amanazaretha youth internet radio (of the Shembe church), which position African culture and African identity in a multicultural and religious society.

How young people generally rediscover and express their heritage (and therefore their religious identity) in a multicultural society such as ours should be enabled by culturally appropriate schools, school systems, policies and practices such as culturally responsive teaching (Song 2018:19,20; Jackson-Barret & Lee-Hammond 2018:88,99; West-Burns & Murray 2016: 60-61,63; Gay 2013: 50,51 and Hanley & Noblit 2009:18, 28). While the school environment is as much a factor as home circumstances in influencing young people's thinking and behaviour (Vygotsky 1978), based on my experience, the curriculum in our schools does not provide for the broader African experience, such that learners who may be so inclined might not feel free to express their indigenous religious beliefs and rituals within the framework of the given school structure. Learners who are members of an African traditional religion (ATR) might therefore struggle to retain their identity in their schools where other religions dominate (Phinney and Kohatsu 1997; Chaudhury and Miller 2008:400; Ferguson 2013:116).

ATR is one of a number of religions practised in South Africa, along with Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Rastafarianism and others. Within the ambit of ATR are groups such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), comprising two groups which are identified either by a star or dove, the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), the Saint John's Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), also referred to as Zion Apostolic of which there are about 39 groups and the Nazareth Baptist Church, also known as "iBandla lamaNazaretha", or the Shembe Church.

To address the religious/spiritual diversity in public education, the Department of Education (DoE) promulgated the Policy under the umbrella of the South African Schools Act 27 of 1996. In tandem with this, the South African Schools Act, 1996, upholds the constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of conscience, religion,

thought, belief and opinion, and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds including religion. The Policy therefore gives expression to the religious freedom provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and thus requires teachers to adopt a multi-religious approach to religion education (RE) in order to accommodate the diverse religions and engender an ecumenical spirit within multicultural schools and society.

It is fifteen years since the Policy was brought into effect in public schools. Nevertheless, based on the literature and on my personal experience and insights as a teacher, RE has not been applied effectively to deal with life in the way most learners experience it culturally, ethnically and religiously. Accordingly, the following issues pose challenges for both teachers and learners:

- Christianity is still the dominant religion in the country and therefore the dominant religious culture in many public schools (Ferreira 2011:124).
- The teacher profile in many of these schools does not always reflect the cultural diversity of the learners
- In those instances where the teacher profile differs, teachers' values may either be in opposition to the schools' multi-religious culture or to the learners' different religious identities (Jarvis 2009:167; Mpisi 2010:4). Thus, teachers' own religious value systems and identities may conflict with other religious beliefs and policy expectations (Ferguson 2014a:32–33; Ratsatsi, Mattson & Harley in Jarvis 2009:158).
- A teachers' discomfort with teaching to diverse religions because of his or her own religious biases could inadvertently entrench religious discrimination or promote stereotyping of learners with other belief systems (Mwesigwa 2009:59).
- In addition, teachers who are either biased against or not adequately knowledgeable about African indigenous culture might not readily validate an indigenous religious philosophy within the broader view of affirming diverse religious beliefs (Shizha 2013:14, 15; Jarvis 2013:133, 142).
- In respect of learners, not all are readily open to other religions that differ from their own (Jarvis 2009:167).
- The accommodation of a dress code that allows for the expression of a person's cultural and religious beliefs is often still disapproved of. This would also include

items such as cultural beads or religious symbols, where the general rule applied would be that such dress must conform to the accepted standards of a school's uniform policy (Waal, Mestry & Russo 2011:65– 71, 88–89, 218).

- Learners of different cultures are merely assimilated into integrated/multiracial schools, where a dominant school culture generally still exists (Vandeyar 2010:353–355). This will be discussed in Chapter 2.

It is clear from the above challenges that for teachers and the school to engage more authentically with learners' religious perspectives, it is important that they reflect on their own attitudes towards different belief systems with a view to being more open and transformative in their teaching and learning approaches (Jarvis 2009:170; Jarvis 2013:133–134). However, from my perspective, it has become crucial that we listen to the voices of the learners, especially those that uphold indigenous belief systems. In this regard, exposure to wide multicultural and multi-religious perspectives through my schooling and teaching experiences, particularly from my knowledge of ATR, provides the impetus for exploring the learners' lived experiences through this research. In particular, research that presents the perspectives of adolescents from AICs is lacking. It is my view that this type of mutual engagement can ultimately elevate learning and teaching and place it in a more meaning-driven context. Thus, as Ferguson (2014a:32–34) asserts, the need for a paradigm shift in the way teachers deliver RE in multicultural and multi-religious schools is paramount.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The main research question which therefore emerged from the above is:

How are the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools accommodated in RE?
The following sub-questions logically follow:

- What do learners understand about their religion?
- How do learners express and experience their various indigenous religious belief systems in a multicultural and multi-religious school context?
- In what way does the RE/Life Orientation (LO) curriculum accommodate the indigenous religious identity of learners?
- What recommendations can be made to accommodate learners from ATRs?

- What recommendations may be made to better address RE practices and acknowledge religious identities among learners from AICs?

The aim of this research is threefold: Firstly, by exploring the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in South African secondary schools, teachers and learners may become reflective; this would provide a platform for openness and discussions that could elicit an appreciation for diversity. Secondly, the study could make a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions regarding the way schools interpret and implement the Policy (2003) with regard to RE. Finally, the inquiry adds to the emerging literature of African-centred research which promotes African indigenous knowledge perspectives with the focus on ATR.

Therefore, I selected learners from four South African secondary schools in Mpumalanga province. The schools comprise various ethnic groups and therefore were considered data-rich sites in the context of the study. It is important to take cognisance of the fact that the learners were in the adolescent stage of development with ages ranging from 14 to 17 years. During this stage of development, individuals are transitioning from childhood into early adulthood and are exploring different identities that include the personal, social, ethnic, cultural and religious-spiritual aspects of a person's life. They not only look to their parents for guidance, but seek this as well as to their peers, to educational, religious, socio-political organisations or belief systems (Erikson 1968; Vygotsky 1978; Erikson & Erikson 1997:73; Marcia 2007; Chaudhury & Miller 2008).

1.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Willis (in Taylor & Medina 2013:1) explains a paradigm as a "comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field". A paradigm thus provides the frame of reference for insights and reasoning. Bearing in mind my focus on the adolescents' *indigenous* religious identities, an African-centred framework guides my research.

1.3.1 Theoretical framework: African-centred approach

The overarching framework for the research paradigm is African indigenous knowledge (AIK) or an African-centred approach, where the epistemologies are informed by African culture, history, language and spiritual philosophy. This theoretical framework is in keeping with the South African National Indigenous Knowledge

System Policy (in Kaya 2013:136–137) which seeks to promote the integration of AIK systems in research, teaching, learning and community participation at higher education institutions.

The AIK perspective considers and respects all cultures and other knowledge systems while providing new insights and dimensions on the understanding of African indigenous culture. It aims to interpret research data from an African perspective and requires that the researcher empathises and identifies with the participants' culture and worldview (Sefa-Dei 2012:106). My expansive multicultural background, obtained from my schooling and teaching experiences, provides me with a broad base from which to know and understand how the participants would perceive, interpret and make sense of their realities in their schools and supports the aim of this research (Sefa-Dei 2012:106; Owusu-Ansah & Mji 2013:2).

In addition, African indigenous culture must be understood and considered in the research and in any subsequent recommendations that may affect indigenous communities and their culture (Sefa-Dei 2012:103–104; Kaya 2013:141–142). This would be applicable to this study when analysing data from the adolescents' responses in order to show how they express their indigenous religious identity and how this identity influences their behaviours in the classroom.

I will therefore consider African-centred approaches when making recommendations for RE practices and acknowledging religious identities among adolescents from AICs. A constructionist approach will thus be used to make meaning of and understand the participants' contexts.

1.3.2 Constructivism

Constructivism views knowledge as socially constructed, which implies that as individuals seek to understand their world, a range of meanings are presented in relation to their experiences and interactions with others (Guba & Lincoln 1989). Constructivism views knowledge as socially constructed, which implies that as individuals seek to understand their world, a range of meanings are presented in relation to their experiences and interactions with others (Guba & Lincoln 1989) This idea of the learner as a meaning-maker underpins constructivism, wherein an individuals' knowledge and prior learning experiences informs his/her worldview (Bruner,1990; Mahn,2012:101). I will therefore rely on the participants' historical and

sociocultural perspectives in relation to the research questions and, in this way, to understand their context (Guba & Lincoln 1989). The multiple realities that the constructionist approach allows for will provide me with the flexibility to gather more information in order to support the study and reach an interpretation (Creswell 2013:8, 9).

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is qualitative in nature. Creswell (2013:18) defines a qualitative approach as one in which the researcher arrives at conclusions based primarily on "constructivist perspectives or advocacy/participatory perspectives". This study will interpret the constructed meanings that learners present regarding their views on their indigenous religious beliefs, how their beliefs are expressed in their schools and their impressions of the way their religious identity is accommodated in the RE curriculum and the RE classroom.

The methodology used for this inquiry will now be discussed.

1.4.1 Phenomenological collective case study

Phenomenology as a research methodology describes and constructs the meaning of a people's lived experience through "intensive dialogue" with persons who are living the experience (Creswell 2014:57). Phenomenology as a human science therefore guides the research to be systematic, methodical, general and critical (Giorgi 1997). Focusing specifically on psychological phenomenological approaches, Giorgi (in Creswell 2014) presents the following four core characteristics that are typical across phenomenological enquiries:

- The research is descriptive.
- It makes use of phenomenological reductions.
- It explores the intentional relationship between the participants and their situations.
- It then searches for the essences of meanings with participants who have experienced the phenomenon.

This enquiry will utilise descriptive phenomenological reductions, where I will explore the meanings that the learners give to their religious identities and related experiences in their schools and then describe their discoveries accordingly (Husserl 1983:150, 151; Husserl in Giorgi 2007:64; Giorgi 1989; Creswell 2014:234). Using multiple case

studies (also known as a collective case study), a more comprehensive picture of the research phenomenon will be obtained. The focus groups of adolescent learners will provide the data from similarities or differences among the cases will be analysed to obtain a better understanding of their religious identity experiences in the school environment (Stake 2010).

This study will, therefore, explore the shared experiences of a group of African adolescent learners who affiliate with AICs. The purpose of the research will be to understand the emic view of their cultural religious identity in contrast to the etic view (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011:137–140). In this regard, the study will describe and interpret the way in which the knowledge, norms and values associated with African indigenous religion (AIR) influence the adolescents' religious identity within the school context.

The school, which is the natural setting (for this research) in which the adolescents' religious identity is expressed, contextualises the participants' real world and therefore allows me to explore the adolescents' perspectives and interpret and report on my findings (ibid). This interpretative phenomenological enquiry method of providing data about the participants' reality is thus the case study.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this study includes an extensive literature study and the conducting of focus group interviews so as to triangulate the research findings.

1.5.1 An extensive literature review

The literature review explores the role of religion in the identity development of adolescents as well as RE in secular schools. In all progressive research, a literature review is conducted to identify existing research related to the proposed research, to support the identified need to conduct the research, to provide evidence for the problem and then to examine and reflect on the findings of the research in the light of the literature (Creswell 2012:17, 67, 81).

1.5.2 Sampling

The selection criteria for the participants included accessibility to the research site and the willingness of the school and learners to participate in the study. The research data was obtained from purposely selected learners who affiliate with in the first instance AICs and then included others who were representative of other faiths in order to

include diverse views. Hence, purposive samples are biased towards the researcher's need to source people who have the knowledge and can communicate on the issues presented (Cohen et al 2011:109, 114–115).

1.5.3 Focus groups

The use of focus groups allows for data to be collected in a relatively short time and through multiple responses, as participants interact with each other and the researcher around the questions presented (Cohen et al 2011:288; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2010:15, 16). The questions posed were therefore open-ended, allowing the participants to explain their meanings in relation to their indigenous religious identities which would have developed through their cultural-social interactions within their AICs and with others.

1.5.4 Reflective journal

Being consciously reflective during the research process "helps to bring the unconscious into consciousness" (Ortlipp 2008:698). The use of a reflective journal as a research instrument was important for reflecting on and checking my personal assumptions and subjectivities as the study progressed, as well as contributing to its validity. I kept a personal journal to record my experiences in the field because journaling contributes to a researcher's analytical thinking and personal insights. To complement the interview data, I kept field notes to reflect on and examine my experiences, impressions, thoughts and feelings during the research process (Ortlipp 2008:703-704).

1.5.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical practices require attention throughout the research process; during the stages of data collection, the reporting and the distribution of the report. Ethical measures involve the following salient aspects:

- The competency of the researcher
- Attaining permission to conduct the research through the researcher's university, relevant education officials and the school principals.
- Obtaining informed consent from the participants' guardians as well as the participants' assent to their voluntary participation and use of their information.

- Ensuring participants know and understand the purpose of the study and how it will be conducted and that anonymity and confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.
- Ensuring that the data is reported honestly (Cohen et al 2011 :23–24).

1.5.6 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

My credibility as a researcher along with my special interest and the value of the research, the attention to precise data collection methods and the fact that the data gathered was relevant to the research question, ensured the research was trustworthy and credible. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the criteria to be considered by the researcher to ensure the reliability, trustworthiness and validity of the data are its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The strategies applied to comply with these criteria are discussed in Chapter 4.

Descriptions of key concepts applicable to this research follow.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Indigenous

The word “indigenous” is derived from the Latin word *indigena,* meaning "a native". It is generally used to describe people, flora or fauna that is native to a particular place, such as an indigenous ceremony or religion that is traditionally used by a certain group of people (The American Heritage Dictionary 2017). The term “indigenous” is also connected to a sense of community where an individual is linked to sacred traditions, traditional homelands and a shared history of the group (Sefa-Dei 2012:111–112). The adolescent learners for this study are descended from a collective of indigenous people of the African continent.

1.6.2 Indigenous knowledge (IK)

IK is described as “a system that is based on the shared experiences, customs, values, traditions, subsistence lifestyles, social interactions, ideological orientations and spiritual beliefs unique to local communities” (Stevenson in Ngulube & Lwoga 2007:118). Prior to foreign occupation and influences, AIK and methods guided the people in all areas of their lives, including social, educational, agricultural, political, economic and spiritual aspects (Gomez 2013:78–79; Kaya 2013:136; Manganyi & Buitendag 2013).

For this study, IK stresses the interconnectedness and interdependence of all phenomena at the biological, physical, psychological, social and cultural levels. The foundation of IK is based on Ubuntu (oneness in humanity) and on the interrelationship between nature and humanity (Forster 2010:6–7).

1.6.3 African traditional religion (ATR)

ATR is associated with African initiated churches (AICs). Traditional religion is expressed through ceremonies, rites and rituals that relate to rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage, death and life after death. These cultural and associated religious values influence the family and society (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013). ATR binds the community through shared sacred beliefs and practices and in this way a group becomes a "sacred community" (Mbiti 1990:200).

1.6.4 African indigenous churches (AICs)

The AICs adapt or integrate Christian spiritual teachings from an indigenous perspective thereby incorporating an African identity and history (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013; Mofokeng in Coetzee, 2005:28). The teachings generally align to the Old Testament because it talks to aspects and practices of African traditional (spiritual) beliefs and culture and, as Bishop Mofokeng (in Coertze 2005:28) explains, "the bible was written for all nations and people regardless of their tribe, language, customs and culture".

1.6.5 Religion and spirituality

For the purposes of this study, the terms "religion" and "spirituality" are used interchangeably in the African context, where traditionally, religion (a component of culture) is a way of life in the community, characterised by traditional spiritual practices (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013; Mofokeng in Coertze 2005:19, 24, 25, 30). Spirituality can be experienced and expressed in many ways, including being or becoming aware of the sacredness of one's soul, and the interconnectedness of the universe which includes the divine Creator and/or ancestral spirits or guides and angels (Lippman & McIntosh 2010:2; Hanley & Noblit 2009:26).

1.6.6 Identity

Identity theorists posit that the individual consists of a collection of identities which may be made up of one's race, class, education, region, religion and gender.

A person’s behaviour and social relationships are therefore influenced by the different roles that he or she plays in society as expressed through different identities at any given time (Callero 1985; Stryker 1980, 1987).

1.6.7 Affirm

To affirm means to confirm, to state as a fact and to state emphatically or publicly (Oxford dictionary, 2010). The synonyms for affirm which are relevant to the context of this research are to accommodate, acknowledge, recognise, support, embrace and to value.

1.6.8 Adolescents

Adolescents are young people who are in the period of physical and psychological development from puberty to adulthood. This period ranges from early adolescence, generally ages 11 to 14, middle adolescence, ages 15 to 17, to late adolescence, ages 18 to 21 (American Academy of Paediatrics 2015). During adolescence, the individual experiences marked physiological, emotional, psychological and social changes as they search for an identity. An adolescent’s identity development includes the personal, social, ethnic, environmental, cultural and religious-spiritual aspects of his or her life (Erikson 1968; Vygotsky 1978; Marcia 2007; Chaudhury & Miller 2008).

1.6.9 Religion education (RE)

RE is the non-confessional study of religion. It can be referred to the teachings delivered through a church or religious association for information regarding doctrinal beliefs and faith, or through an educational institution for learning about different religions. RE is also associated with the academic subject, religious studies. It has an important role to play in preparing adolescents for transition into adulthood and in planning their lifelong education in a supportive environment that fosters critical inquiry and pedagogical skill of and in multi-cultural/religious perspectives (Jackson 2004;2010).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant for the following reasons:

- The voices of adolescents from AICs in existing literature are scarce. This investigation is therefore scientifically relevant as it provides adolescents’ experiences and insights which are pertinent to the pedagogical implications for

schools, parents and other stakeholders who might be involved with RE practices as provided for through the curriculum.

- The context of this study is akin to that found in other countries in the South African Development Community (SADC). This means the findings could contribute to regional discourse on educational reform as it pertains to RE.
- The study contributes to African-centred research and the integration of AIK systems in such research.

1.8 RESEARCH PROGRAMME – DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The study comprises six chapters as outlined below.

Chapter one provides the background to and rationale for the study. The aim of the research and research question were presented, as well as the research paradigm, the research design and data collection methods and clarification of the key concepts. Finally, the significance of the study was explained.

Chapter two examines the role of religion in adolescent identity development.
The discussion includes faith and moral development, the link between ethnicity and religion as presented by different identity theorists, adolescents' views on religion/spirituality and the influence of the education environment on their religious identities. The chapter also provides an overview of ATR, the AICs in South Africa and the associated key values.

Chapter three explores and explains the findings of other research on religious education programmes in secular schools, as experienced in selected countries with a particular focus on RE in South Africa. Approaches to managing and valuing diverse religious identities in public secular schools are also reviewed.

Chapter four provides the research methodology, research design and methods, data collection and data analysis. Phenomenological collective case study is reviewed as the methodology of choice for the research.

Chapter five presents the research findings in relation to the empirical research, the theoretical framework and the literature.

Chapter six draws conclusions based on the findings and relates them to the initial problem presentation. The limitations and the contribution of the study are highlighted.

The chapter finally makes a number of recommendations regarding support for the indigenous religious identities among adolescents in secondary schools.

1.9 SUMMARY

Chapter one outlined the research project, the background to the study and the aims and objectives, and presented an overview of the literature pertaining to the focus and the research design, as well as the methodology which would enable the researcher to collect and analyse data. The relevant key concepts cited for the study were clarified and the planned programme of research outlined.

Chapter two presents the literature review on identity development among adolescents with particular reference to the influence of religion on their identity construction. The chapter therefore provides the religious-cultural context for the research.

CHAPTER TWO:

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one provided an overview of and the background to the research. This chapter begins with a succinct explanation of identity development in adolescents, as it pertains to this study. This will be followed by an exploration of religious identity theories that may be used to explain the influence of religion on adolescents' identity construction. Additionally, the role of religion in adolescent identity development will be critically evaluated and the link between religion and ethnicity in relation to identity development established. This leads the clarification of the meaning of religion, spirituality and values in the context of AIRs. The chapter will further outline adolescents' views on religion and spirituality and finally examine the influence of the education environment on their religious identities. These aspects are relevant as they support the aim of the research, that is, to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in South African secondary schools. This is done with a view to teachers and learners becoming more reflective and exhibiting an openness to and appreciation of diversity and so improve their teaching and learning in RE.

2.2 ADOLESCENT IDENTITY

The need for identity is fundamental to human development. During an individual's cycle of growth and development from infancy to adulthood, adolescence is a period of searching for one's identity. This phase of development is marked by dramatic physiological, emotional, psychological and social changes. Accordingly, the process towards adolescents' firm sense of identity is interwoven with their psychosocial functioning and well-being (Corecetti 2017:148). The exploration of one's identity includes the personal, social, ethnic, cultural and religious or spiritual aspects of ones' life (Erikson,1968; Vygotsky 1978; Marcia 2007; Moulin, 2013:3-5). In addition, the environmental context in which people live and associate also has an influence on adolescents' identity development (Chaudhury & Miller, 2008; Kroger, Martinussen & Marcia, 2010: 694,696).

The aspiration to achieve identity is important because establishing an identity is associated with higher self-esteem, increased critical thinking, and enhanced moral reasoning (Erickson 1950, 1968; Marcia 1966, 1980). This was revealed in a study of identity status differences in positive and negative psychosocial functioning, which was conducted among college-attending North Americans. The study confirmed the importance of identity exploration in promoting well-being and self-discovery and thereby preventing "antisocial activities and health compromising behaviours" among adolescents (Schwartz, Beyers, Luyckx, Soenens, Zamboanga, Forthun, Hardy, Vazsonyi, Ham, Kim, Whitbourne, & Waterman 2011:856). The study also revealed varying degrees of identity development across the spectrum, depending on participants' lifestyles, their levels of self-esteem and well-being, and how far they had progressed towards self-actualisation. This sense of self-concept also influences the formation of a person's religious identity in terms of which a person's worldview and religious convictions are shaped (Schwartz et al 2011:853–856; Bertram-Troost, Roos & Miedema,2009: 311,313; Moulin, 2013:3-5).

2.3 EXPLORING RELIGIOUS IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A religious identity has to do with how people choose to relate to a particular religion, and whether they express this on their own or by belonging to a religious community (Visser-Vogel, 2012:17-19). This would include following specific practices associated with certain beliefs: values (Lippman & McIntosh, 2010:2), rituals, sensory experiences and, in this instance, the study of ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history and mythology, as well as faith and mystical experiences (Gomez 2013:78; Oppong 2013:13). Faith is usually described as a process in which a person places his or her belief or trust in a reality of truth or values hoped for. In the context of religion, faith refers to knowing that God exists or having a belief in a higher power (New World Encyclopaedia 2013). Faith development theorists such as Fowler (1981) describe faith as a person's search for meaning and purpose through the different phases of his or her life.

2.3.1 Fowler's faith development theory

In his study on how people's faith develops, Fowler (1981) identified a pre-stage and six stages of faith development based on a person's life experiences from birth to the later years and on the meanings or values attached to their circumstances. In the study, interviews were conducted with people from different religions. The stages

identified were drawn from the theories of cognitive development, including the development of a person's ability to consider other people's perspectives, the development of moral judgement or reasoning, the development of people's approaches to finding meaning, and people's relations to symbols and self - knowledge. The structure of Fowler's (1981) faith development theory is summarised as follows:

The *pre-stage* occurs at infancy, where *primal undifferentiated faith* is formed. This is the stage when babies form relationships with parents (and others) and rely on them to meet their needs. The development of trust in others is the early formation of faith or the "first pre-images of God" (Fowler 1981:121).

In *stage one, the intuitive-projective faith* (early childhood), young children aged two to six or seven years of age have developed language and their experiences or ideas of God are based on stories and images passed on by their caregivers. Children's perceptions of God and any related images are influenced by their imagination and their fantasies (Fowler 1981:133–134). *Stage two, the mythic-literal faith,* begins in the elementary school years and extends through to early adolescence. Individuals between the ages of seven and ten are starting to think logically and separate reality from make-believe. Their view of right and wrong behaviour is determined by their sense of fairness (Fowler 1981:150).

As individuals reach middle adolescence their faith develops through *stage three*, which is described as *synthetic-conventional faith*. During this stage of puberty, adolescents' self-concept is influenced by their perceptions of how other people see them. Their cognitive development translates to concerns about their personal future, their identity, work and career. Friendships and other personal relationships correspond to their desire to have a deep and loving relationship with God. At this stage, individuals have developed values and beliefs and their conceptions of faith arise from various influences (Fowler 1981:172–173).

As their faith development is further influenced by different value systems through their young adulthood, individuals might move on to *stage four, individuative-reflective faith*. People who move to this fourth stage of faith development are more reflective and questioning about their earlier beliefs. Owing to their expanding life experiences and worldviews, which are influenced by events such as leaving home and experiencing

the world of work, they now have an independent and conscious sense of identity and might acquire new value systems (Fowler 1981:182–183).

The fifth stage is *conjunctive faith* which occurs at mid-life or beyond. At this stage, individuals who are exploring other religions and belief systems are identifying parallels with the traditional concepts and symbols from their own initial beliefs. People are therefore open to and appreciative of different views that bring a new understanding to their faith (Fowler 1981:197–198). At this stage, a person may, for example, relate to his/her respective scriptures in a deeper and more meaningful way.

While individuals in stage five do not challenge injustices (such as oppression, segregation and violence) as they see them, individuals in *stage six* are willing to sacrifice themselves for the love of the greater good, with Mother Theresa being given as an example here. Their faith, which Fowler describes as *universalising faith*, is rooted in being at one with God (Fowler 1981:199–201).

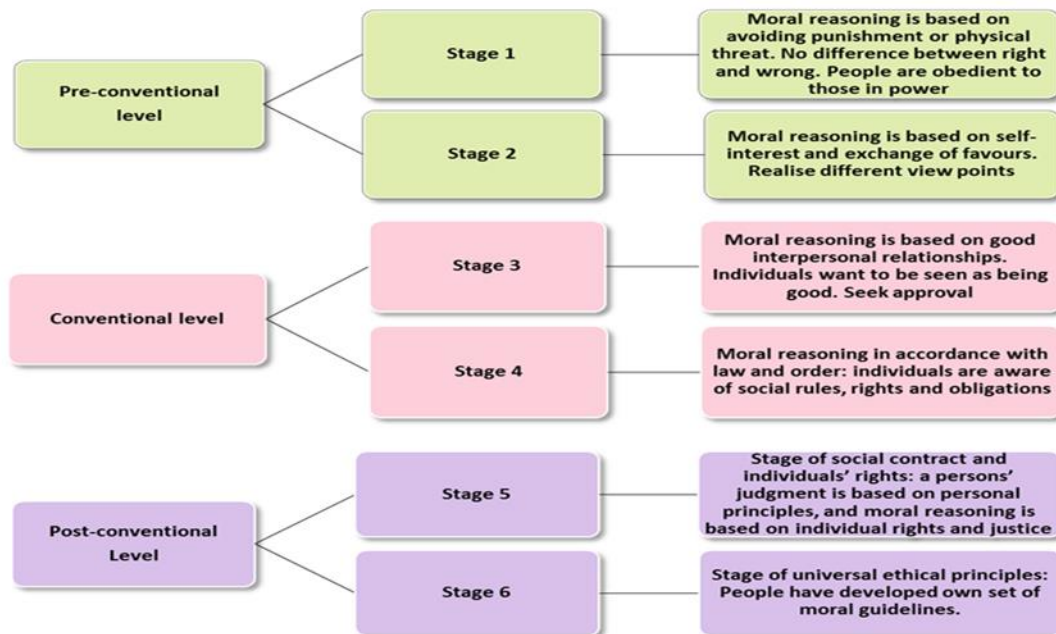
Because the participants for this study were learners in Grades 8 to 11 (between the ages of 14 and 17), they are likely to fall into stage three, the synthetic-conventional faith. This stage underlines the way in which adolescents understand and develop their religious or spiritual identity in the midst of other factors and how certain factors may affect their values and moral development. Research has revealed a small positive correlation between identity status and moral reasoning development (Kroger 2016 :11). The following section discusses moral development in adolescents.

2.3.2 Adolescent moral development

Moral development involves the thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with deciding what is right and wrong. According to Kohlberg (1984), moral reasoning develops according to a universal sequence of stages and that individuals attain levels of moral development in stages based on how they resolve moral issues and conflicts. His study presented male children aged between 10 and 16 with a scenario which had to do with a husband who had to decide whether he should steal medication to save his sick wife. Based on the children's reasoning on how they would address the moral dilemmas, he developed a six-stage theory of moral development. These six stages are grouped into three higher-order levels of development: 1) the pre-conventional level, 2) the conventional level, and 3) the post-conventional or principled level. Each level is subdivided into two stages, making the six stages in total (McCloud 2013).

The table below describes Kohlberg's three levels and six stages of moral development.

Table 2.1: Kohlberg's stages of moral development



Sources: Adapted from McLeod (2013)

The progression through the stages illustrated in Table 2.1 happens sequentially and at different rates, depending on each child's perception of moral reasoning (McLeod 2013). This implies that stage 1 characterises children's orientation at preschool, age 3 to 5 years and stage 2, at elementary school, age 6 to 7 years, though this could include older learners. Adolescents in stage 3 three include those in higher primary up to the early high school years. At this stage, individuals are directed towards interpersonal conformity with their teachers and their group associations, such as family, friends and colleagues.

The participants in this study would be associated with stage 4 of moral development, which falls into the conventional level of moral reasoning. At stage four, which occurs during the high school years, adolescents are influenced by the social system in which they live and study. Here, a person would therefore want to go along with and maintain the social order. However, stage four also speaks to social rights and equality. This suggests that within the context of RE in secular schools, learners from AICs should have the space to express their specific heritage and religious perspective, even though these might not align with the prevailing religious worldview in their school.

In light of the fact that a person's culture can influence moral judgements, it should be noted that Kohlberg's study was limited to adolescent males, of whom 80% were Christians from Western nations. His theory did not, therefore, consider cultural biases and contexts associated with how other groups arrive at value judgements (Cam, Cavdar, Seydoogullari & Cok 2012; Andrade 2014). Furthermore, a person might respond differently to real life situations as opposed to scenarios presented in a research environment (McCloed 2013). This implies that Western value systems would differ in some respect from those of Africans, for example, where, for the latter, group identity and communal values are emphasised.

2.3.3 Vygotsky's integrative approach to identity formation

In contrast to Kohlberg's study, psychologist Vygotsky, who is renowned for his contribution to cognitive development, located moral development (and character education) within a socio-cultural framework.

Through his multifaceted theory of cognitive development, Vygotsky examined the psychology of art, language and thought, as well as learning and development with particular attention to special education. According to Vygotsky, cultural and social influences underpin the development of learners' higher cognitive abilities, as expressed through the use of language from their socio-cultural environment (Mahn 2012; Steiner & Mahn 2012:192, 198, 202–203). Vygotsky believed that cognitive development includes moral development. This underscores the fact that an adolescent's worldview and morality influence his or her value judgements.

In this study, values are understood to be beliefs or ideals shared by members of a culture about what is good or bad and acceptable or unacceptable. Values generally influence a person's behaviour and attitude. Although the characteristics of values may be universal, individuals and groups have different value "priorities" or "hierarchies", as indicated above with regard to Western and African value judgements (see 2.3.2) (Schwartz 2012:3).

2.4 THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ADOLESCENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

An individual's sense of identity is an important aspect of psychological health. This is borne out by various research studies, which have found that spiritual beliefs and practices among the youth are positively related to identity and moral development, among other aspects of life and social development (Lippman & McIntosh 2010:1). A

strong spiritual identity corresponds with factors that contribute to a solid sense of one's personal identity. This fact is an important consideration for this study in locating an enabling space within the school for African spiritual expression among adolescents, for instance, where they may represent themselves or seek acknowledgement of their particular beliefs and practices (Gee in Moulin 2013:4–5).

Research confirms that, generally, religion and spirituality have a positive impact on many aspects of adolescent development, including identity, values, prosocial attitudes and behaviour, social responsibility, having life goals, coping with adversity, and other healthy behaviours (Lippman & McIntosh 2010:5–6; Layton, Dollahite & Hardy 2011:382; Oppong 2013:15). Layton et al (2011:391) conducted a study involving 80 religious youths from different faiths in the United States of America and accordingly found seven areas that influence adolescents' religious commitments. The most common factor was religious traditions, rituals or laws. This was followed by God, commitment to their faith, membership of their faith community, parents or family as their source of religious information, scriptures which provide the spiritual foundation and guidance and, finally, religious leaders who they view as authority figures or as influential and from whom they can get support.

A recent meta-analysis of 40 studies confirmed that religious involvement in adolescents is positively associated with various constructive behaviours and negatively associated with various destructive behaviours (Saroglou 2012:391–423). King and Furrows' (2004:704, 711) study on understanding how religion influences positive outcomes among adolescents, also confirms that religion has a constructive effect on adolescent moral development. The link between identity and religion, as presented by Erikson (1950, 1966), Marcia (1966, 1980) and Peek (2005), will be illustrated in the following sections.

2.4.1 Erikson's view of the link between identity and religion

Erikson's (1950:261) fifth stage of personality development represents the adolescence stage of 12 to 19 years of age. Erikson called this stage identity vs. role confusion, as this period is defined by confusion within the mind and body, as adolescents try to achieve a coherent identity and avoid identity confusion. It is during this stage that adolescents are torn between their childhood and their adult statuses and are therefore continually reflecting on aspects of their identity, such as whom they are, their capabilities and friendships, and how they want to live their lives. The

physical, cognitive and social changes that take place in adolescence allow them to develop an identity that will serve as a basis for their adult lives (Kroger 2016:16). This suggests that they would commit to relationships, morals and ideals, particularly around politics and religion as they negotiate their identity (ibid).

This identity formation begins by associating with the parents' religious contacts, and in forming the self-identity the person chooses the same or a different religious identity to that of his/her parents (Erikson 1968; Marcia 1966, 1980; Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga 2013:340). In the current study, the research participants fell into the 15 to 18-year age group and, while they would not have had direct experiences of the politics of the colonial and apartheid systems, their conditioning and worldview would be influenced to a large part by their parents'/extended families'/communities' inherited experiences, memories and emotions (Msila 2014:433, 439). This corresponds with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural approach to cognitive development, as he believed that community (environment) contributes strongly to how and what children think about. This therefore means that the factors of indigenous religious expression, which have an impact on the participants' identity, would to some degree be indicators of transference from previous generations during their process of exploration and commitment.

2.4.2 Marcia's model of identity development

The way in which adolescents commit to a particular identity was further explored by Marcia (1980). Marcia's (1980:159) model of identity development, which emanated from Erikson's theory (1950, 1968) of adolescent identity development, describes the transition of the adolescent's identity formation process from self-exploration to commitment. Marcia (1966, 1980) identified four statuses of identity to describe the process of adolescent identity development. These statuses are foreclosure, exploration, achievement and diffusion (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie 2013:403).

The foreclosure status occurs when a commitment is made without exploring alternatives. For example, Oppong (2013:15) points to evidence that suggests a relationship between religious attendance and identity foreclosure and achievement. However, adolescents subsequently begin to question their ideas and beliefs and enter the moratorium status, where they begin to question their identities and explore alternatives (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga 2013:344). This may

be reflected by attending different churches or exploring different social roles. In the researcher's experience, this questioning and uncertainty could also be influenced by particular circumstances such as whom the adolescent may be associating with, for example peers or relatives with different religious affiliations. This is corroborated by research studies that suggest that a community of religious peers and religious adults influences the religious identity formation of adolescents. Parents are particularly influential (Bertram-Troost, De Roos & Miedema 2009; Armet 2009). In the context of this study, parents would include the extended African family.

Thus, the questioning and the further exploration that occurs in the moratorium stage may be followed by identity achievement when the adolescent now commits to important aspects of his or her identity. The transitional state of moratorium is also described as *''searching moratorium''* (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga 2013:344).

Other theorists have advanced additional identity processes between the exploration and commitment stages. The exploration variable was further divided between ''*exploration in breadth''* (as per Marcia's first stage*) and ''exploration in depth''* where a person takes into account his or her prior commitments. Commitment was further separated between ''*commitment making''* (from Marcia's model) and ''*identification with commitment''* when a person integrates these commitments in relation to his/her self-awareness (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga 2013:343).

A third type of exploration is ''ruminative exploration'' where a person is so consumed about what would be the "correct" choice, that he or she is unable to decide which direction to follow. On the other hand, adolescents who have foreclosed commitments from their upbringing, for example, can reconsider these commitments during their identity development process. The constructs ''*reconsideration of commitment''* and *''ruminative exploration''* are similar to Erikson's (1968) identity confusion stage (ibid).

Some adolescents become overwhelmed or confused, however, and may not have a clear self-awareness. This describes the diffusion status, in which adolescents may become socially isolated and withdrawn. Additional diffused statuses have been presented as ''*diffused diffusion''* and ''*carefree diffusion''*. In the former instance, individuals' exploration is haphazard and, in the latter, individuals show little or no

interest in identity matters as indicated in Erikson's (1950) identity confusion stage (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga 2013:344).

At the diffusion stage, an adolescent might then not attend religious meetings, for example. With regard to the focus of this study, encouragement and support from parents and schools, as adolescents explore their identities in their communities, would greatly foster their identity achievement at this particular time of their life (Eccles & Roeser 2011:225; Moulin 2015:500-501).

2.4.3 Peek's stages of religious identity development

Peek (2005:215–242) described the identity process in a study in which she explored the formation of a religious identity among a group of young American Muslims. The research participants presented three stages of religious identity development where their salience towards their religious identity progressed from religion as an ascribed identity, to a chosen identity where a conscious decision to being Muslim was made, to the third stage where religion was a declared identity.

According to Peek (2005:236), the research demonstrates that the formation of a religious identity is a dynamic and ongoing process and that religious identity itself is not a static phenomenon. This research also confirms that identity salience may change over time, as individuals become more or less committed to other identities. Ultimately, in the process of forming their self-identity, individuals might not always have a fixed social identity and could ascribe higher value to other identities over time (Vryan, Adler & Adler in LaFountain 2010:23, 39).

Although adolescents explore multiple aspects of their identities, commitments to ethnic or religious identity may occur at different times (Oppong 2013:14–15). For example, proceeding from Marcia's identity status model, Coretti (2017:146) proposed that adolescents might decide to reconsider their initial identity commitments and through deep reflection and exploration opt for other alternatives. The following section discusses ethnic and religious identities in relation to identity development.

2.5 THE LINK BETWEEN RELIGION AND ETHNICITY IN RELATION TO IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A review of the literature on identity construction indicates that whereas culture is influenced by interaction with one's environment in regard to factors such as language, education, gender, history, beliefs and values, religion is a powerful force driving

culture (Barber in Wexler 2009). Culture, in this instance, describes the sum of behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought, ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to differences in cultural practices. Ethnic identity is determined in terms of culture, language and family origin. A person's ethnic identity relates to a group of people who share a national, cultural and language heritage (Ladson-Billings 2014: 75).

The correlation between a person's religion and their ethnicity is very strong in groups such as the Amish, Mormons, Hutterites and Jews, whereas in others such as the Greek Orthodox or Dutch Reformed, their religious identity is influenced more by the country of origin and language (Oppong 2013:14). Indigenous African religion integrates the culture and language as a way of life for its devotees. Regarding Phinney's (1989; 1992) and Peek's (2005) models of identity, the relationship of racial (ethnic) identity salience in the former and religious identity salience in the latter are important aspects when considering personal and social identity development. Models of ethnic identity development are thus especially relevant for this study because of the correlation between religion and ethnicity, as will be discussed in the following section.

2.5.1 Phinney's model of ethnic identity

In a study that integrated Marcia's (1980) empirical model and Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development, Phinney (1989) proposed a model of ethnic identity development for members of all ethnic groups. In terms of this model, individuals' progress through three stages: firstly, unexamined views of their ethnic identity, secondly, the exploration of their groups' ethnicity, and thirdly, an achieved ethnic identity. In the third stage, Phinney (1992) suggests that a positive sense of ethnic group membership correlates with ethnic identity achievement. Research has also shown that ethnic identity is more salient for people of colour (Phinney & Alipuria 1990; Smith in French, Seidman, Allen & Aber 2006:4).

Ethnic identity development, which forms a phase of adolescence, has been associated with a positive self-concept, self-efficacy, positive coping styles, better grades, as well as better relationships with family and friends, for adolescents who have a firm ethnic identity (Phinney 1989; 1992; Hanley & Noblit 2009:31–33, 55).

Although Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity was based on experiences of minority adolescents within a minority subculture, the principle could apply to most African adolescents (in South Africa), whose education and socialisation have dominant western influences (notably at the expense of their ethnic identity). According to Phinney and Kohatsu (1997), negative issues relating to identification with a minority subculture, such as racism and inequality, can lead some minority adolescents to avoid the issue through foreclosure or diffusion.

During early adolescence, minority learners may not have much interest in their racial or cultural background. In the context of this study, identity conflict could apply to learners who follow ATR against the majority Christian ethos that prevails in the school environment. However, it is posited that as minority adolescents become more aware of the conflicts between their subculture and the dominant culture, they often begin to explore their heritage (Phinney & Alipuria 1990; Smith in French, Seidman, Allen & Aber 2006:4). The link between the degree of religious identification and traditional cultural beliefs would be influenced by an adolescent's commitment to their religion and to their socialisation (Lopez, Huynh & Fuligni 2011:1299).

Interactions with other members of the same culture and attendance at religious services or cultural celebrations can, therefore, increase the adolescent's knowledge and encourage a sense of pride in their ethnic background (Oppong 2013:13). This underscores the possible appeal for an adolescent to associate with ethnic-oriented groups such as the AICs in their search for spiritual values and ethics. The next section distinguishes between religion and spirituality because the two are referred to interchangeably in ATR, where religion is a way of life, linked to the culture and values system.

2.6 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Religion is usually associated with an institution, which includes the belief systems, practices and rituals that form part of a religious tradition. Religion also recognises other dimensions which involve people's spiritual experiences in seeking the meaning of life. Although religion and spirituality have common factors such as the belief in divinity and sacred teachings, religion is understood to focus more on religious institutions and their theology (Lippman & McIntosh 2010:2).

Spirituality then is described as a developmental process in which individuals identify with meaningfulness and an awareness of the interconnections of the universe, which

includes all humanity and other life forms, and connect with their inner power. This process of spiritual development can be experienced within a particular religion or through other systems of belief (Roehlkepartain, Benson, King & Wagener 2005:4–6). Spirituality within a religious community might contribute to positive adolescent development where a person may explore his or her identity in an environment where there is a shared sense of purpose and community support (King 2008). Participants in this study associate with African indigenous religion (AIR), also known as African traditional religion (ATR); an overview of the indigenous system of religion and spirituality therefore follows

2.7 THE CONCEPTS OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Prior to the arrival of colonists and missionaries, the indigenous people of Africa had a spiritual identity and their own system of beliefs that guided them through their way of life. AIR encompasses the belief in a supreme creator Spirit (God) who is in everything and is everything and who presides over lesser gods and ancestral spirits (guides) (Mndende 2013:76–78; Gomez 2013:78– 79; Kudadjie & Osei in Forster 2010:7). Although traditional African religion recognises a Supreme God, followers ask the ancestors to communicate with the creator on their behalf.

The beliefs of AIR are expressed in myths, folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, idioms and names. This belief system includes divination, veneration of the ancestors, witchcraft (as in spells), medicine, spirits and life after death. Traditionally, Africans valued community and humane living (Ubuntu) where the community is viewed as sacred rather than secular (Mndende 2013:77–78; Gomez 2013:78–79).

Africans' spirituality is holistic and interconnected to everything, including the interaction between the world of the living and the dead. This means that the religion is a way of life in which ancestors are part of everyday life and are particularly acknowledged at events such as weddings, births, healing ceremonies, deaths, house openings, starting work or a business or finishing university. During these events, usually a cow, sheep or chicken is slaughtered as an offering to honour and thank the ancestors and to seek their blessings (Mndende 2013; Kudadjie & Osei in Forster 2010:7).

The African religious tradition, with its beliefs, worldview, creeds, codes of behaviour, rituals and values, inspires the way Africans live, relate and worship. Their identity and

their spirituality are therefore deeply informed by their religious culture. As with most religious societies, AIR thus creates a sense of security and (moral) order in the community for those practising it in their families and/or through an AIC (Forster 2010; Mndende 2013).

This spiritual worldview, which is held by supporters of AICs, is encapsulated in a statement by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1995: xvi):

> *"The African world view rejects the popular dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, the material and the spiritual. All life is religious, all life is sacred, all life is of a piece. The spiritual is real and permeates all existence, so that the ancestral spirits, the living dead, are all around us, concerned to promote the well-being of those who are bound together with them in the bundle of life"*

2.7.1 African initiated churches in South Africa

Among the AICs in South Africa are the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), the Saint John's Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and the Nazareth Baptist Church, also known as "iBandla lamaNazaretha", or the Shembe Church. These churches are headed by the founding spiritual leader, a bishop, as well as a committee that oversees the church organisation. In many of these churches, women, who are in the majority, play prominent roles, serving as healers, prophetesses and overseers, and several have been appointed as bishops and archbishops (Anderson 2003; Masondo 2014).

The youth in the AICs are involved in various activities that promote self-reliance and engender the development of inner strength and stability. Youth are mentored into the church's community support structures, which aim to empower members and provide for spiritual and other needs. For example, the Shembe AIC in the Durban area organises savings clubs (also known as societies or stockvels), which are typical communal groups in African communities (Oosthuizen in Masondo 2014:12).

It has been reported that membership of the AICs has increased by over 25 per cent in the past decade, with the ZCC membership reaching 2.4 million between 2001 and 2011. The Shembe church's membership throughout southern Africa exceeds a million people. The growth in membership of AICs has been attributed to the churches' healing (and prophetic) practices, as indicated by the secretary-general of the South

African Council of Churches, which represents mainline Christian churches (South African Audience Research Foundation 2011).

2.7.1.1 Religious practices in AICs

In the AICs, a number of practices may be identified, which vary among the different groups:

- faith-healing and revelation through dreams
- the use of water for cleansing and healing purposes and for baptism in rivers or at the sea, since water is regarded as a natural resource with healing powers
- open air worship and annual pilgrimages (sacred ceremonies) such as the ZCC Easter pilgrimage to the Zion city of Moria in Limpopo province and the Shembe pilgrimages in KwaZulu-Natal
- performance of rituals at sacred sites. These sites include mountains, natural caves, graves, shrines, and certain rivers and forests. Rites of passage such as initiation and puberty ceremonies are conducted at such sites and mark the transition from adolescence to adulthood and often consist of physiological, social and moral education.
- ritual and sacred dances which form part of their worship (Anderson 2003; DeVisser 2011; Masondo 2014:2, 3).

2.8 KEY VALUES OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The key values encompassed within ATR are centred on community and the virtue of Ubuntu, as well as the interconnection with the universe which includes the supernatural world comprising the Spirit of God, the ancestors and other spirits and the present life (Forster 2010:6, 7; Gomez 2013:79).

In the African worldview, the value of Ubuntu, “I am because you are”, is emphasised in the collective consciousness which underpins how people relate to each other. The principle of Ubuntu, captures this sense of community, an identity, human dignity and personhood. Interdependence is therefore valued above individualism, wherein a person’s identity is linked to the identity of others within the community. The principle of Ubuntu encompasses the Africans’ cooperative identity from an ethical, moral and religious standpoint (Forster 2010; Masondo 2014:938). An individual therefore, does not and cannot exist alone, since he or she is physically and spiritually united with everything and everyone from birth to death, when a person transitions to the next life

or reunites with the community of ancestors (Gomez 2013; Mcunu in Forster 2010:8). This implies that whatever happens to the individual is believed to happen to the whole group, and vice-versa.

The AICs express this collective identity through the processes of initiation, which include rituals of inclusion. Membership into the church is supported through mentorship and instruction (Anderson 2003). The interconnectedness of relations with all that is in the churches practices is captured in the following description:

> *"The universe itself – comprising both seen and unseen reality (spirit beings, human beings, plants, animals, mountains, waters, stellar bodies, and all) – is a whole, a community with symbolic influences and relationships. It is also commonly believed that, through the laws of nature and various spiritual forces, as well as human customs and institutions, God sustains and upholds the world. Thus, he maintains an orderly and harmonious world so that all can perform their own duties in it" (Kudadjie & Osei in Forster 2010:7).*

As is consistent with African traditional spiritual heritage, in the AICs the Holy Spirit is the focus of belief and practice. The African churches thus acknowledge the spirit world, from the Supreme spirit to the ancestral spirits and other forms of spirits. In the AICs, prophets, like the ancestors, are seen as mediators between the people and God. Accordingly, much time is spent invoking the presence of the Spirit for guidance and healing during their services. The spirit, which is sought for revelation and prophecy, is the link between the physical and the non-material universe (Gomez 2013; Masondo 2014:4).

On the matter of life, the focus is on the present life, which as indicated above is lived in solidarity with the Spirit world, humankind, the earth and the universe. The African traditionally views the whole world as a life force and regards the foundation of this vitality as that of goodness (Forster 2010:4–6; Kudadjie & Osei in Forster 2010:7; Masondo 2014:938). This is in accord with the values of Ubuntu and the interconnectedness of things described above.

While Forster (2010:8) considers the unity between the self, others and the universe as central to the African worldview of consciousness and identity, he points out the negative impact that "individualism, westernisation and the stigmatisation of African concepts" have had on traditional African consciousness. One such factor that has

contributed to the breakdown of African traditional thought and behaviour is the impact of Christianity (and Islam). (see section 3.3.5.2).

The above background and content of the AIR provides the context for this study which explores how African adolescent's religious identity is supported within the context of the RE curriculum in South African secondary schools. The adolescents' views on religion and spirituality are discussed in the next section.

2.9 ADOLESCENTS' VIEWS ON RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

One of the sub-questions guiding this study concerns what religion means to adolescents. This naturally interests me because it could elicit the aspects of religion that they value and then perhaps account for the way this influences their worldview. From time immemorial, people have always wondered about the real nature and purpose of human life. In modern times (and especially as propelled by social media) youngsters are engaging more with this question and for many (perhaps) religion becomes an expression of self-realisation and thereby finding meaning in their life.

Like the rest of society adolescents are affected by happenings around them, which may be the positive and uplifting aspects, or the many social problems experienced in the country. For example, according to a national survey by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP 2006), which focused on young people, it was found that 40% of South African children between the ages of 12 and 22 years had already been victims of crime or violence. A positive factor, relating to the grade levels of this study's participants, is that more learners are completing Grades 9 and 12 which are exit grades to FET colleges or university respectively (South African Yearbook – Education 2013/14).

These examples contextualise aspects of environmental factors that could have an impact on adolescents' emerging identities and perspectives (Vygotsky 1978), as well as expectations regarding their future. Adolescents' spiritual identities are influenced by their different cultures, contexts and religious traditions; and for some being part of religious fellowship gives them direction and a sense of purpose.

According to Layton et al (2011:391), there are seven areas that influence the way adolescents anchor their religious commitments. This was concluded from a study they conducted in the United States of America, involving 80 religious youth from different faiths. The most common anchor was religious traditions, rituals or laws. This was

followed by God, then commitment to their faith, membership of their faith community, parents or family as their source for religious information, scriptures which provide the spiritual foundation and guidance, and finally, religious leaders who they view as authority figures or as influential and from whom they can get support.

The role of family and religious leaders as an information source is supported by a study carried out in England, which surveyed over 10 000 youngsters aged 13 to 17 and interviewed 160 youths, aged 17 to 18 years, of different faiths. More than threequarters said that their knowledge of religion came from religious education lessons, 64 per cent reported that families were an important source of information, 56 per cent mentioned friends, 48 per cent religious leaders, and 40 per cent cited the internet. The participants confirmed the value of religious education in furthering their knowledge and appreciation of different faiths (Madge, Hemming & Stenson 2014).

An additional study conducted by the Search Institute (Zakrzewski 2013) explored the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices of young people. About 7 000 people aged between 12 and 25 from a range of educational and socioeconomic backgrounds and from different countries, namely, Australia, Cameroon, Canada, India, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United Sates, took part in the research. The sample also represented the world major religions as well as paganism, Sikhism, traditional spirituality, atheism, agnosticism and those who are non-religious. It was found that about 64 per cent of the participants considered themselves spiritual without necessarily affiliating with a particular religion. Spiritual consciousness is therefore not bound by culture or a particular religion. The participants' spiritual development included leading a purposeful life and building humane relationships. The study also concluded that most of the participants valued spiritual education (Zakrzewski 2013).

Further reflections on religious and spiritual inclinations are captured in a longitudinal study on youth and religion in the United States, which was conducted in 2002–2003 with a follow-up in 2005. This study found, among other things, that adolescents aged 13 to 17 expressed a firm belief in God and that religion and their faith were very important in their lives and influenced their major life decisions (Lippman & McIntosh 2010:5–6).

From the different religious, economic and cultural contexts, the patterns that emerge from world values surveys (Lippmann & McIntosh 2010:5) are that firstly, countries

developing economically de-emphasise dominant religious traditions in favour of secularism; secondly, in countries where a religious tradition dominates such as Islam or Catholicism, young adults score relatively high on questions of spirituality and religiosity; and lastly, countries from a secular tradition such as communism and socialism and from welfare states (e.g. the Nordic states) attach lesser importance to God and religion (ibid).

Similarly, the European Commission (EC) of the European Union (EU) conducted a comparative research project on young people's views on religion. The survey, which involved students from Estonia, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Russia and the United Kingdom, found that learners were generally appreciative of the diverse religions in their communities. The adolescents believe that people of different religions can live together peacefully provided they are open-minded and respectful of different beliefs and are willing to learn about and from each other (EC 2011:16-17). Of significance for this study is the fact that the European research confirmed the significant role schools play in promoting interreligious education.

Finally, in considering the above sample studies on religion and spirituality, the common thread that runs between them is that the majority of young people are open to exploring religion or spirituality. Relating this factor to this study, which is contextualised in a system where there is separation of church and state, teachers are tasked with establishing a classroom environment that fosters different religious/spiritual identities and in which students feel safe to explore their religiosity (DOE 2003).

2.10 THE INFLUENCE OF THE EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT ON LEARNERS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Existing research acknowledges the formative influence of parents, peers and schools on adolescents' religious development (Durkheim 1956; Hirschi 1969; King & Rouser in Cohen-Malayev, Schachter & Rich 2014:3). Accordingly, this section explores the impact of the educational environment on learners' religious identity construction.

Because this study focuses on the narratives of adolescents in secularised schools, it is therefore important to consider how the learners' sense of their religiousness is expressed in these multi-religious settings with particular attention to the teachers' role in facilitating their religious identity. Given that environments have an influence on identity formation and that adolescents spend much of their time at school, the school,

along with family and religion, is an important social context in the lives of adolescents and in shaping their identity (Gay 2013:50,51).

The school also provides environments in which adolescent development is supported through their participation in structured activities that promote prosocial behaviour and a sense of group identification, and which could encourage and nurture new skills and interests which could be useful in their future (Eccles & Roeser 2011; Banks & Banks 2010: Gay 2013).

The DoE, through its RE Policy (2003), is committed to promoting tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion or belief. Previous studies have also shown that religious education has encouraged children to learn about and from various religious beliefs, values and culture, while at the same time exploring their own beliefs regarding their religion. RE therefore accommodates the continuing creation of a person's identity in harmony with identities that differ from their own. It has been recognised that factors such as association with religious peers, teacher as role models (of moral behaviour) and exposure to religious instruction contribute to adolescent religious identity formation in religious schools (Cohen-Malayev et al 2014:3, 4, 7). Identity negotiation in multicultural/religious secularised schools may also be influenced by acculturation and assimilation.

2.10.1 Acculturation

Acculturation theory describes how a person adapts to the attitudes, values and behaviours of different cultures as a result of being exposed to these other cultures (Niensa, Mawhinney, Richardson & Chiba 2013). Berry (in Niensa et al 2013:908) proposes that acculturation consists of two dimensions: on the one hand, a person prefers to maintain his or her cultural identity, while on the other there is a willingness to engage with the dominant culture.

Persons from minority groups may respond in a number of ways. Through individualisation they may distance themselves from their own cultural identity and that of the majority. Alternatively, they may separate themselves from the majority but maintain their cultural identity. Then again, through assimilation, they may identify with the majority culture and distance themselves from their cultural identity. Finally, through integration, they may identify with their cultural group and that of the majority community (ibid).

The research on children's acculturation attitudes shows that most people from ethnic minority and majority backgrounds hold integrationist attitudes. Studies on religious identity development have found that learners from minority belief backgrounds may try to assimilate into the dominant religious culture in order to fit in (Barrett, Pearson, Muller & Frank in Niensa et al 2013:910). With that in mind, the religious ethos in schools as experienced through school assemblies, the hidden curriculum and the RE, may influence the development of religious identity and acculturation attitudes in learners from minority belief backgrounds.

A study to examine acculturation and its relevance to religious minority groups was conducted in Northern Ireland with 26 learners in a school environment where their peers and staff, as well as the RE, were Christian oriented. It was found that the learners negotiated their religious and non-religious identities back and forth in relationships between their minority religious belief community both in and out of school and the mainstream school culture. In this instance, the learners were inclined towards integration strategies where they maintained friendships with their own religious community and the majority Christian community. However, their acculturation orientations shifted in regard to the different parts of their school lives, when they would use assimilation or individualisation strategies in relation to the RE curriculum in particular which were assimilationist (Niensa et al 2013:921–922).

Although human rights law provides for opt-out to protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief in an educational context, the assimilationist slant of RE means that students from minority belief backgrounds could either opt-out (separation strategy) when doctrinal RE is taught or assimilate and be part of the doctrinal RE classes. In either case this does not suit an integrationist position (ibid).

Consequently, religious instruction may contribute favourably to adolescents' religious salience in the school environment. The discussion in section 2.4 and the findings (albeit in religious schools) of Bertram-Troost et al (2009:25, 26) referred to in section 2.4.2, attest to learners' appreciation of religious education lessons as an opportunity to explore their worldviews and learn about other perspectives.

In a study to explore how Muslim learners were able to negotiate and maintain their religious identities in Eurocentric secular public schools in Toronto, Zine (2001:419–420) found that the learners interacted with their peers of other faiths within limits or

distanced themselves and socialised among their own kind. By establishing boundaries within which they would socialise with others according to the social and moral codes of their faith, or by forming strong links with people of their faith, both in and out of school, the learners were able to stay grounded in their Muslim identity and therefore resist assimilation.

This example of how groups of people from the same religion (and ethnicity) form boundaries between themselves and others, or who associate with people who have shared cultural meanings, is typical in many school communities. In the researcher's experience, it is commonplace to find Christian learners, for example, who organise prayer groups or hold Christian meetings in their schools (teacher-led in some instances). However, learners from the AICs tend to be low key in expressing their faith and tend to adopt integrationist attitudes. Since the latter may represent a minority religious group in some schools, there is potential risk to the development of their religious identity formation and self-esteem. This is borne out by a study conducted with sixteen Bangladeshi American Muslim adolescents, in which Chaudhury and Miller (2008:400) found that adolescents' religious identity formation is fostered in environments where they feel comfortable expressing and constructing their faith.

In such a situation, knowledge of a learner's religious affiliation could provide a teacher with an opportunity to discuss his or her particular faith in the classroom in an objective and impartial manner, and thereby enable the learner to integrate effectively into their school community.

Children's and adolescents' development and experiences are shaped by constant interactions with others in family, peer, community and larger cultural environments (Knopf, Park & Mulye 2008). These social contexts, which are their primary sources of social integration, include contexts such as family, school and religion (Maimon & Kuhl 2008). The teacher's influence is therefore discussed in the next section.

2.10.2 The teacher's influence on learners' religious identity development

The development of learners' religious values is initially communicated at home. However, teachers also have the responsibility of serving as role models for the ongoing personal/spiritual development of their learners, which includes their understanding of moral issues and decision making. Learners' attachments and experiences at school are influenced to a large degree by their relationship with their

teacher and the teaching practices, as well as a teacher's religious/value orientations (Sikkink 2010:160, 167; Eccles &Roeser:2011:227).

It is the norm that a teacher brings her/his whole self, including religious values, into the classroom. The RE teacher should be impartial and show respect for the different religions and ensure that individual learners are made aware of the diverse religions that exist. In that regard, an open and supportive learning environment helps learners have a better understanding of religion (Roux in Ferguson 2014:3) and therefore makes them feel able to commit to or explore a particular belief.

There are therefore two qualities that influence adolescents' religious identity, namely, "teacher caring" and "teacher as role model", where a learner could be drawn to or identify with a teacher's qualities (Cohen-Malayev et al 2014:8). Such a caring approach involves classroom practices that accept, respect and are sensitive to the diverse needs of learners (Gay 2013:50,54,56) and where the general school environment is supportive of different religious identities (Roux in Ferguson 2014:3; Cohen-Malayev et al 2014:8). The implication here, which is consistent with a humanistic orientation, is that teachers should acknowledge and guide a learner's self-discovery from his or her point of view, experiences and consciousness (Banks & Banks 2010; Ladson-Billings 2014: 83; Hamachek in Msila 2014:434); hence the need for teachers to have an adequate understanding of their learners' environment and social background. As mentioned, teachers bring their own cultural-religious values; this suggests that multicultural teaching and learning provides opportunity for both the learners and teachers life experiences and cultural practices to be used as teaching resources (Banks and Banks 2010: 38; Gay 2013).

The RE teacher needs to affirm the diversity that presents itself in multicultural school communities (Gay 2013: 50,51; Nieto & Bode 2012). In a teacher development for diversity research project, a survey of LO teachers across 60 secondary schools was conducted in Gauteng (South Africa) to determine teachers' inclination to address topics on diverse religions and cultures. Ferguson (2013:114) accordingly found that 68% stated they had the knowledge and skills to do so, against 32% who were not sure or who were not well informed. This is encouraging if the survey is representative of the expertise among Gauteng LO teachers who are open to exposing learners to expansive knowledge on RE.

Of particular interest is one teacher who referred specifically to the AICs, which he felt were not adequately catered for in the learning and teaching resources. Ferguson (2013:116) considered that perhaps teachers would need guidance from experts regarding the AICs and that because more attention is given to the major religions, minority religions such as ATR, among others, are misrepresented by teachers in the classroom. This supports the scope of my study, which includes exploring how the RE/LO curriculum affirms the indigenous religious identity of learners (see section 1.2).

2.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter adolescents' identity development was examined with special focus on their religious identity. AIRs and the AICs and their practices were discussed to provide some background on the religious associations of the participants in the current study. Adolescents' views on religion and spirituality were presented and the influence of the schooling environment on their religious identity debated.

Chapter 3 discusses RE in secular communities, taking into account its aims, content and pedagogy. The discussion will also examine the challenges faced by teachers in addressing and delivering an encompassing RE curriculum in public schools, focusing particularly on the South African curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE:
EXAMINING RELIGION EDUCATION IN SECULAR SCHOOLS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three reviews multicultural education with the view to locating multi-religious literacy within public schools. This is followed by a discussion on RE which includes an examination of different perspectives on RE in secular schooling systems from both international and African contexts. This discussion highlights a multi-religious approach to education against the background of the world's varied cultural communities. The discussion includes an exploration of how schools and teachers approach RE in various countries, as well as examples of policies and practices in these countries that acknowledge indigenous identities as they relate to the exploration of local indigenous religious identities.

Since the purpose of this study is to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools, the chapter concludes with a review of the policy governing religious education and expression in South African public schools.

3.2 CULTURE

According to Erikson (in Banks & Banks 2006:41), culture is a dynamic social

construction that changes from one generation to the next:

> *"Since what we see, know, and want – is culturally constructed, and since culture varies, persons really do not inhabit the same subjective worlds. Even though some of us show up at what seems to be the same event, how we experience it is never quite the same across the various individuals who have joined together in interaction … Individually and collectively, we make cultural worlds and they are multiple."*

The (religious) culture of the adolescents for this study is composed of beliefs and practices passed down through generations and rooted in the African culture. Bishop Mofokeng from one of the AICs explains the role of culture in their church in the following way: "Our African culture connects us with God. We are Africans before being Christian" (Coertze 2005:26). It is from this standpoint that AICs seek to meet the

cultural and religious needs of their members. Likewise, culturally relevant instruction requires teachers to be aware of the various communities and contexts in which learners, such as those from AICs, make meaning of their cultural identity (Hanley & Noblit 2009:27)

3.2.1 Multicultural education

As mentioned in chapter one, multicultural education embraces democratic values and beliefs and affirms the diverse cultural realities of all learners in order to engender educational equity and social justice. Multicultural education is an important element of transformation in societies such as South Africa and it is therefore vital that the school curriculum includes multicultural perspectives in order to promote exposure to broader worldviews in various aspects of learning (Banks &Banks 2010:22-24; Nieto & Bode 2012:40, 54; Gay 2013).

Since schools mirror the broader society, they are positioned to make a significant difference towards valuing diversity if learners are taught to understand and respect different cultures. Pedagogy should therefore incorporate diverse perspectives that would engender cultural sensitivity and allow for cultural variations that may exist within the classroom (Shizha 2013:14, 15). In this regard, learners who are part of a religious minority in the classroom would experience positive self-esteem in relation to their cultural identity.

Accordingly, RE teachers should present the religious and/or secular values in such a way that is engaging and realistic to those who align with those values (Copley 2008:29). It is essential, therefore, that teacher education incorporates knowledge and awareness of culture, which includes religious diversity, and prepares student teachers for practising inclusive education and valuing different religious identities in the classroom (Jarvis 2013:133, 142; Nelson, Guerra & Henry in Nelson & Guerra 2014:89).

3.2.1.1 Multicultural curriculum

Multicultural education can be easily implemented in the classroom in line with the relevant policies, as it is a set of beliefs and a philosophy that teachers can apply within a range of pedagogical activities. Embracing the diversity of their learners requires teachers to balance solidarity and critique with recognition, tolerance, acceptance and respect (Banks & Banks 2010:20-22,23; Gay 2013:50).

Multicultural curricula focus on individual identities, with an emphasis on the development and validation of different ways of seeing, thinking, speaking and creating knowledge and meaning (Moletsane in Mpisi 2010:10). People's identities are influenced by their histories, experiences and perspectives and, thus, the curriculum should incorporate aspects of all the different cultures. In relation to this, Banks and Banks (2010:20-22,23) maintains that the scope of multicultural education should consider reviewing the curriculum to include other dimensions in order to make education appropriate to all learners. A summary of these dimensions of multicultural education follows in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Dimensions of multicultural education

i. Content integration Diverse cultural ideas, principles and worldviews are included and integrated across different subjects so that learners have a broad perspective of other cultures
ii. The knowledge construction process Learners are helped to understand how the knowledge imparted for different subjects is influenced by implicit cultural assumptions
iii. Prejudice reduction Teaching and learning interventions are applied to address any traits of learners' racial attitudes
iv. An empowering school culture and social structure The school environment from group stereotyping, how people participate in sports, to how staff and learners interact across ethnic and racial lines, is examined so as to create a school culture that empowers learners from all cultural groups
v. An equity pedagogy Teaching methods are matched to different learning styles in order to support the academic achievement of learners from diverse racial, cultural and social groups

Source: Adapted from Banks and Banks (2010:20-22,23)

It is clear that all five aspects described above are applicable to RE; in other words, in each instance the dimensions can be transferred to the teaching and learning of RE. Another aspect that has to be considered in multicultural curricula is the "hidden curriculum", which examines other elements such as teachers' and learners' personal

backgrounds, culture and socialisation, all of which influence their perceptions and values. Coupled with this is the school's regulations which also influence the curriculum (Bennett 2007:31). There is also concern about learners adopting stereotypical attitudes from their teachers which could cast aspects of other cultures in a negative light. In the South African context, a teacher could use language or make comments that negatively stereotype people of certain religions such as adolescents who follow AICs. In such cases, cultural competence or culturally responsive teaching is applicable.

3.2.1.2 Cultural competence

Research demonstrates that people become more culturally responsive as they understand how their own identity and values influence their attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of people of different cultures (Allen, Hubain, Hunt, Lucero & Stewart 2012:5, 16; Ferguson 2014; Gay 2013). In order for schools to become more culturally competent, they should incorporate their cultural responsiveness with the knowledge, skills, experience and ability required to implement RE in the classroom (Hanley & Noblit 2009:18, 28; Nieto & Bode 2012:40; Jarvis 2013:133–134).

The above overview has contextualised the multicultural education perspective of RE. A discussion on RE itself follows.

3.3 RELIGION EDUCATION

There are different approaches to RE worldwide, depending on factors such as whether a society is mono-religious or multi-religious, the relationship between religious and secular elements in the society, the religious tradition of a country and the perceptions about the nature and purpose of state school religious education. In plural societies, RE can be described in two ways: firstly, *learning about religion*, where in public education learners can receive knowledge about religions in a neutral way, and secondly, *learning from religion,* where exposure to religions can encourage the development of personal orientation and identity building (Peace education standing commission of religions for peace 2013; Copley 2008:26–27; Jackson 2004;2010).

This approach to RE can also be distinguished as being *confessional* and *non confessional*, or as *integrative* and *separative.* In integrative RE, learners from plural religious backgrounds learn about different religions, while in separative RE, they learn about their religion, but are also taught about other religions (Alberts 2010:276).

One of the main aims of RE is to advance learners' own search for commitment to beliefs and values by which to live by and to find meanings in life. The purpose of education encompasses a person's holistic development and therefore, RE is a valuable component of the school curriculum as it contributes to a person's citizenship, socialisation and identity development process. Identity formation can thus be fostered by encouraging learners to reflect on and evaluate different religious perspectives in relation to their own heritage and worldview. In that regard, educating for religious citizenship is a pedagogical, theological, societal and global necessity, as it would enable students to explore and understand how religion could influence the politics, culture and economics in different societies globally (Bertram-Troost & Miedema 2009:129–131).

RE in secular schools is supposedly not biased towards any particular faith, which means learners' cultural religious heritage, their beliefs and values, should be supported as part of their education. This is consistent with the growing recognition in many countries for giving indigenous peoples greater educational access to their cultural and spiritual traditions, taking into account that RE in secular schools should help learners become more familiar with their own religious tradition (Cohen-Malayev, Schachter & Rich 2014; Rich & Schachter 2012:225–226).

The next section presents a review of how RE is addressed in selected countries.

3.3.1 Religion Education: international context

Many western nations, including Great Britain, Australia, Canada and Germany, have responded positively to religious literacy within the standard school curriculum, as a means of promoting tolerance and social cohesion (Heinrich 2015:74).

Today's adolescents, particularly in western countries, and now recently in African countries like South Africa, are growing up in a secularised environment. In the case of South Africa, the influence of missionary education and the apartheid government's Christian National Education still has a strong influence on society and politics, and Christianity still permeates the schooling system (Ferguson 2014:29).

Copley (2008:25) is of the view that people whose orientation is towards secularism are not necessarily in the majority, which means that the minority values are influencing the education policy on religion. This, Copley (2008) suggests, could be attributed to secularism being viewed as a common feature over the years, or that, in

plural (multi-religious) societies, it is ideal for the state to be neutral and not favour one religion over another. A very interesting view held by Copley (2008:26) is that, if indeed democratic societies are dominated by minority secular views, then that would be tantamount to suppression of religious and spiritual values, and therefore secular indoctrination. The following sections explicate the way RE is addressed in multi-faith pluralist societies.

3.3.2 Australia

3.3.2.1 RE policies and practices

Australia has no formal church-state separation and is similar to other multicultural democracies with a Christian (and Anglo) cultural history which has influenced its position on RE education. The New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education (DOE) requires schools to offer two types of religious education, namely, general religious education and special religious education (SRE). Under section 3 of the Education Act 1990, SRE allows for education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion. It is not, however, funded by the state (NSW D0E 2015). Australia has no formal church-state separation and is similar to other multicultural democracies with a Christian (and Anglo) cultural history which has influenced its position on RE education. 2016). According to the NSW DOE (2015), there are more primary than secondary schools that offer SRE and the dominant provision is Christian.

Since the 19th century, religious volunteers have been allowed to offer religious instruction (RI) in government schools during school time (NSW DOE 2016). Learners of different religions in all grades up to the age of 16 are allocated separate RI. Some schools offer parents a choice regarding the religion class their children will attend; however, there are still many Christian-oriented public schools which offer Christian lessons only. Nevertheless, according to Byrne (2012), Australian parents and teachers support a more inclusive approach to RE than is currently delivered in public schools (Byrne 2012:201, 202).

3.3.2.2 Colonial and missionary education for indigenous communities

The history of the indigenous (Aboriginal) people of Australia is similar to that of the many nations which were colonised and Christianised by missionaries. Under colonial rule, the Aboriginal people lost their lands – Aboriginal territory in this case includes Australia and the Torres Strait Islands. Their histories and general indigenous

knowledge systems which included their cultures, languages and ways of living were disregarded and suppressed (Partington & Stanner in Burridge & Chodkiewicz 2012).

Up to the early 1870s, schooling for aboriginal children was provided by churches and charitable organisations. While the Public Instruction Act of 1880 introduced free, secular and compulsory primary school education for all children in NSW, a discriminatory, separate and debased aboriginal schooling was established at that time in Aboriginal reserves and in segregated schools or classes. Subsequently, the struggle for the rights of the Aboriginal people, their identities, histories, culture and provision of education, has been ongoing to the present time (Burridge & Chodkiewicz 2012).

3.3.2.3 Recognition of indigenous identities

Government education officials have developed action plans for improving the learning outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners across the country. The latest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014, which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAGs) in 2011 provides the scope for the provision of education to Aboriginal learners from preschool to post school education as well as training options. The aim of the Plan is "to improve the education and life outcomes of Australia's' first nation peoples" (Education Council 2015: i). This plan guides the curriculum with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's histories, values, languages and cultures. Culture and identity comprise the eight priority areas of the Plan.

Rossiter (2002) acknowledges that while religion studies aims to further learners' understanding of their cultural identity, he highlights the fact that Australia has struggled to maintain a balance in affirming the culture and identity of the indigenous people (Aborigines) in its provision of RE. Consistent with Rossiter's (2002) view, an evaluation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 concluded that the Plan did not adequately acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for prioritisation by schools. The evaluation report acknowledged examples of individual schools where efforts had been made to integrate the knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures and histories within State curricula (ACIL Allen Consulting 2014:61–63). On the other hand, Jackson-Barret & Lee-Hammond (2018:91,99) argue that the education system has not been

transformed effectively. The Western curriculum does not address Aboriginal learners' cultural identities.

3.3.2.4 Challenges schools face in delivering Religion Education

Ordinarily, non-denominational and world religious education is part of the ordinary secular religion curriculum in public schools. RE in Australia is provided as a component of intercultural education in an effort to reduce racial and religious prejudice (NSW DOE 2016). However, RE has not been delivered as intended for a multicultural environment and has usually involved "right of entry" by church volunteer representatives who instruct the primary school learners in their respective denominations on a weekly to fortnightly basis. At the secondary school level, learners attend religious seminars twice a year. While this approach is not favoured by learners and state teachers, the church authorities have justified their presence in the state schools because of the right of entry. In addition, the teachers do not have the appropriate training for RE and there have been problems differentiating the context and purpose of world religious education from denominational (Christian) religious education (Rossiter, 2002:43, 44).

In her study on teachers' and learners' attitudes to religious diversity, Byrne (2012:206) found that many marginalised minority groups were not always able to find RE volunteers in contrast to some of the Christian denominations who pay their (government approved) volunteers.

The next section examines RE in Europe.

3.3.3 Europe

3.3.3.1 European colonial and missionary education

A plethora of information exists on Europe's civilising mission in its colonies and protectorates as it expanded its rule through the use of European colonial and missionary education. The dominant Christian religion and Christian education in the countries cited in this literature review was introduced by European missionaries. Some sources of this literature are cited in the discussion on the specific countries included in this chapter and these make it clear that Christian missionary education in Africa, America and Australia had a longstanding effect on the religions and cultural practices of indigenous people. In that regard, schools' and teachers' attitudes and approaches to indigenous religious identities in the RE curriculum have particular

relevance in the context of this study. The next section discusses and highlights the way European countries have transformed RE in their various pluralistic societies.

3.3.3.2 Current European Religion Education policies and practices

European countries have different approaches to RE in public schools. There are obvious institutional links between religion and secular governments in Europe where all states are committed to religious pluralism. The historical influence of the Christian churches, which are still active in running schools and which are fully or partly funded by the State, accounts for the dominant Christian-oriented value system (Arthur 2012:132, 133). In practically all European countries, including those which joined the EU in 2004, specially trained teachers deliver courses relating to religion or religious matters in general. These courses, whether confessional or non-confessional, are offered as a designated school (RE) subject (Willaime 2007:84).

In England, Norway and Estonia, RE is a non-confessional subject, whereas in Germany and the Netherlands RE it can be either non-confessional or faith based. The religious communities in the different states in Germany select the content of RE and, similarly, each school in the Netherlands determines its approach to RE in accordance with its religious identity. However, schools are not legally required to include RE in the school curriculum. In England and Norway, and in German state schools, RE is a compulsory subject, although there is a legal right of withdrawal. In Estonia, where secularisation is entrenched, only 10 per cent of schools offer RE as an optional subject (Everington, Ter Avest, Bakker & Van der Want 2011).

Developments in RE in Great Britain have been non-confessional. In England, where the status of the Church of England is established, the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences has stated that “the constitution of the UK is rooted in faith” and affirmed that the United Kingdom (UK) “is not a secular state” (Arthur 2012:132). France is the only country in Europe whose constitution supports neutrality between religion and the State; however, religion is not entirely removed from the public space where people freely organise and practise their religion.

Throughout Europe, the role of the state in school education is strongly emphasised. In some countries, such as Ireland, the constitution particularly stresses the importance of parents’ inalienable right and duty in the religious, moral, intellectual and social education of their children. The way schools teach about religion demonstrates

the prevailing relationship between the state and RE, such that school education correlates with the national identity in countries which have a particular confession such as Lutheranism in Denmark, Orthodoxy in Greece, or Catholicism in Italy. This, therefore, influences the associated development of religious and national identity among learners (Jackson, Miedema, Weisse & Willaime 2007).

In the European Union, there is consensus on the need to strengthen the role of religious knowledge in public school education. A recommendation adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2005 declared:

> *"Education is essential to combat ignorance, stereotyping, and incomprehension of religions. Governments must also do more to guarantee freedom of conscience and religious expression, to encourage religious instruction, to promote dialogue with and between religions, and to further the cultural and social expression of religions" (Williame 2007:84).*

It is reported that Europe has more immigrant workers and a higher Muslim population than the United States of America (USA), where the Muslim population in America is less than one per cent compared to Europe, with six to seven per cent in Holland, and 12 per cent in France. The total Muslim European population is about 20 million. In recognition of the religious and philosophical plurality of European societies, there are growing initiatives in many European countries to either organise Muslim religious education, where religion is part of the school curriculum, or to improve the inclusion of the Muslim faith in the overall school curriculum (Williame 2007:89).

In plural societies such as France, the appreciation of other people's religion is seen as citizenship education. The study of religious matters is therefore introduced across existing school subjects without RE being offered as a new subject by specifically trained teachers. Through its lay and interdisciplinary approach to RE, France has differentiated itself from those countries that have developed a confessional system of religious instruction (with the exception of Alsace-Lorraine). Over time though, numerous courses of RE have devised non-confessional approaches which integrate the plurality of religions, including atheist humanism (Williame 2007:84).

The relationship between religious faith and general education is evident in the UK where the Education Act of 1988 determined that the overall curriculum of public school education seeks to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical

development of learners in school and society. English, Irish and Welsh public schools have adopted the learning about religion and learning from religion approach to RE (Copley 2008:23, 26). In order to apply equal treatment for all faiths, the RE policy recommends that all learners in public schools should study world religions including philosophies such as humanism. This translated to BBC Wales producing a series for schools, Secular Believers, which critically examined the secular life, its traditions and history. Content was drawn from the UK, France, and the USA in order to obtain a wider perspective (ibid).

UK public schools have been teaching world religions in the curriculum for more than 30 years, subject to a rarely invoked parental withdrawal clause. RE in the UK has therefore been keenly supported by mainstream secular organisations and religious foundation schools from various faiths such as Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu, which have agreed to teach world religions in their RE programmes as well (Copley 2008:23, 26, 29).

3.3.3.3 Religious symbols in schools

In Europe, legislation differs in each state with regard to religious symbols. For example, a cross must be displayed in Austrian public and public-status schools in classes where religious education is compulsory, provided the majority of the learners belong to a Christian denomination. Crucifixes in Spanish schools have been classified as both religious and cultural symbols and while it is the schools' prerogative to display them, the principles of equality and religious freedom granted by the Spanish constitution would have to be considered. In Germany, there are some states which allow the presence of crucifixes on the walls of public schools and in Italy, where crucifixes and crosses are part of Italian culture (and identity of the people), these are standard fixtures in classrooms as well as in many government offices, courts and hospitals (Williame 2007:87). RE practices in classrooms in the USA are not as permissive.

3.3.4 United States of America (USA)

3.3.4.1 Policies guiding Religion Education

The Bill of Rights in the US Constitution protects individuals' religious freedom through the First Amendment. The constitutional separation of church and state requires that public schools maintain neutrality in the delivery of the religion education curriculum.

Transformation of RE in US public schools has been guided by a statement of principles titled, “Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy”. One of the guiding principles reads thus:

> *“Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education” (Haynes & Thomas in Haynes 2012:12).*

In essence, learners have the right to pray in public schools, read their scriptures and discuss their faith with others in a manner that does not disturb school programmes or infringe on the rights of others. As part of extramural activities and as provided for by the Equal Access Act, learners can also form their own religious clubs on school premises (ibid; Heinrich 2015).

In light of the US Constitution’s protection of citizens' freedom of religion, the discussion explores the way policies have affected the religious freedom of indigenous (or Native) Americans.

3.3.4.2 Impact of colonisation and Christian missionaries on indigenous Americans.

Native Americans face ongoing challenges in maintaining their identities, histories and cultures. Colonisation and the influence of Christian missionaries had far reaching effects on their way of life physically, emotionally, psychosocially, economically and spiritually. Native people were expected to adopt Christianity and to stop practising their traditional religious beliefs. In addition, whole generations of Native Americans “were lost to European diseases, massacres, displacement and assimilation” (Dalal 2011:1). Their land was taken through government treaties and by force. Furthermore, the practice of forcibly removing children from their homes (their cultural base) and sending them to horrendous boarding schools stripped the Native Americans of their identity. Consequently, Native American learners lost their links to their religious beliefs, language and traditional cultural practices (Dalal 2011; Lowe 2012; Hemenway 2017).

3.3.4.3 Recognition of indigenous religious identities

For over a century from the 1800s, federal Indian policies directly and indirectly limited the traditional spiritual practices of Native peoples. In 1978, Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) which protects the rights of Native peoples to practice their religions and requires federal agencies to consult with Native traditional religious leaders when reviewing policies and procedures that may affect indigenous religious rights and practices (AIRFA section 1, 1978; Gubi 2008; West Comprehensive Center at WestEd 2014).

Federal boards of education, such as the Arizona and Nevada State Board of Education, recommend that their school districts integrate Arizona American Indian languages, cultures and histories into all areas of the curriculum in an effort to foster appreciation and understanding in all learners (West Comprehensive Center at WestEd 2014:37, 46).

3.3.4.4 Challenges schools face in delivering Religion Education

Religious literacy presents ongoing challenges in the US school curriculum (Heinrich 2015:74). The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights protects the right to religious liberty of all learners and yet the delivery of RE in many schools has its challenges as a result of lawsuits and ongoing conflict (with parents or fundamentalist groups) about what or how religion is addressed in the schools. However, the US courts have allowed schools to limit learners' religious expression if there is "a clear and present danger" or "material and substantial disruption" (Heinrich 2015:69). The criteria that inform the violation of church and state with regard to RE are that schools must do nothing to prevent or promote religion; must be motivated by a secular purpose; and must avoid getting too involved (Heinrich 2015:69, 70).

Examples of violations include instances of silent meditation or voluntary prayer which are led by the school. In such cases, the school is seen as not only supporting religion but also compromising learners' rights. Owing to teachers' position in loco parentis, courts generally give more attention to learners' rights if it appears a teacher might influence their religious beliefs. One such case involved a teacher who was dismissed for refusing to remove her religious (Sikh) head gear (dastaar) which she wore daily to school. The school authorities considered the dastaar a religious symbol and therefore improper as this could influence impressionable learners (Heinrich 2015:72).

As a result of the disputes around issues regarding the separation of church and state, most schools have gradually phased out RE studies from the curriculum, which means that these public schools are violating the principles of the First Amendment in addition to depriving learners of the knowledge and skills to appreciate the religious ideas, habits and practices of others (Heinrich 2015:64, 65, 73, 77; Haynes 2012:13, 14).

In view of the growing number of diverse cultural and religious groups, Schlesinger (in Heinrich 2015:75) maintains that religious literacy is one of the factors that could contribute to social cohesion in a multi-ethnic society such as in the USA, where citizenship has (traditionally) been the one element binding Americans. As such, religious tolerance and social cohesion can only be achieved if RE is valued and addressed in the classroom (Heinrich 2015:77; Lester & Roberts in Haynes 2012:9).

The discussion will now look at RE in African countries

3.3.5 Religion Education: the African context

The overview of different countries' policies regarding RE (section 3.3) highlights context for policy considerations in each of the nations. The section reviewed the approaches to and the teaching about religion which takes into account factors relating to curriculum, resources, instructional methods and strategies as well as teachers' personal identities and their perceptions about diversity. In comparison to the European and American experiences, the situation in most African countries is conservative regarding the teaching of multi-religious beliefs and practices (see sections 3.3.3 to 3.3.6) This is significant as it was the denigration of the Africans' indigenous religion by colonialists and missionaries that subsequently led to the formation of the AICs in the nineteenth century (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013).

3.3.5.1 African traditional education practices

African customary education traditionally aims to preserve and hand down the cultural heritage applicable to the community. The holistic nature of how indigenous knowledge was learnt integrated all aspects of a person's life from his/her extended family, to the clan, to his/her physical environment. African values, knowledge and practices which prepared people for their communal responsibilities and interpersonal relationships were underpinned by their religious worldview which sustained peace and harmony in their lives and in their communities (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013; Owuor in Shizha 2013:8) (see section 1.6.3).

3.3.5.2 Colonial and missionary education

Africans' cultural practices and the application of their indigenous knowledge were interrupted by Christian missionaries and the colonial governments which regarded their practices as barbaric. While the missionaries' objective was to convert Africans to Christianity, the colonialists were determined ''to subjugate, control and exploit the Africans'' (Carey 1792; Bediako 1992:230, 237; Chidester 1996:14, 20, 27). I agree with this statement as the negative impact of Christianity and colonialism on African indigenous culture and practices are evident even to the present day. African indigenous knowledge has either been discredited or marginalised from universal knowledge systems. This has resulted in a fractured religious identity consciousness, for example, especially among young people in general. As a result, efforts to address what I perceive to be a wholistic national identity, comprising land reform/land restitution and the decolonisation of our education system in South Africa have gained currency (National education collaboration trust 2017:17,18; Hall & Williams 2018:6,7-8,11).

Christian missions disseminated education through their schools. The education policies and curriculum design thus served to achieve the objectives of the missionaries and the colonialists. The RE curriculum in mission schools was naturally Christian-centred, confessional in nature and required learners to know the Bible (Mavhunga, 2006:442–443; Shizha 2013:7; Tlou & Campbell in Baamphatlha 2013:34). Christian education was effective in leading indigenous people to the Christian faith, especially through the use of Christian literature that came to be printed in African languages. Over time the mission-educated converts (evangelists) continued the spread of Christianity in their communities (Pawlikova-Vilhanova 2007). This discussion will review five countries (including South Africa) from the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Since their independence, most Southern African countries offer RE in an attempt to provide a multi-faith curriculum. In the context of the location of this study, the focus is on selected states in the SADC, of which South Africa is a member. Historically, all SADC countries were influenced predominantly by Christian missionary education.

The member states of SADC are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles,

South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The headquarters are in Gaberone, Botswana**.**

I have selected the following African countries to provide an overview of RE: Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

3.3.6 Botswana

In Botswana, which is a constitutionally liberal democracy, Christianity is the dominant religion. At all school levels, content has been decidedly Christian-oriented since the country's independence. In order to make the curriculum inclusive of the pluralistic society, a multi-faith curriculum was introduced at the primary to senior phase levels in 1996 and in 2005 at secondary school level.

3.3.6.1 Religion Education policies and practices

RE is taught at primary school as Religious and Moral Education (RME), while at the secondary school level it is offered as an optional subject (Dinama 2013:34, 35). In 2008, the Botswana government reviewed the junior secondary curriculum in order to specify the religions to be studied, with a view to exposing and sensitising learners to different religions (Dinama 2013:34, 35). Multi-faith practices and individuals' right of conscience are protected by the Constitution of Botswana (Republic of Botswana 1966) and the Education Act of 1971. Section 11(3) of the Constitution states that "no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if that instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own" (Constitution of Botswana, 1966). Section 22(2), (3) and (4) of the Education Act specify a learner's right to withdraw from attending religious instruction or worship and a minister of religion's right of access to the school for religious instruction, with parents' permission.

The prevailing influence of the Christian faith was confirmed in a study that explored the experiences and views of 18 teachers on how assemblies are conducted in Botswana primary and secondary public schools. Dinama (2011:718) found that while the teachers acknowledged the dominance of Christian worship at assembly, they admitted it was contrary to the promotion of multi-faith observance and even suggested ways to integrate other faiths or exclude religious activities at school assemblies so as not to pressure non-Christians into involuntary adherence.

In most instances, the RE teachers were expected to direct the prayers and while some were not always comfortable, they did not exercise their constitutional right to withdraw from the gathering. On the other hand, other teachers supported worship at assembly as they felt it contributed to the learners' spiritual, moral and social development (ibid).

3.3.6.2 Recognition of indigenous religious identities

The primary and secondary school RE syllabi encompass a range of themes from an introduction to religion to human rights, crime, violence and punishment. These are dealt with from a multi-faith perspective. Examples are drawn from different religious traditions including ATR, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and the Bahai Faith (Nkomazana & Senzohuhle 2016).

3.3.6.3 Challenges schools face in delivering Religion Education

In a specific case study, it was found that RE teachers' understanding and classroom implementation of the multi-faith RE curriculum was influenced firstly, by teachers limited pedagogical and content knowledge. Teachers do not use other resources on different religions beyond the learners' textbook for example. In addition, teachers lack knowledge about their learners' social and cultural backgrounds. The focus is on getting learners to pass the RE examination as opposed to ensuring they have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject. Secondly, there is a lack of mentoring and collaboration among RE teachers regarding all aspects of the curriculum, including assessment practices. There is also inadequate professional in-service training of RE teachers (Dinama 2010).

These findings are reinforced by Kamwendo and Seretse (2014), who highlight inadequate teaching material and teachers' lack of preparedness for the multi-faith syllabus. Furthermore, the open nature of the syllabus meant that teachers focused on the key world religions. ATR was therefore marginalised. Some learners felt side-lined because teachers did not relate the teaching to learners' diverse religious and social backgrounds (ibid). A similar situation exists in Namibia which still embraces a confessional approach to RE in public schools.

3.3.7 Namibia

3.3.7.1 Religion Education policies and practices

Namibia is a secular state with multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious groupings. Christianity, particularly Protestantism, is the dominant religion. Religious freedom is

guaranteed by Namibia's Constitution, as in article 10 which also protects citizens from religious discrimination. Further references to religious freedom are found in article 19, which states: "Every person shall be entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the terms of this constitution …" and in article 21, which recognises the "freedom to practise any religion and to manifest such practice" (Namibia Constitution 2007).

The Education Act (2001), read with article 40 of the Constitution, provides for public schools to exercise freedom of religious observance and practices in consultation with learners' parents (Bialostocka 2015:2). Post-independence, Namibia transformed its South African controlled, Christian nationalist education to what is now called Religious and Moral Education (RME). This curriculum, which is based on life orientation and citizenship education, provides for a multi-religious school environment with a focus on Christianity, Judaism, Islam and ATRs. The learner centred RME curriculum therefore introduces RME teachers and learners to diverse religious beliefs, as well as the associated moral values, practices and insights. In spite of the entrenched Christian perspectives, teachers are expected to adapt RME lessons so as to include diverse viewpoints (Ministry of Education in Iiata 2014; Bialostocka 2015).

RME is a compulsory subject in all public schools in Namibia and is optional as Religious Studies for Grades 11 and 12 in schools which choose to teach it (Iiata 2014). At junior secondary school level (i.e. Grades 8–10) and at senior secondary school level (i.e. Grades 11–12), topics focus on contemporary moral issues.

3.3.7.2 Recognition of indigenous religious identities

Within the curriculum, African traditions and customs are included only in Grade 6 with minor references made in Grades 3 and 4. In general, African traditional practices are dealt with from the perspective of their impact on Christianity (ibid).

In a study on RME in Namibia, Bialostocka (2015) found that learners' experiences of African traditional beliefs informed classroom discussions, in that teachers often learnt from their learners and from each other about their indigenous beliefs, customs and traditions. Furthermore, while learners' indigenous religious identities were widely acknowledged, some teachers still regard these beliefs as inferior and as superstitions.

3.3.7.3 Challenges schools face in delivering RE

Iiata’s (2014) study on the curriculum and implementation of RME in Namibia found that teachers’ personal religious and moral values influence the teaching and learning process and the conflicts that concern them as religious and moral education teachers. This study revealed that a lack of teaching materials/teaching aids, a lack of pre-service and in-service training, insufficient period allocations, and workload were some of the key problems that teachers were facing in teaching RME in schools. Because their teaching of RME was dominated by Christianity, the teachers felt a commitment to share their personal (Christian) religious beliefs and moral values in the classroom (Iiata 2014:153–156).

The discussion now looks at RE in Zambian schools.

3.3.8 Zambia

3.3.8.1 Religion Education policies and practices

Zambia is a pluralist, multicultural and multi-religious society. Before independence, Christianity was the only religion taught in mission schools in Zambia and the influence of Christianity pervades society to this day. However, all religions and cultures are constitutionally protected. In order to acknowledge the diverse faiths, RE in post-independence Zambia, focuses on the country’s main religions which are Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and ATR. Learners are expected to value the moral, spiritual and religious values and practices of these religions across the different syllabi for primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education 1996).

The dominance of Christianity has influenced the delivery of RE in Zambia, which has remained partly confessional especially as the state was declared a Christian nation in 1991. Moreover, the content of learners’ textbooks is more Christian-based. Teachers and learners are decidedly influenced by the Christian ethos prevailing in the school environment and, since most of the RE teachers are Christian-oriented, they teach from that perspective. Learners are therefore not encouraged to explore other faiths such as ATR, which is given little attention in the curriculum and the classroom compared to the other religions (Muma 2013).

3.3.8.2 Recognition of indigenous religious identities

The inclusion of ATR in RE has been supported by groups supporting and promoting AIK and African identity, by traditional healers and in part by some AICs and feminist groups. Those in opposition are particular AICs that have a differing understanding to

the invoking of spirits, some feminist groups that reject cultural-religious traditional practices that subjugate women, and by a number of Pentecostal and evangelical churches that feel that ATR is in opposition to their teachings (Muma 2013:6–8).

3.3.8.3 Challenges schools face in delivering RE

RE teachers are not inclined to teach the subject as required by the multi-religious scope for a number of reasons, which include their lack of knowledge of the worldviews of other religions, inadequate training in multi-religious RE, as well as the fact that the content is skewed towards biblical perspectives (Ministry of Education 1984), is not relevant to diverse religious faiths and is not applied equitably to the major religions in the country (Muma 2013).

3.3.9 Zimbabwe

3.3.9.1 RE policies and practices

Section 60, the freedom of conscience clause, of the amended constitution of Zimbabwe affords every person the freedom to practise their religion and beliefs (Republic of Zimbabwe 2013). In a study to measure support for a values-oriented multi-faith approach to RE in Zimbabwe secondary schools, Ndlovu (2014:194) found that most RE stakeholders prefer a values-oriented multi-faith model that would contribute to the teaching of values such as citizenship, human rights, Ubuntu and nationhood, as well as contribute to the learners' well-being. Participants felt that a values-oriented multi-faith approach would contribute to the acknowledgement of Africans' traditional beliefs.

3.3.9.2 Challenges schools face in delivering Religion Education

The education system in Zimbabwe is still rooted in colonial (British) philosophy, which includes theories of knowledge, values and beliefs (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza 2014). Between 1980 and 2009, initiatives were undertaken by government and representatives of different religions to reform the RE curriculum, however these were largely superficial and therefore did not succeed. Further attempts to introduce a multi-faith RE curriculum were made under a Human Rights and Democracy Programme in 2001 and again between 2005 and 2008. To date, the Department of Education's Curriculum Development Unit has not finalised this curriculum which was initially targeted for forms 1 and 2 (equivalent to Grades 8 and 9 in South Africa). The challenge lies in transforming the biblical and Christian oriented RE content (Ndlovu 2014:175, 176, 197).

In the higher grades, efforts to transform the current ordinary level religious studies syllabus have also failed due in part to funding limitations and to prevailing negative sentiments which accuse curriculum planners of undermining Christian education (Gwaravanda, Masitera & Muzambi 2013:223, 224).

In neighbouring South Africa, transformation of RE has been to a degree more progressive and will be discussed next.

3.4 RELIGION EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.4.1 Religion Education in the colonial and apartheid era

South Africa, as a colony of the British Empire, was subjected to the common circumstances of colonial and mission education, which was introduced to westernise and Christianise the native Africans for political and economic exploitation. Western missionaries disregarded the informal apprentice-style education practices of indigenous tribes. Christianity was introduced to civilise and tame the Africans who were considered pagan and savage. Missionary education thus began the disruption and destruction of the African people's cultural and spiritual way of life (Luthuli & Nkuna in Lewis & Steyn 2003:103).

The Christian National Education Act of 1948 established apartheid education the aim of which was similar to that of the missionaries. The Calvinist education policy characterised by Protestant-Christian principles had its roots in Holland in the seventeenth century. Under this system, the state, church and school were closely connected.

3.4.2 Religion Education after 1994

The first democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994 represented the end of colonisation and the apartheid (segregationist) system in South Africa. In the post1994 democratic South Africa, the national Department of Education introduced polices aimed at creating a learning environment that would provide learners with the necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to enable them to participate meaningfully in a modern and culturally diverse society. These policies included the transformation of RE (DOE 2003).

In South Africa, where public schools are secularised, Christianity is the dominant religion. Religious educators from a particular faith are challenged to present an open

multi-religious perspective in the RE class. A detailed discussion on the RE policy in South Africa follows.

3.5 THE NATIONAL POLICY ON RELIGION IN EDUCATION

The new democratic South Africa and the adoption of a new constitution, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, led to the introduction of the Policy on RE (DOE 2003), which gives expression to the religious freedom provided for in the Constitution. South Africa does not have a state religion nor is it a secular state with a distinct separation between religion and the state (DOE 2003:2, 3). Freedom of religion, belief and opinion is protected in section 15(1) of the Bill of Rights and section 15(2) accepts that: "Religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions, provided that (a) those observances follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities; (b) they are conducted on an equitable basis; and (c) attendance at them is free and voluntary."

The Policy (DOE 2003) provides a framework for schools together with parents and relevant communities to decide on policies that inform their approach to RE, religious observances and practices. Four models were reviewed in building a case for the most appropriate RE model for South Africa. These models were a *theocratic model,* where the state is aligned with a particular faith, a *repressionist model,* where religion is eliminated from public life and spaces, a *separationist model*, such as exists in France and the USA, where there is strict separation between religion and the state and, lastly, a *cooperative model*, which provides for interaction between religious groups and the state in matters of common interest. Consequently, the South African state allows for freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion as expressed by the democratic principles of a *cooperative model,* which provides for constitutional separation and mutual cooperation (DOE 2003:5).

The South African Schools Act (Act 94 of 1996) upholds the constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of conscience (South Africa 1996), religion, thought, belief and opinion, and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds including religion. Within this constitutional framework, public schools are charged to promote the core values of a democratic society through the curriculum and extracurricular activities, and in acknowledging religious festivals, dress, food and other symbols associated

with diverse religious identities. The values applicable in education include equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour (DOE 2003:8).

An important aspect for this study is that in linking religion and education with the African renaissance, moral regeneration and the promotion of values in our schools, the Policy recognises the significant role that religion can play in respecting diversity, promoting values and preserving people's culture (DOE 2003:6). To that end, the recognition of learners' indigenous religious identities is an important factor for this study.

3.5.1 Key features of Religion Education in South Africa

The general aims of RE globally were discussed at section 3. An outline of the features of RE in South African public education is included in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Features of RE

1	The knowledge, understanding and appreciation of diverse religions are included in the learning programmes of our schools.
2	The school environment must engender inclusivity and ensure that all learners' different and various cultural-economic- personal-social identities are recognised and supported.
3	Through the teaching and learning about religions and other non-religious value systems, RE is important in communicating moral values, ethics and respect for others.
4	RE will be integrated across different subjects with special attention presented in life orientation (LO) in both General and Further Education and Training (FET). The relevant outcomes and assessment standards for RE are included in the LO.
5	The subject Religious Studies is offered at the FET band (grades 10 to 12) as an optional, specialised, and examinable subject.

Source: Adapted from the RE policy (DOE 2003:13–15)

3.5.2 Religion Education in the Life Orientation curriculum

RE forms a component of the subject, LO in South African public schools. Extensive research from South Africa and countries such as the USA, UK, and Europe, confirms the value of orientation programmes that prepare students for managing themselves in demanding and dynamic aspects of life. Religious programmes, socialising

programmes and self-development programmes form part of such orientation. The Department of Education (DoE 2003a:10), drawing from the findings of this research, developed a series of LO programmes differentiated across the four bands of school education, namely, the Foundation Phase, the Intermediate Phase, the Senior Phase and the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Prinsloo 2007:156).

LO is a compulsory subject in public schools. The broad aim of LO is to prepare learners for responsible citizenship and a healthy and productive life. It also serves to guide learners towards positive self-concept formation and the realisation of their potential. LO also addresses issues of human rights and inclusivity. The National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12 represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools and includes the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for each approved school subject (Department of Basic Education [DBE] 2011a, b). Topics for each subject are clearly outlined and recommendations are made on the number and type of assessments per term. Outcomes and assessment standards are now called topics and themes and learning areas are called subjects (DBE 2012).

Each of the LO curriculum topics requires that a range of skills, knowledge and values should be addressed and assessed. The five topics in Grades 7 to 9 are, Development of the self in society, Health, social and environmental responsibility, Constitutional rights and responsibilities, Physical education, and the World of work. Grades 10 to 12 cover six topics, namely, Development of the self in society, Social and environmental responsibility, Democracy and human rights, Careers and career choices, Study skills, and Physical Education (DBE 2011b).

RE forms part of social development, which requires learners to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.

The learning area statement for LO directs that learners should develop the capacity to respect the rights of others and to appreciate cultural diversity and different belief systems. In the Foundation Phase, learners may learn about the differences and similarities in the symbols, diet, clothing, sacred spaces and ways of worship of a range of belief systems, while in the Intermediate Phase this is taken further through learning about the values, festivals, rituals, customs and sacred spaces of different belief

systems. In the Senior Phase, they learn about how spiritual philosophies are linked to community and social values and practices. Opportunities and possibilities for further development of the principles and practices related to RE are also found in other learning areas (DOE 2003:19).

At the FET phase, which comprises Grades 10 to 12, religion is also offered as an elective academic subject. The topics for RE across the grade levels are displayed in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Overview of topics relating to RE: Grades R to 12

Grade	Topic
Grade R	Symbols linked to own religion
Grade 1	Symbols associated with a range of religions in South Africa
Grade 2	Important days from diverse religions
Grade 3	Diet, clothing and decorations in a variety of religions
Grade 4	Major religions in South Africa: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'i Faith and African Religion
Grade 5	Festivals and customs of a variety of religions in South Africa
Grade 6	The dignity of a person in a variety of religions in South Africa
Grade 7	The role of oral traditions and scriptures in a range of the world's religions
Grade 8	The contributions of organisations from various religions to social development
Grade 9	The contributions of various religions in promoting peace
Grade 10	Ethical traditions and/or religious laws and indigenous belief systems of major religions
Grade 11	Contributions of South Africa's diverse religions and belief systems to a harmonious society
Grade 12	Ideologies, beliefs and worldviews on construction of recreation and physical activity across cultures and genders

Source: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Life Orientation 2011/12 (DBE 2011a; 2011b; 2012)

The Policy states as follows:

“We believe we will do much better as a country if our pupils are exposed to a variety of religious and secular belief systems, in a well-informed manner, which gives rise to a genuine respect for the adherents and practices of all of these, without diminishing in any way the preferred choice of the pupil” (DOE 2003:16, 29).

3.5.3 Recognition of indigenous religious identities

This study seeks to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in selected South African secondary schools. It is clear from the above RE topics that the RE curriculum addresses the diverse perspectives that exist in a multicultural society, as guided by the Policy. Accordingly, teachers and learners have opportunities to engage specifically with ATR across the grades. Some of the topics make specific reference to ATR/indigenous religious identities. Where topics refer to the diverse religions in South African society, it is incumbent on teachers to ensure that ATR is included in the classroom discussions especially when learners from AICs are enrolled in the school. Giving learners access to their cultural religious heritage should be a natural part of their education.

3.5.4 Religious observances

School governing bodies (SGBs) are required to determine their schools’ policy on dealing with religious observances for teachers and learners within the framework of the policy and applicable legislation, although schools may also decide on a policy of no religious observances. Religious observances may take place at any time determined by the school, for example as part of a school assembly. However, in such instances learners and teachers should not be discriminated against or forced to be part of a religious observance that does not complement their faith and may therefore opt out. Where a religious observance is organised as an official part of the school day, it must accommodate and reflect the multi-religious nature of the country in an appropriate manner (DOE 2003: 21).

The various ways in which religious observances can be accommodated include schools making their facilities available to different religious groupings on an equitable basis, for teachers and learners to have religious meetings during school breaks, and by accommodating religious dress, prayer times and diets associated with a person’s religion. In addition, in a religious observance in which the public participates on school

property, that activity should not be held during the school's official teaching day (DOE 2003:23).

The policy allows for the flexibility of opportunities for observance, in proportion to the representation of different religions in the school, such as permitting readings from various religious texts, allowing for the use of a universal prayer or periods of silence. Ultimately, in all their RE practices, public schools should aim to affirm and celebrate diversity without violating the religious freedom of learners and teachers and without imposing religious uniformity on a religiously diverse school population (DOE 2003).

Finally, with regard to the displaying of religious symbols at public schools, South Africa has no specific clause about religious symbols on school premises. The researcher concludes that in terms of the policy, SGBs would have to consider their religious environment in determining what symbols the school would display.

3.5.5 The application of Religion Education in the classroom

The Policy (DOE 2003:9) which relates to the different aspects of RE, religious instruction and religious observances in all public schools is applicable at all levels of the education system, including district, provincial and national-level gatherings. While sectarian religion has been banned from public schools, the teaching of religion studies as an academic subject and for religious observances is allowed on condition that these were offered in a fair and equitable manner. In summary, section 19 of the policy (2003) states that RE, which is the responsibility of the school, shall include teaching and learning about world religions with particular attention to the religions of South Africa. Teachers are therefore required to adopt a multi-religious approach to RE and must accommodate learners from different religions regardless of their own personal orientation and views (DoE 2003:15, 16). This aspect of RE teachers' perceptions of and responses to diversity in relation to their own identities is a typical issue experienced in multicultural school communities globally.

Teachers are called to be aware of and reflect on strategies they apply for dealing with cultural/religious diversity in their classrooms. RE teachers who are able to reflect on how their own beliefs, views and experiences impact their professional responsibilities in light of national policies, local politics and the socio-cultural context in which they work, would be better positioned to plan for and manage teaching about diverse cultures/religion (Everington et al 2011:241, 253).

Teachers can plan their content and presentation in a way that ensures that individuals and groups are protected from 'ignorance, stereotypes, caricatures and denigration'. The curriculum allows for guest facilitators from religious organisations to assist teachers in dealing with issues of religion in the classroom, including religious observances, and to contribute to the development and distribution of suitable materials (DoE 2003:16, 19). From the researchers' experience, LO teachers are not making much use of this resource.

3.5.6 Challenges in the implementation of Religion Education in the classroom

Within the framework of the policy discussed at section 3.4, public schools have an educational responsibility for the teaching and learning of religion and religions, and for promoting these equitably within the curriculum (DOE 2003). Several factors contribute to the difficulties associated with implementing RE in the classroom. These are the fact that Christianity is the dominant religious culture in many public schools; the fact that teachers' personal religious values and identities may be in conflict with the school's multi-religious culture, the learners (different) religious identities and with policy expectations; teachers' stereotyping, prejudicing or discriminating against learners of different religions and beliefs; teachers' inadequate knowledge about ATR; learners not readily open to others' beliefs/religions; dress codes that do not accommodate a person's cultural and religious beliefs; and learners of different cultures being assimilated or integrated into multiracial schools with a dominant cultural perspective (see section 1.1).

The above challenges schools and teachers face in implementing RE have a direct bearing on the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents who are the subject of this study. In order for teachers and the school to engage genuinely and emphatically with learners' religious perspectives, they should reflect on their own attitudes towards different belief systems with a view to being more open and transformative in their teaching and learning approaches (Jarvis 2009:167).

It is in the spirit of valuing and managing diversity that schools affirm other religious identities among adolescents in their schools in spite of Christianity being the dominant religion in most schools. In order to address this concern, parents and religious institutions should be instrumental in guiding the pedagogical and religious goals provided for by the RE programme in schools (Kruger in Van der Walt 2011).

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the literature on RE as a component of multicultural education and has examined the way different countries, both in Africa and in the rest of the world, apply RE in their public schools. The discussion also included examples of how indigenous religious identities are acknowledged. The chapter focused particularly on RE in South Africa, on its application within the Policy framework and the challenges faced in the implementation of RE.

Chapter four will present the research design and data collection methods used to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in selected South African secondary schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research was to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology. The methods used to investigate how the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools are accommodated in RE are explained. The chapter presents the research design, the data collection methods and discusses the data analysis that was applied. The ethical considerations and the measures taken to ensure trustworthiness and validity throughout the study are described.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is based on an interpretive methodological approach in terms of which participants collaborate with the researcher in providing the data that will inform the meanings constructed by the analysis (Creswell 2013:8, 9, 18). As discussed in chapter one, qualitative exploratory research allowed me to interpret the constructed meanings that the adolescents presented regarding their views on their indigenous religious beliefs, how their beliefs are expressed in their schools and their impressions on how their religious identity is accommodated in the RE curriculum.

This study was situated within the overarching framework of an African indigenous knowledge (AIK) or African-centred approach. This approach was used as I am familiar with the culture, history, language and spiritual philosophy of the research participants, and the epistemologies of such an approach are informed by AIK contexts (see section 1.3.3). To that end, the design and methods were influenced by a phenomenological approach.

4.2.1 Phenomenological multi-case study

The study was located within a phenomenological paradigm. In a qualitative research study, such an approach allows for phenomena to be studied in their naturalistic settings. As a research methodology, phenomenology describes and constructs the meanings of a people's lived experience through intensive dialogue with persons who are living the experience (Creswell 2013:57). This approach was adopted because, in terms of this approach, participants are asked to describe their experiences which

reflect their realities. To attain the goal of the study, I purposely sampled learners who attend AICs in the first instance and then included samples of learners from other religions in order to collect rich data that are reflective of multi religions and that would show how learners from other churches or religions view ATR in relation to their own faith.

4.2.1.1 Types of phenomenological study

There are generally two types of phenomenological enquiry. The one approach is descriptive phenomenology where the researcher explores the meanings that participants give to their lived experiences and describes their discoveries without offering any interpretation (Husserl 1983; Giorgi 1989). In inductive, interpretative phenomenology or hermeneutics, the researcher explores meanings and reports on the findings based on his or her interpretations (Van Manen 2007,2016).

Informed by a qualitative human science methodology, phenomenology as a human science is systematic, methodical, general and critical (Giorgi 1997). Focusing specifically on psychological phenomenological approaches (which are applicable to this study), Giorgi (1989) presented four core characteristics that are typical across all variations: The research is descriptive, uses the phenomenological reductions, explores the intentional relationship between the participants and their situations, and then searches for the essences of meanings with participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell 2013).

This study explored the shared experiences of a group of African adolescent learners who affiliate with AICs for the purpose of understanding the emic view of their cultural religious identity in contrast to the etic view (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011:137–140). In this regard, the study will help describe and interpret the way in which the knowledge, norms and values associated with African indigenous religion influence the participants' religious identity. This interpretative phenomenological enquiry method of providing data about the participant's reality is known as the case study.

4.2.2 Case study

In this study, a case study approach was used to examine real life situations using multiple cases as the sources of evidence (Yin 2012:23). Group participant interviews helped to communicate the relationship between indigenous religious identity and RE in selected secondary schools. A case study is defined as a method to observe the

characteristics of simple or complex “bounded” units such as a person, a person’s experience, a group or a community, institution or other social unit in order to analyse various phenomena in relation to that unit of study such as the group of adolescents for this research (Cohen et al 2011:181).

4.3 ETHICAL MEASURES

Ethical permission for the study was given from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa and permission to conduct the research at the schools was obtained from the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Education. Permission to access the research site (the school) was sought from the school governing body with whom I communicated through the school principals. Throughout the study ethical measures were applied as follows.

4.3.1 Informed consent

By providing their informed consent the participants were given an opportunity to consider whether to participate or not, without penalty. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:338–339) highlight the importance of establishing a trusting and transparent relationship between the researcher and the participants. Disclosing the purpose of the study, evaluating any possible risks and not pressurising participants to sign consent forms are important aspects of securing informed consent (Cohen et al 2011:52; Creswell, 2012:47; 2013:136).

I met with the participants once in order to establish rapport and then again to explain the nature, goals and method of the research study. I also explained that the work would be used for research purposes, in the interests of developing teaching practices to address the different religious identities in the schools. I stressed that since their participation was voluntary, they could withdraw at any stage of the research (Cohen et al 2011).

The participants were all minors under 18 years of age, hence informed consent was also secured from their parents/legal guardians who were given the same explanation of the research. Participants and their parents were asked to sign assent and consent forms, respectively, in which they agreed to the interviews which would be audio recorded. They were required to acknowledge that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. The assent form also outlined how the data would be managed (see Appendix C).

Before beginning the group interviews, I reiterated participants' voluntary participation and confirmed their understanding and assent for the discussions to be digitally recorded. During the interviews, I noted that the learners were quite relaxed and the atmosphere was cordial. This was probably because the learners were seeing me for the second or third time since I had first introduced and talked about the study with them on previous school visits.

4.3.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity means that any information participants disclosed during the research cannot be linked to them in the report. Equally, information provided will not be shared with any third party. Accordingly, the participants were assured that anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms and by not disclosing the names of their schools (Cohen et al 2011:64, 65; Creswell 2013:138).

4.3.3 Deception and privacy

From the initial meetings with participants and communication with their parents to explain the rationale behind the research and securing their consent to participate, every effort was made to ensure that they were not deceived in any way with regard to their understanding of the information provided. Participants were additionally assured that their privacy would be protected (Cohen et al 2011:52, 63, 66; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:117; Creswell 2013:136, 137).

4.3.4 Competence of the researcher

In order for research to be credible and dependable, the researcher has to be competent and skilled in the gathering and interpreting of the data and in explicating the results of the interviews. This requires that the research is conducted truthfully and objectively and in a manner that protects participants and shows sensitivity to their perspectives. I maintained a high standard of personal and professional integrity in conducting the research. I read and researched extensively on phenomenological enquiry and research design (Cohen, Manion & Morrisson 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Creswell, 2012,2014; Patton 2002; Stake 2010; Rubin & Rubin 2012; Van Manen 2007,2016).

Throughout the study I was reflexive of my role as research instrument (see section 4.5.2).My expansive multicultural background and understanding of indigenous religion provided a broad base from which to know and understand the way the

participants would perceive, interpret and make sense of their realities in their schools with regard to the aim of this research.

4.4 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

The constructs to ensure the qualitative data was trustworthy were guided by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model for ensuring the trustworthiness.

4.4.1 Credibility (validity)

Credibility is the consistency of the research findings to reality. Within the ambit of internal validity, authenticity addresses the accuracy of the research in explaining the data from the participants' perspective (Cohen et al 2011). This study recorded and described indigenous religious perspectives through the eyes of the adolescent learners. The study is credible to the extent that:

- the participants' experiences and perspectives informed the data; the researcher collected a considerable amount of data directly in the research location (the schools) using a tape recorder and field notes
- established research methods were used
- a comprehensive literature review was conducted which provided background to the research
- research results were triangulated through multiple focus groups, and
- the researcher established rapport with the participants in order to encourage them to communicate openly and honestly and by checking the correctness of their responses with them. Participants were requested to authenticate the summary of the discussions and comment on the salient points that would inform the research report (Stake 2010; Cohen et al 2011:133, 134).

4.4.2 Transferability

Transferability, also referred to as generalisability, refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to other similar situations (Cohen et al 2011:135, 136). It is not easy to demonstrate transferability as situations could be dependent on other variables such as contexts, settings and participants. In order to allow the readers and the users of the research to determine its transferability, Lincoln and Guba (in Cohen et al 2011:137) recommend providing "thick descriptions" of the phenomenon under investigation. I provided this as indicated (section 4.4.1) together with ample contextual information about the setting and the research methodology.

4.4.3 Dependability

The dependability or the consistency of the data indicates its' replication over time and in similar samples (Cohen et al 2011:146). Dependability in qualitative research may allow other researchers to replicate a study even if they obtain differing results. To that end, when writing up the research, the research processes should provide ample details.

For this study, consistency was applied through the research design and by using the same interview schedule for the multiple focus groups to collect the data. I feel that the use of case studies for this research also lends authenticity to the study since case studies do not involve any experiments or manipulated social settings (Stake 2010).

The dependability of the research was ensured through debriefing with the research supervisor, triangulating of the data and checking responses with the participants, as well as my reflections and independent audits through the examination of the thesis. (Lincoln & Guba,1985; Stake 2010).

4.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to the neutrality of the researcher in ensuring the findings are based on the participants' responses and the conditions of the research. I was therefore mindful about avoiding bias in the reporting and analysis of the data. In addition, I ensured the data obtained and analysed were relevant to the research question. Furthermore, my role as research instrument and my reflections during the investigation helped me maintain an objective stance (Cohen et al 2011:145).

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

The data obtained for this qualitative research study was derived from a research design that was tentative and open-ended and thus the design emerged as it was shaped by the data collection process (Cresswell 2012: 8,9,17).

4.5.1 Sampling

Purposive sampling in qualitative research is used when the researcher purposely selects sites and individuals that fit the aim of the research and that will therefore provide such ''thick'' information required to understand a specific phenomenon (Creswell 2012:206). The participants identified for the study were learners who were affiliated to AICs. In order to identify them, I had made general enquiries at a few schools in the district to find out if there were any learners who attended AICs. I then

purposely enquired in the first instance at schools offering RE in the FET band and then considered other schools that did not offer RE. Only two schools in the district offered RE as an academic subject. The research sites then comprised the schools described in section 4.3.1.

The selected Grade 10 and 11 participants included those who had elected to take Religious Studies as one of their FET subjects, while the Grade 8 and 9 and other Grade 10 and 11 participants studied religion as a component of the LO subject. The literature review in chapter three details the RE policy governing the RE and LO curricula.

The sample included both female and male students from different South African ethnic groups, namely, Ndebele, Pedi and Zulu. None of the Indian or white learners from the one mixed race school volunteered to participate in the focus groups. These groups comprised between six to 12 learners. This criterion-based sampling assisted to elicit different data on how the researched adolescents are supported in expressing their indigenous religious identity in their classrooms and allowed for a range of interpretations in relation to the research questions (refer to section 5.2).

Maximum variation is recommended in sampling (Creswell 2012:207-8; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011:157; McMillan and Schumacher 2010:327-329). Although there was variation in the samples, one group included only one male despite there being a few other male learners who attend AICs. There were unforeseen delays in getting additional males and with mid-year examinations imminent, identified male learners were not available for the group interview which had been arranged in their village.

4.5.2 The researcher as instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. Accordingly, the researcher's ontological and epistemological position underpins the research and permeates the choice of the problem, the questions to be answered, the representation of learners, the methodology applied in generating the data and through to the ethical considerations.

In the context of this research, an important factor to note is the positioning (Creswell 2012) and cultural competence of the researcher, which could influence the outcome of the analysis of the research data. While I understood and honoured the participants'

cultural worldview and personal religious beliefs, I was also careful to check that my own particular attitudes and beliefs did not influence my interactions with participants, as well as my interpretation of the data.

The pilot interview helped to test the line of questioning for the focus groups and to obtain further input from a neutral person, namely the research supervisor.

Several readings of the participants' transcriptions ensured that I was consciously aware of the range of information that I considered appropriate and relevant without being influenced by any misinterpretations of responses that I could have missed from my earlier reviews. I became a voice for the participants and provided an informed interpretation that would promote an understanding of the participants' indigenous religious identity realities within the school context (Rubin & Rubin 2012; Stake 2010:202,203; Cohen et al 2011:6, 7).

4.5.3 Data collection methods

4.5.3.1 Interview guide

An interview guide with predetermined questions was used. The open-ended questions allowed for participants to talk about their lived experiences, their world view and knowledge in relation to their indigenous religious beliefs. The questioning style probed answers for clarity and to obtain rich information. The interview schedule for the participants was drawn up using the following questions:

- Can you tell me how you came to be a member of your church?
- Can you explain what your religion means to you? What benefits does it offer you?
- How would you say your religion influences your behaviour here at school? In the classroom? In your relationship with educators and other staff? With your classmates?
- Can you give me examples of LO and religious studies class discussions, activities or homework that have involved African indigenous religion?

By directing the conversations through the use of open-ended questioning, the responses given by the participants were open and unstructured, allowing me to listen and follow their thinking. The interviews lasted for about forty-five minutes to an hour.

4.5.3.2 The pilot focus group

The pilot interview comprised a group of Grade 8 learners who were available at the time. The experience with the teacher who was delegated to confirm the interview was a bit unsettling because she did not seem to fully appreciate the request for learners from indigenous churches. The first group of six had only two from an AIC and the rest from Christian churches. Even though a second attempt was made to access additional learners from AICs, the teacher subsequently sent a group made up of learners from AICs and from non-charismatic Christian groups. Perhaps the teacher's understanding of AICs was not clear and I noted this for future visits.

The group was rearranged in line with the signed letters of assent (it appeared almost half the class had signed assent letters) and I conducted the interview with a group of 12 learners which included three Jehovah's Witnesses, one from the Roman Catholic church, one from the Wesleyan Church and the rest from AICs. Inadvertently, the mixed group gave me an opportunity to explore the views of learners from other churches about AICs.

The pilot interviews gave me an opportunity to review my interactions with the research participants during the group discussions and to consider additional or other ways of proceeding with the research. An important consideration in terms of developing a rich description of the research phenomenon was to ensure the selection of learners who could communicate confidently and explain how their indigenous identity is expressed in the school (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Patton 2002).

Following my experience with the pilot group's responses and feedback from the supervisor on the initial experience, I felt more comfortable and clearer about how to proceed with the selection for the focus group interviews, particularly with regard to including a multi-religious group that was representative of the broader South African society.

4.5.3.3 Focus groups

Focus groups are a form of group interview and were used in this study to generate data to obtain an understanding of the research topic, that is, to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in selected South African secondary schools. The rationale for using focus groups in this study was to obtain a first-hand account of the lived experiences, ideologies and perceptions directly from a group of selected participants, as well as to give the participants an opportunity to provide detailed

explanations of their responses to the research questions (Creswell 2012; Cohen et al 2011).

The interaction of the adolescents with each other around topics I presented and the views expressed by the learners from different religious groups, as well as from mixed denominations, provided additional perspectives and data in relation to the learners' experiences with RE. The use of multiple focus groups was useful as a means to verify the interpretation of and triangulate the data collected and also helped to determine when data were saturated where no new themes emerged (ibid). The interviews took place at times that did not disrupt the participants' school programme.

It is important to point out that while I utilised multiple cases to obtain data, it was not my intention to generalise the results of the study. The study was conducted in a specific province of South Africa, at selected schools that were within forty kilometres from my home. The adolescents were predominantly those who affiliate with AICs. In that regard, the exploratory nature of the study and the sampling used for the multiple cases enabled me to investigate similarities, differences and patterns from the participants' responses and viewpoints (Kruegar & Casey 2009; Yin 2012).

4.5.3.4 Researcher's reflective journal (field notes)

Field notes are a form of data collection and in this study these notes were contained in a reflective journal. It is important for researchers to reflect on and keep notes of their experiences, impressions, thoughts and feelings (Hubbs & Brand 2005:61, 67; Cresswell 2014: 234). From the planning of the research through to the data collection and interpretation thereof, I was appreciative of ensuring that my own subjectivities did not constrain my interpretations during the course of the research. To that end, my reflections on my own position with regard to the participants' focus group responses and their interactions with myself and each other, as well as my interactions and feelings as I engaged with school staff, were recorded in a personal journal.

Continual reflection during documentation and checking my personal assumptions and subjectivities was important for establishing validity for the study. This was especially important given that I am an indigenous insider, with knowledge and understanding of ATR. This is not, however, limited to ATR, as I have an all-encompassing approach to multi-faiths that allowed for open and engaging discussions with all the participants.

As active participants in the study, from the data collection to analysis, the participants and I became active partners in co-creating the meaning they assigned to their religion, their views on how their religion influences their behaviour to finally assessing how RE in their schools addresses their religious identity. This partnership in the creation of knowledge means that I was mindful of my role as a research instrument (see section 4.5.2) (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006).

In addition, discussing the research trajectory and receiving feedback from the supervisor from how the topic and the attendant questions were framed not only helped guide the research but also greatly assisted in maintaining objectivity and in adopting a logical approach to the topic (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Maxwell 2005).

The next section discusses how the data were analysed.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Phenomenological data analysis involves a thorough and sensitive reading of the participants' transcribed responses. Naturally, the data analysis began even while I was in the field and from this I began to process the data within a thematic framework which was developed from the research questions as the initial a priori issues. These priori issues formed the coded domains (Cohen et al 2011).

The phenomenology context underpinning the focus group discussions facilitated an understanding of the learners' lived experiences and perceptions of that experience in relation to their religious identity within the school context (Patton 2002). The learners' responses were used to answer the research questions.

4.6.1 Transcribing interview protocols

The audio recordings of the four focus groups were transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions together with the researcher's notes formed the basis for content analysis. Verbatim transcription of the learners' responses reduced any likely bias to include only those sections that I thought relevant. A problem was experienced with the recording for school D but fortunately, since I usually made notes against each participants' name during the group interviews as a matter of course, my consolidation of the notes and of my memories of the group discussion and experiences were converted into my field notes on the same day. This was followed with a written summary of the discussion which was given to all the participants and on which they

were requested to confirm what was said and make any additional comments (Krueger & Casey 2009).

Consistent with the methodological approach for this study, all interviews and researcher's notes were read several times; this included verifying the transcriber's capturing of the vernacular into English in order to ensure that the essence of the participants' and my language was captured accurately.

It is generally accepted that transcriptions are not always accurate (Cresswell 2014), for example, when the voices are not audible or when the translation does not capture the manner in which the participants or researcher speak or express themselves. This happened with the first transcription. For all focus groups participants and myself spoke in isiZulu or Sepedi and some English. I informed the first transcriber of my dissatisfaction with the quality of the work. This meant that I had to listen to the audio and make corrections to the translation. I decided to use a different person for the other recordings and these were translated satisfactorily.

4.6.2 Coding

I read the transcript and field notes repeatedly so as to hear the data (Rubin & Rubin 2012) and obtain a clear understanding of the adolescents' perspectives in relation to the purpose of the research, which was to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in selected South African secondary schools. I used colour coding systematically across the various responses for each particular question, highlighting specific words or ideas that kept coming up.

Coding was done using words or phrases which were grouped into descriptive labels and organised for comparison, contrasting and identification of patterns (Hammersley & Atkinson in Cohen et al 2011). Drawing from the research and the sub-questions, basic clusters were created to categorise a range of phenomena related to the adolescents' perspectives in categories such as their belief practices, meanings associated with religion, relationships with peers, RE curricula, behaviour and repeated phrases (Cohen et al, 2011). From these categories, the sets of data were reduced for segmenting.

4.6.3 Segmenting and patterns

When segmenting the data, the descriptive labels were sorted into smaller sets from which patterns were identified. This was done because patterns from the categories

were identified across the sets of data and therefore required the codes to be refined and linked together or where learners' experiences and perspectives revealed different understandings under an assigned code (Patton 2002).

4.6.3.1 Forming categories or themes

Within the framework, the coded data were applied to categories obtained from the existing literature. Accordingly, the headings thus determined are presented under each of the three a priori themes (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). Since two of the focus groups included learners from non-AICs, the data set was also coded for responses to RE in the school context that related to the viewpoints of multiple belief systems (which included a learner who identified himself as an atheist).

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the research design. In addition, details of the various constructs of the ethical measures and the measures to ensure trustworthiness was provided, as well as an explanation of the data collection and data processing methods.

Chapter five thus reports on the research findings and presents a discussion and an interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to highlight the voice of adolescents who attend African initiated churches (AICs) in order to answer the research question: *How are the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools affirmed?* (see section 1.2). The findings were drawn from the synthesis and interpretation of the participants' responses, firstly, to what their religion means to them, secondly, with regard to their perceptions of how their religion influences their behaviour within the school environment and, lastly, regarding the way their religious identity is supported within the context of the RE policy.

The identity development theoretical framework and RE contexts discussed in chapters two and three respectively guided the data collection. Chapter four discussed the qualitative research design and methodology relevant to this study and presented the data collection method applied which comprised multiple focus groups. Chapter five concludes with a summary.

5.2 PROFILE OF THE SCHOOLS

The four schools which were involved in this study are coeducational government schools; one is in Emalahleni and three in Middelburg. The schools' mission statements include a commitment to offer quality education to all learners irrespective of race or religion. It was noted that the schools were all Christian-oriented. Christianity was the dominant religion in the country pre-independence and still is today. As is the prevailing practice among many government schools, the schools allow local churches (which happen to be Christian charismatic) to use the schools' facilities for their weekend services.

School A is a secondary school situated in an African township, catering for Grades 8 to 12. It is a typical three-storey school building with 30 classrooms, housing 922 learners and 32 teaching staff, of which two were Indian, at the time of the study. There were three staff members in reception, one being white. The school grounds were neat and the school, like several other schools in the district, had recently acquired a new netball/basketball court sponsored by the national lottery fund. Other physical

education activities are practised in a small section of the schoolyard. The languages of instruction are isiZulu and English.

School B caters for learners from Grades 1 to 9 and is an isiZulu and English medium school situated in an African township. All personnel and learners were African. At the time of the study, there were 917 learners, 22 classrooms, 28 teaching staff and two women at reception. The school had no formal sportsground and so a section of the yard was allocated for physical education activities. The grounds were well-kept and the school appeared orderly.

School C is situated in a farming area about 25 kilometres from town. Despite its location, it is not considered a farm school in the typical sense. Languages offered are Sepedi, isiZulu and English. The school caters for learners from Grades 1 to 12 who come from local settlements and surrounding villages. At the time of the study, there were 1030 learners and 16 classrooms and it was immediately apparent that the infrastructure and space was limited in relation to the learner population. The teaching staff of 35 included two whites and an Indian. The school had an attractive vegetable garden located near a small kitchen area to the right of the entrance, where the learners' meals were prepared. There was a basket/netball court to the far left of the entrance.

School D is well resourced in all aspects, with formally laid out sports fields. This English medium high school caters for learners from Grades 8 to 12. The three reception personnel and 26 state teaching staff were all white except for two Indians appointed by the school governing body. There were 764 learners and 28 classrooms. It is a suburban school situated in a formerly white area and was a former Model C school. These schools did not admit children of other races before 1993; thereafter their admission criteria changed as the country's political dispensation transformed. Furthermore, the School Act of 1997 requires that schools admit all children who reside in the feeder areas.

Over the years more African learners have enrolled at the school and at the time of the research the ratio was about 70 per cent African and the rest white and Indian. Most of the African learners come from the local townships and for many it is the school of choice, having completed their primary schooling at local English medium schools.

5.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

Forty-two learners took part in the focus group interviews; 12 from school A, 11 from school B, seven from school C and 12 from school D. The purposeful sample included female and male participants in Grades 8 to 11 and from different South African ethnic groups, namely, Ndebele, Pedi, Zulu and Coloured, as well as those from the three AICs mentioned in this study (see section 1.5.5 and 4.3.2). To broaden the variety of perspectives, participants from other religions and Christian denominations were invited to volunteer for the research. Invitations were also sent out to two other multiracial schools, one of which is predominantly Afrikaans and the other English. However, neither of the two was available. The majority of the participants were African and two were coloureds. The following table profiles the focus groups by school label and group composition, which comprises gender, grade, race and religion denomination.

Table 5.1: Profile of focus groups

School label	Group composition															
	Gender		Grade				Race		Religion							
	F	M	8	9	10	11	A	C	Zion	ZCC	Ipc	Jw	Rc	Mw	Cc	Ath
A	7	5	12				12		5	2	1	3	1	1		
B	9	2		11			11		7	4						
C	6	1			6	1	7		3	4						
D	7	5	1	4	3	4	10	2	3	3		2			3	1

Race – **A**: African (Black), **C**: Coloured;

Religion – **Zion**: Zion Apostolic, **ZCC**: Zion Christian Church, **Ipc**: International Pentecostal Church; **Jw**: Jehovah's Witness, **Rc**: Roman Catholic, **Mw**: Methodist Wesley, **Cc**: Charismatic Christian, **Ath**: Atheist.

A discussion of the findings follows.

5.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

To validate the findings and compare and contrast them with relevant literature, the discussions on each finding used quotations from the group interviews. Participants' responses are cited by referring to their respective school, their grade, gender and race, for example for school A (A: 9FA).

5.4.1 Categories and subcategories

Table 5.1 presents the research categories and sub-categories as drawn from the interview questions which served as a priori themes/categories.

Table 5.1 Research categories and sub-categories

Categories	Sub-categories
Adolescents' identification with their religion	• Affiliation to family beliefs • Personal choice • Friends' influence • Uncertainty • Meanings assigned to religion: *Values: dress code* ***Fellowship: expressions of worship*** ***Religious-cultural beliefs and practices: ancestors, prophets and healing***
Influence of religion on the adolescents' behaviour within the school environment	• How they respond to their peers' perceptions of ATR *Misconceptions about their and others' religious beliefs and practices* • Prayer and religious practices within the school • Religious integration
Adolescents' perception of representation of ATR in the RE curricula	• Main religions in South Africa were mentioned in earlier grades • ATR is not discussed in LO class • ATR is discussed in RE (at the FET band)
Emerged category Participants' value of religious education	• The need for clarity or understanding of their and others' religious practices • Appreciation for discussions about religion

5.4.2 Category 1: Adolescents identification with their religion

This first a priori domain was addressed by the question: Can you tell me how you came to be a member of your religion or church? This question served to get the discussion going so that each participant had an opportunity to talk about their church and indicate what motivated their identification with ATR or another church.

5.4.2.1 Affiliation to family beliefs

Existing research acknowledges the formative influence of parents, peers and schools on adolescents' religious development (Fowler 1981; Durkheim 1956; Hirschi 1969; King & Rouser in Cohen-Malayev et al 2014) (see sections 2.3.1 & 2.9). Across the four focus groups, most of the participants reported that their religious affiliation was influenced by parents or other relatives and that they attended church as a family tradition. Responses from the participants included:

> *"My mother and I go to a church where she grew up (Wesley Methodist) because we like the (African) traditions* …" (A:8FA).
>
> *"We grew up in this church"* [Zion] (B:9FA).
>
> *"My parents have passed away … I live with my sister … I joined the Church (Zion) this year because my sister (who was previously with the ZCC) is married to one of the apostles"* (B:9MA).
>
> *"We changed from the ZCC to Zion because my father complained about the long service … on Sundays the service begins at 2 and ends at 5"* (B:9FA).
>
> *"I grew up in the (Zion) church … when my mother was sick* (the family*) took her there and she was healed"* (C:10FA).
>
> *"I started going there (IPC) from when I was young … but my mother does not go to church … there are many rules in the church"* (A:8MA).
>
> *"My mother told me we attend the same church (Zion) as a family and that I can make my own choice after I turn 18"* (D:9FA).

The above quotes, which are examples from all four groups, illustrate how identity formation begins with the association with and internalisation of their family's religion, as in an ascribed identity. In this instance the participants have foreclosed without prior exploration. Aspects of confirming in accordance with their family's social and moral orientation are evident. There was one example of a conscious orientation to rules within the church. One participant displayed a conscious identification with African

traditional customs and practices. This association between a religious identification and traditional cultural beliefs would be influenced by the adolescent's commitment to their religion and to their socialisation. In two instances commitment from one church group to another was reconsidered as a convenience, albeit within the broader ATR. These choices which begin in relation to the family's' identification, move to a chosen identity where the adolescent chooses the same as or different religious identity to that of his/her parents as a personal choice (Erikson 1968; Marcia 1966: 1980;Peek, 2005; Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga 2013) (see sections 2.3.2,2.4.1,2.4.2,2.4.3 and 2.5.1).

5.4.2.2 Personal choice

An example of participants' views in relation to their own volition includes one who said: "*My mother wanted me to attend the Zion church, but I refused. My family attends the church"* (C:5). While she is not a church goer, this participant acknowledged the traditional practices; hence she volunteered to be part of the focus group. This could allude to the participants' cultural heritage and ethnic identification, as well as socialisation into African traditional practices (Owuor in Shizha 2013; Phinney 1989; 1992) (see sections 2.5.1 and 3.3.51). A few of the participants from the non-AICs were not regular churchgoers, but believed in prayer and reading the scriptures:

> *"I am more of a believer, rather than belonging to a church, I read the Bible and pray at home"* (D:11MA).
>
> *"Going to church makes me feel good especially, say, if I have not attended for a while, I miss the teachings and guidance, and whenever I have attended church, I feel I have gained something"* (D:10MA).

Another participant, who professed to be an atheist, expressed his inclinations:

"*I don't believe you have to belong to a religion*." When asked by another respondent in the group, "*how do you set your boundaries?"* He suggested that a person can relate through his or her consciousness: "*I decide from my mind what I feel is right or wrong."* When I asked how his parents feel about his standpoint and further on how he handles family prayers, he responded, "*they have no problem with what I believe. When the family engage in prayers, I just stay in my room"* (D:10MA).

The participants' personal choice regarding church attendance, the guidance and teachings they receive, as well as their sense of boundaries and consciousness,

corresponds to research which confirms the positive impact that religion and spirituality generally have on adolescents (Lippman & McIntosh 2010) (see section 2.8). One participant implies a person does not need to belong to a church to know what is right from wrong (Kohlberg 1984) (see section 2.3.2) Furthermore, during this stage of personal development and identity vs role confusion, adolescents begin to want to define an identity for themselves. They will, for example, through in-depth exploration, decide whether to choose the same or different religious identity to that of their parents. (Erikson 1950; 1968; Marcia 1966; 1980; Knafo & Schwartz 2004; Coretti 2017) (see section 2.4.1 & 2.4.2).

5.4.2.3 Influence of friends

Some participants were influenced by school friends who attended AICs. A participant who had relocated to the region did not belong to a church, however, he had begun attending his classmates' (Apostolic) church since he "*had once attended (her) church practise sessions*" (A:8MA). Another participant responded, "*I went because of my friends … and ended up liking it*" (C:9FA). She shows an interest and openness to exploring an identity. Attaining a firm sense of identity, whether from family or friends, is vital to adolescents' psychosocial functioning and well-being. (Coretti 2017).

For participants from AICs, peers from the same religion were described as sources of support, where they would pray or sing together during break or on their way home. This was also linked to how their religious association influences their behaviour in their school, as presented in section 5.4.4.2.

5.4.2.4 Uncertainty

Some of the participants' apparent uncertainty and further exploration was also influenced by circumstances such as with whom they may be associating, such as with friends or relatives. For example, one 15-year-old male participant from the ZCC was not sure if he would perform the required confirmation rite when he turned 16. Similarly, a female participant stressed the fact that she would be free to decide whether she would continue attending her family's church when she turned 18.

This uncertainty and the above identification positions discussed from section 5.4.2.1 to 5.4.2.4 corresponds with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural approach to children's cognitive development, with Erikson's (1950) fifth stage of adolescent personality development when they reflect on their identity, on who they are, their capabilities,

friendships and how they want to live their lives, and with Fowler's (1981) synthetic-conventional stage of faith development, when adolescents have developed values and beliefs and their conceptions of faith come from various influences, as well as with the individuative-reflective stage. In this last-mentioned stage of faith development, individuals are more reflective and questioning about their earlier beliefs based on their circumstances or life experiences. The participant with atheist views, for example, explored other literature on religion and the bible. (see sections 2.3.1,2.3.3 and 2.4.1).

To summarise, the above comments regarding the participants' religious affiliations depict the commitment to and exploration of their religious identity from the point when they foreclose without considering other alternatives based on their families' experiences, through to the moratorium status, when they begin to question their ideas, beliefs and identities and explore alternatives. Specifically, their search for an identity includes the stages of commitment, exploration in depth and a reconsideration of that commitment. (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca & Ritchie 2015) (see section 2.4.2). This is reflected in their attending churches that differ from those their parents attend, or when they explore different social roles such as atheism or non-association with churches.

5.4.3 Category 2: Meanings assigned to religion

From discussing the choice of association with their religion, I turned to asking the participants about the meaning and benefits that religion held for them, as I felt this could prepare them to discuss the influence this had on their outlook and behaviour in the school environment (see section 5.4.4). Respect for everyone, fellowship with other members of different groups, feelings of belonging, the form of praise and prayers, as well as the rituals, healings and elements of prophecy, are some of the reasons associated with the value participants attribute to their religion. The following are sample responses which illustrate how participants related to their ATR.

5.4.3.1. Values

> *"I am a member of the Zion Holy church of South Africa. I started in this church … many people of this religion have respect … they don't use oils; like if you have a problem, they use prayer. They strongly believe in prayer"* (B:9FA).

> *"I like the Zions for their respect and love … they don't regard ancestors as demonic or evil spirits. You can do anything (rituals) you want"* (B:9FA).

Researcher: What do you benefit from your church?

> *"Rewards. We earn respect … we receive blessings and respect"* (B:9MA).

> *"They teach us that a young person must respect elders and the older person to respect the younger one"* (B:9MA).

The above comments could be indicative of the way the AICs establish a united and orderly environment which enhances group interconnectedness. Within ATR, the values inherent in the African worldview emphasise humanity or humaneness and consider the collective consciousness which informs the way in which people relate to each other. Participants underscored respect for others and others' religions and the collective associations within their church groupings (Anderson 1992; 2003; Forster 2010; Masondo 2014) (see sections 1.6.3, 1.6.4. 2.6 and 2.7).

5.4.3.2 Dress code

Members of AICs ordinarily wear a church uniform. The discipline, respect and their demeanour in terms of behaviour and dress code were principles participants valued (Forster 2010; Masondo, 2014) (see section 2.6 & 2.7). It was confirmed by participants from the ZCC and the Apostolic church that dress code had to be adhered to after a person was baptised. For example, females do not wear pants and neither females nor males wear sleeveless garments:

> *"We only wear pants* (at school) *when we are playing just to cover up, but at church we don't"* (A:8FA).

And again, on wearing pants at school, another participant commented:

> *"According to my understanding, it's cold (during winter), and you cannot pretend that you don't feel the cold"* (B:9MA). *"At our church, we have to cover our head"* (B:9FA).

> *"Earrings are not allowed … you are not even allowed to wear short pants (boys)."*

> *"A woman must not wear pants at any time"* [Zion] (B:9MA).

> *"At our church (ZCC) they don't have a problem with wearing pants, but once you get baptised, it's known, you have to stop wearing pants"* (B:9FA).

According to my knowledge and experience, some female adolescents and older youth from the ZCC do wear pants but only on condition that they are not displaying their church badge at the same time. Adherence to the schools' uniform policy was also implied:

> *"I wouldn't wear a head covering at school, although at church I would"* (D:9FA).

There are several Muslim learners at this school and I noticed that none of them covered their head.

5.4.3.3 Fellowship

It seems the biblical injunctions and AIC practices provide participants with structure and intergroup relations consistent with the traditional way of life. This is also illustrated by Mbiti (1990), Forster (2010) and Gomez (2013), who emphasise the key values encompassed by African traditional religion; these are centred on community and the virtue of Ubuntu (being human as one) (see sections 1.6.3, 1.6.4 and 2.7).

One ZCC participant highlighted the fact that their church "*welcomes everyone … and most of their rules are found in the bible*" (C:9FA) and another added, "*it is enjoyable because they don't discriminate against anyone*" (C:10FA*).* When I asked for clarity, the participants explained how members of charismatic churches belong to many different groups or denominations, each separate from the other, unlike the Zions or ZCCs whose members come from all over South Africa and even from neighbouring countries: "*you find ZCC in other countries, and when we meet, we meet in one place, Moria in Polokwane*" (C:10FA).

The others agreed, adding that members (of the different groups) come together at certain times of the year, whether in different places (like the Zions) or in one place (being Moria for the ZCCs). This fact corresponds with the findings of Anderson (1992), DeVisser (1999) and Masondo (2014), who include open air worship and annual pilgrimages or sacred ceremonies as some of the religious practices among AICs (see section 2.6.5.1).

The participants' comments appear to indicate that being part of religious fellowship gives them direction and a sense of belonging. In African communities, families are ordinarily part of local "societies", which offer collective financial and social support for their members. For some people, church membership therefore holds the practice in

terms of which a church may have elements of a "society". As one participant indicated, "*so that they can have a place or people to bury them*" (D:9FA). (Forster 2010; Gomez 2013) (see section 2.7).

5.4.3.4 Expressions of worship

Singing, clapping, dancing and drumming (among the Zion groups) are characteristic of praise and worship in the AICs. Music is culturally integral to spiritual expression (Hanley & Noblit (2009) (see section 1.1). Ritual and sacred dances, such as the circle dance of the Zion apostolic groups and other styles of the ZCC, are part of their worship (Anderson 1992; DeVisser 2011; Masondo 2014) (see section 2.6).

In response to how she became a member of her church, one participant responded that while all five family members attended a Zion African church, her parents attend a different one from the children. She liked her church "*because they sing beautifully … and there are many children. At my parents' church, they sing songs for older people*" (A:8FA). The music was a clear differentiator, as suggested by another female participant who lives with and attends her grandmother's charismatic church. She explained she was not comfortable with her grandmother's church because she and her parents belonged to a Zion church and she was therefore not used to the way things are done there: "*I don't know their songs as I'm used to the Zion songs*" (A:8FA). Other responses from the Apostolic groups confirmed this:

> *"I sing songs from my church* (during school break or free class periods)*; and others would join in with songs from their churches" (A:8MA);*
>
> *"It's not just because of my parents. I like the church, it is good … I like the clap and tap"* (form of choir music*)* (B:9MA).
>
> *"I eat and sleep Zion music … even on my phone you will find a few general gospel songs, but the rest is Zion music"* (B:9MA).
>
> *"At Zion … they give you a sentence and ask you to form a song; you do it easily"* (B:9MA).
>
> *"I like the way the Zions sing … as well as the circle dance"* (B:9MA).
>
> *"When we do the circle dance, the blood is running at that time"* (B:9FA).

Participants gave examples of how they pray*:*

"At ZCC we don't use organs and we don't pray as if we are talking in the street" (C:10FA).

Researcher: How so?

"The born agains make noise and they shout Jesus! Jesus! We don't behave like that … we also kneel when we pray" (C:10FA).

In African culture, as a sign of respect, a person ordinarily kneels or bows to physically lower him or herself before an elder or one in authority. In this regard, it would be appropriate and natural for attendants at AICs to do likewise.

5.4.3.5 Religious-cultural beliefs and practices

Religion and culture are inextricably linked in ATR (this also illustrates how this is expressed among the learners at school in section 5.4.4.2). This is supported by Lopez et al (2011), who state that the link between the degree of religious identification and traditional cultural beliefs would be influenced by an adolescent's commitment to their religion and to their socialisation (see section 2.5.1). Participants displayed a sense of (ethnic) pride in their association with their AIC groups in relation to their identification with spiritual values and ethics (Phinney 1989; 1992; Gay 2001; Hanley & Noblit 2009; Oppong 2013) (see section 2.5.1). I noted how the participants, especially from school C, were quite keen to point out the differences between the ATR and the "Born agains" (charismatic churches) which centred around rules and practices:

"We like how the traditional things are done … I also believe in both the African churches and traditional healing" (A:8FA).

"God kept his culture. They [from the charismatic church] *say we are farther from God but they are the ones who are. We follow Gods' rules … Zion is mentioned in the Bible and so is circumcision"* (C:10FA).

"They [referring to learners from charismatic groups] *say we worship a person"* [the ZCC bishop] (C:9FA).

Examples of participants' comparisons of the charismatic and ZCC or Zion are expressed further in section 5.4.4.1 when they comment on "others" perceptions of ATR.

5.4.3.6 Ancestors

The African churches acknowledge the spirit world, from the Supreme spirit to the ancestral spirits as well as other forms of spirits. Prophets in the AICs, like the ancestors, are seen as mediators between the people and God. Accordingly, much of the time during their services is spent on inviting the presence of the Spirit to reveal itself, guide their meeting and facilitate healing. The spirit, which is sought for revelation and prophecy, is also the link between the physical and non-material universe (Gomez 2013; Masondo 2014) (see section 2.6). The following interview responses indicate how participants understand the position of ancestors in accordance with their church teachings:

> *"God reveals something to you through his spirit"* (B:9MA).
>
> *"Every type of spirit comes from God. That means even when your grandfather reveals something, it is through God's spirit"* (B:9FA).
>
> *"I do believe in ancestors and (using) herbs, but we (Zion) do not perform witchcraft"* (C:9FA).

5.4.3.7 Prophecy and healing

Prophecy and the gift of healing are also important practices of their church. This and the veneration of ancestors was often a source of contention with their peers, where some participants were at pains to differentiate between a person consulting a traditional healer versus one seeing a prophet at the church. When I asked for the difference between a prophet and a traditional healer (since many people seek healing in the AICs), a participant from the ZCC responded:

> *"You are not allowed to see a traditional healer elsewhere … we observe some customs (although) some say it's a persons' rule* [referring to their bishop] *... It is like you have been initiated according to the church customs"* (C:6).

Some Zion and ZCC participants' comments regarding the Spirit confirmed what Gomez (2013) and Masondo (2014) (see section 2.6 & 2.7) state about the Holy Spirit being the focus of belief and practice within the AICs, which of itself is consistent with the traditional spiritual heritage.

Examples of group responses which confirmed this view on prophecy and healing are:

> *"One thing I receive from the church is what they call spirit"* (B:9MA).
>
> *"God reveals (things) through his spirit; the Holy Spirit"* (B:9MA).

"(After) I am baptised I receive white clothing and then I receive the spirit … I will be able to foresee things" (B:9FA).

"I can actually say truly … at home most of them have visions because my grandfather is a big prophet [she named him] *… many churches know him"* (B:9FA);

"I like Zion because they can foresee what would happen to a person and tell him; they are prophets" (C:9FA).

Some of the participants explained how the healings performed influenced their families into joining the AIC: "*when my mother was sick (the family) took her there and she was healed*" (C:9FA). AICs acknowledge the spirit world from the Supreme spirit to the ancestral spirits and other forms of spirits, and participants are clearly cognisant of the supernatural world, which they view as being interconnected with all aspects of the universe (Forster 2010; Gomez 2013) (see section 2.6).

While prophets in the AICs, like the ancestors, are seen as mediators between the people and God, one female ZCC participant commented *"… at ZCC we don't believe in traditional herbs and healers … we also don't believe that ancestors are alive …*". She then tried to distinguish how their church prophets are the link to the ancestors by giving an example: "*the prophets can tell you that your ancestors won't see you, so you need to show yourself to them and tell them (when) you have moved to a new place, so that they don't turn their backs on you* …" (C:10FA). This participant was trying to clarify that they do not necessarily communicate directly with ancestors, however, the church prophets might provide guidance in that regard.

In acknowledgement of the spirit, AIC services apportion time to inviting the presence of the Spirit to reveal itself, guiding their meeting, facilitating healing and inviting their protection from harm or evil (Gomez 2013: Masondo 2014) (see sections 2.6 and 2.7). Other confirmations were captured as: "*even the ancestors reveal something to you*' … *When I go into a wild deep prayer, something will be revealed to me* (B: 9MA).

It is worth mentioning that the growth in membership of AICs has been attributed to the churches' healing and prophetic practices (South African Audience Research Foundation 2011) (see section 2.7.1). People from other churches, such as the mission-initiated churches, are known to visit AICs for healing, as confirmed by one female participant from Wesley Methodist: "*My mother and I go to a church where she*

grew up because we like the (African) traditions … I also live with a traditional healer at home (A:8FA).

From the interview responses, it was found that participants reflect aspects of their religious understanding from the church teachings and how they have been mentored and socialised into their church (Anderson 2003; Kudadjie & Osei in Forster 2010) (see section 2.6.1). ATR, therefore, with its beliefs, worldview, creeds, codes of behaviour, rituals and values, inspires and informs the participants' lived experiences and their religious identity (Bertram-Troost et al 2009; Armet 2009; Forster 2010: Oppong 2013:13; Mndende 2013:77–78) (see sections 2.4.2 and 2.6). As with most religious societies, the AICs thus create a sense of security and (moral) order in the community for those practising in their families and/or through an AIC (Oosthuizen 1997 Mndende 2013:77–78) (see section 2.6).
The participants' responses regarding religious-cultural beliefs and practices also serve to highlight common areas that influence the way adolescents ground their religious commitments (King & Furrow 2004; Lippman & McIntosh 2010; Layton et al 2011) (see sections 2.4 and 2.8).

I discussed aspects of identity exploration at section 5.4.2.1 to 5.4.2.4. Since the meanings a person associates with his or her religion informs their exploration and commitment, I want to elaborate further in that regard.

A person's different identities are influenced by their environment, which includes the context, situation and reactions of others. This aspect was therefore considered in the development of the participants' religious identity. Most of the participants could be said to have an assigned identity because their religious affiliation is based on socialisation by their family. While it was obvious that regular church attendance complemented participants' identity foreclosure and achievement, a few adolescents were at the moratorium stage where they were exploring their beliefs (atheism) or other choices, even within the same AIC. This movement was influenced by circumstances such as friendships, family relationships and personal self-concepts. Such experiences and further exploration may be followed by identity achievement when the adolescents commit to important aspects of their identity such as through formal baptism into the church (Fowler 1981) (see section 2.3.1) and (Erikson 1950; 1968; Marcia 1966; 1980; Oppong, 2013; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca & Ritchie

2015) (see sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). The following are examples of participants' comments on baptism:

> *"Others go and others don't* [referring to children accompanying elders to pay respects to a family in mourning] *because they follow their church rules. Like at Zion, if you are not baptised you don't go"* (A:8FA).
>
> *"(After) I am baptised I receive white clothing and then I receive the spirit … I will be able to foresee things"* (B:9FA).
>
> *"There are some (learners) in Grade 11 who are baptised, so they know more about our customs in church"* (C:10FA).
>
> *"I am not yet baptised … I will decide when I turn 16"* (D:8MA).

In all instances, whether participants were religious, nonreligious or a self-identified atheist, the discussions unveiled a conscious or unconscious search for meaning which informed their associations with their beliefs (religion) and their moral development. In that regard, spiritual consciousness is therefore not bounded by culture or a particular religion. As illustrated by Layton et al (2011:382, 391) and Mndende (2013:77–78), the discussion and findings indicate that the participants' spiritual development included leading a meaningful life and building favourable relationships (see sections 2.4 and 2.6). This was captured by a male participant who, although he identified with a charismatic church, was not a regular church goer, "*life without following your heart is a useless life*" (D:11MA).

This appreciation of community gives people a sense of belonging, an identity and human dignity. Interdependence is therefore valued above individualism, where a person's identity is linked to the identity of others within the community (Forster 2010; Masondo 2014) (see section 2.7).

Accordingly, it was found that in keeping with the conventional level of moral reasoning, many of the participants conform to their group associations such as family and friends, as well as being influenced by their religious practices. This and the need to comply also influences their outlook and behaviour in the school environment (Kohlberg) (see section 2.3.2).

5.4.4 Category 3: Influence of religion on behaviour in the school

A person's self-concept influences his or her religious beliefs and since religion contributes positively to adolescent well-being and pro-social behaviour (King & Furrow 2004; Layton et al 2010; Dollahite & Hardy 2011; Oppong 2013) (see section 2.4), I wanted to explore if and how the participants perceive their religion as an influencing factor in their behaviour and in their outlook in general in the school environment. The discussion continued with the question: *Can you tell me how your religion influences your behaviour here at school?*

Further clarification on the question was sought by asking for examples of how their religion influences interaction with teachers, staff, classmates, other learners and the environment.

In ATR, where religion is experienced as a way of life, cultural practices form an important part. Accordingly, participants' responses would either include examples of practices that could cross over from home to school, as in corresponding behaviour between home and school, or they would cite incidents with classmates relating to their religious beliefs or practices.

5.4.4.1 Responses to their peers' perceptions of ATR

A matter which caused contention was the perceptions among learners from non-AICs on ancestral veneration, prophets in the churches and the purpose of traditional practices. The discussions in the focus groups presented a view that African traditional beliefs conflict with Christian teachings or values: "*Born agains speak badly about our church (ZCC) but they don't follow the rules in the bible"* (C:9FA). In responding to the researcher's request for examples of such rules, a participant cited how baptisms are conducted, where in their churches a person is immersed totally in water (AICs usually direct baptisms in a river/stream or at the sea), unlike the charismatic churches "*who just place hands on them … while the Bible says you must be immersed*" (C:10FA).

In response to a question about RE discussions in class, the Grade 10 participants who take RE as an academic subject gave other examples of their church rules that they mentioned in class: the practice of children accompanying their elders to give their condolences to a family in mourning, where in the Zion church children are not permitted to do so unless they are baptised; how mourning is observed and how religions do not encourage premarital sex. One participant added that the "*Born*

agains" don't observe the seven-day biblical rule where in certain circumstances members are not allowed to attend church and have to wait seven days after attending a funeral, after monthly menstruation, or after sexual relations (C:10AF).

A participant from an AIC responded to a question on why Catholics use wine: "*we don't do that because we use the Old Testament*" (A:8FA*),* to which another participant from an AIC added, "*we focus mainly on the Old Testament, although they do teach us about Jesus' history at Sunday school*" (A:8MA); and "*I know why they use the Old Testament; it is because African churches are cultural, just like in the Old Testament*" (A:8FA*).* The participants' understanding of the AICs' correlation with the Old Testament is illustrated by Mofokeng (2005) and Manganyi and Buitendag (2013), who explain how AICs adapt or absorb Christian spiritual teachings from an indigenous perspective and thereby confirm an African identity and history. The teachings generally align with the Old Testament because it relates to aspects and practices of African traditional (spiritual) beliefs and culture (see section 1.6.4).

Other comments relating to inter religious interactions in relation to ancestral spirits include the following:

> *"I have a good friend of mine who goes to the Watchtowers and she doesn't believe in ancestors but we get along very well … her parents treat me well and they don't mind talking about ancestors"* (B:9FA).

Interestingly, three of the focus groups included participants from the Jehovah's Watchtowers (JWT) denomination, and in all instances, they and participants from AICs had positive friendships. There is a perception in the charismatic churches that people from Watchtowers or from mainline churches (such as Roman Catholics) are not Christian as in being saved or born again in the Pentecostal sense.

A JWT participant explained how some learners were not sure if they were Christians. Accordingly, she asked another JWT in the group, *"what would you say to them?"* (D:11FA). To which he responded, *"we read the same bible and we also believe in Jesus, just that our teachings are different"* (D:11MA). A female participant related her experience:

> *"I'm free to talk about my beliefs. When my friend asked me to join her in her church (charismatic), I told her that my mother does not want me to join those churches because we don't understand their practice of praying for people with*

> *fire* (of the holy spirit)*. She (the other learner) then said there are ancestral spirits in my church (Zion) … They started gossiping about me in class because, after a certain woman prayed for my friend, she was told, there's someone who is standing in her way, and they said it's me…"* (B:9FA).

In relation to the matter of ancestral veneration, other comments concerned the ritual of bringing the coffin to a person's home, where a participant from an AIC pointed out that since members of charismatic churches observe that ritual, they are then also "honouring their dead relative … some copy from their neighbour to keep the coffin at the gate" (B:9MA). Similarly, one participant pointed out that when a person visits the grave to clean the area, others will say they are talking to the dead – although in some instances that would admittedly be the case:

> *"The reason people clean the grave is that the person who has passed comes in your dream and tells you the grave is dirty and when you get there you find there is grass growing"* (B:9FA).

Another participant expressed an indifferent opinion, "*some dreams are just normal and interesting*" (B:9MA).

One of the challenges faced in relation to teaching and learning about AIR (as well as other faiths) and for promoting this equitably within the curriculum is that learners may not be readily open to other religions that differ from their own (Jarvis 2009:167) (see section 1:1). This was realised in the following example from one of the groups:

> *"At a weekend school camp where there was this one Muslim in the group (*of Christian learners*) … we did not have a problem when she took out her mat and said her prayers in our presence, however, when we would pray, she would block her ears so as not to hear our prayers and would even say her Muslim prayers loudly over us"* (D:11FA).

It was further stated that Muslim learners at the school "read their holy book while Christians are praying" (for example during assembly) (D:11FA). Other participants related differently to religious observances that differed from theirs: "*we (JW) don't pray at assembly and we don't close our eyes … we show respect when they pray … we just don't get involved*" (A:8MA); "*at our church (Zion) we don't close our eyes when we pray; we close them here at school because the teachers tell us to close our eyes …*" (B:9MA).

Considering the above comments, the RE policy (DOE 2003) allows for flexibility of opportunities for observance in proportion to the representation of different religions in the school. This includes permitting readings from various religious texts and allowing for the use of a universal prayer or periods of silence. Ultimately, in all their RE practices, public schools should aim to affirm and celebrate diversity without violating the religious freedom of learners and teachers and without imposing the school's religious orientation on a religiously diverse school population (see section 3.5).

The Muslim learners at school D exercised freedom of religious expression by reading their own scripture during a religious observance that did not complement their faith and, thus, opted out (although the camp incident proved disrespectful to the others). For the participants from the AICs, who might view the bible being applicable to all nations, "*the bible (as) written for all nations and people regardless of their tribe, language, customs and culture*" (Mofokeng in Coertze 2005:28) (see section 1.6.4), and where for the other Africans in general, the value of the African worldview emphasises humanity or humaneness (Forster 2010; Masondo 2014) (see section 2.6), adopting an outright separatist stance might not be immediately acceptable to their cultural sensitivities.

I was also made aware of some participants' perceptions of power dynamics: "*religion is one of the major things that create those little groups we sit in during break time and in class even … others feel like they're superior … like their religion is the only right one* …" (D:10FA).

While they were somewhat aware of their religious identity in relation to others and could point out the different religious practices, the focus groups began the process for them to think through and distinguish their perceptions on how their religious identity affects their various school-based interactions.

The adolescents' examples of how their religious identity salience influences their worldview and behaviour centred on interactions with other learners from the same church, conversations with learners from other churches about their different practices, or on specific situations that were expressed during the discussions.

5.4.4.2 Prayer and religious practices within the school.

Regarding what their religion means to them and on how this manifests in their school, the examples associated with expressions of their values and moral judgement, which

were also referred to in section 5.4.1.4, included treating others with respect and, "*like I would not cheat in an examination … and for example, as a runner, I obey the rules and would not cross the starting line*" (D:9MC).

Peers of the same religion, whether from AICs or other churches, were also described as important sources of support within the school community. Participants from AICs in the three groups, with the exception of school D, talked about praying either privately or together and singing together during break: "*I sing songs from church and others would join with songs from their churches"* [different Zion groups] (A:8MA) and about how they had a particular way of greeting each other. *When we meet someone from our church (Zion) we ask them how they are and they must say they are alive with Gods' might"* (A:8FA) and, "*before I go home after school I sit down and say this prayer … I also do that when I get home*" [a ZCC participant] (A:8FA). At the end of the discussions, participants from schools A and B gave short examples of their worship songs. The school A participants from both the AICs and JW sang together.

The above examples illustrate a dimension of acculturation, which suggests that through integration adolescents from AICs could identify with their cultural group and that of the majority community (Berry in Niensa et al 2013) (see section 2.9.1). They maintained friendships with their peers from their own broader religious community as well as the majority Christian school community. Participants from school B also reported "*there are teachers* [mentioned two names] *who attend the same churches as us*" (B:9MA) and then also included one from the "*Romans*" (Catholic church). They pointed out that having the teachers at the school at their church gave them the confidence to express their religion.

Their viewpoint is indicative of a general school environment that is supportive of different religious identities and suggests that their experiences at school are influenced by their relationships with their teachers, as well as the teachers' religious orientations (Sikkink 2010:160, 167; Roux in Ferguson 2014:3) (see section 2.9.2).

Regarding religious symbolism in the school environment, when asked whether any of them wear the ZCC church badge, a 15-year old participant explained that, "*a person chooses to do so after baptism*" (D:8MA). Within an AIC, a person is initiated to membership through baptism. However, this participant was "*not sure*" if he would go for baptism at the required age of 16. In the same vein, a female participant responded

that she covers her head only when she goes to church; since she would not wear a head covering to school she would therefore not display the church badge (D:9FA).

Incidentally, on a follow-up visit to school B, it was noted that one of the male learners had his Zion church cross over his school shirt. Since the school (as with the others) is historically Christian-oriented, the cross would not necessarily conflict with the school ethos. Furthermore, the theology of AICs incorporates Christian spiritual teachings, albeit from an indigenous perspective (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013; Mofokeng in Coertze 2005:28) (see section 1.6.4). With that in mind, the religious ethos in schools, as experienced through school assemblies and the hidden curriculum, may influence the development of religious identity and acculturation attitudes in the adolescents from AICs (Niensa et al 2013) (see section 2.9.1).

From what I gleaned, participants did not indicate bias, unfairness, prejudice or stereotyping on the part of teachers; however, this may just not have surfaced since the schools do not address ATR in their LO praxis and activities (see section 5.4.5.2). However, from the interview responses in schools A, B and C, as to how they express their religious identity, there were instances where their cultural (religious) practice could be a natural occurrence among the generally African school community: "*We do everything the same as others*" (B:9MA); and with regard cultural practices: "*Why is it that when (some) people grieve, they sit on the bed for specific period?*" (A:8FA). This is a traditional and not a religious practice.

> *"We have some teachers who when you ask if they do certain (cultural) things, they say they don't … but at home they told me to ask them if they practise the custom of leaving the coffin at the gate, if they say yes, then … they do believe in customary rites"* (B:18).

Another participant responded that some people follow cultural requirements, even though their church might not support these practices.

This aspect of cultural practices would be understandable to learners in the schools where all the learners and the majority teachers are African and where, therefore, aspects of their worldview, cultural identity and family context coincide with the broader cultural communities in which they live. This view can be contextualised in line with the understanding of African cultural practices, where, traditionally, religion (a component of culture) was a way of life in the community and, hence, individuals might continue

with the customs, norms and traditions (Mofokeng in Coertze 2005:19, 24, 25, 30; Manganyi & Buitendag 2013) (see section 1.6.5).

In a conversation with a teacher about cultural day activities, the teacher recalled how, one year, one of the learners from the Shembe church came to school in his church uniform (as opposed to his ethnic dress). This is a classic example of how culture and religion are inextricably linked in AICs (Gomez 2013).

The link between the degree of religious identification and traditional cultural beliefs would be influenced by an adolescent's commitment to their religion and to their socialisation. Interactions with other members of the same culture, and attendance at religious services or cultural celebrations, can therefore increase the adolescent's knowledge and encourage a sense of pride in their ethnic background (Phinney 1989; 1992; Hanley & Noblit 2009, Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie 2013) (see sections 2.4.2 & 2.5.1).

5.4.4.3 Religious integration

It was evident that the participants' religious integration and social interaction with their peers and teachers, and other aspects related to the school environment, were reflective of the homogenous ethnic composition, particularly for schools A, B and C, or the general (expected) behaviour in and out of school. The prevailing sentiment was that:

> "W*e do everything the same as others"* (B:9MA).
>
> "O*f course, you have to be humble and respectful at school and love other people … you can talk to them and if you see that you can help them then you can"* (C:10FA).
>
> "W*e all serve one God"* (C:9FA).
>
> "W*hen we pray at assembly, we all pray the lords' prayer … Why we feel free … there are some teachers who go to our churches"* (B:9MA).

Participants, particularly those from schools A, B and C, seemed comfortable enough expressing their religious affiliation in their school environment with their teachers and peers, considering their descriptions on how they pray, sing and interact closely with others from AICs. Whereas culture is influenced through interaction with one's

environment by factors such as language, education, gender, history, beliefs and values, religion is a powerful force driving culture (see section 2.6).

The community (environment) contributes strongly to how and what children think about (Vygotsky,1978). This would be applicable to all adolescent learners as they explore their identity during their process of exploration and commitment (see section 2.4.1). Except for school D, the homogenous cultural community of their peers in the schools seemed to provide them with a sense of belonging to a community in the broader sense. The small ATR community in their schools, as a group of individuals who share similar beliefs, provided the social and emotional support that is integral to the adolescents' religious identity. The way they presented themselves attests to the level of self-awareness in terms of beginning to recognise the extent of their identification with their religious traditions and how they represent this in their schools (refer to section 5.4.2.2).

The adolescents from AICs were comfortable with the Christian prayers conducted during assembly, as compared to the Muslim learners at school D for example, who opted to read their scriptural texts instead. The only technicality was that members of the Zion church ordinarily pray with their eyes open and so sometimes teachers would tell them to close their eyes, which they would do out of respect. One participant from the JWT mentioned he "*did not sing the national anthem*" because he felt "*it was a worship to the country*", while others from his church had no problem with the wording of the anthem (D:11MA).

The way adolescents adjust and function is shaped by their ongoing interactions with others, including family, peers, community and extended cultural environments. These social contexts which include school and religion are therefore their chief sources of social integration (Niensa et al 2013) (see section 2.7.1). It was only in school D that there were indications of religious groupings:

> *"… religion is one of the major things that create those little groups we sit in during break time and in class even" (D:11FA).*
>
> *"I don't want to point fingers, but some learners behave as if they are superior"* (D:11MA).
>
> *"Muslims paint themselves in a certain way, but I don't see them living up to that here at school" (D:11FA).*

When asked in what way, the participant responded:

> *"Like they always talk about how they are charitable and giving … but they don't behave that way here at school."*

In the case of school D, I had purposely indicated that I was interested in speaking with learners who were representative of the demographics of our country, which is multi-faith and multiracial; however, in relation to the above comments, the principal mentioned the Muslim learners did not want to participate since the discussion was about ATR. Interestingly, none of the Hindu or white Christian learners volunteered to join the discussions either.

Owing to the correlation between religion and ethnicity, the relationship between racial (ethnic) identity salience and religious identity salience is especially important when considering personal and social identity development, particularly in a multiracial school environment. In the context of this study, identity conflict could apply to the minority learners in a school with a majority Christian ethos, as in school D, a situation which could be compounded by a teaching staff comprising a majority of whites.

Studies on religious identity development have found that learners from minority belief backgrounds may try to assimilate into the majority religious culture in order to fit in with their peers and perceived school norms. With that in mind, the religious ethos in schools, as experienced through school assemblies and the hidden curriculum, may influence the development of a religious identity and integration attitudes in learners from minority belief backgrounds (Phinney 1989; 1992; Gay) (see section 2.5.1).

However, other theory posits that as minority adolescents become more aware of the conflicts between their subculture and the dominant culture, they often begin to explore their heritage (Niensa et al 2013) (see section 2.7.1). While I cannot attest to the extent of this from my short interaction with the learners, it was clear that learners considered their religious (cultural) practices as a defining/differentiating factor between themselves and others from non-AICs.

In summary then, while it was found that in general participants were not always able to isolate how a behaviour or worldview was influenced by their religion, the discussion served as an opportunity for the participants to search for answers. The discussions on how the participants balance or integrate their religious affiliation and their life in the school community required them to reflect on a topic that they had not hitherto

been given an opportunity to do. Naturally, my previous introductory meetings at the school and the information in their letters of assent had triggered discussions that learners had begun to have with each other prior to the focus groups.

5.4.5 Category 4: Adolescents' perception of the representation of ATR in RE curricula

To understand how the learners experience and perceive the LO or RE curricula in relation to their religious identity, the focus groups were guided by the question: *Can you give me examples of LO class discussions, activities or homework that has involved African traditional religion?*

5.4.5.1 Main religions in South Africa were mentioned in earlier grades

Grade 8 participants responded they had not discussed religions (yet), but had been introduced to other religions in South Africa during LO in Grades 6 or 7. When asked which religions were discussed, they mentioned Christianity, Judaism and Islam. One female participant stated "*they teach us about other religions so that we know which religion we fall under and understand it*" (A:8FA); to which another added; "*And also to know other peoples' beliefs so that we don't look down on them, just as I go to ZCC and others Apostolic, we shouldn't look down on each other*" (A:8FA). However, when asked if ATR was mentioned, she replied that it was not, which was echoed by the other participants. These responses correspond with the learning assessment standard for Grade 6, which requires learners to discuss the dignity of the person in a variety of religions (DOE 2003:29) (see section 3.5.2).

> *"They didn't teach us anything, we would do physical exercises, but we didn't do religions"* (C:9FA).

After probing and cross checking, participants reiterated having discussed the main religions in the earlier grades. It was only on the follow-up visit to school D that the one self-identified atheist learner stated: *"We've discussed the most popular religions just this week"* (D:10MA). The other participants had not. I wondered if that class lesson had been influenced by my inquiry at the school.

African traditional religion is one of several religions practised in South Africa, along with Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Rastafarianism among others. The participants mentioned that they recalled the main religions (i.e. Christianity, Islam

and Judaism) being introduced in their earlier grades, but stated that religious diversity was not covered during their LO classes in the year I met with them or in the year prior to my study.

5.4.5.2 ATR is discussed in RE class

In the further education and training band (FET), which comprises Grades 10 to 12, religious studies is offered as an elective academic subject; however, only two schools in the district where the study was conducted offered RE as a subject of which School C was one. The three participants at the FET education band, confirmed having discussed ATR in class. In responding to a question about examples of topics that their teacher discussed in class, a participant from the ZCC said:

> *"One day we were talking about sangomas* (traditional healers) *and the teacher asked us to tell her about our religion, the things we do as members of ZCC … and about our rules … We told her about the ceremonies (for ancestors) … we explained (some of) our rules"* (C:10FA).

On enquiring about examples of class tests and homework in relation to ATR, the participant confirmed a test question on the difference between ATR and Christianity (C:10FA).

In addition, a poster in another classroom was mentioned that depicted all the different religions in South Africa, including ATR. A Grade 11 male participant, who had elected to take RE as a subject that year, described the different religions that had been presented in his class and explained how the AICs were started. However, he confirmed that ATR was not addressed in the LO class.

5.4.5.3 ATR is not discussed in LO class

Given that ATR was not included in the LO classroom, even when the main religions in South Africa were mentioned, as indicated at section 5.4.5.1, the study was not able to comment on the adolescents' views on how their religion is addressed in the LO classroom. When asked for examples across the subjects where any aspects of ATR might have been discussed or mentioned, the participants could not cite any. This could imply that teachers have not used other class subjects as opportunities to integrate RE (DOE 2003:19) (see sections 1.1 & 3.5.2).

LO is a compulsory subject in public schools and contains four areas of focus in the curriculum. These are, namely, *personal well-being; citizenship education; recreation*

and physical activity and careers and career choices (DOE 2007:8). RE, as an aspect of citizenship education, requires the learner to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions (DOE 2003) (see sections 3.5, 3.5.1 and 3.5.2).

At the end of the group discussions and as confirmed in the follow-up feedback with available adolescents from the focus groups, I concluded that in the LO classroom, religion in general and ATR in particular were not affirmed or given purposeful attention. When asked what topics had been covered in their LO classes, in all the discussions participants were quick to say that they usually had physical education activities during LO. When pressed further to give examples of LO classwork and tests, participants from the AICs mentioned discussing "*careers, self-confidence, self-esteem, peer pressure, types of abuse*" (C:10FA), with one participant from a charismatic church stating "*we talk more about violence and other such issues*", with the rider that, "*religion is a sensitive subject, and maybe that's why teachers don't get into much discussion about it*" (D:11FA).

Since this study focused on the perceptions of adolescents in particular from AICs on whether ATR is affirmed in the LO classroom, it is important to indicate the learning assessment standards for RE within the LO curriculum for Grades 8 to 11 and how this knowledge and information could have informed their interview responses. In Grade 8, learners are required to discuss the contributions of organisations from various religions to social development; in Grade 9, to reflect on and discuss the contributions of various religions to promoting peace; in Grade 10, explore how the ethical traditions, major religions and indigenous belief systems contribute to a harmonious society, and in Grade 11, identify and analyse various moral and spiritual issues and dilemmas (e.g. right to life, euthanasia, cultural practices and tradition, economics issues, environmental issues) (DOE 2003:29) (see section 3.5.2).

5.4.6 Emerged category: Participants' value of Religion Education

An important theme that emerged from the discussions was the interest shown in religion and spirituality. The resultant conversations about ATR practices and other religions indicated that the participants were eager to engage in discussions about religion. This was found to be equally so with the non-AIC participants.

Regarding religion among adolescents, research confirms that religion and their faith were very important to them and that their spiritual development influenced their major life decisions and relationships (Lippman & McIntosh 2010; Zakrzewski 2013) (see sections 2.4 and 2.6).

5.4.6.1 The need for clarity or understanding of their and others' religious practices

The inquiry revealed that participants did not always have a clear understanding of some of their own AIC practices or knowledge of their peers' religious practices. The exchanges and questions directed at each other and to myself served as opportunities to share information that provided a better understanding of different religious beliefs. A representative sample of questions and comments from the discussions that illustrate their curiosity and interest include the following:

> *"Why is it that usually at Easter people partake of the Lord's supper? Why do they use wine?"* (A:8FA) [from a ZCC participant].
>
> *"Is it right for us children to accompany older people to other people's homes to comfort them?"* (B:9FA) [from a Zion apostolic participant].

When asked why members of his church do not cook on weekends, the participant from the IPC responded, "*I don't know*" (A:8MA).

> *"If he says they don't cook on Saturdays, what if they have a ceremony (over the weekend)?"* (A:8FA).

Researcher: "*They would not have ceremonies on a Saturday … this is the same for Seventh Day Adventists, those who attend Shembe and strict Jewish people… they regard Saturday as the Sabbath, which is their holy day."*

In some instances, respondents contradicted or misinterpreted their own and others practices, the degree to which biblical truths were upheld, how others do not live up to their religion, and their views on topical subjects like politics, which was mentioned as an example of why their church does not encourage them to be involved in politics. Some of the questions spoke to the technicalities of why one group does things one way or another. For example:

> *"We do vote but we are not allowed to have a prominent position in politics, like a councillor or a mayor"* (C:10FA).

This is inaccurate; there are councillors who belong to the ZCC.

> *"We follow traditional customs … Jesus himself went for initiation. When we go to the mountain we circumcise* …" (C:9FA).

This participant (ZCC) applied the custom of "going to the mountain", as part of the initiation/circumcision rite of passage, to Jesus who went to the mountain to pray.

Research into the scriptures, for the participant who chose the atheist route, presented *"contradictions"* in a way that he felt *"God or Jesus is misrepresented*". In a follow-up written response, he further stated that, "*a trip from Egypt to Israel is approximately 630 kms (kilometres)and it took Moses 40 years to travel this distance, meaning they travelled 42 metres each day. Usain Bolt runs half this distance in less than 20 seconds. I think either the facts have been exaggerated or Moses was very lazy*" (D:10MA).

5.4.6.2 Appreciation for discussions about religion

The contradictions in the bible that participants mentioned would be well served by a class discussion that could engage learners in an analysis of the bible (and other scriptures) from both spiritual and literary perspectives, as confirmed by one female participant:

> *"This discussion has really been interesting and has raised some questions for me … we would love ma'am* (the researcher) *to come and give us more of this type of discussion"* (D:11FA).

When the opportunity arose, I emphasised that the participants should do further research and seek clarity from their parents and church elders about their church origins, teachings and practices. Research has shown that adolescents aged 13 to 17 years acknowledge the role of family, religious leaders and religious education lessons as information sources for expanding their knowledge and appreciation of diverse religions and faiths (Madge et al 2014) (see section 2.8).

Consequently, religious instruction can contribute favourably to the adolescents' religious salience in the school environment, as it provides with them an opportunity to explore their worldviews and learn about other perspectives (Bertram-Troost et al 2009) (see section 2.9). In support of this view, I attest that the discussions inadvertently provided the participants with such an opportunity. On follow-up visits to confirm the key points discussed in the focus groups, when I asked participants how they had felt about having being part of the study, the participants from the AICs

generally expressed feeling proud of having had an opportunity to speak about their religion. The discussions, therefore, provided an enabling space for them to talk about their beliefs and practices (Sikkink 2010;2013; Ferguson 2014) (see section 2.9).

Finally, an important consideration that arose from the discussions was that, in order to expand the adolescents' ability to make reasoned and informed judgements about their and other religions, multi-religious education must be properly addressed in the classroom within the context of multicultural and culturally sustaining education. This speaks to the aims of the Policy, which highlights the need for schools to promote the teaching and learning of the diverse religions in South Africa and to affirm the diverse religions equitably within the curriculum (Banks & Banks 2010; Gay 2013). (see sections 1.1 and 3.5.1).

5.5 SUMMARY

Chapter five presented the findings of the empirical investigation. It began by describing the participants' school contexts and demographics and then proceeded to present the results of the empirical investigation, including the findings gleaned from the data collected from the four focus groups and field notes.

The findings highlighted the opportunities and challenges faced by learners and the school community regarding the affirmation of the religious identities among adolescents from AICs in South African secondary schools.

The next chapter will present the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this research. In the conclusions, an attempt is made to answer the main research question, namely: *How are the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools affirmed?* Accordingly, the chapter integrates conclusions arrived at from the literature reviews regarding, firstly, the influence of religion in the identity construction of adolescents and, secondly, multicultural-religious education and RE in secular schools in relation to the accommodation of learners' indigenous identities.

These conclusions provide the basis for making recommendations to policymakers and teachers on increasing the acknowledgment of religious identities among learners from AICs, as guided by the Religion Education (RE) policy. Implications for further research are suggested, followed by a discussion on the limitations of the study. Finally, the study concludes with a brief summation.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

6.2.1 The role of religion in adolescents' identity development

The literature confirmed adolescence as a critical phase in a person's self-discovery and the development of an identity. Identity development in adolescents, across the spectrum of personal, social, ethnic, cultural, and religious or spiritual aspects, is influenced by their environment and their lived experiences (see section 2.2). An examination of constructivist theory (see section 1.3.2), faith development theory, certain moral development theories (see sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.3), as well as identity theories, highlighted the impact that the socio-cultural environment has on an adolescent's identity construction and, subsequently, the way their worldview and morality influence their values (see sections 2.4.1 to 2.4.3).

The literature on the role of religion in adolescent identity development (see section 2.4) indicates the positive influence that religion and spirituality generally have on adolescent development, including their identity construction and values. Religion

thus provides a basis on which adolescents can find meaning and purpose in their lives (see sections 2.4 and 2.9).

It was further established from an examination of various models of identity that religious identity salience correlates with ethnic identity salience (see sections 2.4.3 to 2.5.1). Accordingly, the degree of religious identification and traditional cultural beliefs would be influenced by an adolescent's commitment to their religion and to their socialisation (see section 2.5). The literature also confirmed the way the sociocultural context of adolescents from African initiated churches (AICs) influences their consciousness and worldview (see sections 2.7 to 2.8). It is within this ecosystem that adolescents engage with the key values of community, Ubuntu and the interconnection of the earthly life to the supernatural or transcendental dimensions (see section 2.8).

It can thus be concluded that in the ongoing personal/spiritual development of adolescents, the school environment, religious instruction and the teacher's role have a significant impact on the way adolescents negotiate their religious identity in multicultural or multi-religious secularised schools (see sections 2.10 to 2.10.2).

6.2.2 Religion education in secular schools

The literature confirmed the position of multicultural education as an important element in the transformation of multicultural societies. It can therefore be concluded that it is essential that the school curriculum includes multicultural perspectives in order to expose adolescents to broader worldviews in various aspects of learning (see sections 3.2 to 3.2.1.2).

Religious literacy is one of the factors that could contribute to social cohesion in pluralistic societies. The comparative exploration of multi-religious literacy and approaches to religious education in public schools, as experienced by selected countries (with a focus on South Africa), revealed the growing recognition in many countries for giving indigenous peoples greater educational access to their cultural and spiritual traditions. It is concluded that religious education in secular schools should help learners to become more familiar with their own religious traditions (see sections 3.3, 3.5 to 3.5.2).

In all the countries reviewed, Christianity dominates the value systems as a result of European colonial and missionary education (see sections 3.3.1 to 3.4). It is therefore evident that schools face ongoing challenges in delivering RE. Such challenges range

from operating within a Christian oriented culture, teachers not having the appropriate pre-service and in-training for RE, teachers focusing on the key world religions and therefore marginalising others, for example indigenous religions, learners' limited views of others religions, the lack of teaching material and resources, insufficient period allocations and disputes to ongoing conflict about how religion is addressed in schools (see sections 1.1, 3.3.2.4, 3.3.3.2, 3.3.4.4, 3.3.6.3, 3.3.7.3, 3.3.8.3, 3.3.9.2 and 3.5.6). Schools in South Africa face similar challenges in relation to the application and implementation of RE (see section 3.5.6).

The literature on the religion policy governing religious education and expression in South African public schools underscores the state's support for an enabling framework that affords schools, parents and relevant communities the ability to decide on the policies that will inform their approach to religious education, religious observances and practices (see sections 3.5 to 3.5.5). In linking religion and education to the African renaissance, moral regeneration and the promotion of values in schools, the policy recognises the significant role that religion can play in respecting diversity, promoting values and preserving people's culture. It is concluded that recognition and support for indigenous identities in schools requires purposeful attention.

The discussion in the literature on the role of religion in the identity development of adolescents and on RE in secular schools contributed significantly to the recommendations presented (section 6.4) of the way in which the indigenous religious identities of adolescents can be accommodated in South African secondary schools.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are presented in five parts based on the research sub questions that were drawn from the main research question presented in chapter one. The conclusions drawn from the findings integrate the conclusions from the literature reviews and the empirical investigation, where the data collection was guided by a constructionist approach within an African-centred framework (see sections 1.3 to 1.3.2).

6.3.1 Adolescents' understanding of their religious identity

6.3.1.1 Affiliation to family beliefs

It was evident from the findings that for the majority of the adolescents, the development of their religious identity and socialisation was influenced by parents or

extended family in the first instance (see section 5.4.2.1). At the stage of middle adolescence, into which the participants in the study fell, a person's values and beliefs and their conceptions of faith come from various influences, as was indicated in section 2.3. It is evident from the literature that adolescents aged 13 to 17 years acknowledge the role of family in their religious appreciation. It is therefore concluded that parents or family are an important source for adolescents' religious information and commitment (see section 2.9).

6.3.1.2 Personal choice

The study found that for some adolescents, their personal questioning and searching for meaning contributed to their processes of identity exploration. At this stage of personal development, a person is beginning to clarify his or her identity and the role they play in society (see section 5.4.2.2). The literature revealed that at this stage of development, adolescents undergo dramatic physiological, emotional, psychological and social changes. Their search for an identity, as influenced by their environmental contexts, encompasses the personal, social, ethnic, cultural, and religious or spiritual aspects of their lives (see sections 2.2 to 2.5.1). It was found that some of the adolescents in this study chose to attend different churches to that of their parents or explored different social roles such as atheism or non-association with a church.

6.3.1.3 Influence of friends

It was also found that, to a lesser degree, some adolescents' choice of church was influenced by their friends at school (see section 5.4.2.3). In addition, peers from the same religion were described as sources of support when they would pray and sing together during school breaks. Studies show how socialising with friends with similar beliefs helps a person to ground his or her religious identity (see section 2.9).

6.3.1.4 Uncertainty

The study showed that some adolescents at the *individuative-reflective* stage of faith development were becoming more reflective and questioning about their beliefs based on their circumstances or life experiences (see section 5.4.2.4). At this phase of self-discovery, in relation to committing to a religious identity, a person proceeds from identity foreclosure to a stage of moratorium (see section 2.4.2).

The literature corroborates the above findings in that identity achievement among adolescents revealed varying degrees of identity development across the spectrum

based on an individual's lifestyle and his or her level of self-esteem and well-being, and self-actualisation. Ultimately, in the process of developing their self-identity, individuals may not always have a fixed social identity and may ascribe higher value to other identities over time. This sense of self-concept also influences the formation of a person's religious identity, the salience of which may also change over time (see sections 2.2 to 2.5.1).

Accordingly, a model on religious identity development described in the literature showed three stages of progression. In terms of this model, a person's salience moves from an ascribed identity, such as that influenced by family tradition, to a chosen identity where a conscious decision regarding a religion is made, to a third stage where religion is a declared identity (see section 2.4.3).

6.3.2 Meanings assigned to religion

6.3.2.1 Values

It was found that the adolescents displayed a sense of (ethnic) pride in their association with the ethnic-oriented AIC groups and in their identification with the spiritual values and ethics espoused by these religious groups (see sections 2.3.3 and 5.4.6.2). Key values affirmed in African tradition religion (ATR) are community, Ubuntu (oneness of humanity), and connection with the supernatural world, which comprises the Spirit of God, ancestors and other spirits and the present life which is interconnected with all aspects of the universe (see sections 2.7 to 2.8). It can be concluded that multi-religious schools have to provide an affirming environment in which learners feel comfortable expressing their religious values. Teachers should acknowledge and guide a learner's self-discovery on his or her journey towards a religious identity (see section 2.10.2).

6.3.2.2 Dress code

Dress codes, like other factors such as music, are aspects of culture that were highlighted during the study. The learners' religious-cultural dress code was an important consideration given that it formed part of their religious-cultural identity (see sections 1.1 and 5.4.3.2). It was further evident that the learners tended to abide by the school uniform policy at school rather than their religious dress code.

6.3.2.3 Fellowship

Religious fellowship provides adolescents with a sense of belonging and direction and helps to ground their faith (see section 5.4.3.3). Participants underscored respect for others and others religions as well as the collective associations within their church groupings (see sections 2.7 to 2.8 and 5.4.3.5).

The literature confirmed that membership of a faith community, among other factors, influenced their religious commitment (see section 2.9). Since the adolescents in this study affirmed ATR, models of ethnic identity development were examined from the literature because of the correlation between religious identity salience and ethnicity. A particular model of ethnic identity proposed that persons of all ethnic groups progress through three stages of development. In the first stage, the individual has not examined his or her views on an ethnic identity; in the second, he or she begins to explore the group's ethnicity; and in the third stage, the individual has achieved an ethnic identity. At this third stage, a person's positive sense of ethnic group membership correlates with ethnic identity achievement (see section 2.5.1). In order to support adolescents as they negotiate the different stages of ethnic identity development, it is recommended that schools make use of available experts on ATR and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in their communities as a learning resource.

6.3.2.4 Expressions of worship

Both the findings and the literature indicate that singing, clapping, ritual and sacred dancing, and drumming (among the Zion groups) are integral to praise and worship within the AICs. People express their beliefs and religious identity in various ways such as through myths, folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, idioms and names (see section 5.4.3.4). RE addresses South Africa's diverse religious perspectives and topics in the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum by including learning about values, festivals, rituals, customs and sacred spaces of different belief systems (see section 3.5.2).

6.3.2.5 Religious-cultural beliefs and practices

Acknowledgement of the religious-cultural beliefs and practices (see section 5.4.3.5) accords with the literature (see section 2.5), which indicates that the link between the degree of religious identification and traditional cultural beliefs is influenced by adolescents' commitment to their religion and to their socialisation. It was evident that

the biblical injunctions and AIC practices provide the adolescents with structure and intergroup relations that are consistent with the traditional way of life.

6.3.2.6 Ancestors

Ancestors and prophets (see section 6.3.2.7) in the AICs are regarded as mediators between the people and God. The learners from the AICs were clearly cognisant of the supernatural world of God, the Holy Spirit, ancestral spirits and other forms of spirits, which is consistent with the African traditional spiritual heritage. Ancestors are revered and offerings are presented to show honour and gratitude, as well as to seek their blessings (see sections 2.8 and 5.4.3.6).

6.3.2.7 Prophecy and healing

Healing and prophecy are central to the practices of the AICs. During church services, the Holy Spirit is invoked for guidance and healing, as well as for revelation and prophecy. It is concluded that many of the adolescents were influenced by their religious practices (see section 5.4.3.7).

The broad aim of RE, which is also expressed through the learning area statement for LO, is for learners to show an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures and religions (see section 3.5.2). The literature reveals that ATR, with its beliefs, worldview, creeds, codes of behaviour, rituals and values, inspires and informs the learners' lived experiences and their religious identity (see sections 2.7, 2.8 and 5.4.3.7). Accordingly, the above meanings that the adolescents assigned to their religion are important considerations for the proposed recommendations.

6.3.3 The impact of the adolescents' religious identity on their behaviour and outlook within a multicultural and multi-religious school environment.

6.3.3.1 Responses to peers' perceptions of ATR

The adolescents' examples of how their religious identity salience influences their worldview and behaviour, centred around interactions with other learners from the same church, conversations with learners from other churches about their perceptions of the various practices of other religions or on specific situations that were given as examples during the discussions. In the case of the multiracial school, for example, it was clear that some learners of different faiths were not readily open to know or learn about other religions that differ from their own (see sections 5.4.4.1 to 5.4.4.3).

6.3.3.2 Prayer and religious practices within the school

With regard to prayer and religious practices (see section 5.4.4.2) and through integration (see section 5.4.4.3), adolescents from AICs maintained friendships with peers from across AICs, and could identify with the majority (Christian) school community, particularly in the schools where all the learners and most of the teachers are African. In these instances, aspects of their worldview, cultural identity and family context coincide with the broader cultural communities in which they live (see section 2.9).

This view corroborates the literature, which presents African religion as a component of culture and therefore a way of life in the community. Hence, individuals might continue with certain customs, norms and traditions beyond the church (see sections 2.7 to 2.8).

6.3.3.3 Religious integration

The study revealed that adolescents were not always able to explicitly recognise the influences of their religious identities on interactions within the school environment.

The way adolescents adjust and function is, therefore, shaped by their ongoing interactions with their family, peers, community and extended cultural environments. These social contexts, which include school and religion, are therefore their chief sources of social integration (see sections 5.4.3.3 and 5.4.4.2).

While they were somewhat aware of their religious identity in relation to others and could point out the different religious practices, the focus groups began the process for them to think through and distinguish their perceptions on how their religious identity affects their various school-based interactions. Classroom praxis therefore needs to strengthen religious education among learners in order to further their religious-cultural understanding between and among those affiliated with AICs and, by extension, those from other faiths.

6.3.4 The adolescents' perspectives on how ATR is acknowledged in the LO/RE curriculum in the classroom

6.3.4.1 Main religions in South Africa were mentioned in earlier grades

According to the learners, the main religions of South Africa were mentioned in Grades 6 and 7. Christianity, Judaism and Islam were mentioned, however, they did not provide much information about these religions (see section 5.4.5.1). The literature confirms that RE topics and themes from the Foundation Phase to Grade 9, range

from learning about the practices of different religions and belief systems, and their differences and similarities, to learning about how spiritual philosophies are linked to community and social values and practices (see section 3.5.2).

6.3.4.2 ATR is discussed in RE class

ATR was discussed in religious studies as confirmed by learners in Grades 10 and 11. In the further education and training band (FET), religious studies is offered as an elective academic subject (see section 5.4.5.2). During this phase, topics include the ethics and/or religious laws of indigenous belief systems and the major religions, the contributions that South Africa's diverse religions have made to social cohesion and the way the different belief systems influence recreation and physical activity across cultures and genders (see section 3.5.1 and 3.5.2).

6.3.4.3 ATR is not discussed in LO class

The main finding was that ATR is not acknowledged in the RE component of the LO curriculum, as experienced by the adolescents who affiliate with AICs (see section 5.4.5.3). This fact was substantiated by other adolescents from non-AICs who formed part of the focus groups. It was equally noted that learners' different and diverse religious perspectives were not adequately dealt with, if at all, across the grades.

The literature emphasised that one of the main aims of RE is to advance learners' own search in committing to beliefs and values by which to live by and from which to find meaning in life. Since the purpose of education encompasses the holistic development of the person, RE is a valuable component of the school curriculum as it contributes to a person's citizenship, socialisation and identity development process (see section 3.2.1.1, 3.5.1 to 3.5.3).

6.3.5 Adolescents' appreciation for RE

6.3.5.1 The need for clarity on or understanding of their and others' religious practices

An interesting and important factor that emerged from the study was that in some instances adolescents from across the denominations were not always clear about or did not understand some of their religious practices and those of others (see section 5.4.6.1). Learners form Pentecostal/charismatic churches had misconceptions about the ethos and practices of AICs. Furthermore, Muslim learners from school D declined to participate because they felt the discussion was about ATR.

It is concluded, based on the group exchanges, that learners keenly appreciated talking about their religion and beliefs and learning about other religions (see section 5.4.6.2). Religious instruction could thus contribute favourably to the adolescents' religious salience in the school environment as it could provide them an opportunity to explore their worldviews and learn about other perspectives (see sections 2.10 to 2.10.2).

6.3.5.2 Appreciation for discussions about religion

An important finding arising from the discussions pointed to the learners' interest in and value attributed to RE (see section 5.4.6.2). It was also concluded from the literature that the majority of adolescents aged 13 to 17 years are open to exploring religion or spirituality (see section 2.9). In that regard, support for adolescents' religious identity can also be provided for in the classroom environment through RE (see sections 2.10 and 3.5.5).

Considering the above conclusions, RE in the classroom has to be reviewed in order to better assist in the development of a religious identity in adolescent learners. In conclusion, the findings of the research and the views expressed in the literature on indigenous religious identity development among adolescents, as well as on RE, contributed to the following recommendations proposed regarding classroom praxis and the implementation of RE.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE STUDY

6.4.1 The implication for LO praxis

While the proposed recommendations are applicable to the accommodation and affirmation of the diverse religions in South Africa, the particular consideration is for the recognition of the religious identities of adolescents affiliated to ATR. The Policy (DOE 2003) provides a framework by means of which schools, together with parents and relevant communities, may decide on the policies that inform their approach to RE, religious observances and practices. Accordingly, the policy recognises the significant role that religion can play in respecting diversity, promoting values and preserving people's culture.

This study therefore makes a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions regarding the way schools interpret and implement the policy on RE in the context of the LO curriculum. With regard to classroom praxis, public schools have the educational

responsibility for teaching and learning about diverse religions, including ATR, and for promoting this equitably within the curriculum. This is applicable to religious observances which may be conducted at a public school under the guidance of the governing body. Such observances have to be conducted on an equitable basis and attendance by learners and school personnel should be done free and voluntarily.

6.4.2 Recommendation for improving RE practices and the acknowledgment of religious identities among learners from AICs

6.4.2.1 Proposal for a directive from the Mpumalanga Department of Education

Within the framework of the policy, the Mpumalanga department of education could consider issuing a directive requiring each school district in the province to comply with the policy guidelines for RE teaching and learning in the RE and LO curricula.

It is suggested that school districts, in collaboration with school governing bodies (SGBs), school management teams (SMTs) and LO teachers, incorporate an interfaith module in teachers' LO work schedule that purposely includes the teaching and learning of ATR across the grades based on the ascribed RE topics (see section 3.5.2). This directive would serve to focus teachers in delivering the RE component of the LO curriculum in their respective schools.

LO in general is allocated 2 hours per week in the timetable, which amounts to 70 hours and 66 contact hours for Grades 7 to 9 and Grades 10 and 11 respectively, taught over 40 weeks per year. The constitutional rights and responsibilities topics (wherein RE is included) for Grades 7 to 9, accounts for 7, 9 and 7 hours for the respective grades. In Grades 10 and 11, the democracy and human rights unit, in which RE is located, accounts for 7 hours for each grade. This interfaith module could therefore be aligned with the learning outcomes for religion across the grades.

With reference to the adolescents in this study, the learning assessment outcomes noted for Grades 8 to 11 are highlighted: In Grade 8, learners are required to discuss the contributions of organisations from *various religions* to social development; in Grade 9, to reflect on and discuss the contributions of *various religions* in promoting peace; in Grade 10, to explore the ethical traditions and/or religious laws and *indigenous belief systems* of *major religions* and in Grade 11, to identify and analyse the contributions of South Africa's *diverse religions* and *belief systems* to a harmonious

society. I have italicised the wording specific to the provision for diverse religions (DOE 2003:29) (see section 3.5.2).

6.4.3 Recommendations to accommodate learners from ATR

6.4.3.1 Life orientation and African traditional religion

The aforementioned ATR interfaith module could deal with the origins and timelines of ATR and other religions and show how these have had an impact on society in general and South Africa in particular. In light of the research findings related to the meanings the adolescents associated with their faith, content should include ATR values, expressions of worship, as well as religious-cultural beliefs and practices which include the recognition of ancestor spirits, prophets and healing, and address the perceptions that Christians and learners of other faiths have about ATR.

Learners could, for example, conduct research that includes reading sacred texts or writings of ATR and different religions or belief systems, analyse the religion and hold directed class discussions which allow them to reflect on their understanding about values that are universally present in ATR and other religions and belief systems. Discussions could also address how their cultural-religious identity influences their worldview and behaviours and then finally examine the similarities and differences among different religious groups, for example. Such a purposeful effort would afford adolescents a real understanding of other religions, while also examining their own faiths more deeply (DOE 2003). Furthermore, these discussions would enable teachers to have a better understanding of their learners' background and beliefs (see sections 2.10.2 and 3.5.3).

Teaching and learning about a person's different identities with a focus on his or her religious identity would encourage adolescent learners to explore these identities and, thus, help them to recognise the influences of their own religious identities on their behaviour and interactions with others.

6.4.3.2 Life orientation and community partnerships

Teachers are expected to be aware of and reflect on the strategies they apply for dealing with cultural/religious diversity in their classrooms (see section 3.2.1). While IKS can be integrated across all other subjects, the RE curriculum allows for guest facilitators from religious organisations to assist teachers in dealing with issues of religion in the classroom and to contribute to the development and distribution of

suitable materials (DoE 2003) (see sections 3.5.3 to 3.5.5). These guests could therefore include volunteer facilitators from the AICs. This is a resource that teachers could use intentionally as they plan their RE content and presentation in a way that ensures that learners from AICs and associated members of the community, are protected from ignorance, stereotypes and denigration.

Resourcing for the interfaith module (suggested at section 6.4.2) could therefore involve participation by local faith-based organisations (FBOs), relevant local religious experts or community elders who have extensive knowledge on IKS and ATR (see section 3.5.3). Ultimately, the diverse religions in South Africa would be given fair and equitable treatment as required by the RE policy.

In conclusion, the above recommendations propose that the issues that teachers and learners face regarding how RE is delivered in schools be addressed. These issues include Christianity being the dominant religious culture in many public schools; the fact that teachers' personal religious values and identities may be in conflict with the school's multi-religious culture, with the learners (different) religious identities and with policy expectations; teachers' stereotyping of, prejudice against or discrimination of learners of different religions and beliefs; teachers' inadequate knowledge about ATR; learners not readily open to others beliefs/religions; dress codes that do not accommodate a person's cultural and religious beliefs; and learners of different cultures being assimilated or integrated into multiracial schools with a dominant cultural perspective.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While phenomenological inquiry does allow a deep understanding for the recognition of adolescents' indigenous religious identities in the classroom, it has its limitations. Although the purposeful sampling of adolescents for the study met my requirements for reporting the experiences of cases in a particular context, the selection presented a limitation since there is no certainty of generalisation, as mentioned in section 4.4.2

This study is limited by its specific region. Although there was some representation of adolescents affiliated with ATR, the results of this study could have provided more insight if conducted in regions with greater number of followers of ATR, for example, learners from the Shembe church and from the ZCC who are present in larger numbers in Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces respectively.

However, since the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the support for the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in the classroom, it does not profess to represent whole groups of adolescents who affiliate with AICs. The recorded responses during the given time might differ from what could have been obtained at another time or in other contexts; for example, in instances when learners stated they had “not yet” discussed ATR in their LO class although some had read about it in their textbooks. However, using up to four focus groups for the study could contribute to making a scientific generalisation of outcomes for this study (Krueger & Casey 2009).

The inquiry required description of the adolescents’ personal experiences of their religion, examples of how they encounter ATR in the curriculum and how their religious identity influences their lives in the classroom and in their interactions with teachers and peers. While some of the learners could articulate their experiences, albeit superficially in some instances, others offered a more integrationist explanation in that they behaved like others. For example, they would generally respect the religious ethos in the schools, as experienced during prayers at school assemblies or in the classroom (see section 5.4.4.3).

It has been noted that phenomenological inquiry can present a dilemma as to whether it results in descriptive scientific research or in an interpretive personal inquiry. While I was conscious of maintaining objectivity in my analysis, my own cultural and historical background and knowledge of ATR informed the interpretations and presuppositions (Van Manen 1990).

Dealing with a transcendental phenomenon such as religious identity can have its challenges, especially when it concerns trying to understand the adolescents’ consciousness and experience of their religious beliefs. In analysing the phenomenological data generated with adolescents as research participants, I acknowledge that the limited interaction between the learners and myself did not provide in-depth information on the significance the adolescents attach to their religion, particularly on how this influences their behaviour at school. It is hoped that in trying to speak for them through their voices, in line with the literature provided and as informed by my cultural and historical background with AICs and ATR, the reader will appreciate the context of the research recommendations as presented.

6.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study makes an important contribution to the pedagogy of multicultural education in general and RE in particular. The study highlighted the influence of religion in adolescent identity development and how RE is a valuable component of the school curriculum as it contributes to a person's citizenship, socialisation and identity development process.

The perspectives of adolescents from AICs were an especially important contribution to the improvement of religious-cultural education, since their voices are scarce in existing literature.

This study contributes to SADC discussions on RE since the context is similar to other countries in the region. Finally, the study contributes to African-centred research and the integration of AIK systems in such research.

6.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study sought to contribute to the research in religion education by examining the school-based experiences of adolescents who affiliate with AICs. Within the ambit of multicultural and multi-religious school communities, the study addressed issues related to accommodating and affirming the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected secondary schools in South Africa.

In light of the limitations presented in section 6.4, future research may consider studying a setting with a larger sample size than the minority groups found in this study. Secondly, since only one of the three multiracial schools that were approached participated in the research, further study should engage learners from AICs who attend multiracial schools, in order to examine challenges relating to identification with a minority subculture and whether this can lead some adolescents from AICs to avoid the issue of their cultural-religious identification through foreclosure or diffusion.

Finally, as I admitted (section 6.5) it proved quite a challenge for the adolescents to critically assess how their religion identity influences the range of relationships and situations they were presented with. Future research could therefore focus specifically on this element and involve learners from AICs in critical, reflexive considerations of their cultural-religious identities and analyse how their identities influence their worldviews. It would thus be interesting to examine how religious identity practices are challenged or supported in the two contexts suggested above.

6.8 CONCLUSION

An indigenous religious identity is an important aspect of an African adolescent's cultural heritage. This research was motivated by a desire to support African adolescents' identification with ATR and then explore how RE accommodates and affirms their beliefs. Thus, the main research question was *How are the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents from selected South African secondary schools accommodated in RE?* This question addressed the multi-pronged aim of the study, namely, to explore the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents, to make a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions on the way schools interpret and implement the RE Policy (DOE 2003) and, finally, to contribute to the emerging literature of African-centred research which promotes African indigenous knowledge perspectives with a focus on ATR.

Recommendations were made for improving the RE practices in the classroom and for affirming religious identities among learners from AICs. The limitations of the study were presented and the study concluded by discussing implications for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Approval letter from the Mpumalanga Department of Education

Bui!ding No, 5, Govemment Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province Private
Bag X11341 , Mbombeie. 1200,
Teit 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvm Umnyango we Fundo   Departement van Ondetwys   Ndzawufo ya Dyondzo

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Ms. M.R Thamaga
PO BOX 22003
Middleburg
1050

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: Ms. M.R. THAMAGA

Your application to conduct research was received. The title of your study reads: "Exploring the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in South African secondary schools." I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental draft research policy which is available in the departmental website. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document.

In terms of the attached draft research policy, data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the department's annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.babyi@education.mpu.gov.za.

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MRS MOC MHLABANE   OC MHLABANE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
22/4/16
DATE

MPUMALANGA THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN

Appendix B:

Approval letter from the UNISA ethics committee

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

18 May 2016

Ref : **2016/05/18/55763952/32/MC**
Student: Ms MR Thamaga
Student Number: 55763952

Dear Ms Thamaga

Decision: Ethics Approval

Researcher: Ms MR Thamaga
Tel: 078 3595462
Email: rmthamaga@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr C Ferreira
College of Education
Department of Educational Psychology
Tel: +2712 429 2157
Email: ferrec@unisa.ac.za

Proposal: Exploring the indigenous religious identities of African adolescents in South African secondary schools

Qualification: M Ed Educational Leadership and Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 18 May 2016.
The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

1) *The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
2) *Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for*

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the research participants.

3) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

Note:

The reference number **2016/05/18/55763952/32/MC** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.*

Kind regards,

Dr M Claassens
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
mcdtc@netactive.co.za

Prof VI McKay
EXECUTIVE DEAN

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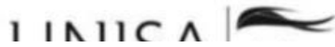
APPENDIX C
Learners assent



If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or to my study supervisor or you can have your parent or another adult contact either of us. My contact number is 0783595462 and my e-mail is rmthamaga@gmail.com. My supervisor, Prof Ferreira, Department of Psychology, College of Education, University of South Africa can be reached at: ferrec@unisa.ac.za. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Regards.

Ms M R Thamaga
(Researcher)

WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

____

Learner's name(print): Learner's signature: Date:

____

Witness's name (print) Witness's signature Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

____

Parent/guardian's name (print) Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

____

Researcher's name (print) Researcher's signature: Date:

APPENDIX D

Sample entries from Researcher's reflective journal (field notes)

I explained my research to the male HOD. He appeared rather defensive, this gleaned from his comment and reaction… When I later met with the Principal, she mentioned that the permission letter from the Province suggested that she comply. I assured her that she would not be forced to participate because the Provincial office would not know which schools I have approached.

My choice of schools was influenced by the potential to have a critical number of learners attending AICs. I was referred to the LO/English teacher for further assistance. Everything went well.

2.

The Principal remarked, *''Why this school? You leave all the schools in town and come to this one. We've even had 2 student teachers from xxx come to do their practical here.''*

I am aware of the schools' issues with overcrowding and low academic results and wondered if she felt her school was targeted. I assured her that it's good for researchers to spread their research sites. Getting sorted out proved to be a trying experience …the relevant educator/s were not informed so that I could access my targeted groups of learners (two trips and several phone calls); I had to request to be assigned to a LO teacher so that I could take things forward…once I received the list of potential research participants, a grade 11 learner was assigned to assist with ensuring the learners were available on the agreed days. …from my initial visit in May (2016), and with exams imminent, we agreed I would meet learners from end July to early August (2016) (a couple more trips and phone calls).

3.

The principal displayed an open and professional attitude.

I was given space at Assembly to address the school about my research project. I instinctively opened with a statement about diversity in general with a focus on the different religious groups in South Africa contributing to the country's diverse make up. I cited the different religions and told the group about my research project. While I was particularly interested in meeting with learners from AICs, I invited learners from other religious groups to participate in the group discussions.

I noticed the initial list of names included two Muslim names; however, the final participants were made up of African and Coloured learners. It was subsequently explained why Muslim learners did not volunteer to participate.