

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences
MA THESIS

Title: The subjective experiences of Psychology Honours students enrolled at a faith-based institution.

Student Name: Natasha L. Paris

Student Number: 3483038

Type of Thesis: Full Thesis

Thesis completed in fulfillment of degree requirements for the M.A. Psychology.



Degree: MA Psychology (Thesis).

Department: Psychology

Supervisor: Prof. Mario R. Smith

Date: 14/12/2018

10 Keywords: spirituality, stress (psychological), retention, throughput, resilience, coping mechanism, postgraduates, coping strategies, values

Table of Contents

Plagiarism Declaration.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
List of Theoretical Definitions.....	ix
Abstract.....	xi
Chapter One	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Thesis outline	1
1.2 Background to the Study.....	2
1.3 Problem Statement	7
1.4 Aim of the Study	8
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Rationale for the Study.....	9
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	10
Chapter Two.....	13
Literature Review.....	13
2.1 Higher Education.....	13
2.2 Honours Degree Structure.....	16
2.3 The Alignment of Personal and Institutional Values	17
2.4 Private Institutions.....	19



Chapter Three.....	23
Methodology.....	23
Introduction.....	23
3.1 Aim of the Study.....	23
3.2 Objectives of the Study.....	23
3.3 Research Questions.....	24
3.4 Research Setting.....	24
3.5 Target Group & Sample.....	25
3.5 Research Approach.....	27
3.6 Method of Data Collection.....	28
3.7 Data Analysis.....	30
3.8 Rigour.....	32
3.9 Reflexivity.....	33
3.10 Ethics Consideration.....	37
Chapter Four.....	39
Results.....	39
4.1 Sample Characteristics.....	39
4.2 Content Categories.....	40
4.2.1 Reasons for enrolling at a faith-based institution.....	40
4.2.1.1. Default Choice.....	40



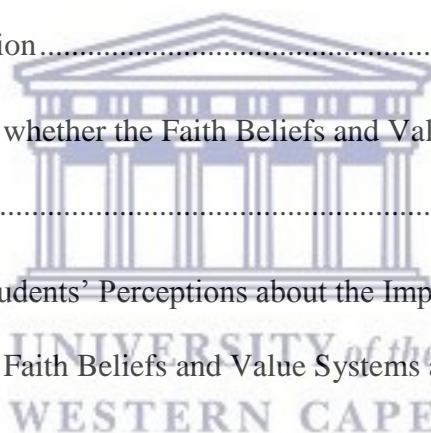
UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

4.2.1.2. Recognition of Qualifications.....	42
4.2.1.3. Extended Deadlines for Application.....	42
4.2.1.4. Faith-Based Institution a Primary Choice	43
4.2.1.5. Size and Nature of the Institution.	44
4.2.2 Knowledge of the Statement of Faith of the [Identified Institution]	44
4.2.2.1 No Knowledge or Awareness of the Statement of Faith	45
4.2.2.2 Familiarity with the Statement of Faith.....	45
4.2.3 Participant Beliefs and Values	46
4.2.3.1. Religious Affiliation.....	46
4.2.3.2. Values	48
4.2.3.3 Alignment between personal and institutional values	51
4.2.3.4 Impact of Non-Conforming Beliefs.....	52
4.2.4 Christian Principles in the Curriculum.....	55
4.2.5 Sense of Community at Identified Institution	56
4.2.5.1. Student Community.....	56
4.2.5.2 Staff/Lecturer Community.....	59
4.2.6 Academic Growth	60
4.2.7 Spiritual/Personal Growth.....	62
4.2.8 Recommendation.....	63
4.2.8.1 Recommend Institution to Other Students.....	63



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

4.2.8.2 Recommendations for Improvements.....	63
Chapter Five.....	66
Discussion and Conclusion.....	66
5.1 Objective 1: Exploring Students’ Decision-Making Process to Enrol at the Identified Institution	66
5.1.1 Preferred choice.....	66
5.1.2 Default Choice.....	68
5.2 Objective 2: Exploring the Extent to which Students Are Familiar with the Statement of Faith at the Identified Institution.....	69
5.3 Objective 3: Determining whether the Faith Beliefs and Values of the Students Align with that of the Institution.	70
5.4 Objective 4: Exploring Students’ Perceptions about the Impact of Alignment or Misalignment Between Their Faith Beliefs and Value Systems and that of the Institution	72
5.4.1 Sense of Community	72
5.4.2 Integration of Faith in the Curriculum.....	73
5.4.3 Growth.....	74
5.4.4 Recommendations	76
5.5 Conclusion.....	78
5.6 Limitations to the Study	81
5.7 Recommendations for Future Study.....	82
5.8 Significance of the Study	82



References.....	84
Appendix A.....	99
Interview Schedule.....	99
Appendix B: Ethics Clearance	101
Appendix C – Information Sheet	102
Appendix D- Consent Form.....	104



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that this study, which is aimed at exploring the subjective experiences of Psychology honours students enrolled at a faith-based institution, is my own work. It has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree or examination at any other University, and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

N. Paris

14/12/18

MRS N.L PARIS



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Acknowledgements

Embarking on this academic venture has been one of the most challenging and stretching experiences of my life. Many times I wanted to give up, but because of an amazing God who has given me the wisdom, strength and endurance, I was able to push through and bear testimony to God's strength perfected in weakness.

A very special thanks to my life partner, best friend and husband Adrian. You have sacrificed so much and without hesitation you took care of my responsibilities. I am really blessed to have you in my life. Thank you for your love, support and encouragement and thank you for never allowing me to give up, and for being the driving force behind me in seeing this dream fulfilled.

To my family I want to say thank you for your prayers. I'd like to especially thank my parents and sisters for being my greatest cheerleaders.

I would like to thank the National Research Foundation (NRF) for the financial support for this research. Opinions expressed, and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

I would like to thank Celeste Swart for her faithful support, expertise and encouragement.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Mario Smith, without you none of this would be possible. Thank you for your motivation and for believing in me when I did not. Thank you for your immense knowledge, guidance, patience and support. You have been amazing! I would also like to express my appreciation to all participants for their time and input in this research study.

List of Theoretical Definitions

Spirituality: A relationship with a supernatural presence that unifies, orientates, and mobilizes all aspects of life, namely, the intrapersonal, suprapersonal and interpersonal aspects. It is the consequence of relational dynamics among the divine, self and others in maintaining a congruent ideology-life style (Schmidt-Wilk, Heaton, & Steingard, 2000).

Faith-based institution: Researchers refer to faith-based as an expression of a religion examined through the self-identity of the institution, religiosity of contributors, and definition of outcome measures (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). A faith based institution upholds a purpose statement rooted in the Christian religious tradition, it integrates faith with academia, and in service in both curricular and extra-curricular activities, and only employs staff and faculty professing belief in Jesus Christ (Kuh & Gonyea, 2006).

Statement of Faith: A theological perspective concerning one's basis of beliefs (Slick, n.d.).

Stress: A physical, mental, or emotional reaction resulting from an individual's response to environmental tensions, conflicts, and pressures ("stress," n.d.).

Honours Degree: Most commonly it refers to a variant of the undergraduate bachelor's degree containing a larger volume of material or a higher standard of study, or both, than an "ordinary", "general" or "pass" bachelor's degree ("honours degree," n.d.).

Postgraduate: Relating to or denoting a course of study undertaken after completing a first degree ("postgraduate," n.d.).

Private University: Private universities are universities not operated by governments, although many receive tax breaks, public student loans, and grants. Depending on their location, private universities may be subject to government regulation. This is in contrast to public universities and national universities (Grove, 20187).



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Abstract

The demand for study places in Honours courses in Psychology far exceeds the available places in courses at government-funded universities. Private institutions are increasingly offering such courses to address the need for enrolment and to capitalize on a market niche. Students who are unsuccessful at mainstream universities might apply for courses at private institutions, even those offered at faith-based universities regardless of their personal spiritual beliefs and values. There is a clear gap in the literature exploring the experiences of students enrolled at faith-based private institutions. The study attempted to gain insight into the subjective experiences of students enrolled in a Psychology Honours programme at a faith-based institution in the Western Cape. The proposed study incorporated an exploratory research design and employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data from a purposively selected sample and transcripts were subjected to a content analysis. Data collection and analysis occurred in parallel until reaching the threshold number. Ethics clearance and project registration was obtained from the UWC Senate Research committee and all relevant ethics principles were upheld. The findings indicated that faith based institutions are not homogenous and that students enrolled at faith based institutions are respectively not homogenous. Findings further indicate that alignment does exist between the core values of participants and their discipline choice, and not that participants' faith beliefs were necessarily aligned with that of the institution.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Thesis outline

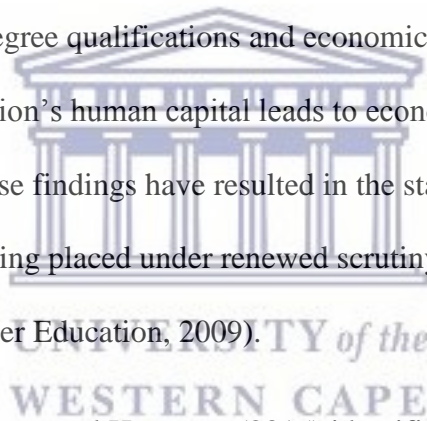
This thesis contains five chapters. Chapter One provides the reader with the background against which this study was conceptualized. It identifies the problem statement, which indicates the need for the study, and it provides the rationale for conducting this study. Chapter One furthermore provides an overview of the purpose of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of research that justifies how the study addresses a gap in the literature. It demonstrates how the study will contribute to existing knowledge, and outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study. In this chapter a review of studies has been reflected on globally and locally. Chapter Three specifies the aim of the study followed by an outline of the objectives of the study. It provides the definition of key terms used for a clear conceptual understanding. Chapter Three further discusses key features of the research methodology used to conduct this study. This chapter describes and justifies how the study was conducted, how participants were selected, how data was gathered and then analysed. Lastly, the trustworthiness and credibility of the data obtained and reported on in the study was also discussed. Chapter Four presents the results and discussion of the study. Chapter Five is the conclusion, which served to give an executive summary of the study and highlight its significance and limitations, as well as provide recommendations for further research and implications or practical suggestions for private, faith-based institutions.

<http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

1.2 Background to the Study

South Africa has been identified as not having sufficient numbers of highly skilled people in most professions, with the greatest shortage being at a postgraduate level of training (Council on Higher Education, 2009). In order for South Africa to remain globally competitive, to continue being in high international demand, and to generate knowledge that is responsive to societal needs, the country will need to drastically increase the number of graduates with higher degree qualifications (Council on Higher Education, 2009; ASSAF, 2010). There is a significant relationship that exists between the throughput of higher degree qualifications and economic growth, as the enhancement of the nation's human capital leads to economic growth (Callaghan, 2013). These findings have resulted in the state of postgraduate studies being placed under renewed scrutiny as of recent years (Council on Higher Education, 2009).

Styger, van Vuuren and Heymans (2015) identified student dropout as a national concern. In response a number of studies have been conducted on undergraduate students, but very little research has been conducted on postgraduate students. A significant segment of the reputation of any higher education institution is based on the postgraduate success (Edwards, 2002; Lee, 2009; Cassim, 2011). The reputation of higher education institutions are defined in part by student completion in the minimum time and it hinges particularly on postgraduate success rates (Wright, 2003). Postgraduate success improves the reputation of the institution and it contributes to the funding of the institution (IEASA, 2011). Not only are the reputations of higher institutions at risk, but the high dropout rates furthermore



pose a threat to the future of South Africa (Laseka & Maile, 2008). South Africa is in dire need of delivering more postgraduates with its current graduation rates less than 15% across all South African based universities, which is one of the lowest in the world (MOE, 2001). Macgregor (2009) concurs with this and identified the high dropout rates as an area of grave concern which should be assessed and addressed urgently to create a situation in which the country can be globally competitive. To ensure global competitiveness in South Africa, the national strategy implemented aims to increase postgraduate output and accelerate human capital development (Kritzinger & Loock, 2012). Institutions are encouraged to examine student retention more closely in relation to financial losses from student dropout rates (Rossouw, 2001). Approximately R1.3bn in public funding is lost per annum as a result of the student dropout rate (Koen, 2007). Student dropout is in conflict with the national strategy and students who do not complete their academic requirements undercut the capital investment at a personal, institutional and governmental level. This is a significant investment into students by the government subsidies and therefore a return is expected. Much more research is required if the aim is to reach higher targets for graduation rates (Koen, 2007; Ministry of Higher Education and Training, 2012). The Department of Higher Education and Training noted that success and throughput rates is a very serious challenge and must become a priority focus for national policy and for the institutions themselves (DHET, 2014).

There is currently a range of factors that may have a causative effect on the length of time that is taken for students to graduate or dropout from university studies (Murray, 2014). Student age, gender, race and financial status are potential contributing factors and may be

easier to measure than other factors such as, students' level of motivation for studying, the level of academic integration and the environment that exists at the university of choice (Murray, 2014). Laseka and Maile (2007) further reported that academic failure; personal and family stressors are additional factors that can potentially lead to student attrition. Student stress has also been identified as a contributing factor that has been on the increase nationwide leading to an escalation in attrition rates (Robotham & Julian, 2006).

Financial constraints or lack of funding has become one of the most controversial issues in South Africa and has contributed to the #fees-must-fall student action movement where students dramatically expressed their discontent of the high university fees and attracted widespread media coverage which even sparked solidarity protests in London and New York (SFSA, 2016). The issue of the concerning high dropout rate has received more attention from the students themselves, consequently taking matters into their own hands through protesting and demanding more financial support from the South African student loan and bursary scheme (SAHO, 2015). Student protests in SA did not suddenly start in 2015, but dates back to the anti-Apartheid marches predating democracy in South Africa. Of recent years the uprising of student protest action has once again been on the increase for access to universities (SAHO, 2015).

A stressor that has been under-researched in postgraduate students is the pressures of securing places in postgraduate degrees. Attaining success in stringent selection procedures for scarce skill disciplines such as Psychology has been highlighted as a concern as it causes an educational bottleneck (Cruys, Greenaway & Haslam, 2015).

A bottleneck occurs when students enter a phase of their training in which admission is highly competitive and determined by benchmark performance levels. Four Universities in the Western Cape offer Psychology as a major, namely The University of the Western Cape (Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, 2018), Stellenbosch University (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, 2018), The University of Cape Town (UCT Psychology Society, 2018) and the University of South Africa (UNISA, 2018). The Honours programme is offered at the abovementioned universities, as well as four private institutions, namely Cornerstone Institute (Cornerstone Academics, 2016), the South African College of Applied Psychology (South African College Applied Psychology, 2016), Midrand Graduate Institute (Midrand Graduate Institute, 2016) and CTI Education Group (CTI Education Group, 2016).



Universities have large numbers of students who wish to enrol in Psychology courses as the subject contains relevance for many professions namely, occupational therapy, sports science, nursing and clinical psychology (Kagee & O'Donovan, 2011). In order to qualify as a Psychologist in South Africa, the student must complete a professional Masters degree in Psychology that is accredited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2014). The trajectory to this point includes the completion of a three year Bachelor's degree and a Honours degree. In addition to access to professional courses, students can apply for admission to research-based Masters degrees after completion of the Honours degree. Thus, a Honours degree is the qualifying programme for Masters level studies.

On completion of the Honours programme there is also the possibility to do a practicum to qualify as a Professional Counsellor registered with the South African Psychology Health Professions Council of South Africa (Professional Board of Psychology, 2005). This opportunity however is only accessible to students registered in Honours programmes that are accredited as B.Psych equivalent programmes (HPCSA, 2014).

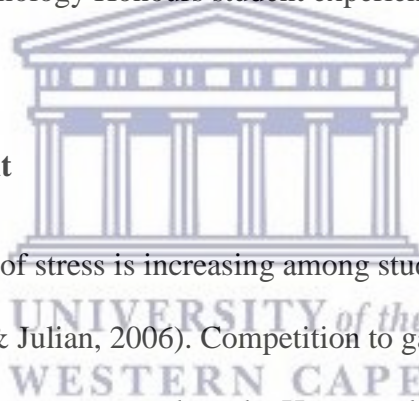
According to the Department of Higher Education, only 20% of general degree undergraduates majoring in Psychology will be selected for Honours programmes, and a third of these will be selected into a Masters programme (Council on Higher Education, 2014). What emerges clearly is that students in Psychology have to undergo several selection processes to be accepted into the respective degree programmes. Consequently, student distress has increased to a greater scale due to the high level of competition for selection in this specific discipline and as a result of the difficult route that students are subjected to in pursuing postgraduate qualification and / or becoming a registered professional (Kotze & Carolissen, 2005). In addition, there is consensus that the profession and discipline of Psychology in South Africa is undergoing change (Abel & Louw, 2009; Elkonin & Sandison, 2006).

The demand for access into the Honours programme far exceeds the available places in Honours programmes at government funded institutions (Du Preez & Roos, 2008). This need has created a niche area for private institutions, including faith-based institutions (Coan, 2017). According to the Department of Higher Education, these private institutions are considered as a partner that compliments the public

sector in the delivery of post-school education in SA (Coan, 2017). Thus, many students may opt to enrol for Honours at a faith-based institution, regardless of their own faith belief and spirituality. Honours programmes among Christian institutions started relatively late and as a result there exists limited data on university honours students enrolled at faith-based universities (Holberg, 2010). Subsequently, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the experiences of Psychology Honours students, further research should be conducted in a wider cross-section of institutions, including those that are faith-based (Gaines, 2013). The purpose of this study was to address this knowledge gap by examining Psychology Honours student experiences within a faith-based university.

1.3 Problem Statement

The prevalence of stress is increasing among students in higher education (Robotham & Julian, 2006). Competition to gain access into specialized postgraduate courses, such as the Honours degree in Psychology, has become an additional source of stress for students (Abel & Louw, 2009). Private institutions including faith-based institutions are now offering such courses to offer training in desired disciplines and to benefit from a market need in which the demand far exceeds the number of places available (Bridges & Hayek, 2007). As a result of limited access to Universities, students are enrolling for courses at private, faith-based institutions regardless of whether their own spiritual beliefs and values are aligned to that of the chosen institution (Dale & Sharpe, 2001). Students' performance is said to be optimal and their expectations met when there is alignment between the values, goals and expectations of the student and that of the institution



(Lau, 2003). The investigation of the experiences of students who chose to enrol in an Honours course in Psychology at a faith-based private university remains a focus of further research.

The perceived impact of the extent to which students' personal goals, values and expectations align with the statement of faith of the institution is reflective of MacGregor's (2012) assertion that there is insufficient data regarding this subject at private institutions. Thus, the present study attempted to address the gap in the literature about students' experiences at a faith-based institution. The study aimed to explore how students engage with the concordance or discordance between their own faith beliefs and that of the institution, and its impact on performance and overall satisfaction with training.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This research study seeks to explore the perceptions and experiences of students enrolled in a Psychology Honours programme at a private, faith-based institution.

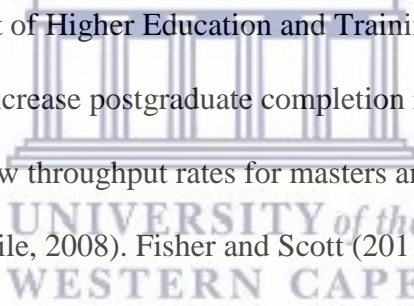
Objectives of the study

- To explore students' decision-making process to enrol at the identified institution
- To explore the extent to which students are familiar with the statement of faith of the identified institution
- To determine whether the faith beliefs and values of the students align with that of the institution.
- To explore students' perceptions about the impact of alignment or misalignment between their faith beliefs and value systems and that of the institution

1.5 Research Questions

- What were students' decision-making processes to enrol at the identified institution?
- To which extent were students familiar with the statement of faith of the identified institution?
- What was the alignment between the faith beliefs and values of the students and that of the institution?
- What were students' perceptions about the impact of alignment or misalignment between their faith beliefs and value systems and that of the institution?

1.6 Rationale for the Study



The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) identified the need to increase postgraduate completion rates as reports showed significantly low throughput rates for masters and doctoral degrees (Letseke & Maile, 2008). Fisher and Scott (2011) define the South African Higher Education in the past and in the present as a “low participation, high attrition” system. For this reason, the National Development Plan 2030 hopes to increase participation and retention of students in Higher education particularly at a Masters and Doctoral level (National Development Plan, 2011). As such, Honours level students become the pipeline and research into the experiences of pipeline students who can provide insights in the realization of the NDP.

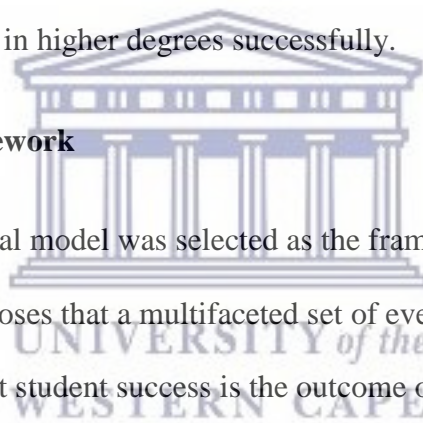
The National Development Plan 2030 identified higher education as a sector requiring transformation. A benchmark was projected by the White Paper to increase participation rates – that is from just over 937 000 (17.3%) students in 2011 to approximately 1.6

million (25%) enrolments in 2030 (Council on Higher Education, 2013). The exploration of the tensions between access and preferred choices is important as it impacts the issue of participation in higher education. Here too the tension between private and public higher education must be explored.

The 10-year innovation plan of the Department of Science and Technology identified that graduates must be transformation or change agents, and that they must be able to contribute to a knowledge economy (Department of Science and Technology, 2007). Thus, studies into the pipeline for postgraduate students provide insight into the readiness to participate in higher degrees successfully.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The socio-critical model was selected as the framework for this study. This model proposes that a multifaceted set of events shapes student success and that student success is the outcome of an interaction between personal, institutional and broader contextual factors (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). The socio-critical model examines factors impacting student success on three correlated levels. First, on the individual level the model considers factors such as, academic and attitudinal attributes, and other personal characteristics and circumstances (Gopaul, 2015). Second, on an institutional level the model considers factors like quality and relevance of academic, non-academic, and administrative services (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). Third, on a supra-institutional level the model considers macro-political and socio-economic factors (Motshoane & Mckenna, 2014). A socio-critical model moreover considers the unique impact of context on student success and it suggests that in some contexts, non-academic

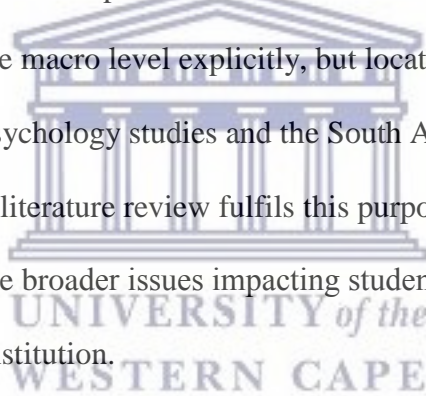


factors may have a greater impact on student success than academic factors (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011).

There are six key constructs that are foundational to the socio-critical model (Bandura, 1997). First, situated agency includes mutually influential activities, behaviours, attitudes and responsibilities of students and the institution (Berger, 2000). Second, capital includes mutual engagement and success that is enhanced when each of the agents possess certain kinds of capital (Tierney, 2000). Third, habitus entails reflecting on individual or institutional cultural behaviour that create barriers or opportunities for success (Braxton, 2000). Fourth, attribution is the process whereby causality is attributed to external or internal factors (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Fifth, locus of control relates to the location of control internally or externally (Tierney, 2000). Sixth, self-efficacy is a personal attribute for success (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011).

These constructs are applied to both students and institutions in understanding the success of the student's trajectory and furthermore aims to build a conceptual case for understanding the consequences of the decision made by Psychology Honours students to enrol at a faith-based institution from a socio-critical perspective. This framework acknowledged the higher education context as the supra-institutional level. As mentioned before, the macro-political and socio-economic factors influence the low participation and low retention higher education sector. The framework was suitable, because it took cognizance of the institutional culture at the identified institution as an example of private, faith-based higher education. This culture includes the quality of academic and support services provided to students in this setting. What is interesting here is that this model draws our attention

on the quality of the academic offering within the Honours programme in Psychology and a departmental level. At the same time there are services provided within the broader institution that impacts the experience of students. Thus at this level there are layers of representation. Another aspect of the framework was that it made it possible to consider the personal characteristics and circumstances of the individual student. For this purpose, a description was provided of the faith beliefs and background of each student to assist with understanding the individual factors and dispositions contributed to the overarching experience. The present study focused on the individual student within a particular discipline and institutional context. The study did not engage the macro level explicitly, but located the study within the context of psychology studies and the South African higher education context. The literature review fulfils this purpose and provided insight into the broader issues impacting students' decision to enrol at a faith-based institution.



Chapter Two

Literature Review

In discussing the South African higher education landscape, it is necessary to situate it within the recent global trends, as well as to expound on the stories of its own particular trajectory.

2.1 Higher Education

As already mentioned, student retention and throughput rates in postgraduate studies are a critical issue in South Africa (Department of higher education, 2001; Department of labour, 2001). Higher Education is facing a critical challenge of producing a balanced scale between inputs and relevant outputs, specifically relating to students who are enrolled and those that graduate (Paura & Arhipova, 2014). Dropout rates for university students are an important topic in countries as it does not only waste taxpayers' money, but it results in lower employment opportunities in highly qualified positions within the country (Letseka, 2008). Furthermore, it is has become one of the measures for evaluating Higher Education. Kritzinger and Lock (2012) concluded that student retention is an area of grave concern for higher education institutions in South Africa that requires urgent attention.

Higher education in SA has undergone numerous and fundamental changes since the first democratic election in 1994 (Abiddin & Ismail, 2011). Many forms of corrective legislation were introduced in higher education that aimed at eradicating the results of separate development and White privilege practiced by the Nationalist government for decades. For example, the Education White Paper 3, introduced in 1997, proposed a programme for the transformation of

Higher Education. The changes made education available to all South Africans from all levels of society (DOE, 1997). The resultant student body profile was more diverse as participation rates increased however; racialized and economic patterns still exist for retention and throughput. Consequently, Government is keen to witness an increase in the statistics of Doctoral and Masters degree graduates.

The national aim is consequently targeted at increasing the total headcount enrolments in higher education in both public and private institutions, amidst the vulnerability presented in the system in relation to funding institutions and student commitment which determines the growth (National Development Plan, 2013). To date there has subsequently been an increase in postgraduates indicating that the system is responding positively to Government's research development priorities set out in the National Development Plan (DHET, 2014). Thus, the phenomenon of student access, success and throughput rates have become a priority focus for national policy and for the institution themselves (DHET, 2017). However, it has been established that student success rates in SA are still much lower than expected considering the low participation rates in higher education (Manik, 2015). The stark picture is that despite massive efforts and expenditure focused on addressing the problem, very little impact has been made (McCallin & Nayar, 2012; CHE, 2013).

Postgraduate success is critical since the country depends on this for its future academics, researchers and leaders within knowledge-intensive professions (Subotzky, 2003). Since higher education is the main driving force behind economic growth, it is imperative that

research is conducted to ensure optimal achievement, assuming that data on a specific research topic is readily available (CHET, 2010). However, in the event where data is either unavailable or insufficient, this may prove to be a difficult situation.

The Council for Higher Education, which is the body that advises the ministry of education, acknowledged the complexities involved in access, success and throughput, and then commenced in researching the salient trends and challenges within higher education in South Africa (CHE, 2010). Recently literature on student success, access, throughput, dropout and related discourses has rapidly emerged with the aim to increase student throughput and address student dropout (REAP, 2008; Prinsloo, 2009; Ramrathan, 2013; Heymann & Carolissen, 2011; Horn et al., 2011; Bojuwoyo, 2014; Bokana & Tewari, 2014; Sosibo & Katiya, 2015). Student attrition (i.e. students leaving and not returning) threatens the economic stability and reputations of universities that are achieved by a consistent student base (Beer & Lawson, 2016).

According to Prinsloo (2009) the heart of student retention is the result of any of the following three levels: individual (i.e. motivation and ability and other personal characteristics and circumstances), institutional (i.e. quality of advice, guidance and general quality of provision) and supra-institutional (i.e. finance and other socio-economic factors). Similarly the body of literature reporting on what hinders or facilitates student retention and throughput contain research foci on transformation (e.g. Department of Higher Education and Training, 2002); legislation, racial and gender inequalities, cultural

differences (e.g. Nilsson, 2007); and human resources challenges (e.g. Govinder, Zondo & Makgoba, 2013). Thus in order to resolve the problem of low completion rates, all stakeholders (i.e. students, universities, government, communities, etc.) has to make important contributions (CHE, 2013). Government, on the other end, has been aiming at increasing the amount of people with degrees and at the same time looking to improve the quality of postgraduate training that is offered (Strydom, Kuh & Mentz, 2009).

2.2 Honours Degree Structure

The Honours degree has a pivotal location between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. South Africa follows a 3+1 model which includes a three year undergraduate degree with a further postgraduate year known as the Honours degree (CHE, 2016). Psychology presents a unique scenario since the nature of training only allows for a small number of students to be selected to enrol in Honours programmes, resulting in a highly stressful and competitive environment (Council on Higher Education, 2014; Cruys, Greenaway & Haslam, 2015).

As mentioned before, the Honours programme creates a trajectory to become a professional counsellor registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA, 2015). The requirements accompanying this process include a six month practicum, completion of an accredited B.Psych equivalent programme or Honours degree, followed by a written board exam which needs to be passed with a required grade before a certificate of qualification as a Registered Counsellor is issued (Professional Board for Psychology, 2005). A further challenge presented is that not all institutions in the

Western Cape offer HPCSA-accredited B.Psych equivalent programmes, thus adding to the levels of distress and competition.

To become a registered Psychologist a student is required to complete a Masters degree in Psychology and in order to qualify for the Masters programme the student is required to complete an Honours degree (HPCSA, Professional Board for Psychology, 2015). With the Masters programme there are even fewer places available for students in comparison to the Honours intake. For example, the first year enrolment in the Psychology programme at UWC averages approximately 200-300, with the student selection for Honours, numbers are reduced to a maximum of 40 following a further significant reduction to only six to eight students that are selected for Masters on average per programme by a panel of academic staff (University of the Western Cape Prospectus, 2015). This further highlights the importance of functioning at Honours level since it is the stepping stone to achieving higher degrees and launching students careers (Jordaan & Burger, 2009). Even though literature emphasises the importance of the Honours level, Honours in comparison to other degrees and doctoral programs has shown to be a neglected area in higher education research with only a handful of reported studies (Wolfensberger, 2012; Greenbank; Kiley, Boud, Cantwell & Manathunga, 2009).

2.3 The Alignment of Personal and Institutional Values

Kuh's (2000) study on the role of higher education in character development reported that small institutions significantly shaped the values of the nation in the past and to a lesser extent in the present, through cultivating the values of students that were enrolled at these

institutions. Personal values provide a lens to understand attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Arambewla & Hall, 2011). Tinto's model of student attrition explains student retention and success behaviour in relation to the context of the institution (Tinto, 1975; 1997). His model suggest that as students interact with the university's academic structures and goals, students personal goals and intentions are continually reshaped through the alignment of their attitude and values (Tinto, 1997). The findings of Pascarella and Terenzin (2005) underpins Tinto's (1997) finding and reported that students are not just shaped academically but even in their identity while studying at a university. Tinto's theory further suggests that when student integration increases it consequently links their personal goals, yet on the other hand if students have a negative experience, they distance themselves from the academic and social community of the institution which results in reduced alignment to mutual objectives. This misalignment or "mismatch" of students' personal values with that of the institution causes stress and can impact objective measures of academic performance (Stephens et al. 2012). When stress becomes excessive or is perceived negatively it impacts students adversely and places their academic futures in jeopardy (Carver & Scheier, 1994). This can cause students to suffer psychologically, physically, socially and educationally, whereas the positive reaction of stress can drive individuals to peak performance and the cultivation of their potential (Baqtayan, Mai, 2001; Kampfe, Mitchell, Boyless & Sauers, 1995; Lazarus, 1990). Students thrive and maximise the learning experience when they are fully engaged academically, psychologically and socially (Cuevas, Schreiner, Laurie, Young and Bloom 2017). It is therefore imperative that institutions maintain a well-balanced academic

environment for improved learning with the focus on students' needs. However in order to attain this, more exploration is required since researchers report a gap in the literature when investigating students personal values and how it in enhances their institutional experience and student satisfaction (Kilbourne, Grunhagen and Foley 2005; Ledden, Kalafatis and Samuel 2007).

2.4 Private Institutions

At the end of the 20th century the demand for private higher education has increased due to the decline in public institutions (Froneman, 2002). The education system in South Africa has expanded in its participation rate by nearly double, from approximately half a million in 1994 to close to a million by 2014 (Shay, 2017). With the rise in population seeking admission at universities, this demand created opportunities for private institutions to fill the gap through delivering educational services and relieving the burden by expanding access (MacGregor, 2008). There is recognition that private providers do play a key role in service delivery and therefore higher education institutions have been called upon to foster public-private partnerships, subsequently improving and developing the cities and regions where they are situated (Bergman, 2014).

The higher education system consists of different sectors, namely, the public higher education sector that consist of universities and a National Institute for higher education; the private higher education sector consisting of registered PHEIs (Private Higher Education Institution's); and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) that implements a quality assurance system for higher education (DHET, 2017). One of the biggest differences between private and

public institutions is that although both offer the same qualifications, private institutions are owned by private organisations or individuals and consequently seldom receive government subsidies (Stander & Herman, 2017).

The public higher education sector consists of 26 universities including eleven general academic universities, nine comprehensive universities and six universities of technology, as well as the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (DHET, 2017). In 2016/2017, 125 PHEI's reflected as registered with the private higher education sector evidencing 147 210 students , however this number fluctuates depending on the economy, accreditation status of programmes and compliance with regulations (DHET, 2017).

The demand for access to higher education in South Africa is surging due to the high population growth, however under the present circumstances, only a few students will be accommodated (Froneman, 2002). The limited capacity of government-sponsored universities and it being inaccessible for prospective students has resulted in an increasing demand for private higher educational institutions in South Africa, as this aids in relieving the demand for higher education (Coan, 2017). This demand is not unique only to South Africa, as there has been a worldwide increase in demand for higher education (HE) which has resulted in the increase of private higher education institutions globally (Stander & Herman, 2017).

Private higher education institutions have rapidly grown in sub-Saharan Africa and have become the “hot spots” in the growth of Christian higher education (Carpenter, 2017). Private higher education institutions have not only grown rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa, but also

globally, for example in the Netherlands, South Africa, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, and South Korea (Theron, 2013). Glanzer (2017) emphasises that the surge in Christian higher education is as a result of the on-going private surge but that it is not of generalised religious surge. Christian higher education played a salient role in this rapid private growth and has become quite dynamic across the continent since the faith-based movement (Carpenter, 2017). This study places Christian higher education within the context of faith-based institutions.

Most democracies do not have an established religion which is why government tends not to lend financial support to religious institutions (Glanzer, 2017). Faith-based institutions as a result are overwhelmingly privately funded and thus dependent on student fees. Due to this self-financing factor, financial pressure is placed on students where fees often result in being much more than state universities. The self-financing factor is classified as one of the most robust stressors that students face and is defined as perceived economic stress which can affect academic performance and attrition rates as it impacts students psychologically, physically, socially and educationally (Adams, Beidas, Meyers, 2016). It is therefore imperative that institutions maintain a well-balanced academic environment for improved learning with the focus on students' needs.

Faith-based institutions are vulnerable to the same challenges facing most private higher education of which there are two major kinds, threatening enrolment size and dilution of core mission (Levy, 2017). Levy (2017) reported that institutions aspire to meet quality and status expectations, however, due to these pressures; there is the

possibility that institutions will lose focus on what was once priority and deviate from its original religious mission.

At the time that this study was conducted there were very few faith-based institutions in the Western Cape that offered a honours degree in Psychology. However, to date one of the institutions is no longer considered a faith-based institution but purely as a higher education institution.

College-decision making process is important as it has a lasting impact on careers, livelihoods, lifestyles of the individual and even on society. It further affects the tertiary system of education in an enormous way (Hossler, Schmidt & Vesper, 2002). In university selection, students go through a series of decision making processes that are multifaceted and influenced by various internal (persona and mental) and external (environmental) factors (Polat, 2012). Personal factors, according to Hossler and Gallagher's 3-stage college choice model, include student search activities, student characteristics, significant others, educational activities and student preliminary college values; whereas the institutional factors include the characteristics of the institution and university search activities (Hossler, Schmidt & Vesper, 2002).

Kuh (2000) stated that institutional environments are inclined to shape and influence students' development significantly but still there is limited research that reports on how students' view their experiences, for example appreciation for human differences, personal values and beliefs, particularly at faith-based institutions. Thus the present study aimed to address the gaps in research by exploring the experiences of Psychology Honours students enrolled at a faith-based institution.

Chapter Three

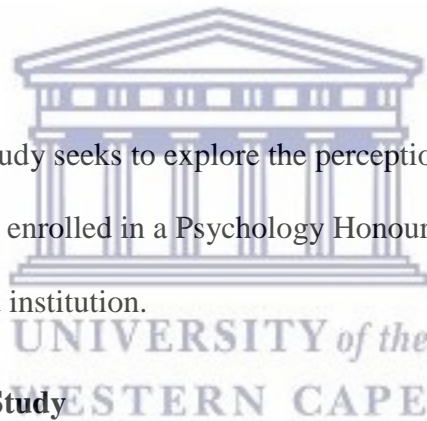
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used in the present study. The chapter explains and justifies the reasons behind research or methodological decisions. Chapter 3 further provides information on the techniques used to collect data and specifies how research participants were selected. All methodological considerations and decisions are therefore summarised in this chapter.

3.1 Aim of the Study

This research study seeks to explore the perceptions and experiences of students enrolled in a Psychology Honours programme at a private, faith-based institution.



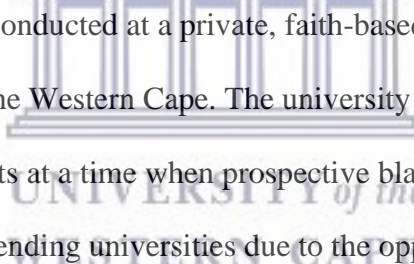
3.2 Objectives of the Study

- To explore students' decision-making process to enrol at the identified institution
- To explore the extent to which students are familiar with the statement of faith of the identified institution
- To determine whether the faith beliefs and values of the students align with that of the institution
- To explore students' perceptions about the impact of alignment or misalignment between their faith beliefs and value systems and that of the institution

3.3 Research Questions

- What were students' decision-making processes to enrol at the identified institution?
- To which extent were students familiar with the statement of faith of the identified institution?
- What was the alignment between the faith beliefs and values of the students and that of the identified institution?
- What were students' perceptions about the impact of alignment or misalignment between their faith beliefs and value systems and that of the identified institution?

3.4 Research Setting



The study was conducted at a private, faith-based higher learning institution in the Western Cape. The university was established in 1970 on the Cape flats at a time when prospective black theologians were excluded from attending universities due to the oppressive laws in the former regime (<https://cornerstone.ac.za/about-us/>). Initially it provided theological education for unqualified pastors on the Cape flats however, over time the institution broadened its focus and now offers accredited certificate, diploma and degree programmes in a variety of academic disciplines, including Psychology, Sociology, Teaching, Business, Interior Design, Theology and Christian Ministry through a combination of contact and e-learning platforms. This institution at the time of conducting the research study was committed to a Christ-centred, biblically-shaped worldview, and their vision still is to prepare leaders for service and to ensure academic competence. The institution consisted of 59 staff members, 22 administrative staff and 37 academic

staff. The student body comprised of 173 e-learning students and 198 campus students (G.Franciscus, personal communication, 2015).

The BA Honours Psychology programme commenced in 1999. The programme was in existence for five years at the time of conducting the study. The programme was re-accredited for a further five years (G.Franciscus, personal communication, 2015). The general intake into the honours program was approximately 30 students for the year. Since September 2015 the institution is no longer classified as a faith-based institution.

3.5 Target Group & Sample

The target group for the present study was students from the 2015 Psychology Honours cohort or intake in the degree programme at the identified institution. The intake for the 2015 academic year, totalled to 35 Honours students (G. Franciscus, personal communication, August, 2015). Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Race, age, gender and other biographic details did not prohibit any eligible student from participating in the study. In order to attempt to generate the widest range of experiences in the interview data, a mix of gender, ethnicity and faith beliefs were considered. The primary inclusion criteria were that 1) students had to be registered for the Honours programme at the identified institution. The sampling was purposive in those eligible students who were identified as having a greater ability to engage in a reflective interview about their experiences. In other words, students who were more expressive and reflective were targeted. Patton (2015) recommended the identification

and recruitment of rich key informants who can be purposively selected for the study. Similarly, Creswell (2007) recommended the identification of potentially rich data respondents to provide the necessary information needed to satisfactorily answer the research question. Potential respondent participants were identified by staff teaching in the Honours programme. Thus, they were familiar with the students and the nature and degree of their participation in class discussions, and in general interactions. The involvement of all staff reduced the likelihood of introducing bias related to the way students interact with particular staff such as the Head of the department or programme coordinator. Potential students were discussed with the researcher and supervisor in terms of the motivations for including them. From a short list of 14 potential students, a final list of 12 names was compiled. The two students who were excluded were identified as radical in their Christian faith and studied theology as undergraduate students at the identified institution. Thus, they were excluded for the purposes of this study. The final list constituted the sampling frame from which the sample was recruited.

Process: Sampling of participants was initiated through an introductory email from the Head of the Department. The email gave an overview of the topic and the purpose of the research, and furthermore allowed for questions to be asked. In keeping with the Protection of Private Information Act, the contact details of students could not be disclosed to the researcher. The email address of the researcher was provided to eligible students and those interested could contact the researcher directly. There were no incentives offered as a result of

participation. After the introductory email, eleven students showed interest and provided their contact details. The researcher contacted all students who showed interest to participate and arranged the interview times. Twelve students were invited to participate in the study of which 11 consented. A process issue was encountered as one male student was unable to successfully schedule an interview and was excluded from the study. Thus, the final sample consisted of ten students. Sampling, data collection and analysis occurred in parallel. In qualitative research the sample size is unimportant since there is more focus on evaluating the quality of the data against the application of it (Sandelowski, 1995). Sampling, data collection and analysis occurred in parallel until saturation was reached after ten participants were recruited.

3.5 Research Approach

This study employed an exploratory research approach. The objective of exploratory research is to gain familiarity or achieve a new lens through which to interpret information and examine the relationship (Reiter, 2017). This approach identifies the environment in which the subject of interest exists, and through the process of observation and analysing, salient variables are identified that might be of significance to the research (Kothari, 2004). This design is beneficial and applicable when interacting with a subject matter on which limited research has been conducted, in order to test concepts before they are put in practice (Stebbins, 2001). The exploratory approach was therefore applicable for the present study due to the limited data of Psychology honours students, particularly those enrolled at faith-based

universities. This approach allowed for a deeper level of understanding on the topic in an attempt to address some of the gaps that existed in the body of literature. Instead of providing final and conclusive evidence, exploratory research explores the research topic on varying levels of depth, forming the basis of more conclusive research (Sing, 2007). As a result, the different experiences of students at a faith based institution were explored, and significant insights were reported on in relation to the present study. Insight into the experiences of Psychology honours students at a faith based institution is important as the students informed the study of their experiences attending a university outside of the mainstream setting and informed the study on how the alignment of religious beliefs impacted them. Exploratory research lays the initial groundwork and paves the way for further study and better understanding (MacNabb, 2004). In this way the present study contributed to fulfilling the exploratory aspect by providing significant insights of student experiences and at the same time forming the basis for further research in relation to this research topic. Exploratory research favours qualitative methods of data collection which include interviews, observations, and analysis which subsequently aligns with this qualitative method (Kothari, 2004).

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants directly by the researcher in order to gather more reliable and meaningful data of Psychology honours students. In-depth interviewing is an effective method for getting people to address sensitive topics such as their personal experiences, feelings and opinions of which they

might feel intimidated and reluctant to share in a group (Oltmann, 2016). Open-ended and hypothesised-directed questions are involved in qualitative research in order to obtain data from participants (Flick, 2009). This method also known as discovery interviews, allows for an opportunity to explore participants motivation and perceptions or beliefs (McLeod, 2014). For the purpose of this study, it was of critical importance that participants' subjective experiences were observed and explored in a manner that left students feeling confident, valued and not judged. The semi-structured approach was well suited as it created an environment where students could give rich descriptions about their attitudes and experiences and it facilitated a deeper and more honest sharing of views and opinions about the identifiable context. Avital and Schultze (2011) described rich data as bringing humans to life and that it produces new ideas and understandings.

The semi-structured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions for participants that is trustworthy and comparable (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This data collection method provided consistency across interviews and it elicited deep reflection about the experiences of students by following a set of questions that was developed in the interview guide (Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews are flexible in its approach as it allows the interviewer the freedom to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Cresswell, 2003). For the purpose of my research I opted for this type of interview as it covered various matters in the study and through the process of probing it expanded the knowledge base of the participants who are attending a faith based institution.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private room at the identified institution to facilitate ease of access and a sense of safety for students. Interviews were approximately forty minutes in length and conducted in English. They were captured by a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. According to Hermanowicz (2002) a more accurate interview report is produced through recording than what is achieved through obtrusive and disruptive on the spot note-taking. Interviews were conducted by the primary researcher and overseen by the supervisor.

3.7 Data Analysis

The method of analysis chosen for this study was content analysis. Content analysis is a general term used for the methods used to reduce information into fewer, content related categories (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The purpose of developing the categories is to describe a phenomenon, and to build a conceptual map of the phenomena being studied (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Content analysis is a suitable method for the simplified reporting of common issues mentioned in data, while at the same time allowing for quantifying aspects of the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This is done by observing frequencies of commonly mentioned terms, words, phrases and ideas. The research quantifies these common categories by counting code frequencies in the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This allows the researcher to provide both descriptive and numerical discussions of the interview data.

A deductive approach to content analysis entails extracting categories based on the research questions (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The research objectives guide the coding and grouping of information salient to the study under similar headings. The three-phase process as set out by Vaismoradi et al. (2013) was followed; preparation, organisation, and reporting.

Preparation entailed the transcription of the interviews and becoming familiar with the data. Manifest content was used as the unit of analysis, as no attempt was made by the researcher to infer meaning onto what was said in the interviews. In the second phase, *organisation*, open coding was done and codes were grouped under potential categories and sub categories. The categories were then compared with each other and in relation to the entire data set to check for any inconsistencies or gaps of missing information. This process was followed until data saturation was reached and no new categories or codes emerged (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). In the third and final phase, *reporting*, the categories and sub categories were described and a conceptual map of the phenomena under study was presented (White & Marsh, 2006). Data is presented both in qualitative descriptions and quantitative descriptions.

For the purposes of the present study a deductive approach was adopted to content analysis. The reporting of categories was done qualitatively with illustrating quotes. Quantitative reporting was limited to frequencies and percentages, and was used minimally.

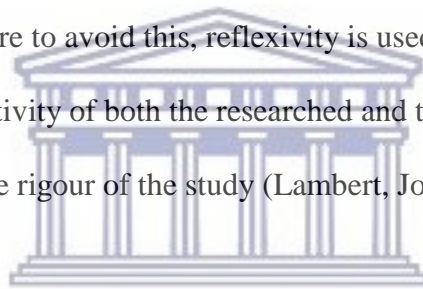
3.8 Rigour

Rigour was achieved by ensuring that there is a correlation between the abovementioned successive steps and the present study. Each stage is traceable and clearly documented so that another researcher can clearly follow the trail used by the investigator and potentially arrive at the same conclusions (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007). A field journal was used to record reflections during data collection, analysis, a write up and supervision which enabled the researcher to track her imprint on the work. In order to reduce bias and misinterpretations, appropriate and precise data collection techniques were employed and a reflective/critical component was incorporated, as well as double raters in the analysis. Extracts from the data was used to support interpretations. These steps were followed in combination with accountability to a supervisor as an external audit which contributed to ensuring that this is a valid account of the research project and furthermore assisted in facilitating reflexivity consistent with the recommendation from Braun and Clark (2012).

Semi-structured interviews allowed for the understanding of students to be cross-validated which enhanced the authenticity of the study as participants were allowed to validate their responses to the interview questions (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Cross-validation is an important quality control strategy employed in qualitative research that allows for greater depth in the interpretation of the study conducted (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). When responses were not clear, participants were asked to verify the accuracy of the information resulting in more conclusive results.

3.9 Reflexivity

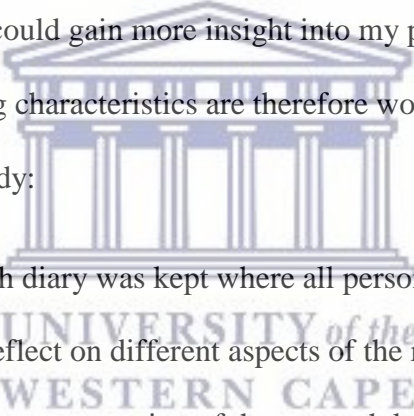
Reflexivity is an essential strategy in qualitative research of becoming self-aware of situational dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee (Finlay, 2002). It is viewed as the process to critically reflect as a researcher on personal biases, feelings and ideological stances (Moon, 2008). Berger (2013) further defines reflexivity as the self-appraisal where researchers are objective and take responsibility of their own situatedness within the research, the impact on the setting, the questions asked, the data collected and the interpretation of these results. The absence of reflexivity leads to obscure results, therefore to avoid this, reflexivity is used to monitor participation and objectivity of both the researched and the researcher which contributes to the rigour of the study (Lambert, Jomeen & McSherry, 2010).



According to Berger (2013) reflexivity is important since all researchers enter the field of research with their own preconceptions. Consequently, it was imperative to be aware of my background and not to go into the field with preconceived notions about the participants as the aim was not to establish objectivity but to gain an accurate reflection and appreciation of subjectivity to the co-construction of knowledge through the research conducted. All data collection and analysis was conducted by the primary researcher. It is of importance to note that I am an alumnus of this institution and I was an employee as well. This past connection was known to some of the participants, but to others this was not known. No details was personally provided and revealed in relation to my experience as a student in order to help

reduce the risk of influencing responses, and to create a space where students would freely reflect on their experiences. My spiritual stance was also concealed to participants and careful attention was observed, avoiding a prejudice stance, when interpreting the data.

Reflexivity was a critical part of establishing rigour in the present study. Studying this population, which has been previously familiar to me, made me realise how acknowledging my identity and experiences could both help and hinder the interpretation of the data (Finlay, 2002). I reflected upon the specific signifiers in order to increase my own awareness of my subject position regarding the subject matter so that I could gain more insight into my potential influence. The following characteristics are therefore worth revealing in order to enhance the study:

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' overlaid in a serif font.

Firstly, a research diary was kept where all personal recordings were noted in order to reflect on different aspects of the research as well as my role within the construction of the research knowledge (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001). My observations, concerns and questions were recorded in cryptic form during the conducting of the interview to aid with greater self-awareness.

Secondly, I am a coloured female who is classified as a phlegmatic personality type. I recognised that my calm, social nature and femininity influenced association with students as they were very comfortable in relating to me during the interviews. This could have been a contributing factor to participants being transparent and vulnerable during the interviews. As a result of these characteristics,

interaction was enhanced and the quality of data, I believe, was enriched.

Thirdly, I am an alumnus of the private institution identified and I completed my honours degree with this institution. During the interview I was very aware of my own personal experiences at the institution, and in addition to this I at times still had my own responses in mind as a result of my subjective experience. It became very apparent to me to start safeguarding against my preconceived ideas to prevent partiality and a linear scope of interpretation. However, likewise, studying areas in which the researcher lacks experience can also present loopholes (Khankeh, Ranjbar, Khorasani-Zavareh, Zargam-Boroujeni & Jansson, 2015). Some of the participants were aware that I studied at the identified institution in previous years as we attended some of the classes together. Being an alumnus provided students with common grounds to relate to me, but this factor could have equally produced conflicting feelings in being totally honest about their experience, if they had their own assumptions or uncertainties about me.

At the time of conducting this research study, I was employed at the identified institution. Therefore taking into consideration the two factors of being an alumnus and an employee at the institution, one can derive from this the possibility that participants perhaps felt threatened by my position held and that they could have hesitated in sharing more information which could have been of value to the study, if my position was different. Or the opposite could also be true, that participants could

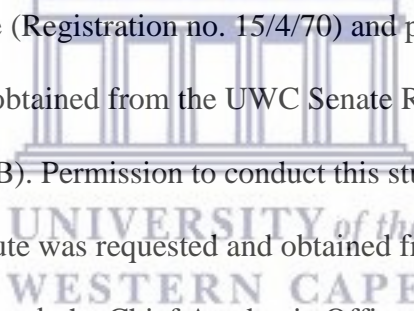
have felt more comfortable to share because of my position of identification and perceived influence. Even though I was employed at the institution, I found myself to be very interested in the topic discussed and eager to hear about student's experiences, since it was very diverse and contrary to what I experienced. I found myself at times absorbed in their experience, following the direction of Mauther and Doucet (2003), where I situated myself socially and emotionally in relation to respondents, which is an important element of reflexivity.

My religious beliefs is that Jesus Christ is God incarnate sent to redeem mankind and to reconcile all creation to Himself through His sacrifice on the cross. I believe in being born again in order to attain eternal life through the confession and repentance of sin and through the divine exchange where God made Jesus to be a sin bearer and we become His righteousness. The participants that were interviewed all had different religious convictions. Even though I believe that there is only one way to the Father, which is through Jesus Christ, I did not allow myself to view any information that was shared through my own religious lens or through a judgemental lens. I was intentional in staying focused on the subject matter so that conceptualisation of the research question was not influenced (Yin, 2015). With this said, I must be honest to add that I brought to the research additional conflict that required on-going reflection. While cognitively I was intentional with respecting the religious beliefs of others, there was a voice within me which refused to accept and was critical of the various different gods that the participants believed in. I realised that I was taking a judgemental stance, thus I had

to deliberately make myself aware of the possibility that these conflicting reactions may tint the way I interpret the data and may hinder my ability to be true to the voice of the respondents.

Furthermore, while conducting the analysis, I became aware that there were many places where I did not probe comments made by the participants. This was in part due to my inexperience as an interviewer and in part my reaction to the content participants shared. To ensure that the data analysis was a trustworthy representation of the themes in the data, rather than reflection of my biases, the supervisor was constantly consulted to consider the accuracy of the analysis.

3.10 Ethics Consideration



Ethics clearance (Registration no. 15/4/70) and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the UWC Senate Research Committee (Appendix B). Permission to conduct this study at the identified private Institute was requested and obtained from The Institution's Review Board, the Chief Academic Officer, the Office of the Registrar and the Head of the Psychology department gave permission for the study to be conducted at this specific research site. All participants were treated in accordance to the ethics guidelines of the University of the Western Cape.

An information sheet was prepared for participants that provided contact information for the researcher and clearly defined the risks, benefits and confidentiality terms. Honest and adequate information was shared with participants regarding the benefits and possible risks involved with participating in the study in the information

sheet (Appendix C). Participant's anonymity was achieved through using codes and removing identifying information. The confidentiality of participants was protected by keeping all files on a password protected computer. Every caution was taken to ensure that participants felt safe, comfortable and had the freedom to withdraw from the study if they felt the need to do so. Participants were informed that elements of their responses would be used in this thesis and that this information will only be handled by the researchers involved.

Referrals to the student counselling department were arranged in the event where students required containment due to distress, emotional dysregulation or existential concerns resulting from sharing their subjective and personal experiences. Although planning and arrangements were set out for this eventuality, it was not required since there were no such instances. Each participant was required to complete an informed consent form confirming their voluntary participation and acceptance of the different procedures involved, such as audio recording (Appendix D).

This study was funded by the National Research Foundation as part of the Thuthuka funding instrument. The study was not been commissioned by the NRF. Neither does it represent the opinions of the NRF. The disclosure of the funding of the present study is to provide transparency about potential influences in the present study.

Chapter Four

Results

The results chapter has been structured in such a way as to present the content summaries around the objectives or research questions and a summary of the sample characteristics.

4.1 Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 3 men and 7 women. All participants were enrolled for the Honours programme in Psychology at the identified institution at the time of this study.

Table 3.1
Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Race	Previous Studies	Faith Beliefs
1	Male	30	White	SACAP	Atheist
2	Female	62	White	Cornerstone	Christian
3	Male	40	White	UWC	Spiritual/undefined
4	Female	42	Coloured	Unisa	Christian
5	Female	47	Black	UCT	Christian
6	Female	26	White	UWC	Christian
7	Female	28	White	UCT	Agnostic
8	Female	22	Coloured	UWC	Christian
9	Female	34	Coloured	UWC	Muslim
10	Male	24	White	UCT	Christian

The age distribution of the respondents who participated in the study is provided in Table 1. The sample included participants who were twenty-two years and older. Four participants were 40 years old and older (40%). The majority of the participants (60%) were between the ages of 22 and 34 years of age. The gender composition of the respondents was 30% male and 70% female. Data was collected from respondents from different ethnic groups, namely, Black/African, White, and Coloured. In terms of the independent variables, Christianity seems to be the most popular religion for all respondents who claimed a religion (40%), followed by other non-Christian religions (60%). Majority of the participants attended public universities before enrolling at the identified institution.

4.2 Content Categories

4.2.1 Reasons for enrolling at a faith-based institution

4.2.1.1. Default Choice

The majority of the participants indicated that they were unsuccessful at other institutions and applied to the identified institution as a default.

“I think if I am honest, the only reason why uhm, I enrolled at [identified institution] was because I wasn’t accepted at the, at the university I applied to. I applied to [name of mainstream institution], I was not accepted for Honour’s and then uhm I find out about [identified institution], I never even knew [identified institution]. If I, if I drive in the main road, I always thought, I thought it was like [name of institution], you finish your matric or something, I didn’t know what it was about.”

(Participant 8)

“I wanted to get in at [name of mainstream institution 1] and I applied there and I applied to [name of mainstream institution 2] and I tried at [name of mainstream institution 3] and I didn’t get in to any of those. Ja, it was to get my Honour’s so that I can eventually, I want to apply for clinical Masters.”

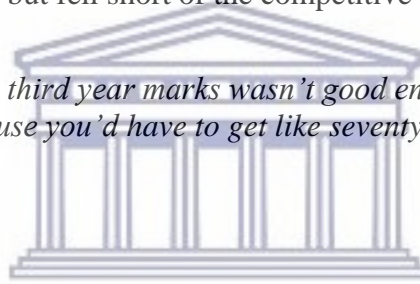
(Participant 6)

“Just the fact that I didn’t get in anywhere else. I, uhm, my plan was to get um I didn’t get in at [name of mainstream institution], well I applied everywhere but I wanted to get into [name of mainstream institution] and I didn’t.”

(Participant 3)

Participants identified that due to the competitive nature of the application process, the cut-off score for selection into the programme was very high. Participants thus met the minimum criterion in terms of academic performance, but fell short of the competitive cut-off.

“...because my third year marks wasn’t good enough ... It’s ridiculous because you’d have to get like seventy five to get into honours.”

**(Participant 3)**

“Uhm, I think my mark it is just shy of seventy five, like seventy four, so I just missed the mark uhm which was very frustrating.”

(Participant 7)

Thus, the participants looked at the alternatives to their initial application to the institutions of choice. The need to complete an accredited training or qualification was a strong consideration and participants did not want to delay commencement of training.

4.2.1.2. Recognition of Qualifications

Some participants indicated that their undergraduate qualification was not accepted by the institutions where they applied.

“To a degree it was practical because [identified institution] recognized my counseling diploma from [name of institution] and [indistinct 0:01:36] whereas [name of mainstream institution] didn’t recognize [name of institution] and weren’t happy with my undergrad degree ,being thirty years old, having no relevance at all anymore because everything moves on.”

(Participant 1)

From the above quotations it becomes evident that the programme at the identified institution was perceived to be a viable alternative to programmes at mainstream universities.



4.2.1.3. Extended Deadlines for Application

The participants indicated that they considered the identified institution only after their lack of success at other institutions was communicated. Outcomes of selections for Honours programmes are communicated late in the year after third year examinations and promotions for bachelors degrees are completed. Participants indicated that the institutions they considered as alternatives were those that had extended deadlines for application.

“The the cut off dates. That was the only university that was still open for registration.”

(Participant 3)

“I enrolled uhm in December of last year, because I wasn’t accepted at any other institution. Uhm I knew about it, but I kind of forgot about it and I thought that the applications probably, the deadlines are probably long due, so then, my friend just asked me to phone uhm, which I did and then I decided to go to them uhm and just ask a few questions, uhm because what I’ve learnt was that it was a faith-based institution. Uhm, I wasn’t sure they would accept me for that reason. Uhm, ja, and then, when I applied, I had to fill in forms and things and then within like two weeks or so, they replied by saying they have accepted my application.”

(Participant 9)

4.2.1.4. Faith-Based Institution a Primary Choice

Enrolment at a faith-based institution was also a decision based on primary choice. Four participants indicated that enrolment at a faith-based institution was an explicit and intentional choice. The alignment between their own faith beliefs and that of the institution was a major consideration for them. Participants mentioned that being at an institution which aligned with their beliefs was attractive to them.

“When I saw [identified institution] I was like ,I was very drawn in that it was a Christian institute and at that time I grew very strong in my faith and at that time I was drawn in by that factor and I thought coming here this is going to be amazing.”

(Participant 6)

The decision to enrol at a faith-based institution was also made in relation to the experiences that participants had at other mainstream institutions and their growth in their faith beliefs.

“I had just um come into a relationship with Christ, and I knew in my spirit I couldn’t return to [name of mainstream institution], so my prayer was I need, I wanna study psychology but I also want to integrate my faith.”

(Participant 4)

4.2.1.5. Size and Nature of the Institution.

Participants indicated that they were drawn to the [identified institution], because of size. The identified institution is a smaller university that would provide a more intimate experience.

“Uh, maybe it is a sense of community here because I also think the classes are small and we do a lot of interaction, so that very, very much. I think that is also why I chose [identified institution], because their classes are small, there’s interaction and in psychology especially and probably even in, in, in Christianity it is nice to be able to talk to others about these things and not just be a number, walk into a big hall and then walk out again.”

(Participant 2)

One participant indicated that the identified institution was a more attractive option than another distance learning or correspondence programme.

So then I was uhm looking into other options, kind of, which other option, like [correspondence course at mainstream institution], uhm and then I thought [identified institution] and I tried in [name of mainstream institution] uhm and [identified institution], got into [identified institution] and [name of mainstream institution] but then I decided to come to [identified institution] because I wanted to be around people, you know”.

(Participant 7)

From the above quote it becomes evident that the overriding consideration for [identified institution] was the connection with other students in a class context.

4.2.2 Knowledge of the Statement of Faith of the [Identified Institution]

Participants were asked if they were aware of or familiar with the statement of faith of the [identified institution]. All participants were

aware that the institution was based on Christian beliefs and values. None of the participants were able to recall an explicit statement of faith of the identified institution. There appeared to be two types of responses to this question:

4.2.2.1 No Knowledge or Awareness of the Statement of Faith

One type of response was that participants reportedly did not have any knowledge or awareness of the existence of a statement of faith.

“No I've never known that, you know, to be honest I didn't even know there was one.”

(Participant 6, Christian)

“No. I'm sure I've read it, I'm sure it's in front of me up the stairs here or something but I'm not religious, it hasn't sunk in. Do want to remind me?”

(Participant 1, Agnostic)

The responses above demonstrate that some participants, whether of the same faith persuasion as that of the [identified institution], or not, weren't aware of the statement of faith. This infers that they did not engage with the faith-based nature of the institution even though they enrolled at [identified institution].

4.2.2.2 Familiarity with the Statement of Faith

Some participants demonstrated an awareness of the statement of faith. When attempting to recall what the statement was, they mentioned several elements incorrectly as they identified aspects that were part of the vision/mission statement and not aspects of the faith statement. These elements included the following:

- Family
- Community
- Kindness
- Love

Some participants were able to identify that the statement of faith spoke of a duty to community, with an ethos of ‘giving back’ to society.

“...all the basics and all the background of the whole Christian faith and we are supposed to grow in our faith and then eventually take this out into society and make changes in society as good Christian leaders.”

(Participant 2, enrolment by choice)

“...does it say something about community and... the ethos?”

(Participant 4, enrolment by choice)

4.2.3 Participant Beliefs and Values

4.2.3.1. Religious Affiliation

Participants were asked to identify their own religious affiliation. Four key religious affiliations or belief systems were reported. Six participants identified as Christian.

“My faith belief is at the end of the day to express God and express Jesus, to be an example to people around me.”

(Participant 10, Christian)

“... I believe very much there is a God. I believe He will come again.”

(Participant 4, Christian)

One participant identified as Christian, but did not elaborate on why s/he held that religious belief.

“I know I believe in God but like why or, or for what reason or whatever don’t - I don’t know, I can’t answer that.”

(Participant 8, Christian)

Two participants identified as Agnostic.

“Uhm, I think I am not religious, probably agnostic or you know verging sometimes on atheist.” So I would say I am more like a humanist if that makes sense, I really believe in, what – like open minded whatever anyone wants to believe in, whatever they want to do then.”

(Participant 1, Agnostic)

One participant identified as Muslim.

“Uhm, I am a Muslim...”

(Participant 9, Muslim)

One participant stated that s/he was more spiritual than religious, and understands God as a universal entity across religions.

“You know it’s interesting because again I was taught that Jesus was there... um but again I wonder if that was that was only a fairy-tale. Because you know it’s interesting if you go back to to Allah, I mean some people say Jesus was a prophet, the same as they say Allah was a prophet... the core, the core, the basics of religion... erm is goodness. It’s just to be good. There’s a bit different, difference because Buddhism and um those things are more about the power is inside you, where Christian and Hinduism and and Judaism is the power’s outside you, so there’s a little bit of difference there. But it’s all about you have to be true, don’t do anything to other people that you don’t want to do, you know, that have to be done to you. So the the wheel turns, the it’s basically the same. All religions are made to be the same.”

(Participant 3, Spiritual/not defined)

4.2.3.2. Values

Participants were asked what personal values they espoused to.

All participants mentioned that they had core personal values.

“Uhm, ... irrespective of what uhm, what faith, what religion, whether you are a Muslim or you are a Christian, I think the core values is still within you.”

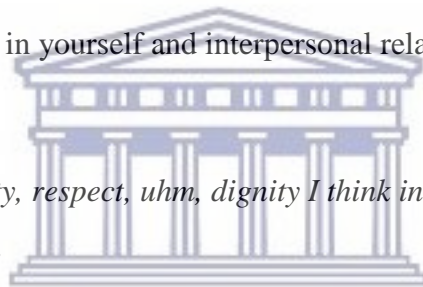
(Participant 9, Muslim)

These core values appeared to be reflective of universal goodness.

These values included

Integrity and Honesty: Four of the participants primarily had these two values in common. They expressed the importance of being true, constant and consistent in yourself and interpersonal relationships.

“Ja like integrity, respect, uhm, dignity I think integrity is a very big one for me”



(Participant 8, Christian)

UNIVERSITY
WESTERN CAPE

“...it’s all about you have to be true...So honesty is very important and I mean really integrity and respect, those are things that’s very important.”

(Participant 3, spiritual/ not defined)

“I should imagine honesty, integrity and reliability, neutrality. Honesty, integrity, reliability, uh punctuality, uhm integrity...”

(Participant 2, Christian)

“My core values; I think it’s honesty and tolerance, I think I sort of sit on those two things”

(Participant 1, Agnostic)

Respect: Participants stated the importance of valuing and honouring others' worth and dignity and being accepting regardless of their background, abilities and beliefs. For some this value furthermore demonstrated and expressed characteristics core to their faith beliefs.

"... and like respect and communication and honour ... So I think uhm I am open to know and understand. I don't judge people."

(Participant 9, Muslim)

"Honesty, respect, humility, you try, at the end of day reflect what we were taught to be, for how we were supposed to express Jesus implicitly explicitly express God."

(Participant 10, Christian)

Empathy: Participants emphasised that even though their values were congruent to the characteristics and values held in the discipline of psychology, they adopted these values because of personal standards, and that it was not mere conformity to the expectations of a particular career choice. They expressed how important and meaningful it is to have deeper insight into the well-being and feelings of others.

"Empathy has always been very important to me. You need to be able to put yourself in the other people's shoes uhm and it felt like I'm just saying like all psychology core values here, but this is what I really hold dear to me ... My values are where forgiveness is a big thing."

(Participant 6, Christian)

Honour: Participants identified honouring others as a value and shared how this quality aided in holding true to their personal faith beliefs and yet being able to hold other religions in high esteem.

"Uhm, I am a Muslim and with that, respect firstly uhm and honor those around you. I think I am a very open kind of person, so it didn't interfere in my personal beliefs and how I see and value things and other people uhm of the Christian faith as well."

(Participant 9, Muslim)

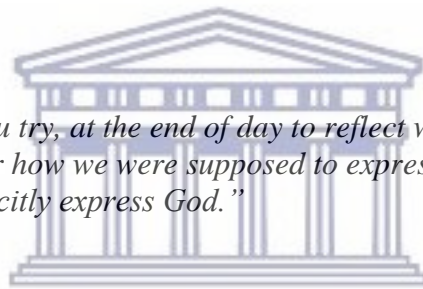
Non-judgement: Participants reflected on the importance of not passing judgement or being critical of others and recognised how the application of their faith values has contributed to their experience at the [identified institution].

“My core values, I definitely feel uhm [prolonged silence] being judged, being non-judgmental is very important. So that definitely played a role, my my yeah that's my, my Christian values definitely played a role in my honours experience, yeah, God has guided me through and yeah and I'm not judging anyone else for wherever they might be so yeah.”

(Participant 6, Christian)

Humility: Some participants expressed a belief in humility; they demonstrated this among their peers and further endorsed it as an expression of divinity.

“...humility, you try, at the end of day to reflect what we were taught to be, for how we were supposed to express Jesus implicitly, explicitly express God.”



(Participant 10, Christian)

Tolerance: Participants reported on their ability and their growth while studying at [identified institution], in tolerating the beliefs and practices of others that differ from their own.

“My core values; I think its honesty and tolerance, I think I sort of sit on those two things. I try to be tolerant to the fact that people do have faith, try to be tolerant of different cultures and nationalities [indistinct 0:04:49] on me, their ways of going about life and more and more I am more honest.”

(Participant 1, Atheist)

Giving Back to or Considering Others: Some participants noted the importance of their involvement in social upliftment by sharing their

knowledge with others and being involved in the community, and to use their education to make counselling services available to those who might not be able to afford it.

“You have to make a difference in the society we live in and I hope to do that through psychology uhm and counselling and I am involved in a lay counselling centre, helping the community those that really cannot afford psychological services, so we work closely with the police, so it is really primary, primary uh psychological care for people.”

(Participant 2, Christian)

4.2.3.3 Alignment between personal and institutional values

For participants who were Christian, the core values they expressed align strongly with those of [identified institution]. In particular, Christian participants felt a strong sense of alignment to the faith-based values and beliefs of the institution and mentioned how this alignment was important to them while studying at this institution.

“It aligns very strongly with it, very very strongly with it, if you read the core values of our institution it is very much the same as mine, but yeah, it is very much the same”

(Participant 10)

“I’d say completely aligned... So, I think that’s what attracts me so to [identified institution]”

(Participant 4)

For participants who were not Christian, personal values were still said to be aligned with those of the institution, given the universal nature of religious values of goodness and kindness. Participants mentioned that regardless of which religion is being considered, the underlying message is the same, those of being a good person. These

participants felt that in that regard, their values do align with those of [identified institution], despite not aligning with the faith of the institution.

“Uhm, I think like [identified institution] or the Institution is obviously you know Christian based, but I don’t necessarily think that I don’t align with the values that it has, like even though I am not like fully – I don’t know religious but I still believe in like the morals and all that stuff.”

(Participant 7)

“Yes it does. Uhm, like we all believe in one God, so irrespective of what uhm, what faith, what religion, whether you are a Muslim or you are a Christian, I think the core values is still within you...”

(Participant 9)

4.2.3.4 Impact of Non-Conforming Beliefs

Four participants who did not identify as Christian reported that there were impacts on the reaction of peers to faith beliefs, on class participation, and on satisfaction with the programme.

4.2.3.4.1 Reaction to Faith Beliefs: Participants who held non-normative faith views such as, agnostics experienced a process similar to “coming out” in which the non-normative belief system had to be disclosed. They also reported that classmates were shocked or surprised at their faith beliefs that left them feeling judged.

“I do feel uhm I have once told someone that I was kind of atheist in a way or agnostic, they kind of, they were shocked, they were kind of, uhm made me feel judged, you know.”

(Participant 7)

Participants in this group also reported that their classmates demonstrated tolerance overall and there were attempts to make them feel at home. Thus being Christian was not experienced as a prerequisite for studying at the institution.

“I guess tolerance they align and certainly by making me feel at home in [identified institution] well I've been made to feel that way at [identified institution] I think that shows tolerance but different people make sense of their lives in different ways... So not greatly but it's certainly enough, you know, it wasn't a prerequisite that I am religious in order to be here”

(Participant 1)

Reaction to Christian beliefs: One participant mentioned that being in a Christian institute helped them to overcome their prejudices toward deeply religious individuals.

“... with something like my first class I think, they came around the class saying why are you studying psychology, several people went, “because God's chosen me to study psychology”, and I just started getting like oh please, it can't just be that, where's your sense of autonomy, your own sense of self. Then I go ok that's their approach and if that's what does it for them then that is what does it for them, I mean I need to reign in my antagonism and just find out where is that coming from and work with that. So that's been quite a good experience for me...”

(Participant 1)

4.2.3.5 Impact on Participation: Participants felt as though they could not be completely honest or themselves at this institution. In class when discussing topics, such as abortion and religiousness, participants felt as though they could not voice their stance on these matters.

“Ja, I think it sometimes like people might be scared to talk about things like uhm abortion or you know something that is not in line with or something like evolution or –uhm like, like you know it's like stuff like that and it's like there is a lot of other people that say like, if they were like psychologist they wouldn't want to work with people who wanted to have an abortion or something like that....maybe I could have been a little bit more myself at another institute but ja”

(Participant 7)

4.2.3.6 The Impact of Religious Alignment on Satisfaction with the Programme:

In terms of religious beliefs, most participants mentioned that not being Christian did not affect their experience negatively at [identified institution]. The main reason for attending this institution was to focus on studying and obtaining a degree, and so the fact that they were not Christian did not impact their experience in this regard.

“I don’t think there is any, any uhm anything that is against it, or let it interfere with my studies. Uhm, like I am there for one goal, uhm and that’s it.”

(Participant 9)

For those who were Christian, the alignment of religious beliefs has a positive impact on their satisfaction with the programme. These participants felt a sense of safety and security during their studies.

“It does align, and there’s definitely a satisfaction aspect with regards to it, because I know people around me also in this course know they are Christians, so you have their accountability ... these people are in a... all kind of have the same views, and you’re always in a safe place, people are not going to judge because you are a Christian”

(Participant 10)

“Definitely because you know what when it boils down to the root of something is very important. If there is something wrong with the root then it's gona[going to] filter down to the students, but definitely I did feel the warmness and there were some lecturers who were really kind and warm and family. I got a strong family sense here and that was definitely because of the Christian culture.”

(Participant 6)

4.2.4 Christian Principles in the Curriculum

Participants were asked whether there were any Christian principles coming through in the teaching and curriculum at the identified institution. The majority of the participants said that Christian values were never explicitly brought into the classroom, particularly at Honours level. However, those who attended [identified institution] for undergraduate studies mentioned that the Christian component came through in the undergraduate course, by way of modules surrounding integration of psychology and Christianity, and having chapel compulsory for undergraduate students. During honours studies, attendance of chapel was not compulsory.

The curriculum was said to be very theoretical and scientific and that Christian beliefs were not brought into these discussions.

“You don't learn actually how you do a psychoanalysis... from a Christian perspective, doesn't compare with the bible, you don't do it like that, this is... I'm growing and learning a lot through studying here.”

(Participant 10)

“They don't use it [Christianity] to teach, in a sense they use Psychology to teach”

(Participant 1)

Three participants said that Christian values are sometimes incorporated indirectly, although this was lecturer specific. All participants identified that they knew that the lecturers were Christian, and mentioned that in some cases a lecturer would pray before or after class, but this did not affect the teaching of course content beyond that.

“No. Definitely not, no. Uhm. No they don't. But some lecturers makes us aware of the fact that you know I am Christian I believe in God, I really have a strong faith base and whatever, but no they don't really integrate it. And I actually like the fact that they don't.”

<http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

(Participant 8)

“Some of the lecturers you know it really depends on the lecturers so some of the lecturers we would actually pray before we would start and that was very nice uhm some lecturers would would incorporate the faith component, but to a really small amount in the lecture but it wasn't across it wasn't a norm across classes it was just if a certain lecturer is very strong in their faith it would come across, but it wasn't a norm and I don't I didn't get the sense like that was the case for all classes.”

(Participant 6)

Two participants expressed their dissatisfaction that the Christian view was not brought into the teaching of courses. These individuals felt that as a faith-based institution, a Christian view should be offered in the learning of theories and therapy techniques.

“So I just felt like there was too much different opinions, different yeah or, or letting there just be one main vision that they put out there yeah . What is [identified institution] is it Catholic or Pentecostal then what are they, you know. What is their identity that needs to be more made more explicit.”

(Participant 6)

“So I think I would like to see more of an integration of faith, at an honours level, in the content.”

(Participant 4)

4.2.5 Sense of Community at Identified Institution

4.2.5.1. Student Community

The majority of participants indicated that the nature of the university, being a small institution with classes up to 25 people made them feel a positive sense of community. A sense of family, belonging and intimacy was expressed by these participants. It was easy to make friends and get to know other students on a personal level.

“I would say that there's a very family like community like very family like setting... There's such a sense of being together...”

(Participant 4)

“...because their classes are small, there’s interaction and in psychology especially and probably even in, in, in Christianity it is nice to be able to talk to others about these things...”

(Participant 2)

Some participants identified that the student mix was diverse and included students from varying demographic groups. They mentioned that they enjoyed being able to interact with individuals from different walks of life and learn about different cultures and backgrounds.

“Hugely and positive as well too, to become a part of an institution for me is, you know, represents the demographics in Cape Town it’s really nice... I got to know students from very different backgrounds and I got on with them as well and accept me because I’m an older guy and I’m white and I’m foreign so it’s been good”

(Participant 1)

Three participants did not experience this environment positively, which may be due to personal preferences. These participants preferred to be alone or not have to interact on an intimate level every day. In particular, older participants felt as though they did not share much in common with other students at [identified institution] and were there to study and not socialise. However, these participants did not express displeasure towards the student community at this institution.

“I came to finish my honours degree. I have a life, like I said I’m forty so I have a life outside... uhm so I’m not interested in in in connecting to community here.”

(Participant 3)

“People at [identified institution] is just really, really friendly and I think I am not, I’m not like that, I am not really friendly... like I don’t like a lot of people and like why are we smiling, why we greeting ten times, uhm why are we smiling at each other all the time? I don’t, that is not me so uhm, I don’t really like that, because it is not me, it’s not what I am used to, it is not how I go about doing things, so uhm, no it hasn’t, because I, I don’t I am not like that.”

(Participant 8)

Those who identified as Christian felt as though faith played a role in their sense of community, in that they were able to interact with like-minded people and share their experiences with one another and be understood.

“...there's a very family like community like very family like setting. but I felt like the students that came in here, their expectations and their walks of life ,they also were drawn in by the Christian component and that was where I could really, you know, go deeper with my, with my faith.”

(Participant 6)

“Oh fellow students? Ja, it came a time when I would confuse the dates, the days and the timings of the class and or there was a time when I was logged off and several of them that I requested for help supported me.”

(Participant 5)

Those who were not Christian stated that their religious non-alignment did not affect their sense of community in any way. It was mentioned that in some cases participants felt different to other students at [identified institution], being that they weren’t Christian, and felt awkward when praying or saying phrases such as, “bless you”.

“You know it’s interesting I have brought with me since I have some people in my class that I know that think’s being gay is wrong because they are such fanatic Christians... I’m very extremely over sensitive when it comes to people sort of ditching me because of that, and I haven’t picked that up”

(Participant 3)

“The people that I have worked with at [identified institution] immediately will be like God bless you stuff like that at the end of a sentence then I will be like you too [laughing] ...stuff like that which you know makes me feel a little awkward because uhm I think it is nice to you know get received like with a blessing, feels weird for me to say it back because you know stuff like that so you know I felt like that...”

(Participant 7)

“There was a kind of foundation that Christian people uhm and Muslim people in my class at that time, we did what we were supposed to do and like the religion did not like separate us in any way.”

(Participant 9)

4.2.5.2 Staff/Lecturer Community

Four participants stated that “you are more than just a number” at the identified institution, referring to larger universities not being as intimate and close-knit. Lecturers were said to be very caring, attentive, and available to students, which was a different experience to larger universities. Three participants mentioned an ‘open door policy’, in that if a student needs advice, assistance or guidance, there was always a lecturer or staff member willing to provide support. Participants experienced lecturers showing concern for student’s wellbeing, and often discuss stress, coping and progress with their students in class. Participants felt as though the staff at the identified institution genuinely cared about their wellbeing and academic careers.

“...I was able to actually approach lecturers easily, they were more open to approach about assignments.”

(Participant 6)

“Um there’s a personal a very authentic interest in your life and I found that in the in the psych honours programme many spaces within lectures have created for us to get really up close and personal, tears have been shed, um students feel comfortable to share very real stories.”

(Participant 3)

“It is not like there are three hundred in a classroom, so there is a lot of like interaction. Uhm, the lecturers are, they know you by name basically, not by number.”

(Participant 9)

“So there’s such an open door policy and that your voice matters...”

(Participant 4)

“Yes, you just a number, you are just a face somewhere there, where here we interact with the lecturers, you know them by name, they know us, (indistinct 0:10:16.0) support, so you can pick up people are not going wild, you work with this, and you can also stop a lecturer and explain it again, actually get (indistinct 0:10:27.7) clarity on what has been spoken about, so as you build relationships with the people around you in your class, you know how to interact with or interact with each other but also how to integrate our own views on the information, almost like a counseling session or a bible study or something like that where you can actually debate about something, break it down, different views and come to a conclusion of a group. The lecturers are different, there’s is something unique to them... they care about people in the classes ... we are not numbers, we interact with actual people, with emotion and who understand what is going on in people’s lives. It is not just money focused, it is actually interaction focused... here we interact with the lecturers, you know them by name, they know us.”

(Participant 10)

“It’s not only, maybe it’s not only their faith, but the maybe it’s the type of the people they are... I was surprised that they know that particularly this time of the year students they are stressed, the way they are feeling, so we find lecturers come to class, first of all trying to find out how people are doing... So that would encourage me to spend a little more time not like where I find you are being bashed or somebody is out to catch you.”

(Participant 5)

4.2.6 Academic Growth

Participants noted that they experienced academic growth while being at the identified institution, although none of the participants

ascribed this to the institution being Christian, but rather to the quality and nature of the classes and teaching. Two participants stated that they were able to do more work and achieved higher grades since enrolling at the identified institution, which was ascribed to the level of support offered. One student pointed out that while he may not have grown academically, his ability to express himself and work in a group has significantly improved. Four participants attributed their achievements in grades to their personal motivation and not as the result of the institutions influence.

“I think I have done well academically but I am very uhm motivated because I want to get a good mark because uhm I really want to get into Master’s so it hasn’t been a problem.”

(Participant 7)

“...The fact that this is a Christian based organization?...No, not at all. Not at all.”

(Participant 3)

“...Academically I could do more than triple the amount that I could ever at [name of mainstream university]. Uhm because just I think of the extra care given here that has definitely allowed me to feel free to...I dunno how to explain this. It allowed me to feel not judged that’s why I felt more free to, to try and when I tried I actually felt that you know what it wasn’t that far from where I was in the first place”

(Participant 6)

Students appreciated the interactive nature of teaching, role plays in particular. Some expressed their appreciation towards the course not only being theory based, but that there was a practical implementation of theory through role-plays.

“I think it is fantastic because there is so much interaction, it is not just pure academics. We, we, we talk to each other and we do role play.”

(Participant 2)

“Role plays gave me an opportunity to practice my interpersonal skills and put theory to practice, and I enjoyed it even though I never done it before. Because we were given opportunities to do more than one role play, I was able to improve my skills, which I did because my marks went up since completing the first one.”

(Participant 6)

“...and it's it, it seems like the program is more directed towards not just the knowledge but the implementation of it.”

(Participant 3)

4.2.7 Spiritual/Personal Growth

Those who were not Christian indicated that they were able to be respectful and open-minded towards other students who were religious, although they did not grow spiritually or religiously in their time at the institution. Personal growth was also noted by the majority of participants, having experienced a positive impact on their life and well-being. Christian students reportedly grew in their faith since they were surrounded by like-minded individuals who encouraged and supported them. Prayer and reading was used to cope with stress and anxiety for these students, which strengthened their faith.

“I've grown a lot with regards to my beliefs, I grown in my personal life through studying here. The thing is you pick up and you realize the people are different, the lecturers are different, there's something unique to them. They are not just... they care about people in the classes, so in growth I've grown a lot, a lot of people in my class have grown, so it definitely has a positive effect in my life”

(Participant 10)

4.2.8 Recommendation

4.2.8.1 Recommend Institution to Other Students

All participants said that they would recommend the institution and programme to any potential students. The main reason stated was due to the community-oriented environment, interactive classes and extra support available to students.

“I would recommend [identified institution] for anybody who wants to do psychology or study in a smaller institute, where you actually have people interaction with lecturers, definitely has a positive effect and I will definitely affiliate myself. I would highly recommend this institution to anybody.”

(Participant 10)

“I mean I really, I would recommend this institution to someone else, I would say it’s a good place to study.”

(Participant 7)

4.2.8.2 Recommendations for Improvements

In terms of recommendations for improvements participants made regarding the Honours programme, participants main recommendations were administrative and not directly related to the course content.

“I think that um I would and I don’t know if this happens but it maybe happened already but I would think that that and I’ve touched on that before, it’s all of these different lecturers, they have to have more commonality, in the fact that they they aah, it feels to me like if they know more of what is going on in this institution, if they spent more time here, they will maybe be better lecturers for =[identified institution]= students. Not not that they not good lecturers that’s not what I’m saying but if you get my drift?”

(Participant 3)

“I think for me, I had so many different lecturers. They were so different they have different personalities but they were so different to where there faith was. They were different I think maybe for them to come on par with what it is that they going to put out to the students because I'm hearing different things all the time. So I'm praying at the beginning of a test. Some don't, some do, some don't, just to have like one main pattern of vision, main pattern of how they do things when it comes to the faith-based things. So I just felt like there was too much different opinions, different yeah or, or letting there just be one main vision that they put out there yeah. Uhm yeah for everyone to, to, to just know that there's one vision and not six...”

(Participant 6)

With regards to the course itself, participants suggested more practical experience and group work be integrated into the programme.

“That is what I all appreciated here at [identified institution], it was practical application of what you are learning and it would have been nice if that could have happened.”

(Participant 2)

“It [could] be more uhm practical uhm, maybe get some experience or whatever, uhm it wasn't like that it's really theory based. it was just lectures, lectures, lectures, ja.”

Participant (6)

Two participants suggested that the course be more integrative with Christian principles, possibly with an ‘integration module’ with psychology and spirituality combined.

“I expected a little bit more explicit Christianity coming through, because of my past, that is where we had Christian psychology subjects and all, a Christian appraisal on most of the subjects to determine how to interpret and express the psychological interventions from a Christian perspective.”

(Participant 10)

“I think if the modules are maybe more of a reflection of the faith-based teaching... So I would perhaps like to see at a honours level I'd like to see a like to see a module called integration of faith and psychology.”

(Participant 4)

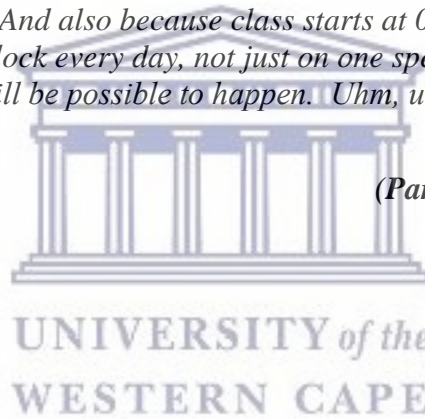
“...you wouldn't you wouldn't hear a mention of where the Christian component comes in at all and I also felt that uhm you know just for example like hypnosis uhm I know from a Christian perspective they taught that uhm as normal in psychology they taught it but they didn't actually bring in a component to say you know according to Christian principles this is their view on it so I feel like they don't make clear the Christian perspective when it comes to very important details.”

(Participant 6)

A prayer room for Muslim students was also suggested, since there are a number of Muslim students studying at [identified institution].

“Uhm, no, once I was thinking of having like a facility where we, where I can pray, but because there is so a minority of Muslim students, I don't think it would be possible to create a space for that. And also because class starts at 01:00 and we pray at one o'clock every day, not just on one specific day, so I don't think it will be possible to happen. Uhm, uhm, ja, that's all.”

(Participant 9)



Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter contains a brief overview of the findings for each of the study's research objectives. A discussion of how the study's findings relate to the empirical literature occurs next. Finally, a discussion on the future research opportunities that touch on postgraduate studies at private faith-based institutions occurs at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Objective 1: Exploring Students' Decision-Making Process to

Enrol at the Identified Institution

Two clear categories emerged: 1) students for whom enrolling at a faith-based institution was a preferred and explicit choice, and 2) students for whom it was a default choice.

5.1.1 Preferred choice

There was a smaller group of students for whom the identified institution was their primary choice. This finding may indicate that religious belief was not as critical in comparison to the need for access as mentioned above. Davignon and Lyon (2014) correspond with this outcome stating that only a small percentage enrolled at the institution was based on its religious identity.

Students who intentionally selected the programme at the identified institution reported three core considerations. First, students chose this programme and institution, because of their religious beliefs.

Their desire to study at a faith-based institution was seemingly rooted in the wish to have greater alignment between their educational and personal/ spiritual beliefs. For these students the pursuit of training in Psychology had to be infused with or informed by a Christian philosophy. The alignment students sought resonated with (Stephens et al. 2012) who argued that students perform optimally when there is alignment between their personal values and that of the institution.

Some of the students indicated that the nature of the degree programme was the key consideration. The student wanted to attend a class-based interactive programme as opposed to a correspondence programme. When accepted into two programmes, the taught component that is in residence outweighed working independently via correspondence. A study conducted by Kemp and Grieve (2014) compared Psychology students preference for correspondence learning to traditional classrooms and found that students preferred the traditional classroom experience. It was reported that the face to face time stimulated greater engagement in the academic program.

Similarly, some students indicated that their preference was to study at a smaller institution which will give them a more intimate and personal experience. Student performance is significantly influenced by the institutional factors such as the size of the institution, size of classes, student-teacher ratios and the nature of the course (Tinto, 1993). This might be in reaction to other experiences at mainstream universities or be indicative of personal preferences. Thus size of the institution was an important consideration for students in selecting their preferred choice.

5.1.2 Default Choice

The majority of the participants enrolled at the identified institution by default. The primary consideration was that they were not accepted into Honours programmes at mainstream universities.

Participants experienced an urgency around registering for the Honours degree and were prepared to register at any institution offering an accredited programme. This finding then concurs with literature that private faith-based institutions address a clear market need (Coan, 2017). Du Preez and Roos (2008) stated that the demand for access in the honours programmes far exceeds the available places at government-funded institutions. The identified institution may be attracting more students for whom the programme was a key factor rather than the faith-based status of the university.

An important consideration that emerged was the extended deadlines for application. The outcomes of applications to Honours programmes are communicated late in the year. Students who have not applied widely are under pressure to find alternatives at that time. Participants identified that the identified institution had an extended deadline for applications which allowed students who were unsuccessful elsewhere to submit applications. This seemed to be an important factor in the ability of the identified institution to access the market of eligible candidates.

The competitive nature of honours programmes gave rise to the cut off points for successful candidates to be very high. One participant indicated that s/he was unsuccessful because the marks fell just below the cut off. The cut off for selection was higher than the cut off for eligibility. Thus this supports the notion that the demand (number of

eligible candidates) far exceeds the number of places available. Thus many candidates with good academic transcripts are eligible, but fall short of high cut-off scores.

A participant indicated that access to other institutions limited at his base or prior qualification was not recognized. Thus eligibility became an issue. Mainstream universities are reluctant to engage in the complex administrative processes to determine equivalence for alternate or less familiar base qualifications. The willingness of the identified institution to engage with establishing equivalence expanded their potential niche market.

5.2 Objective 2: Exploring the Extent to which Students Are Familiar with the Statement of Faith at the Identified Institution

The findings indicated that participants were not familiar with the statement of faith. Upon probing, participants were able to identify some elements from the mission statement rather than the statement of faith. The lack of awareness of the existence of a statement of faith may be a function of a confluence of factors. First, individual students might be more interested in programmatic information than in institutional issues, especially if attending the institution was a default choice. At a macro level, faith-based institutions are required to have a statement of faith that defines it as such. Thus it relates to the registration process of institutions of higher learning with the Council of Higher Education. Once registered, the institution is required to display the registration certificate and not the statement of faith. The institution is responsible

for implementing of the content of the statement of faith whether it is through pedagogy or the culture of the institution. This it is a statement of intent that students are more likely to encounter in the process of their studies. One way in which it is implemented is by incorporating it into the vision and mission statement which is not as readily engaged with by students than by staff in organizational structures and processes. The findings resonate with the assertion from Daniels and Gustafson (2016) that the institution is responsible for implementing the contents of the faith statement practically. These authors further argue that there is variation in the extent to which it is done intentionally and explicitly for students to have a clear sense of the statement of faith.

5.3 Objective 3: Determining whether the Faith Beliefs and Values of the Students Align with that of the Institution.

Participants who shared the same faith of the intuition consequently had their core values strongly aligned with that of the institution. When the faith was aligned with that of the institution, it had a positive impact on their overall performance. This is supported by Stephens et al. (2012) stating that students' performance is optimal when the values of the institution are aligned with that of the student and vice versa. When this is not the case and misalignment is experienced this also has the potential to cause stress.

The findings indicated that participants whose faith beliefs were misaligned with that of the institution did not report distress. They reported that they found other ways of identification than aligning to

the faith beliefs of the institution. There was an alignment between values espoused by the discipline of Psychology, the institution and the participants. In particular, the commitment to capacity development, empathy, sense of community and social justice emerged in various forms as valued around which students formed identifications. Thus the findings indicate that there was misalignment of faith beliefs, however there was alignment of values. Some of the values were considered universal, and germane to the discipline of Psychology. Thus, students attracted to the field subscribed to values that resonated with many values subsumed in the faith statement of the institution. This finding was supported by Hartley (2004) who reported that there was an alignment of values found in religious beliefs and institutional values. This author specifically reported that secular institutions shared many values with religion. This includes academic growth, interpersonal growth and giving back to the community. This could help explain participant's alignment to the values of the institution even though their religion was different.

Innate characteristics also contributed to the shared values between participants of a different faith with that of the identified institution. Some individuals have a natural inclination toward helping others and embody innate characteristics such as empathy, compassion, non-judgment, tolerance, etc. (Brown, 2018). These characteristics, which are suitable for the psychology discipline, naturally align with some of the values of the institution, regardless of religion. This therefore indicates that the faith-based status of the institution manifested more in the relationship with students than the content, and in that way it did not impact retention and throughput.

5.4 Objective 4: Exploring Students' Perceptions about the Impact of Alignment or Misalignment Between Their Faith Beliefs and Value Systems and that of the Institution

Overall participants expressed satisfaction with the programme. Four content categories were identified that captured the ways participants expressed their satisfaction with the programme namely, sense of community, integration of religion into curriculum, growth and recommendations.

5.4.1 Sense of Community

Majority of the participants reported on experiencing a positive sense of community at the identified institution. Participants conveyed that they experienced a sense of family, belonging, intimacy, and cultural diversity. The sense of community, perceived by participants was also evident in the positive interactions with academic staff. A comparison was made between lecturers at mainline universities and that of the identified institution and it was said that lecturers showed more care and willingness to help in comparison to the mainstream universities where they were treated as “just a number” because of less student-lecturer engagement. Lecturers appear to have embedded the institutional values and contributed to achieving the institutional objectives as a common goal.

The results resonated with the literature. For example, Schreiner (2017) stated that a community spirit was perceived by students at faith-based institutions as a result of staff aligning to the values that

inherently embody a nurturing attitude towards the community.

Similarly, Jackson (2015) reported that a sense of belonging was positively correlated with student satisfaction of the program.

A small percentage of the participants expressed displeasure toward the community culture as they felt that they had nothing in common with other students and preferred to be left alone. This, yet again, points to the prevailing feature that some participants purely focused on obtaining a degree, showing a lack of interest to all other peripheral engagements.

5.4.2 Integration of Faith in the Curriculum

Majority of participants reported that faith-based perspectives were not explicitly conveyed in the curriculum. Participants stated that when Christian values were incorporated it was implicit and lecturer specific. The program purely included academic content and did not have a Christian slant. The faith-based status manifested more in the relationship with the students than the content. In that way, it did not impact retention, throughput and satisfaction with the programme.

Faith-based institutions do not always integrate the faith beliefs into the curriculum (Korniejczuk, 2007). A minority group was dissatisfied with this lack of integration since they were left to interpret and integrate the psychology content with faith-based principles on their own. According to (Gaeddart, 2014) students do not always appreciate having to construct meaning on their own.

5.4.3 Growth

Honours programmes in Psychology are expected to have growth as an outcome. Participants reflected on two types of expected growth in their responses, namely academic and spiritual growth.

5.4.3.1 Academic Growth. All participants affirmed that they progressed in their academic growth since enrolling at the identified institution. Participants attributed the achievement of academic knowledge and interpersonal skills to the quality and nature of the classes, and to the pedagogical approaches that were implemented by lecturers. Various pedagogies use experiential learning which gives students an opportunity to apply the course content, namely action learning, laboratory work, reflective practice, small group interactions and role-plays (Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 2003). The pedagogy strategies that were employed by lecturers were group work and role-plays. The interaction in the classroom was appreciated by most participants, as the active engagement contributed to greater confidence in self-expression and it improved grades. A study conducted on role-playing underpins this finding that students experience role-plays to be “refreshing innovations in learning and teaching” and that it has a positive impact academically (Kilgour, Hinze, Petrie & Long, deBerg, 2015). The co-operative learning strategy created opportunities for collaborative learning, where students worked together in groups stimulating further growth in participants. Shreiner and Yu (2016) reported a significant and positive relationship between student engagement and academic performance which underscores the validity

of the engagement framework. These authors argued that integration and engagement are important ingredients in improving academic performance.

Participants further accredited their academic progress to the supportive institutional culture that exists. They found lecturers to be very supportive and concerned about their overall well-being. Higher levels of student satisfaction through relationship with lecturers affect student motivation and leads to greater commitment to the institution (Strauss & Volkwein, 2004). Participants perceived this supportive student-lecturer interaction as influencing factors that increased the quantity and quality of the work attained. While some participants attributed their academic growth to external factors, others attributed it to intrinsic motivation.

5.4.3.2 Spiritual/Personal Growth. Results indicate that all participants who did not ascribe to the faith of the institution experienced no spiritual or religious growth. The spiritual climate of the institution had a significant impact on some participants, while others were not impacted at all in their spirituality. Spirituality in university students' lives plays a significant role in their well-being regardless of whether they identify and align with the institutional values or not (Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), 2004, 2005). The participants who did not identify with the faith of the institution emphasised that their lack of growth did not mean that they were indifferent in their attitude towards those of dissimilar faith beliefs.

Participants' reported on demonstrating their values of being open minded and respectful of others choices and identity. The Christian participants however reported on their spiritual growth and attributed it to the supportive institutional environment as well as being amongst people who are encouraging and like-minded.

The findings indicate that the majority of students encountered personal growth through their positive experience at the institution. Quinlan (2011) encouraged an integrated view of holistic student development where the focus should not just be on students' academic growth but also on other aspects such as maturing emotionally and morally. The effects of a holistic approach can lead to students contributing to the larger community.

Most participants confirmed that they experience stressful times because of the demand of the programme. Stress has become a devastating problem at every level, namely personal, social, and institutional (Reddy, Menon & Thattil, 2018). Participants reported on using different coping strategies in dealing with the stress that they experience, namely, reading and through prayer. Coping strategies are employed to cope with the situation (Lo, 2017).

5.4.4 Recommendations

As an expression of their satisfaction with the programme, participants identified recommendations they would make. Two types of recommendations were identified. First, recommended improvements to the programme. Second, whether they would recommend the programme to other eligible and potential students.

5.4.4.1 Recommendations for Improvements. Suggestions for potential improvements were shared by participants. What emerged were the programmes administrative operations, no recommendations were given in relation to the course content. Participants stated that they would like to see greater shared aims amongst lecturers as they perceived them to be “all so different” and further expressed a desire for greater lecturer presence. They associated this to the lack of lecturer presence at the institution since lecturers who came in to teach left again after class, and to the lack of aligning with the institutional core values and aims of the institution. Institutions are driven by specific vision and mission, however one of their major challenges and failings is losing touch with it and not reinforcing or bringing alignment throughout its structures, therefore participants expressed confusion with all the conflicting opinions shared in classes that were contrary to the faith-beliefs of the institution (Leslie & Fretwell, 1996).

As previously discussed participants enjoyed the interactive nature of the class setting, however some felt that the curriculum still required more practical experience and group work. Some participants expressed an expectation that the curriculum would be integrated with Christian principles, but found out while studying there, that this was not the case. They therefore recommended a curriculum that would be integrated as this would complement their interests to a greater extent since this was one of the factors that attracted them to the institution (Schreiner, 2000).

A prayer room for Muslim students was suggested since their numbers are increasing at the institution. Although the participant suggested this, she already felt disqualified as she reported that they were in the minority. This was consistent with Wexler (2015) who stated that muslim students struggle to ask their colleges for a space on the campus — not necessarily a space of their own, but a quiet place to pray in private.

Participants of different faith beliefs perceived that that they were not accommodated in their religious needs and expressed the desire for the institution to create a religious space that would cater for their needs as well and in this way embrace diversity. The participant also stated that their prayer times clashed with class times and that this still would not be possible in the event where this suggestion was considered.

5.4.4.2 Recommendations to Other Eligible Students.

Participants expressed a willingness to recommend the identified institution to eligible students. The reasons given for their recommendation included the sense of community, interactive classes and the extra support leaned. Anghel and Orindaru (2014) affirm this and reported that amidst some differences that students experience at institutions, the ultimate satisfaction indicator is students' willingness to recommend the institution to their peers. Based on these results, a conclusion is drawn that participants were overall satisfied with their experience at the identified institution.

5.5 Conclusion

This research study was conducted with Psychology honours students at the identified institution. A sample of 10 participants was recruited for the study from this particular Psychology honours cohort. The current study was exploratory as it highlighted research on a subject that has not been exhaustively investigated to date. The study aimed at exploring the subjective experiences of Psychology honours students enrolled at a faith based institution. Four core objectives were developed to explore students' experiences in 1) Their decision-making process to enrol at the identified institution, 2) The extent to which students were familiar with the statement of faith of the identified institution, 3) Determining whether the faith beliefs and values of the students align with that of the institution 4) Exploring students perceptions about the impact of alignment or misalignment between their faith beliefs and that of the institution. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim. The resulting transcriptions were subjected to a content analysis.

The findings suggest that there were many factors influencing the decision to enrol at a faith-based institution. The results underscore that the demand for study places in Honours Psychology programmes exceed the demand. The identified institution was able to cater to the niche market by providing an accredited programme as an option albeit at a private, faith-based institution. The students enrolled in the Psychology Honours programme at the identified institution is not a homogenous group and includes a large proportion of students who did not identify with the particular faith on which the institution was based.

The statement of faith was not explicitly promoted, but manifested in the institutional culture and how students and colleagues were relating to it. Consequently, student satisfaction was not impacted negatively by the lack of alignment between the faith beliefs of students and that of the institution. Students were able to form meaningful identifications with the institution around particular value ideals. These values were informed by general humanitarian principles and discipline-specific values, as well as personality traits that are suitable for the discipline. This program in Psychology attracted people with similar views and interests in humanitarian work which gave them a unifying and homogenous experience far more prominent than the faith-based component. Students reported a strong sense of community and belonging at the identified institution.

The program in Psychology was purely academic and discipline-specific, and did not integrate faith into the curriculum. The program aimed particularly to provide students with the advanced theoretical knowledge and applied skills in the specified field. Furthermore, it aimed to extend students undergraduate knowledge through the integration of theoretical knowledge with the development of social science research competencies and practical skills. The identified institution did not deviate from their aims. Students reported overall satisfaction with the programme at an academic and social level.

5.6 Limitations to the Study

The following limitations are acknowledged by the current research and should be noted to help with the interpretation of the results.

The sample used in the study is small, limited to Psychology honours students at the identified institution as a cohort; it is therefore a very small percentage of students. This study therefore provides limited insights about student choice, student expectations and experiences and these findings cannot be generalizable to the population of the identified institution or other context. The sample size, nevertheless, was adequate to indicate general trends in an explorative manner and provided significant findings.

A limitation with regards to the objectives of the study indicated that it was not set out to look at performance as an objective criterion and rather explored satisfaction and completion in the program. The subsequent failure to explore this key factor hinders the advancement of knowledge.

As the interview progresses, the participant should begin to engage in more in-depth descriptions (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). The use of open ended questions and probing will generate greater knowledge into the interviewer's experiences and maintain interaction. As a novice researcher, thinking quickly in the interview and deciding how far to probe in the moment was a challenge, consequently not following up on certain questions due to a lack of exploration, limiting the depth and richness of the data collection. This limitation as a novice researcher furthermore contributed to the data

only supporting a content analysis for the reason that the quality of the interviews was not as robust and only supported content analysis.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Study

Future research could examine the experiences of undergraduate Psychology programmes at private institutions. Further studies will broaden understanding of student experiences and will help facilitate desired outcomes at different types of private institutions. It will furthermore add value to research in exploring Psychology undergraduate students' experiences, as these students have to compete and enter into mainstream programmes. There is still more to learn about how private institutions impact student experiences.

Future research could replicate the current study and follow up on the trajectories of the population sample which would be of significant value. The study could evaluate whether students pursued a Masters degree and/or exploring their alternative careers paths chosen.

5.8 Significance of the Study

The findings clearly suggest that faith-based institutions are not homogenous and that students enrolled at a faith-based institution are not homogenous. The population sample consisted of a diverse group of students with different faith-beliefs.

The study indicated that adherence to the Psychology discipline requirements were followed more strongly than the adherence to the faith-based requirements. A finding in the literature by

Stephens et al. (2012) reported that alignment produces best success, and this study further qualifies that alignment does exist between the core values of participants and the participant's discipline of choice, and not necessarily that participants' faith beliefs were aligned with that of the institution. Thus still resulting in success and no threat in retention and throughput.



References

- Abel, E., & Louw, J. (2009). Registered counsellors and professional work in South African Psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39(1), 99-108.
- Abiddin, N.Z., & Ismail, A. (2011). Attrition and Completion Issues in Postgraduate Studies for Student Development. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(1), 15-29.
- Academy of Science of South Africa. (2010). The PhD Study: An evidence-based study on how to meet the demands for high level skills in an emerging economy. Retrieved from <http://www.assaf.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/40696-Boldesign-PHDsmall-optimised.pdf>.
- Adams, D. R., Meyers, S., & Beidas, R. S. (2016). The relationship between financial strain, perceived stress, psychological symptoms, and academic and social integration in undergraduate students. *Journal of American College Health*, 64(5), 362-370. doi:10.1080/07448481.2016.1154559.
- Altmaier, E. M. (1983). *Helping students manage stress*. San Francisco: JosseyBoss Inc.
- Arthur, J. (2006). *Faith and Secularisation in Religious Colleges and Universities*. New York: Routledge.
- Arambewelaa, R., & Hall, J. (2011). The role of personal values in enhancing student experience and satisfaction among International postgraduate students: an exploratory study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 1807 – 1815.
- Baquatayan, S. (2011). Stress and social support. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 33(1), 29-34. doi: 10.4103/0253-7176.85392.
- Barrett, D., & Twycross, A. (2018). Data collection in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 21, 63-64.
- Barry, C., & Nelson, L. (2005). The role of religion in the transition to adulthood for young emerging adults. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 34, 245-255.
- Beer, C., & Lawson, C. (2017). The problem of student attrition in higher education: An alternative perspective. *Journal of Further*

- and Higher Education*, 41(6). doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2016.117717>.
- Berger, R. (2013). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219-234. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>.
- Bergman, R. 2014. Towards more effective higher education collaboration for development in thegauteng city-region. Retrieved from
http://www.gcro.ac.za/media/reports/gcro_occasional_paper_8_bergman_higher_education_november_2014.pdf. ISBN 978-0-620-642323.
- Bielefeld, W., & Cleveland, W.S. (2013). Defining faith-based organisations and understanding them through research. *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 42(3), 442-467. doi:10.1177/0899764013484090.
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2001). *How to Research Second Edition*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Blunt, B.A. (2000). Students' spiritual integration into bible colleges: a grounded theory study. (Dissertation).
- Bokana, K.G., & Tewari, D.D. (2014). Determinants of Student Success at a South African University: An Econometric Analysis. *Anthropologist*, 17(1), 259-277.
- Bowen-Reid, T. L., & Smalls, C. (2004). Stress, spirituality, and health promoting behaviours among African-American college students. *Journal of Black Western Studies*, 28, 283-291.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77 -101.
- Brown, S., & Taylor, K. (2015). Charitable Behaviour and the Big Five Personality Traits: Evidence from UK Panel Data. Department of Economics, University of Sheffield. ISSN 1749-8368.
- Bujowoye, O. (2010). Stressful Experiences of First Year Students of Selected Universities in South Africa. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 15(3), 277-290.
- Carpenter, J. (2017). Christian universities are growing rapidly in Africa. Retrieved from
<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170131142300487>.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1994). Situational coping and coping dispositions in a stressful transaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(1), 184-195.

- Cassim, L. (2011, April 27). Secrets of postgrad success. *Mail & Guardian Online*. Retrieved from <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-04-27-secrets-of-postgrad-success>.
- Chan, R., Brown, G. T., & Ludlow, L. (2014, April). *What is the purpose of higher education?: A comparison of institutional and student perspectives on the goals and purposes of completing a bachelor's degree in the 21st century*. Paper to be presented at the annual American Education Research Association (AERA) conference, Philadelphia.
- Centre for Research on Science and Technology. (2009). Postgraduate studies in South Africa — a statistical profile. A report commissioned by the Council on Higher Education. Retrieved from https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/CHE_MonitorProjectV7.pdf.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26 (2), 120-123.
doi: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/21155>. ISSN 0952-8229.
- Coan, S. (2017, April 7). Private higher education – Competitive or complementary? Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170407101658297>.
- Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). "Qualitative Research Guidelines Project." July 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>
- Cornerstone Academics. (2005). Retrieved from <http://www.cornerstone.ac.za/psychology/31/ba-honours-psychology-140-credit>.
- Council on Higher Education. (2009). Postgraduate studies in South Africa: A Statistical Profile. Retrieved from <http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/>.
- Council on Higher Education. (2009). Postgraduate studies in South Africa: A statistical profile. (Electronic version). *Higher Education Monitor*, 7, 7-46.
- Council on Higher Education. (2010). Higher Education Monitor: Access and Throughput in South African Higher Education: Three case studies. Retrieved from https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Higher_Education_Monitor_9.pdf.

- Council on Higher Education. (2013). A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a -exible curriculum structure. Report of the task team on undergraduate curriculum structure. Retrieved from https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Full_Report.pdf.
- Council on Higher Education. (2014). Advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on the Reform of the Undergraduate Curriculum in Higher Education. Report.
- Council on Higher Education. (2016). South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy. Retrieved from http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/CHE_South%20African%20higher%20education%20reviewed%20-%20electronic_0.pdf.
- Creswell, J.W., & Miller, D.L. (2000). Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Taylor and Francis Group*, 39(3), 124-130. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cruwys, T., Greenaway, K.H., & Haslam, S.A. (2015). The stress of passing through an educational bottleneck: A longitudinal study of psychology honours students. *Australian Psychologist*, 50(5), 372-81.
- Cuevas, Amanda, Schreiner, Laurie, A., Kim, Young, Bloom, & Jennifer. (2017). Honors Student Thriving: A Model of Academic, Psychological, and Social Wellbeing. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 18(2).
- CTI Education Group. (2016). Get real world ready. Retrieved from https://www.cti.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CTI_2015_Electronic_Prospectus_Final_Web.pdf.
- Dale, K., & Sharpe, D. (2001). Student attrition from Newfoundland and Labrador's Public College. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 47(4), 353-368.
- Daniels, J.R., & Gustafson J.N. Faith-Based Institutions, Institutional Mission, and the Public Good. *Higher learning research communications*, 6(2).
- Davignon, P., & Lyon, J.L. (2014). Faith-Based Higher Education and the Religiosity of Christian Students. (Thesis).

- Department of Education. (1997). Education White Paper 3: a programme for the transformation of higher education. Retrieved from <https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/WhitePaper3.pdf>
- Department of education. (1997). *National Plan for Higher Education*. Pretoria: Department of Higher Education.
- Department of Education. (2001). *National Plan for Higher Education*, Department of Higher Education, Pretoria. Retrieved from <http://www.dhet.gov.za/HED%20Policies/National%20Plan%20on%20Higher%20Education.pdf>.
- Department of Education. (2002). *The transformation and reconstruction of the higher education system*. Pretoria: Department of education.
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2012). Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.dhet.gov.za/DHET%20Statistics%20Publication/Statistics%20on%20PostSchool%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa%202012.pdf>
- Department of Higher Education and Training. (2013). White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System. Retrieved from <https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/White%20Paper%20-%20final%20for%20web.pdf>
- Department of Labour. (2001). Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa. A Nation at Work for a Better Life for All. Retrieved from <http://www.dhet.gov.za/Reports%20Doc%20Library/Human%20Resource%20Development%20Strategy%20for%20South%20Africa.pdf>.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314-321.
- Du Preez, E., & Roos, V. (2008). The development of counsellor identity — a visual expression. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 38(4), 699-709.
- Edwards, B. (2002, December). *Postgraduate supervision: is having a Ph.D. enough?* A paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference on Problematic Futures: Educational Research in an Era of Uncertainty, Brisbane, Australia.
- Elkonin, D., & Sandison, A. (2006). Mind the gap: Have Registered Counsellors fallen through? *South African Journal of Psychology*, 36(3), 598-612.
<http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

- Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107–115. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>.
- Eubanks, A. (2006). *God help me: How college students use religion/spirituality to cope with stress*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.za/books?isbn=0542814188>.
- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. (2015). Stellenbosch University. Retrieved from <http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departments/psychology/programmes/postgraduate/Tab>.
- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. (2015). Stellenbosch University. Retrieved from <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Yearbooks/Current/Arts.pdf>.
- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. (2015). Stellenbosch University. Retrieved from <http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departments/psychology/programmes/postgraduate/Tab>.
- Faculty of Community and Health Sciences. (2013). University of the Western Cape. Retrieved from [https://www.uwc.ac.za/Documents/Downloads/2013_Faculty_of_CHS_Calendar_\(Final\).pdf](https://www.uwc.ac.za/Documents/Downloads/2013_Faculty_of_CHS_Calendar_(Final).pdf).
- Faculty of Community and Health Sciences. (2018). University of the Western Cape. Retrieved from [https://www.uwc.ac.za/Students/Documents/Downloads/2018_Faculty_of_CHS_Calendar_\(Final\).pdf](https://www.uwc.ac.za/Students/Documents/Downloads/2018_Faculty_of_CHS_Calendar_(Final).pdf).
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209-230.
- Fisher, G., & Scott, I. (2011). “The Role of Higher Education in Closing the Skills Gap in South Africa.” Closing the Skills and Technology Gap in South Africa. Background Paper 3: The Role of Education. The World Bank Human Development Group, Africa Region. Retrieved from <http://www.glenfisher.ca/downloads/files/Higher%20Education%20in%20SA.pdf>.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research (4th ed)*. London, UK: Sage.
- Frances, R., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16, 309-314. doi: 10.12968/ijtr.2009.16.6.42433.
- Froneman, L. (2002). Private Higher Educational institutions in a changing South African environment. *Acta Commercii*, 2: 35-44. <http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (2003). *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Enhancing Academic Practice (3rd edition)*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Gaines, C. (2013). "Influences of an Honors Program on Students at a Faith-based University: A Qualitative Study" (Master of Education Research Theses58). Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/education_theses/58.
- Gaeddart, T.J. (2014). A case study of the integration of faith and learning at a christian college (dissertation).
- Glanzer, P.L. (2017). Growing on the Margins: Global Christian Higher Education. *Center for International Higher Education*, 88, 23-25. doi: <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2017.88.9691>.
- Govinder, K.S., Zondo, N.P., & Makgoba, M.W. (2013). A new look at demographic transformation for universities in South Africa. *South African Journal of Sciences*, 109(11/12). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/sajs.2013/20130163>.
- Greenbank, P. (2007). "From foundation to honours degree: the student experience". *Education + Training*, 49(2), 91-102. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910710739450>.
- Hartley, H.V. (2004). Special issue on faith, spirituality, and religion on campus. *The college of student affairs journal*, 23(2). doi: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ956982.pdf>.
- Health Professions Council of South Africa, Professional Board for Psychology. (2005). Framework for Education, Training, and Registration as a Registered Counsellor. Retrieved from http://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/editor/UserFiles/downloads/psych/psycho_policy/form_258_registered_counsellor_%2004oct_2013.pdf.
- Health Professionals Council of South Africa. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.hpcsa.co.za/PB/Psychology/Registration>.
- Heymann, I. & R. Carolissen. (2011). The Concept of 'First Generation Student' in the Literature: Implications for South African Higher Education. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 25(7), 1378-1396.
- Higher Education Research Institute. (2005). *The spiritual life of college students: A national study of college students' search for meaning and purpose*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California.
- Holberg, J. L. (2010). Afterwords. *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*, 14, 97-99.

- Horn, P., Jansen, A., & Yu, D. 2011. Factors explaining the academic success of second-year economics students: An exploratory analysis. *South African Journal of Economics*, 79(2): 202-210.
- Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to College: How Social, Economic, and Educational Factors Influence*. Baltimore, MD: The John's Hopkins University Press. ISSN: 00221546.
- International Education Association of South Africa. (2011). In leaps and bounds: growing higher education in South Africa. Africa and the knowledge economy. Study South Africa. A guide to South African higher education. 11th edition. In association with Higher Education South Africa (HESA)
- Jogee, E., Callaghan, N.C., & Callaghan C.W. (2018). STUDENT ACCULTURATION IN THE CONTEXT OF "FEESMUSTFALL". *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(2), 122-142. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20853/32-2-1645>. ISSN 1753-5913.
- Jordaan, Y., Smithard, C., Burger, E. (2009). "Comparing levels of career indecision among selected honours degree students at the University of Pretoria". *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 17(2), 85-100. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/10222529200900013>.
- Jorgenson, D., Farrell, L.C., Fudge, J., & Pritchard, A. (2018). "College Connectedness: The Student Perspective". *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 18(1), 75-95. doi: <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v18i1.22371>
- Kagee, A., & O'Donovan, A. (2011). Judgments of widely held beliefs about psychological phenomena among South African and Australian postgraduate psychology students. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 41(1), 2011, 83-89.
- Kampfe, C.M., Mitchell, M.M., Boyless, J.A., & Sauers, G.O. (1995). Coping strategies used by undergraduate interns: Implication for rehabilitation education. *Rehabilitation Counselling Bulletin*, 38(4), 318-334.
- Kemp, N., & Grieve, R. (2014). Face-to-face or face-to-screen? Undergraduates' opinions and test performance in classroom vs. online learning. *Frontiers in psychology*, 5, 1278. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01278.
- Kezar, A., & Kinzie, J. (2004). Examining the Ways Institutions Create Student Engagement: The Role of Mission. 47(2), 149-172.
- Khankeh, H., Ranjbar, M., Khorasani-Zavareh, D., Zargham-Boroujeni, A., & Johansson, E. (2015). Challenges in conducting qualitative research in health: A conceptual paper. *Iranian journal of nursing and midwifery research*, 20(6), 635-41.

- Kiley, M., Boud, D., Cantwell, R., & Manathunga, C. (2011). Honouring the incomparable: Honours in Australian universities. *Higher Education*, 62(5), 619- 633. doi: 10.1007/s10734-011-9409-z.
- Kilgour, P., Hinze, J., Petrie, K., Long, W., & deBerg, K. (2015). Role-playing: A smorgasbord of learning types. *International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research*, 3(1), 11-24.
- Koen, C. (2007). Postgraduate student retention and success: A South African case study. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from <http://www.hsreprpress.ac.za/product.php?productid=2205&cat=1&page=1#sthash.05lOpuhU.dpuf>
- Korstjens, I., Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice*, 23(1), 9-18. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091>.
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques (2nd Edition)*. New Delhi: New Age International Publisher.
- Kotze, L., & Carolissen, R. (2005). The employment patterns of BPsych graduates in the Western Cape (Unpublished master's dissertation). University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town.
- Kritzinger, E., & Looock, M. (2012). A critical investigation into the current shortage of information technology postgraduates produced by Unisa. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/8500/Final_Kritzinger%20E%20Looock%20M%20ODL-031-2012.pdf?sequence=1.
- Kuh, G. (2000). Do Environments Matter? A Comparative Analysis of the Impress of Different Types of Colleges and Universities on Character. *Journal of College and Character*, 1(4). doi:10.2202/1940-1639.1277.
- Kuh, G. D., & Gonyea, R. M. (2006). Spirituality, liberal learning and college student engagement. *Liberal Education*, 92, 40-47.
- Lau, L. K. (2003). Institutional factors affecting student retention. *Education*, 24(1), 126-136.
- Lambert. C., Jomeen, J., & McSherry, W. (2010). Reflexivity: a review of the literature in the context of midwifery research. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 18(5),321-326. doi:10.12968/bjom.2010.18.5.47872
- Laurentiu-Dan, A., & Orîndaru, A. (2014). Measuring students' satisfaction as part of the marketing higher education strategies. Retrieved from 10.13140/2.1.3014.7363.
- Lazarus, R.S. (1990). Theory-based stress measurement. *Psychological Inquiry*, 1, 3 – 13. <http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

- Laseka, M., Maile, S. (2008). High university drop-out rates: A threat to South Africa's future. HSRC Policy Brief. Human Sciences Research Council.
- Lee, N.J. (2009). Professional doctorate supervision: exploring student and supervisor experiences. *Nurse Education Today*, 29(6), 641—648.
- Lenepa, K.E. (2008). Student Choice: *What factors and conditions influence University of the Western Cape undergraduate students' change of programmes of study?* Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.
- Leslie, D., & Fretwell, E. (1996). *Wise moves in hard times: Creating and managing resilient colleges and universities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Letseka, M., & Maile, S. (2008). High university drop-out rates: a threat to South Africa's future. *Human Sciences Research Council*. doi: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-outputs/ktree-doc/11601>.
- Levy, D. (2017). Christian higher education's place within private higher education . *Center for International Higher Education*, 88, 22-23. doi: <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2017.88.9690>.
- Lo, C. (2017). Stress and coping strategies among university freshmen in Hong Kong: Validation of the coping strategy. *Indicator*, 8(8), 1254-1266. doi: 10.4236/psych.2017.88081.
- MacGregor, K. (2008). South Africa: Private higher education stabilizes. Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2008050908346518>
- MacGregor, K. (2009). South Africa: Push to graduate more PhDs. University World News. Retrieved from http://www.asocsa.org/news_articles/KarenMacGregor_University%20World%20News_%20SA_PushToGradMorePhDs_31May2009.pdf.
- MacGregor, K. (2009). South Africa: Debate moves on from access to success. University World News. Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20090313111607177>.
- Manik, S. (2015). Calibrating the Barometer1: Student Access and Success in South African Public Higher Education Institutions. *Alternation Special Edition*, 17, 226 – 244. ISSN 1023-1757.
- Mauthner, N, & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Data Analysis. *Sociology*, 37(3):413–431. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030373002>.

- Mayrl, D., & Oeur, F. (2009). Religion and Higher Education: Current Knowledge and Directions for Future Research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48(2), 260-275. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40405616>.
- McCallin, A., & Nayar, S. (2012). Postgraduate research supervision: A critical review of current practice. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 17(1), 63–74. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.590979>.
- McLeod, S. A. (2014). The interview method. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/interviews.html>.
- McNabb, D. E. (2004). *Research methods for political science: Quantitative and qualitative methods*. Armonk, N.Y: Sharpe.
- Midrand Graduate Institute. (2016). Psychology. Retrieved from <http://sastudy.co.za/course/psychology-3/>.
- Ministry of Education. (2001). National Plan for Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.dhet.gov.za/HED%20Policies/National%20Plan%20on%20Higher%20Education.pdf>.
- Moon, T. (2008). Reflexivity and its Usefulness When Conducting a Secondary Analysis of Existing Data. *Psychology & Society*, 1(1), 77 – 83.
- Mosier, S. K. (2012). Creating experiences that matter: A qualitative study exploring honors program peer mentoring and self-authorship development (Master's thesis, University of Nebraska – Lincoln). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/93/>.
- Munyaradzi, E., & Ganyaupfu. (2013). Factors Influencing Academic Achievement in Quantitative Courses among Business Students of Private Higher Education Institutions. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(15), 201.ISSN 2222-1735.
- Murray, Mike. (2014). Factors affecting graduation and student dropout rates at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. *South African Journal of Science*. 110. 1-6. 10.1590/sajs.2014/20140008.
- National Planning Commission. (2011). National Development Plan 2030 - 'Human conditions diagnostic'. Retrieved from http://www.npconline.co.za/MediaLib/Downloads/Home/Tabs/Diagnostic/Diagnostic_Human_conditions.pdf.
- National Planning Commission. (2012). National Development Plan 2030 - Chapter 9: Improving education, training and innovation. Retrieved from <http://www.npconline.co.za/MediaLib/Downloads/Home/Tabs/NDP%202030-CH9-Improving%20education%20training%20and%20innovation.pdf>.

- Nilsson, J. (2007). International Students in Supervision: Course Self-Efficacy, Stress, and Cultural Discussions in Supervision. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 26 (1/2), 35-47.
- Oltmann, S.M. (2016). Qualitative Interviews: A Methodological Discussion of the Interviewer and Respondent Contexts. *Qualitative Social Research*, 12(2).
- Pascarella, E.T., & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Paulsen, M. (2001). *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(3), 383-385. doi:10.2307/2649342.
- Paura, L., & Arhipova, I. (2014). Cause analysis of students' dropout rate in higher education study program. *Procedia-social and behavioural sciences*, 109, 1282-1286. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.625.
- Pouris, A. (2012). Science in South Africa: The dawn of a renaissance? *South African Journal of Science*, 108(7/8), 1-6. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajs.v108i7/8.1018>.
- Prinsloo, P. (2009). *Modelling Through-put at UNISA: The Key to the Successful Implementation of ODL*. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Quinlan, K.M. (2011). Developing the whole student: leading higher education initiatives that integrate mind and heart. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. ISBN: 978-1-906627-28-7
- Ramrathan, L. (2013). Towards a Conceptual Framework for Understanding Student Dropout from HEI's. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 27(1), 209-220.
- Reddy, K.J., Menon, K.R., & Thattil, A. (2018). Academic stress and it's source among university students. *Biomed Pharmacol Journal*, 11(1). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13005/bpj/1404>.
- Reiter, B., & Human, I. (2017). Theory and Methodology of Exploratory Social Science Research". *International Journal of Science and Research methodology*, 5(4), 129-150.
- Robotham, D., & Julian, C. (2006). Stress and the higher education student: a critical review of the literature. *Journal of further and Higher Education*, 30, 107- 117.
- Ryan, F., Coughlin, M., & Cronin, P. (2007). Step-by-step guide to critiquing research: Part 2: Qualitative research. *British Journal of Nursing*, 16(12), 738-744.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 18(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770180211>.
- Schreiber, B., & Yu, D. (2016). Exploring student engagement practices at a South African university: student engagement as reliable predictor of academic performance. *South African*

Journal of Higher Education, 30(5), 157-175. doi:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.20853/30-5-593>.

- Schreiner, L. (2000, October). Spiritual fit. In FIPSE – Through the eyes of retention. CCCU, Washington.
- Schreiner, L.A., Primrose, Kammer, R., Primrose B., & Quick. (2011). Predictors of Thriving in Students of Color: Differential Pathways to College Success. Retrieved from <http://www.thrivingincollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Schreiner-Kammer-Primrose-Quick-ASHE-paper-2011-2.pdf>.
- Schultze, U., & Avital, M. (2011). Designing interviews to generate rich data for information systems research. *Information and Organization*, 21, 1-16. doi: 10.1016/j.infoandorg.2010.11.001.
- Scott, I., Yeld, N., & Hendry, J. 2007. A case for improving teaching and learning in South African higher education. Retrieved from <http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000155/index.php>.
- Shaikh, A., Karodia, A., David, J., & Soni, D. (2014). Private providers can widen access to higher education: A fertile idea whose time has com. Retrieved from <https://regent.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Private-Providers-can-Widen-Access-to-Higher-Education-in-South-Africa-3.pdf>.
- Shay, Suellen. (2017). Educational investment towards the ideal future: South Africa's strategic choices. *South African Journal of Science*, 113(1-2), 1-6. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2017/20160227>.
- Slick, M. Statement of faith. Christian Apologetics & research Ministry. Retrieved from <https://carm.org/>.
- Sosibo, Z., & Katiya, M. (2015). Closing the Loop between Access and Success: Early Identification of At-risk Students and Monitoring as Key Strategies Used by a South African University. *International Journal of Education Sciences*, 8(2), 271-279.
- South African History Online. (2015). Cecil John Rhodes. South African History Online. Retrieved from <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cecil-john-rhodes>.
- South African College Applied Psychology. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.sacap.edu.za/>.
- Stander, E., & Herman, C. (2017). Barriers and challenges private higher education institutions face in the management of quality assurance in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 31(5), 206-224. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.28535/31-5-1481>. ISSN 1753-5913.
- Stephens, N.M., Fryberg, S.A., Markus, H.R., Johnson, C.S., & Covarrubias, R. (2012). Unseen disadvantage: how American

- universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 102(6), 1178-1197. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027143>.
- Stevenson, A., & Harper, S. (2006). Workplace stress and student learning experience. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 14(2). doi: 10.1108/09684880610662042.
- Strauss, C., Linda, & Volkwein, J. (2004). Predictors of Student Commitment at Two-Year and Four-Year Institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 75, 203-227.
- Strydom, J. F., Kuh, G.D. & Mentz, M. (2010) Enhancing Success in South Africa's higher education: measuring student engagement. *Acta Academica*, 42(1), 259-278.
- Stuckey, H. L. (2013). Three types of interviews: Qualitative research methods in social health. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 1(2), 56-59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4103/2321-0656.115294>
- Subotzky, G. (2003). Public Higher Education: Human Resource Development Review. HSRC.
- Subotzky, G., & Prinsloo, P. (2011). Turning the tide: a socio-critical model and framework for improving student success in open distance learning at the University of South Africa. *Distance Education for Empowerment and Development in Africa*, 32(2), 177-193. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2011.584846>.
- Stebbins, R. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences: what is exploration? Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Styger, A., van Vuuren, G.W., & Heymans, A. (2015). Case study of postgraduate student dropout rate at South African universities. *International Business & Economics Research Journal*, 14(1), 1-14.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A review and theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125.
- Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(6), 599-623.
- Tisdell, E. J. (2008). Spirituality and adult learning. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education*, 119, 27-36.
- Theron, P.M. (2013). 'The impact of Christian Higher Education on the lives of students and societies in Africa'. *Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 78(1), 1-8. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/koers.v78i1.60>.
- The South African College of Applied Psychology. Retrieved from www.sacap.edu.za. University of Cape Town. (2015). Psychology Society Retrieved from <http://eid.uwc.ac.za/>

https://uctpsychologysociety.wordpress.com/psychology_in_south_africa/psychology-at-uct/.

- University of South Africa. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualificationsHONS/Qualifications/99422COU.html>.
- University of the Western Cape B.A. (2015). Honours (Psychology) Prospectus. Retrieved from <https://www.uwc.ac.za/Students/DLL/Documents/uwc%20prospectus%202015%20web%20version%2025%20aug%202014.pdf>.
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 15, 398–405. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048>.
- Vincent, T. (1975). Review of Educational Research, Vol. 45, No. 1. Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125.
- White, M. D., & Marsh, E. E. (2006). Content Analysis :A Flexible Methodology. *LibraryTrends*, 55(1), 22–45.
- Wilson, R.A., & Briscoe, G. The impact of human capital on economic growth: a review. Retrieved from http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/BgR3_Wilson.pdf.
- Wolfensberger, M.V. (2012). *Teaching for excellence: Honours pedagogies revealed*. Münster: Waxmann.
- Wright, T. (2003). Postgraduate research students: People in context. *British Journal of Guidance Counselling*, 31(2), 209-227. doi:10.1080/0306988031000102379.
- Yin, R.K. (2014). Case study research design and methods (5th ed). *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 30(1), 1-6. DOI: 10.3138/CJPE.BR-240. ISBN 978-1-4522-4256-9.
- Yorke, M., & Longden, B. (2004). *Retention and student success in higher education*. Glasgow: 33 Open University Press.

Appendix A

Interview Schedule

Firstly I would like for you to tell me about the honours program at this institution in general. How will you describe it to me if I was a future student, what can I expect?

Is there anything unique about this honours program for you at this faith-based institution?

What do you consider to be the strengths of the program?

What do you consider to be the weaknesses of the program?

What do you personally like about the honours program, and what do you dislike about it?

What factors influenced your decision to become a student at this institution? How did you decide to enrol at the institution? To which extent was your enrolment by choice or by default?

What factors influenced your decision to become a student at this institution?

How did you decide to enrol at the institution?

To which extent was your enrolment by choice or by default?

(What caused you to continue to participate through graduation?)

How do you feel now about being a student at this institution?

Thank you for sharing your background with me. Next I'd like you to think about the influence the honors program has had on you as a student and as a person.

In what ways has your time at this institution changed you academically, intellectually, spiritually and socially?

Are you familiar with the statement of faith of the institution?

Which values, goals and expectations are reflected in the statement of faith?

What are your faith beliefs and core values?

What have your expectations been of the course and have these expectations been met?

How have the concordances or incongruences between your faith beliefs and value systems and that of the institution impacted your experience

Since this institution clearly has a mission related to shaping spirituality in the students, in what ways has participation in the honours programme shaped your own growth?

If you could change anything in the honours programme at this faith-based institution what will that be?

- Recommendations for Improvements?
- Will you recommend the institution for eligible students?





UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Appendix C

Permission to conduct the study

Appendix C – Information Sheet**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

*Tel: (021) 959-2283, Fax : (021) 959-3515**E-mail: natashaparis77@gmail.com*

Project Title: The subjective experiences of Psychology Honours students enrolled at a faith-based institution.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Mos. Natasha Paris and Dr. Mario Smith at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project as we are interested in your experience as an Honours graduate and your thoughts and feelings about the extent to which your Honours independent research project (group-based, secondary research) prepared you for Masters level studies. This knowledge is being sought in order to evaluate whether the use of systematic review methodology at Honours level sufficiently prepares students for the Masters level study.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to participate in an interview which will last for an hour. The study will be conducted at an agreed-upon location. Questions surrounding your experience of systematic review group-based research will be explored and the extent to which you perceive it to have prepared you for Master's level study. Thus your participation is as a graduate of the Honours programme and not a student at your current institution.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, *your name will not be included on data collected. A code will be placed on the collected data.* To ensure your confidentiality, *locked storage areas will used to store information, using identification codes only on data forms, and using password-protected computer files.* If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected. This research project involves making

audiotapes of you. The audio recording will ensure authenticity in the study. It enables the capturing of data in greater detail. The recordings will be stored in locked filing cabinets and will be destroyed after the study is completed.

What are the risks of this research?

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the extent to which group-based research at Honours prepares students sufficiently for furthering their studies. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the group-based Honours research. A direct benefit for you is the opportunity to reflect on the extent to which the learning outcomes in your independent project have been achieved and how that has contributed to your overall research capacitation

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. Participation in the research is not a course requirement.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by **Natasha Paris in the Psychology Department** at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact **Natasha Paris** at: 0834268051 **Email:** natashaparis77@gmail.com

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Supervisor: Dr. M. Smith, Department of Psychology, UWC, Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535,
mrsmith@uwc.ac.za

Head of Department: Dr. M. Andipatin, Department of Psychology, UWC, Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535,
mandipatin@uwc.ac.za

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Prof José Frantz UWC, Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535, chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

Appendix D
Review Board permission

Appendix D- Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: (021) 959-2283, Fax : (021) 959-3515

E-mail: nparis@uwc.ac.za

Title of Research Project: The subjective experiences of Psychology Honours students enrolled at a faith-based institution.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....