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**Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of
eight Grade 3 learners**

by

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degree of

**Master of Education
(Social Justice Education)**

DECLARATION

I, Gugu Mable Gumede, declare that this dissertation entitled:

Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of eight Grade 3 learners,

is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

Influenced by debates from the paradigm of New Childhood Studies and the sociology of childhood, the epistemological and ontological stance of this study was that children are individuals in their own right, and active social beings who are able to construct and make meanings of events and issues in their lives. The study was also framed by debates from the sub-field of 'Children's Geographies' that enabled the analysis of the meanings children assigned to experiences of spirituality and morality in various experiential spaces and places of their lives. In essence, the study was about exploring children's conceptions of spirituality and morality and mapped out the spaces and places of spirituality and morality in relation to young children.

This was a qualitative case study conducted at one primary school situated in an urban township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Participants in the study were eight (8) Grade three learners (three male; five female), aged between seven (7) and 11 years. The various creative participatory research techniques utilised in the study to produce data were found to be the most appropriate when engaging with child participants. These included children's drawings, vignettes, or scenarios that contained a moral dilemma viz. conversation with a picture and a letter to God.

A justice orientation was strongly evident in the children's responses to the two scenarios as children clearly had a sense of right and wrong. Data revealed that children reason in terms of the norms they have been socialised to value, for example, justice. Morality is also interpreted as a goal of pleasing others by acting as a good person in society thus its stands to reason that morality is external to children. However, there was evidence that some reason at a more advanced level beyond the stage of obedience and punishment when they focused on themselves as members of a society or community i.e. maintaining the social order. The focus of the children was on obeying laws and maintaining social order and as in the case of the respondents of the study, keeping the school and community safe. The ethics of care was evident in the responses of the children such as fairness, compassion, empathy, care for the welfare of others, protection from physical and emotional harm and hurt. The study did not examine gender differences in the care orientation of the participants.

The data from the eight learners revealed that being spiritual was about connecting with a transcendental being or something sacred (maybe a God or a deity) or with nature, and with significant others in their lives (feeling love, compassion, fairness, empathy). Children live their spirituality and are able to make meanings of abstract concepts such as love, compassion, fairness, care. The study further illuminated the key spaces and places in which children are socialised in respect of their conceptions spirituality and morality, which includes friends, the family, places of worship, and the school. The study revealed that children learn spirituality and morality mainly by internalising experiential interactions within their social and material environment, suggesting that conceptions of spirituality and morality are situated and contextual in nature.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The study presented in this dissertation sought to explore the conceptions of spirituality and morality that children hold and how they experience spirituality and morality within various settings viz. the school, home, community, and society. A motivating factor that contributed the decision to explore this avenue was the limited scholarly research regarding children's conceptions of spirituality and morality within the South African context (for example, Muthukrishna, Wedekind, Hugo, & Khan, 2006; Roux, 2006). Internationally, researchers have made strides in bringing to the fore how children conceptualise spirituality and morality (Park, 2007; Ingersoll, 2013; Smith, 2008).

1.2 Rationale and motivation

In the literature studied, I found that scholars have tried to elucidate the meanings and dimensions of the concepts spirituality and morality (Fisher, 2011; Giesenberg, 2007; Wringe, 2002), closely linking these concepts with religion. Other researchers acknowledge that it is difficult to completely separate spirituality, religion and faith from one another (Fisher, 2011). Most scholars concur that '*spirituality*' is an innate quality that is common to every human being whether he or she is religious or not (Giesenberg, 2007). Giesenberg (2007) further asserts that along with spirituality, one can associated a myriad of values and traits i.e. compassion, empathy, care for the welfare of others, love, a sense of beauty, awe and wonder while Thompson (2009) and Wringe (2002) emphasise that spirituality is closely linked to religion and a connectedness to God or a higher power.

Even young children develop spirituality through their relationships with others and as they do, they become aware of the principles of 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour – this is related to their 'morality' or their moral orientations (Wringe, 2002). Children also develop conceptions around what makes a person 'good' or 'bad' (Moriarty, 2011). In my study, I conceptualised spirituality as a much broader notion than that of religion but rather one that includes religious beliefs, for example, in a transcendental being.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) recognises the importance of religion, the religious symbols of our diverse nation as well as the rights of its citizens to believe in, and practice a religion of their choice. The Constitution prohibits unfair discrimination on grounds of religion or the favouring of any one religion. The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) upholds the constitutional rights of its people to freedom of conscience and religion, thought, belief and opinion, and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, including religion, in all public education institutions. However, as most teachers are located within religious societies and communities, it is likely that consciously or unconsciously they may be teaching spirituality in school (Fisher, 2011). This may happen under the guise of morality or rules of discipline, but ultimately it involves spiritualisation (Fisher, 2011).

South African scholar, de Klerk-Luttig (2008) describes spirituality as a concept that is associated with cognition, intuition, and feeling and one that is often impossible to comprehend and tease out clearly. Roux (2006) asserts that in South Africa, spirituality is generally discussed in the context of theology, and that the language of spirituality is still not evident in educational debates, for example, those pertaining to the school curriculum. Fisher (2011) contends that spirituality is increasingly viewed as a real phenomenon and talks of 'spiritual wellness', 'spiritual care,' and 'spiritual health'. My assumption is that as individuals, these three notions are what adults and children strive for, and pursue in life.

In my study, I explored how these notions played out in the lives of eight primary school children. I was interested in what children thought about the concepts of right and wrong. Kohlberg (1976) who outlined fundamental principles that are central to moral development and moral judgement, stated that children form ways of thinking through their experiences, and in this way, develop an understanding of moral concepts such as justice, rights, equality, and human welfare, for example, that moral action is based on the consideration of justice. Gilligan (1977) brought into debate, the care orientation that she contends Kohlberg (1976) neglected in his theory and argued that he did not give attention to gender differences of moral development due to the fact that participants in his study were predominantly male and thus, the main reason the caring perspective in his theory. Gilligan (1977) further stressed both care-based morality and justice-based morality in her theory.

In this study, I did not examine gender differences - this may be viewed as a limitation but this was not within the scope of a small-scale study. I explored care orientations of the

children, which encapsulates an interconnectedness with others, avoiding harm and violence, helping others in need and fairness. Through my study, I hoped to understand the meanings younger children give to spirituality and morality as previous research into children's spirituality has concentrated on older children (Wringe, 2002). Scholars (for example, Benson, Roehlkepartain & Rude, 2003; Bone, 2007; Conry- Murray, 2013; James & Prout, 1998), when conducting research on spirituality, have focused on the cognitive, motivational, relational, developmental and experiential aspects of spirituality among adolescents and adults much to the neglect of young children. One possible reason for this void in research is that younger children have traditionally been viewed as being incompetent with regard to having perspectives about issues in their lives. Yet, it has been argued that young children's spiritual development is an important aspect of their wellbeing (Conry- Murray, 2013). Roux (2006) contends that one reason for this lack of attention to young children's perspectives may be a reflection of society's view of children as immature adults in the making.

In my study, I chose to examine the *younger* child's views of spirituality and morality influenced by debates from New Childhood Studies or the new sociology of childhood. From this paradigm, children are viewed as social actors who actively make meanings of their worlds, and that it is important to give a voice to children as they are worthy of study in their own right (Kellett, 2005). My objective was to research young children's perspectives, their meaning making, and agency in childhood (James & Prout, 1998).

New Childhood Studies foregrounds the social construction of childhood and the importance of listening to the meanings children make of their everyday realities (Tisdall, 2011). Children are viewed as social actors and agents who are able to actively, construct meanings of issues in their lives. My study aimed to bridge the gap in scholarly research by conducting research *with* young children on the issues of morality and spirituality. I was keen to explore what notions they hold and what influences shape the meanings they make.

1.3 Key research questions

The following research questions framed the study:

- What are children's conceptions of spirituality and morality?
- What influences shape children's conception of spirituality and morality?
- How do children navigate spirituality and morality in their everyday lives?

1.4 Definition of key concepts

- **Child**

According to the Children's Act no. 38 of 2005, in the South African context, a 'child' is a person or individual under the age of 18 years. This definition is in line with that put forth by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989). In my study, the participants were children between the ages of seven and 11 years old.

- **Spirituality, morality and religion**

As I have stated, the concepts of spirituality and morality are closely linked to religion and scholars contend that spirituality is regarded as an innate quality that is common to every human being whether he or she is religious or not (Fisher, 2011; Giesenberg, 2007; Wringe, 2002). It is argued that spirituality comes with the traits such as compassion, love, a sense of beauty, awe and wonder on which the foundation of the children's lives are built upon (Giesenberg, 2007; Thompson, 2009; Wringe, 2002). Zinnbauer & Pargament (2005, p. 35) define spirituality "as a personal or group search for the sacred"; while religiousness "is a personal or group search for the sacred that unfolds within a traditional sacred context".

These definitions highlight the most common conceptual difference in thinking about the two constructs. Spirituality is a more personal and experiential relationship with the sacred. Religiousness refers more to those qualities as embodied in the traditional religious contexts and systems that utilise a hierarchy, authoritative texts, a clergy, or leadership grouping of some sort, and rituals having historical antecedents. Mulder (2014) states that spirituality goes beyond religion, and includes broader concepts such as meaning, purpose, hope, and relationships with others and a higher power (Canda, 1990; Department of Education, 2004; Hodge & Horvath, 2011; Ingersoll, 2013; Koenig & Spano, 2007; Moss, 2011; Murdock, 2005).

On the other hand, religious behaviours may include individual practices, as well as group practices in affiliation with organized religion (Ellison, Musicjk, & Henderson, 2008; Hodge & Horvath, 2011; Krieglstein, 2006).

1.5 Overview of the research design and methodology

My study was a qualitative case study. The participants were eight Grade three learners – aged between seven (7) and eleven (11) years from a school in KwaZulu-Natal. As detailed in chapter three, the unit of analysis was a phenomenon – children’s conception of spirituality and morality. I used multiple child friendly data generation techniques which were participatory in nature, employed during individual interview sessions with each child: two vignettes or scenarios depicting a moral dilemma; and children’s drawings of concepts linked to spirituality - love, a dream, God; and what I refer to as ‘conversations with a picture’.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1

This chapter introduces the study as well as the background, rationale and key definitions.

Chapter 2

This chapter provides a review of the literature on issues of children’s spirituality and morality, exploring the findings of scholars internationally, as well as locally and highlighting the potential of my research to bridge the literature gap by contributing to the body of research on spirituality and children. I foreground some key empirical studies undertaken on and with children.

Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the research methodology and design of the study. This study adopted a qualitative interpretative research approach. The design choices are made are discussed and justified.

Chapter 4

This chapter is a discussion of the findings of the study. The key themes that emerged are highlighted and discussed.

Chapter 5

This chapter presents concluding researcher reflections and the implications of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the importance and relevance of concepts and theories that relate to an understanding of children's conceptions of spirituality and morality. Children are socialised within the family and in schools, which can typically be compared to the planting of the seed and making it possible to grow. This could be exemplified by the time where the farmer plants and harvests the crop which could represent significant others in the learning of the child, be it parents or teachers. As teachers in schools are also members and parents in the child's community, wittingly or unwittingly, they to a degree, transfer spiritual and moral teachings of the community to the younger children so as to mould the ideal member of the community (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999). The reason for this is that younger children traditionally have been viewed as being incompetent to have perspectives about issues in their lives, thus requiring nurturing from all responsible to teach them (James & Prout, 1998).

It has been argued that young children's spiritual development has been acknowledged as an important aspect of their wellbeing (Bone, 2007; Conry-Murray, 2013) but internationally, there has been limited research on the topic. Roux (2006) contends that one reason for this lack of attention to young children's perspectives may be a reflection of society's view of children as immature adults in the making, and he draws attention to the fact that within the South African curriculum, spirituality has never been mentioned as a concept. This consciously drives teachers in schools and parents at home to find ways to teach and model moral behaviour, and to avoid a situation where children learn immoral behaviour (Roux, 2006).

Since the curriculum does not provide a guide for teaching spirituality and morality in the school, research such as this study was much needed. There is limited scholarly research on children's conceptions of spirituality and morality within the South African context for example, in recent years, Ingersoll (2013); Muthukrishna, et al. (2006); Govender (2006) and Roux (2006) have studied some aspects of children's spirituality and morality. Furthermore, internationally, previous research into children's spirituality has concentrated

on older children (Wringe, 2002) and as Noguera (2013) points out, there has been a limited number of studies on children's spirituality and as seen in existing research, the perspective of adults on spirituality is often used to make sense of the spirituality of children.

With this study, the aim was to examine children's conceptions of spirituality and morality. However, in view of the fact that most studies internationally explore spirituality and morality with adolescents and adults, I chose to explore what notions *young children* hold and what influences and shapes the meanings they make about morality and spirituality.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study was sociological in nature hence my epistemological and ontological stance emanated from debates in the 'new' sociology of childhood (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Holt & Holloway, 2006; James & Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002). I adhered to the view that children are individuals in their own right and active social beings who are able to construct and make meanings of events and issues in their lives (Roux, 2006; UNICEF, 1989). Further, research from the sub-field of '*Children's Geographies*' has value in understanding children's lives and the meanings they assign to their life world.

The concept of *Children's Geographies* enables researchers to delve into the places and spaces of children's lives, which embodies political, ethical, moral, spiritual, and experiential spaces (Muthukrishna, 2013). Thus, focusing on everyday issues in, and through which children's identities are shaped and re-shaped may provide insight into children's constructions of spirituality and morality, and may unravel adult misconceptions (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). My study was based on the assumption that childhood is socially constructed and consequently, the school can be seen as an institution, which holds important spaces and times in the geography of children's lives (James & Prout, 1998).

The study was also based on the premise that children's conceptions of spirituality and morality are a window through which one can understand a range of issues in their lives, including their life worlds (Jeffrey, 2010). Children's spiritual and moral learning spaces may be within the formal schooling system or in societal structures divorced from the school. In my study, my aim was to examine the spaces and places of morality and spirituality development in the children's lives.

The concepts of 'spirituality' and 'morality' served as a conceptual framework for my study, which attempted to understand spirituality and morality from the worldview of children. In the literature, I found that spirituality is a contested concept and has many meanings (for example, Hyde, 2005a). Scholars have debated the meaning, nature, and dynamics of spirituality and morality from many disciplines and lenses. Hyde (2005a) states that 'spirituality is a natural human disposition' (p. 32). Bigger (2003) explains that across religions, spirituality relates to the inner elements or components of personal experience and awareness while Noguera (2013) explains that spirituality includes aspects of faith, beliefs, or ways of achieving a meaningful existence. Noguera (2013) further explains that from the discipline of psychology, researchers have linked and integrated spirituality to psychological processes such as cognition, emotion, behaviour, motivation, and social relationships.

Bigger (2003) indicates that within the school curriculum, spirituality is not about promoting the values or religious expressions of a particular religion, for example, Christianity or Hinduism while Hyde (2005b) argues that spirituality can exist and play out outside a religious tradition. Bigger (2003) explains that the aim should be to help children understand themselves, and their relationships and their interactions and responses to the wider world. In other words, they need to explore spirituality at their own level and through personal reflection. From Bigger's (2003) point of view, this process would mean many things, for example,

- Exploring questions such as: What I am worth? What are others worth? What kind of a person am I?
- The issue of 'who am I?' within diverse contexts children inhabit helps them locate and situate themselves socially, emotionally and politically.
- Building balanced attitudes and relationships, and promoting wellbeing, which is emotional, psychological and emotional health.
- Being comfortable with difference related to issues of gender, race, colour, nationality etc.
- Being able to appreciate emotions such as love, appreciation, hope, despair.
- Promoting a sense of awe and wonder about life and the world.

To provide further insight, Benson et al. (2003) define spiritual development as a process that cultivates the core human aptitude for self-transcendence; it is the “engine that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution” (p. 205). It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices, leading to an evolution of an individual’s spirituality and spiritual worldview over the course of life (Benson et al., 2003).

Geisenberg (2007) summarises the common perspectives on spirituality to include an awareness of the world around us; a sense of compassion towards the world and all in it; a sense of wonder; a relationship with a higher power, which may be a God; appreciation of the beliefs and values of others. She explains that spirituality has strong links with religion but one does not have to be religious to be spiritual. Spirituality is more encompassing and inclusive than religion. It is part of a person’s psychological consciousness. Further, Geisenberg (2007) states that a person’s spirituality cannot be divorced from the culture in which he or she lives and the knowledge one has gained from that culture.

Defining the concept ‘morality’ is equally challenging. Govender (2006) explains that scholars have used various approaches that focus on nature, social settings, and cognitive abilities. She argues that in general morality is about developing positive attitudes and behaviours towards other people in society, based on social and cultural norms, rules and laws as morality holds deeply held convictions. For example, well-known theorists Kohlberg and Gilligan show that morality is multi-faceted with components such as moral reasoning, a sense of justice, compassion, fairness, and caring about the welfare of others (Gilligan, 1977; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Kohlberg, 1981; 1984). In addition, morality involves having orientations, that is, perspective-taking ability - the ability to understand what someone is feeling or thinking.

Kohlberg’s (1981) research on moral development reveals the complex ways in which children can reason about justice and rights when responding to hypothetical life dilemmas. Kohlberg identified three levels of moral reasoning each with two sub-stages (six stages in all). He contended that individuals pass through in the order listed. Each new stage replaces the reasoning of the previous stage, and some individuals do not achieve all the stages. Thus, the children in my study were aged between seven -11 years old, as my view was that their

reasoning might be explained by Kohlberg's Levels 1 and 2 (stages 1 to 4). These levels and stages are discussed below.

- **Level 1 - Pre-conventional morality**

Kohlberg (1981; 1984) stated that in general, young children are in the pre-conventional stage of morality and as the participants were aged between eight –ten years old, the majority would be in this pre-moral stage. At this level, a child's moral behaviour is shaped by the standards of adults and the consequences of following or breaking adult rules. In other words, Kohlberg theorised that children develop moral thinking by learning standards, norms, and principles of behaviour from parents, caregivers, peers and other role models. Moral reasoning is based on the physical consequences of a person's actions. "Wrong" behaviours are those that will be punished. At this stage, most children's make moral decisions in terms of avoiding punishment or earning rewards.

- **Stage 1. Obedience and punishment orientation**

In stage 1, the child is good in order to avoid being punished. In this stage, children operate by rules; that is, they are rule-oriented. Any behaviour for which they are punished by adults is bad and behaviours for which adults offer rewards is good, leading to a focus on self-rewards.

- Stage 2. Individualism and exchange**

At this stage, children start to understand that different people can have different views of right and wrong. The standard is self-interest, and children will reason that what is best for the individual is what is right. The child also begins to see the need for mutual benefit. In other words, they start beginning to see morality in terms of treating others well.

- **Level 2: Conventional reasoning**

At this level, the reasoning emphasises social rules. In other words, children internalise the standards of adults in their lives whom they value. This stage is reached by more advanced primary school children and most high school children.

- **Stage 3: Good interpersonal relationships (being a good boy/girl)**

Children in this stage will make moral decisions based on the actions and behaviours that will please others, especially figures such as parents, caregivers, teachers, popular peers and

others who have high status (e.g. teachers, popular peers) and focus on maintaining relationships through sharing, trust, and loyalty. They also take other people's perspectives and intentions into account when making moral decisions. Morally mature children and adolescents will turn to society as a whole for guidelines about right or wrong. They are aware that rules are needed in a society to maintain stability, and believe it is their "duty" to obey them. However, they view rules to be inflexible, and generally do not see that, as the needs of community or society change, rules should also change.

- **Stage 4: Maintaining the social order**

The child/individual becomes aware of the broader rules of society so moral reasoning is about obeying rules in order to uphold the law and to avoid guilt.

Critics of Kohlberg have argued that moral behaviours is not merely shaped by moral reasoning but that there are other social factors that must be taken into account (McLeod, 2013). Researchers have questioned whether the theory will apply to non-Western contexts that have different moral values and outlooks (McLeod, 2013). Gilligan (1977) argued that the principle of caring for others is more important than moral reasoning. Furthermore, Kohlberg (1981; 1984) claimed that the moral reasoning of males is often more advanced than that of females. Girls are often found to be at stage 3 in Kohlberg's system (good boy-nice girl orientation) whereas boys are more often found to be at stage 4 (law and order orientation). Gilligan (1977) claimed that Kohlberg's theory was gender biased and argued that he ignored the feminine voice of compassion, love, and non-violence, which is associated with the socialisation of girls. Gilligan concluded that Kohlberg's theory did not account for the fact that women engage with moral problems from an 'ethics of care', rather than an 'ethics of justice' perspective (Gilligan, 1977). In my study, I did not examine the gender dimension of morality but I was interested in looking at both the care orientation and justice orientation.

Gilligan (1977) argued for the examination of two moral orientations to moral understanding: a justice orientation (leading to equality of rights and fairness), and a care perspective, which is generally undervalued in research, (leading to attachment, responsibility, dependency and loyalty). From a justice orientation, an individual examines moral problems from the viewpoint of rules, values and principles and guidelines that are rationally based on concepts such as good, evil, fairness etc. From a care perspective, moral

problems are analysed from the perspective of relationships and the impact of various actions can have on people one interacts with. The main goal is to build and form healthy and supportive networks of relationships based on values one holds.

Gilligan (1977) stressed that the two perspectives are not separate nor are they gender specific and stated that a care orientation is about looking out for the needs of self and others with whom one has relationships and furthermore that the language of care is different from the language of justice, and it deserves to be valued in research. Jensen (2008) found that across cultures, children and adolescents, girls or boys, speak of both care and fairness as care is directed not only at other people but also at communities as a whole, such as family, school, or society. Thus Jensen (2008), argues that the impetus to care – that is, reason we care or who we care for in situations - is not universal but can vary across cultures.

In my study, I drew on the above concepts and my understandings of them to make sense of my data, taking into account the embedded complexities.

2.3 Research insights on children's conceptions of spirituality and morality

2.3.1 Introduction

There are a number of empirical studies that have explored the issue of children's conceptions of spirituality and morality; the review of international literature (Ahn, 2013; Ingersoll, 2013; Roeser, Issac, Abo-Zena, Brittian, & Peck, 2008) show that there has been attention given in research to understanding spirituality in children.

Ingersoll (2013) conducted a study in Britain with children between the ages of six to 13 years old from different religious backgrounds which found that the children's inner lives are very significant and that children draw their strengths from their inner lives, where they get to know and understand the meaning of existence. Ingersoll's (2013) study indicated that the meaning of existence is understood as the child's life world, which consists of everything and anything interacting within and around the child and emphasised the importance of understanding how children acquire spirituality and morality.

A British study by Hay and Nye (2006), with children aged six to 11 years of age, found that spirituality was a very deep seated, complicated mental activity linked to what is termed 'conscious'; whereby children are conscious of what is going on in their environment and make assumptive interpretations in understanding issues of spirituality and morality in

the environment. Hay and Nye's study (2006) arrived at the conclusion that young children were aware of spirituality within them, and the 'connection' they had with themselves, God, other people and the world around them.

Another important study conducted by Ahn (2013) on morality in a preschool with children aged two to six years old, investigated through observation methods, how children interacted with their caregivers and found that the children were concerned with being a good or bad person as they developed their moral orientations. Ahn's study is important in that it explains how younger children interact with their environment in trying to understand issues of spirituality and morality (2013) and highlighted the importance children attribute to being fair to others in their environment, be it friends in the preschool or adults as teachers. The study showed that human beings develop a sense of fairness as early as before the age of seven and as fairness is a moral characteristic in humans; it is developed through socialisation.

The findings in Ahn's study (2013) substantiate the argument by a number of theorists (for example, Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Hart & Carlo, 2005; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Lehmann, 2011) that morality is predictive of various behaviours and intentions of children. They further argued that morality might relate to moral and immoral behaviours. They also argue that by looking at the immediate determinants of behaviours and intentions, the underlying attitudes, moral evaluations, and social norms directly affecting those intentions may be revealed. This makes one to begin to understand how morality and spirituality interactions among children occur (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Hart & Carlo, 2005; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Lehmann, 2011). The findings of these scholars has major implications for the present study in that the school has no space for the teaching of spiritual and moral issues, thus understanding Ahn's findings gives insight to the child's spiritual and moral conceptions.

Although the language of spirituality in the South African context is still not a popular concept, there are studies that have been conducted by some researchers (de Klerk-Luttig, 2008; Govender, 2006; Muthukrishna, et al., 2006; Roux, 2006) on children's spirituality and morality. These studies found that young children's moral reasoning differs from that of older children. Moreover, these studies concluded that children's choice of moral orientations differs in children by age and gender.

In the sections to follow, further examination of research perspectives is presented to highlight various issues around children's spirituality and morality.

2.3.2 Theoretical arguments on spirituality and morality in childhood

Roux (2006) presented a critical and thorough review of spirituality in *Religion Education* within the South African context. He highlighted that in the democratic South African education system, issues such as personal wellbeing, spirituality and multi-religion education are challenging to teachers and learners who have to cope with a new approach to religion in education and life skills (Department of Education, 2002; 2003). It is not quite clear whether teachers understand the concept of children's spirituality as outlined in the policy document, *National Policy on Religion and Education* (Department of Education, 2003).

As the purpose of schooling should also be to promote human wellbeing or personal wellness, and *education for life*, the curriculum should reflect the priorities of life in general, and the values of a society in particular (Department of Education, 2002; 2003). The *Religion Education* curriculum in South Africa, for many years had no indication or any content relating to spirituality *per se*. There are intrinsic complexities in developing an understanding of spirituality, especially in its different social and economic contexts, i.e. in the school curriculum (Roux, 2006). From my review, very little research on the training of pre- or in-service teachers has been undertaken in South Africa, for example, with regard to the processes or approaches towards children's spirituality in *life skills* programs. In published life skills textbooks, there is also no indication of any learning material on learners' spirituality, spiritual development or growth (Roux, 2006).

Various scholars and researchers have stressed that it is imperative that children engage in a holistic approach to life, encompassing all spheres, therefore, one has to create a wellness within oneself in order to ensure a total physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Fowler & Dell, 2004; King & Boyatzis, 2004). Children, irrespective of their social and economic stance, deserve to develop into healthy and happy human beings. The empowerment of children to be in control of their destinies as they travel the road to achieving their full potential, to be creative and have inquiring minds, to be self-aware and relate well to others, and to live a life defined by respect and human dignity is imperative (Erricker, 2010). Fowler & Dell (2004) argue that the religious and spiritual conceptions of children are linked to their cognitive and emotional development. This

perspective has influenced researchers to focus on adolescent stage as a crucial point for investigating spirituality and morality development.

Although my study looked into children's spirituality and morality with children aged seven to 11 years old, research focusing on adolescents has also been reviewed in this study in order to explore how findings from these studies can explain the development of spirituality and morality. It can be argued at this stage, that research pertinent to adolescents and spirituality has been influenced by many theoretical arguments on their religious experiences, including religious conversion. Many studies on adolescents and religion have concluded that adolescents pursue deeper meaning of life through religion (for example, Benson, Scales, Sesma, & Roehlkepartain, 2006; King & Boyatzis, 2004). However, other studies have concluded that adolescents begin to discard their religious beliefs during this transitional period in their lives (for example, Carlozzi, Winterowd, Harrist, Thomason, Bratkovich, & Worth, 2010; Fiala, Bjorck, & Gorsuch, 2002). Research also shows that this kind of polarisation in religiousness, especially among adolescents, has long-term consequences in the adult stage of life. Levenson, Aldwin and D'Mello's study (2005) in the United States provide empirical support for this drawing on their conclusions that religious commitment or lack thereof during adolescence has predicted adult faith (Levenson et al., 2005).

Hart & Carlo's study (2005) in the United States found that adolescents are at a critical period of moral development, where age-related changes in moral engagement occur frequently and act as the foundation for adult morality (Hart & Carlo, 2005). It has been argued by different authors that the influences on moral development have included *inter alia* hormonal changes associated with puberty (Fabes, Carlo, Kupanoff, & Laible, 1999), media (Hart & Carlo, 2005) and school attachment (Atkins, Hart, & Donnelly, 2004).

From another dimension, a number of theorists have argued that morality is predictive of the various behaviours and intentions of children and have argued that spirituality or lack of it may relate to moral and immoral behaviours (for example, Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Hart & Carlo, 2005; Lehmann, 2011). They also argue that by looking at the immediate determinants of behaviours and intentions, the underlying attitudes, moral evaluations, and social norms directly affecting those intentions may be revealed. This makes one to begin to understand how spirituality and morality interactions

among adolescents occur. The conclusions of studies in adolescents highlight a need for more studies in childhood in order to better understand children's spiritual and moral development behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; King & Boyatzis, 2004; Hart & Carlo, 2005; Lehmann, 2011).

Lerner, Alberts, Anderson and Dowling (2006) argue that spirituality plays a key role in the development of a positive moral and civic identity that makes thriving in adolescence and adulthood possible. In line with this, the US study by Roeser et al. (2008) found that adolescents experience spirituality as a factor that allows them to successfully overcome the challenges they face in identity development and a sense of purpose and meaning. However, despite these insights into the role of spirituality among adolescents, researchers have not fully understood the extent of the impact of spirituality on morality (King & Furrow, 2004).

One explanation for the difficulty in relating spirituality and morality is that there is no clear operational definition of what religion is as a concept, and attempting any definition is complex. Initial definitions of religiousness were mostly superficial, such as the frequency of religious attendance. Currently, this definition has moved from one-dimensional to a multidimensional model, underscoring the complexity of religiousness (Benson et al., 2006; Gorsuch, 1984; Hill & Pargament, 2003).

These multidimensional models of religiousness have included concepts such as closeness to God, religious motivations and religious support (Fiala et al., 2002; Hill & Pargament, 2003), as well as God concept, religious coping, locus of control and spiritual wellbeing, among others (Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2004). Wong-McDonald and Gorsuch (2004) argued that each of these aspects predicts the next i.e. religious beliefs predict religious motivation etc. On another level, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) indicated that moral behaviour is the product of the attitudes and subjective normative beliefs towards the intended behaviour. Fowler's developmental theory of faith states that a child's experience of faith starts in early childhood continues through late adulthood and involves identifying, evaluating, and reforming beliefs, values about the functions of religion or spirituality in their lives (1981).

Further, Koenig, McCulloch and Larson (2001) highlight that religion/ spirituality is meant to inculcate virtue, happiness, and health. A number of theorists and researchers (for example, Peterson & Seligman, 2004) have highlighted that spirituality is an important

aspect of the worldview of many adults and young people. It is about the search for transcendence, meaning, and purpose in life and a sense of connection or unity among all living things. They further explain that adolescents face the developmental tasks of developing autonomy and responsibility, and adopting a personal belief system and religious and spiritual values that may differ from the values and beliefs of family and peers (Froese & Bader, 2008).

It was evident from my analysis of the literature above that most arguments, either described as theories without empirical support or those supported by empirical evidence have not focused on young children.

2.4 Empirical studies on children's conception of spirituality and morality in school contexts

In this sub-section, I provide an analysis of the empirical studies located, that explored spirituality and morality among children. As I have explained in chapter one, in this study a 'child' is a person or individual under the age of 18 years.

Fowler and Dell's study undertaken in 2004 found that the child's relationship with caregivers during the first two years of life sufficient care to basic physiological needs and the quality of emotional interactions provide the milieu for the child's future human relationships, spiritual relationships, and conceptions of good and bad. Human development perspectives are of the view that there is a complex interaction between family, cultural, peer, and school concerning spiritual and moral influences on children (Hart & Carlo, 2005). A study by Hemming and Madge (2011) conducted in the United Kingdom, examined children and young people's religious identities and found that not only is religious and spiritual identity multi-faceted and constructed through interaction with other social identities and a range of social spaces, but children may also play an active role in shaping their own identities through relationships with other people and their environments.

A narrative inquiry by Bosacki and Ota (2000) was conducted in Canada and the United Kingdom in four primary schools to examine children's spirituality and sense of self found that the schools served very different kinds of communities; some were in affluent suburbs while others were located in more deprived inner city areas. The interviews were very open-ended and sought to establish the nature of the worldviews of children and how

these worldviews were fashioned. Bosacki and Ota (2000) found that spirituality and sense of self were constructs that were evident and prominent in the nine to 11 year old children's narratives. Bosacki and Ota (2000) identified making sense of self, meaning, and purpose in life and intrapersonal and interpersonal relations as important constructs for children. The study concluded that children's narratives can further the understanding of their spirituality and sense of self as well as how these often unheard voices might inform future research and education issues such as the role of teacher, pedagogy and curriculum. The study found that the interconnections among spirituality and morality are complex, that spirituality is closely related to children's emotional development, and that such an intricate connection has immense implications for all aspects of children's development (Bosacki & Ota, 2000).

Research has shown that many young children are quite capable of picking up the 'subtext' of the teacher's talk or the hidden curriculum. For example, given that children at the eight to 11 year old development stage are at such a crucial time, any harmful attitudes such as sarcasm and criticism of the spiritual as not true science may have a damaging and potentially long-lasting effect on the child's own developing attitudes (e.g. Harter, 1999; Selman, 1980).

An interesting study by Baringr (2012) conducted in the Philippines explored children's image of God. The study established a differentiated thinking between boys and girls for religious experience, while a similar appreciation of non-religious concepts between genders was found. The study further revealed that expressing a positive disposition towards life makes children believe that they can talk to God anytime. Their parents were positively identified as having a special impact upon them in terms of knowing God and learning how to pray. Baringr (2012) explains that in contrast to theories that insist on the religious neutrality in children's concepts and that assign children's religiosity to a later life stage, the study concluded that cultural and religious influences upon the young child in the study manifest themselves through information the children gather from the environment. The study indicated that the children maintain a positive image of God at all times, and find in God an image of comforting attention of love and care.

In line with this philosophy, the current study has explored the rich texture of meanings behind children's perceptions towards God. Research studies like those by Park (2007) in the United States on spirituality have focused on the cognitive, motivational,

relational, developmental, and experiential aspects of spirituality and have often overlooked the effects of these elements on the individual's engaging in moral and immoral behaviours. In addition, they have ignored or dismissed the role of religion in exploring the relationship between spirituality and morality. Park (2007) contends that in the early years, religion and spirituality have an important influence on morality through embedding behaviour with moral meaning. My study aimed to explore in a holistic way, children's conceptions of both spirituality and morality.

Another study by Furrow, King and White (2004) concluded that religion is a resource for children in developing personal meaning and concern for others that can prompt prosocial behaviour. Spiritual and moral socialisation of younger children occurs within culture and community in terms of what is deemed appropriate for young children to learn. In general, Furrow et al. (2004) assert that community instruction on spirituality and morality is not structured nor included in any curriculum, but are carried out in tried and tested ways that have worked for centuries. This instruction is carried to schooling contexts indicating that children are not blank slates as far as spirituality and morality are concerned (Furrow et al., 2004).

Zinnbauer and Pargament's (2005) study in the United States established that the family is the primary interpersonal context within which a child or adolescent is exposed to religious and spiritual issues. Several spaces of the parent-youth relationship have been shown to predict positive religious or spiritual outcomes, such as frequency of service attendance or degree of commitment. On another dimension, Boyatzis, Dollahite and Marks (2006) found that parents' perceived warmth, support, cohesiveness, or openness transmits, builds and deepens youths' religiosity or spirituality. According to these researchers, parents who interact with their adolescents with warmth, acceptance, honesty, and shared enthusiasm are a primary influence on their religiosity/ spirituality and wellbeing. In contrast, those parents who do not show these qualities are not successful in developing religiosity or spirituality in the children (Boyatzis et al., 2006). In my study, I was keen to examine the intersecting influences on children's constructions morality and spirituality.

Within the early adolescence stage, spiritual beliefs and practices may be seriously challenged by peers and by encounters with differing belief systems. Spilka (2005) pointed out that for many children religion becomes a haven from stress and that makes it a resource

for coping. Therefore, if young people challenged for their beliefs, they are likely to have difficulty resolving conflicting viewpoints and difficult issues. Further, this scholar asserts that in the early adolescents stage children have not matured enough to deal with these cognitive conflicts and may experience more stress (Spilka, 2005). In other words, it is argued that resolving conflicting beliefs about spirituality requires advanced cognitive abilities that may be beyond many of these young people. Turning to moral development, Crain (2000) argues that moral reasoning in early adolescence is often characterized by the conventional stage of moral development where adolescents try to live up to expectations.

Theories and findings of previous studies suggest that it important to study the relationship between spirituality, that is, beliefs, motivations, and spiritual wellbeing of a child and morality (Hart & Carlo, 2005). From my study of the literature, I realised that the actual influence of spirituality on moral behaviours would be interesting to study.

However, it needs to be noted that young children and young adolescents may lack the cognitive ability and reflective ability to explain and interpret internal spiritual development in their everyday lives.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature that focused on theoretical and empirical perspectives, explanations, and interpretations of children's spirituality and morality. I found the insights gained valuable to my study – it both provided a backdrop to locate my study and provided insights into key debates on my topic. These insights would be invaluable to my analysis of data gathered from my participants.

In the next chapter, I present the research methodology of my study and the design choices I made.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain and justify the research methodology and design of my study. Research methodology is the strategic approach to investigating the phenomenon under study, which was influenced by my ontological and epistemological positions and outlines the research paradigm in which my study is located. In other words, it is about the *principles* that guide my research practice, and explains why I adopted a particular approach. I also discuss the research tradition, data generation methods, and the process to analyse this data as well as all other considerations such as ethical issues and issues of validity.

3.2 Methodological issues

The study I undertook was qualitative in nature, undertaken in a natural setting. Qualitative research focuses on rich, contextual descriptions of the phenomenon under study. I was of the view that a qualitative research would have the capacity to uncover the quality and meanings of children's understandings of the concepts being studied viz. spirituality and morality (Devenish, 2006). The key concepts in my study are not observable behaviours and verifiable facts, and therefore, cannot be quantified as would be required in quantitative methodology. This study needed a methodology that allowed the researcher to enter the children's world and discover the nature and meaning of their experiences (Devenish, 2006).

The study adhered to an interpretivist/constructivist approach, as my aim was to understand children's constructions and meanings of spirituality and morality. This paradigm suggests that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p.12). According to Nordqvist, Hall and Melin (2007) an interpretative approach is "a collaborative approach where the researcher and the researched join in an ongoing dialogue (Denzin & Lincoln 2005) where knowledge is created through mutual understanding". Reality will be revealed hence Sueda (2014) as contends, "a handful of reality, not a single 'objective' is obtained in the study.

My research method was a qualitative case study as I chose to research a complex phenomenon – *children's conceptions of spirituality and morality*. According to Yin (2002) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the case is a complex entity located in a milieu

embedded in various influences such as historical, social, economic, political and ethical. Thus, the phenomenon cannot be studied outside the context in which it occurs – hence the bounded reality that I focused on (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A researcher should explore what is common and what is particular about the case.

Baxter and Jack (2008) explain that a qualitative case study facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data resources. Different data generation techniques were used to allow for the examination of a variety of angles to the phenomenon. In my study, a case study approach provided a picture of ‘what it is like’ for young children to be spiritually and morally aware. My aim was to capture the reality of my participants’ lived experience of the particular phenomena under study (Cohen et al., 2007).

Yin (2002) explains that a case study is an empirical inquiry within a real-life context when the margins between phenomena and situation are apparent. Children’s meaning of spirituality and morality are situated and located within particular contexts, and cannot be divorced from context. Therefore, my unit analysis was a *phenomenon*, which is possible in a case study according to Cohen et al. (2007) and Yin (2002).

Multiple data generation techniques, including the individual interview, and various participatory techniques: two vignettes or scenarios depicting a moral dilemma, and children’s drawings of various concepts, for example love, a dream and God, were utilised. These multiple data production tools enabled triangulation of data. In describing the case, I wanted to search for contrasting perspectives and explanations, contradictions and complexities.

3.3 Research design

According to Trochim (2006), the research design of a study provides the glue that holds the research project together and is used to structure the research to show how all of the major parts of the research project “work together to try to address the central research question” (p.2). The research design gives insight into the rationale for all components, processes, and steps I took in the study. In this sub-section, the details of the design of my study and the design choices I made are presented.

3.3.1 Context of the study

It is difficult for researchers to try to study all people in targeted population of interest, as this would be costly, unwieldy and time consuming. Therefore, researchers' select a smaller group of participants that in some way represent the larger population (Devenish, 2006). In this study, it was not feasible to study all children aged between nine -11 years in Grade three. The field of scientific research has devised techniques and strategies to research a population in a more practicable and convenient way. It is important to note that sampling decisions always fluctuate between the aims of covering as wide a field as possible and of doing analysis, which is as deep as possible (Devenish, 2006).

In this study, I wanted to collect meaningful, in-depth data more-or-less reflecting most aspects of the target population. This enabled me to collect enough cases in which to search for common themes on children's experiences of spirituality and morality. The study was conducted at one primary school situated in an urban township in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. I had easy access in terms of travel during the data collection process to a school. Convenience sampling influenced my selection of the school.

3.3.2 Participants

Qualitative research usually makes use of purposive sampling, with the objective of obtaining information rich data. I chose my population from Grade three learners because spirituality and morality is not taught within subjects in primary schools, and as such, the data will be purely the children's own experiences without them thinking that they are being assessed for academic work.

The purposive sampling technique I implemented was typical case sampling. According to Glesne (1999) cited in Devenish (2006), typical case sampling "illustrates or highlights what is typical or normal, with the purpose of being illustrative, not definitive" (p. 29). Participants in the study were learners in Grade three, between the ages of nine and 11 years old. Selection was done through the process of random sampling, stratified by gender. I scanned class registers and made a list of all Grade three learners, separating boys from girls. I then selected three boys and three girls from the pool of learners in each gender group by simple random sampling, drawing names out of a hat (a box in my case).

3.3.3 Data generation

3.3.3.1 Introduction

My first task was to meet with the school principal to explain the purpose of my study. I further explained the procedure and steps I needed to follow. I requested formal permission to conduct the study at the school and arranged for letters of information and consent forms to be sent to the relevant parents/caregivers seeking their permission for their children to be involved in the research.

3.3.3.2 The data generation process

During the whole process, I was aware of the fact that it was important ethically to engage my child participants with respect, as I was aware of the fact that the learners were doing me a favour by extending their time and assistance in data gathering to me.

a. The interview

In the study, the key data generation technique was an interview with each of the participants. My interviews were semi-structured. I wanted to have a more flexible approach that would allow for discovery and an elaboration of the responses by participants (Cohen et al., 2007). Qualitative methods such as the interview enabled a deep understanding of social phenomena such as children's conception of spirituality and morality (Henning, 2004). Kvale (1996) explains that through interviews with participants, the researcher endeavours to understand the world from their point of view while making meaning of their experiences. This was my main motivation for using individual interviews.

From the outset of my study, I knew that I had to address the power imbalance between myself - an adult researcher and the child participants. According to Giesenberg (2007), there are no specific tools for determining children's spirituality but through my study of the literature, I realised that participatory research techniques would be most appropriate to use with my child participants, since my study is located in the paradigm of new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1998; Tisdall, 2011). Many scholars who have researched *with* children have used various creative and innovative methods and multiple data generation strategies (for example, Beazley, Bessell, Ennew, & Waterson, 2006; Christensen & James, 2000; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2013). The aim was to make children active participants in research about matters concerning them and their lived experiences. Thus, during the

individual interviews, I used various participatory, child friendly data generation techniques to produce data. These can be described as interactive conversation techniques (Hyde, 2005). I discuss each technique below.

b. Vignettes

Vignettes have been used in studies to investigate a wide variety of social issues (for example, Govender, 2006; Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney & Neale, 2010). Vignettes are read-by or read to the participants who are expected to then answer questions on the scenarios (Govender, 2006). This allows participants an opportunity to express their own perspectives, views and beliefs about a given situation or incident. In my study, the vignettes (refer to Appendix 7) captured a moral dilemma that children had to give their views on. I read the scenario to each learner that they followed on a written copy placed in front of them. The scenarios were at a reading level that the children could access. They were written in IsiZulu, as learners were more proficient in this language.

The scenarios contained a moral dilemma and my view was that responses to them would reveal children's moral orientations. Further, I hoped that the comments of the participants would reveal aspects of their spirituality, for example, feeling of love, compassion, empathy, values, presence of a higher power etc. In structuring my vignettes, I drew on the research by Govender (2006) and adapted the vignettes used in her study. Pictures were used to stir the children's interest, and to make characters presented in the story more concrete.

c. Children's drawings

Influenced by research undertaken by Giesenberg (2007) on children's spirituality, I decided to use children's drawings as a data generation tool. I asked children to draw or paint pictures about 'dream', 'love'. I zoned in on these ideas during my study guided by Giesenberg's (2007) research. Devenish (2006) points out that artworks have played an important role in the religious and spiritual development of people since ancient times and Stewart (1996) cited in Devenish (2006) explained that art is a language children use to express their feelings, images and questions of what they hold sacred and valued. In other words, art is a form of communication as there is often a gap between children's evolving concepts of spirituality and morality and their ability to verbalise them.

Thus, I envisaged that artwork (children's drawings) would be a valuable way to gather information about children's involvement with and experience of religion, spirituality, or God concepts. Devenish (2006) argues that artwork provides better insight into children's real understandings. I was fully aware that to analyse and understand children's drawings in my study would not be an easy task. I had to be very cautious of not bringing my interpretations and assumptions into the analysis process. Rather, I requested each participant to tell me about his or her drawings and depictions and to use their own words in sharing the meanings with me. I digitally recorded their responses, and later transcribed them.

d. Conversations with a picture

Hyde's (2005a) research on children's spirituality gave me the idea of using pictures to facilitate conversation during the interviews. The children were invited to describe each picture and talk about what the picture depicted. I probed the responses of the children to encourage elaboration. I selected a picture that depicted an everyday experience and envisaged that engaging with the picture would illuminate children's spirituality, as occurred in a similar task used in the study by Hyde (2005a). The picture depicted a child lying ill on a hospital bed (refer to Appendix 7).

e. Letter to God

All children in the study had a conception of God, which I gauged during the individual interviews. The children were from families that subscribed to a religion. In order to gain insight into children's conception of God, I requested them to write a letter to God. This method of data collection involved writing in IsiZulu. Children had to think about and reflect on what they wanted to say to God, and express this in writing. After this task was completed, children were told to complete a drawing depicting God, and explain the drawing to me.

3.3.4 The pilot study

My research started with a pilot study, which was conducted with two participants who were not going to be part of the main study. My aim was to try out, and evaluate the data generation techniques I planned to use in the study. The pilot was very useful as the participant's responses made me realise that the rest of the techniques I was to use in my study would illuminate various dimensions of spirituality and morality. Based on the pilot, I decided to use pictures for the various characters in the vignettes to make them more realistic

and to arouse the interest of the learners. My weakness in the pilot study was that I needed to probe more carefully and ensure that I do not lead the children to responses I wanted. My supervisor's critique of the plot was very valuable in this regard.

3.3.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an interactive and reflexive process as explained by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003). My focus in the data analysis process was on the *stories* of spirituality and morality. The stories provided insight into children's meaning making on spirituality and morality, and illuminated the spaces and places in which these concepts developed. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) "qualitative data analysis is a systematic process of selecting, categorising, synthesising, and interpreting to provide explanation of the single phenomenon of interest" (p. 398). Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that a coding system can be utilised to break down qualitative data, conceptualise, and then represent in a new way to allow a systematic, explanatory theory to be developed.

My overall aim was to identify unique categories and themes related to conceptions of spirituality and morality held by the children. I examined similarities and differences in children's conceptions. I looked for key ideas within a category such as *"judgement of right and wrong"*. Then I worked up from specific categories to larger ideas or themes such as a *care orientation*.

3.3.6 Validity issues

In qualitative research, validity is about trustworthiness and there are four components of trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Shenton, 2004). To ensure that the findings of this study were credible, I triangulated my data generation techniques – I used a number of participatory techniques to produce data as explained above. To enhance dependability, I used the member-checking technique (Nieuwenhuis, 2007) where I took the data back to the children and got them to explain to me whether their responses were correctly captured. They could elaborate or clarify issues if they chose to, and some of them did.

I achieved the principle of transferability by providing a copious description of all phases of my research design for the benefit of other researchers who are interested in my topic and research questions. I also have an audit trail of data, for example, children's verbal

responses, the drawings, and their writing are included in the dissertation. Shenton (2004) states that keeping an audit trail of a detailed and accurate record of everything in the research process is necessary to ensure trustworthiness. I also worked with a colleague to ensure that my translations from IsiZulu to English captured the data as accurately as possible.

3.3.7 Design challenges and limitations

At the outset of my study, I realised that research-involving children requires unique ethical demands and commitment on the part of a researcher, in particular because of the power imbalances between the researcher and child participants. I had to spend a lot of time examining literature related to the ethics of conducting research with children, and in discussion with my supervisor. The insights I gained, however, were valuable and impacted all aspects of my study, in particular my own ontological assumptions and data generation techniques I used. One of my weaknesses that emerged in the pilot was that I tended to lead the participants towards certain responses. My supervisor evaluated the pilot data with me and was able to make me see my limitations. I tried my best to address this when engaging in my final data generation.

3.3.8 Ethical consideration

Ethics is an important aspect of any research project, more particularly in research involving child participants. My supervisor made me realise that every stage of my research would raise ethical dilemmas for me, as I had to protect the participants throughout the research process. Devenish (2006) states that it is ethical for a researcher to engage with participants respect and dignity, and to listen to intently and show interest in the views and ideas they are prepared to share. I obtained informed consent from primary caregivers or parents as the participants are minors. The consent form explained the purpose of research, the process of research, importance of the study at any stage. I also obtained informed consent from all the child participants because I believe that they are individuals in their own right and have the right to refuse or consent to participation. Permission was obtained from the school principal and the school governing body as well as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research office of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (refer to Appendix 5).

3.4 Conclusion

The chapter presented the research methodology and design that was utilized in this study. I have explained why this particular design was appropriate and attempted to show that rigor was applied when designing the study. My conceptual framework has been presented in chapter 2. In next chapter, I discuss the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study was underpinned within the theoretical paradigm of sociology of childhood. Hence, the epistemological and ontological stance is that children are individuals in their own right active social beings who are able to construct and make meanings of events and issues in their lives (James & Prout, 1998; Roux, 2006). The study was also framed by debates from the sub-field of 'Children's Geographies' that enabled me to examine children's lives and the meanings they assign to experiences and conceptions of spirituality and morality in the various experiential spaces and places of their lives. My study explored the geographies of children's spirituality and morality and I have tried to map out the spaces and places of spirituality and morality in relation to young children.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The key research questions were:

- What are children's conceptions of spirituality and morality?
- What influences shape children's conception of spirituality and morality?
- How do children navigate spirituality and morality in their everyday lives?

4.2 Discussion of findings

The data that emerged in this study showed, without doubt that children are individuals in their own right and active social beings who are able to construct and make meanings of experiences in their lives, including those around issues of morality and spirituality. Using the lens of Children's Geographies, I was able to examine children's notions of spirituality and morality in their own unique experiential spaces and places. The themes below reflect the geographies of children's developing moral orientations and conceptions of spirituality, and the influences that shape them. I map out the different facets, angles, and features of their emerging spirituality and morality in the sections below.

4.2.1 Children's conceptions of morality

The study of moral development in children would examine changes in *thoughts, feelings, and behaviours* regarding standards or norms of right and wrong. Morality is not innate among people; it is acquired by living within and interacting with people in the family, community, and society (Gilligan, 1977; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). Morality is an ideal array of standards set by a group of people as a way of life relative to their environment and is embedded within the norms and values of a particular culture. Thus, what is viewed as moral in one culture may be considered immoral in another (Gilligan, 1977; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988).

Morality is described as changes during development in an individual's sense of justice and judgement of what is right and wrong in relation to what is socially accepted. As explained earlier, Kohlberg (1981) contends that people pass through a series of stages in the evolution of their sense of justice and in the kind of reasoning they use to make moral judgements. School-age children tend to think either in terms of concrete, unvarying rules or in terms of society's ideals. In the pre-conventional morality stage, morality is interpreted in terms of rewards and punishment. According to Kohlberg, in the conventional morality stage, morality is interpreted as a societal ideal of pleasing others by acting as a good member of society. Morality is not just one thing that can be described as a single entity (1981; 1984). In other words, there are different kinds of morality; it should be seen as multi-faceted with aspects such as moral reasoning, a sense of justice, compassion, fairness, and caring about the wellbeing of others (Gilligan, 1977; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). I also explained in chapter one that the concept of morality is closely linked to religion (Fisher, 2011).

The above insights guided my interpretation of the findings. The key data source was children's responses to the vignettes or scenarios that depicted a moral dilemma. I explored how children conceptualise, experience and navigate morality. As explained in chapter 3, I used pictures to stir the children's interest, and to make characters presented in the story more concrete. It was interesting to note that within children's responses to the scenarios, one could observe moral reasoning of varying complexity, suggesting that children were operating across the levels and stages delineated by Kohlberg (1981; 1984).

4.2.2 The spaces and places of “doing the right thing”

A justice orientation emerged powerfully in the children’s responses to the two scenarios presented; children clearly displayed a sense of what they believed is right and wrong and the data showed that children reason in terms of rules and norms or ideals they have been socialised to value; fear of repercussions and punishment. Morality is also interpreted as a goal of pleasing others by acting as a good person in society.

Two of the children in my study illustrated that their moral reasoning in terms of the avoidance of punishment. When requested to elaborate, the children focused on the consequences involved meted out by certain authority figures such as the teacher, school management, and parents. This would fit in with Kohlberg’s pre-conventional morality level, more specifically stage 1 (obedience and punishment orientation) where children reason that powerful authority figures lay down a fixed set of rules which must be unquestioningly obeyed (Kohlberg, 1984), lending credence to the fact morality is external to the children themselves.

It is not ok to hurt someone because one will report this to the teacher and you will be punished.

(Learner 2, Vignette 1)

There is no right time where children are allowed to push one another because when you push another child, the parent will come to the school, Lumka might even end up being chased away from school.

(Learner 4, Vignette 1)

I think it is not ok to hit someone because you might hurt him and sometimes go to jail because you have hurt the other person.

(Learner 1, Vignette 2)

However, it is interesting to note that Learner 5 seems to reason beyond the stage of obedience and punishment, almost at a more advanced level, expressing his view as a member of a society or community.

No, it was not right to hit him because learners can end up bringing weapons at school and then school becomes unsafe.

(Learner 5, Vignette 2)

Learner 5 was able to reason at a higher level; where one becomes more concerned with society as a whole and the focus is on obeying laws and maintaining social order, in this case keeping the school safe (Kohlberg, 1984). This response and others below are also indicative of the learner shifting his reasoning to a shift to group-centred considerations – keeping the school safe for all members of the school community. Learner 6 below expressed the concern that Yolisa was setting a bad example to other children in the school community who may emulate the unacceptable behaviour.

Yolisa was not right. No because this will encourage others to fight too.

(Learner 6, Vignette 2)

A number of the participants based their reasoning on preserving good interpersonal relationships and avoidance of hurt to others, physical or emotional, thus suggesting that these participants are at Kohlberg's level 2 of moral reasoning and stage 3. The responses below, normally according to Kohlberg (1981; 1984) are usually evident in children entering their teenage years where they focus on the need to live up to the expectations of the family and community and behave in "good" ways. Such good behaviour means having good underlying motives and interpersonal feelings such as love, empathy, forgiveness, trust and concern for protecting others wellbeing.

Learner: I think it is never ok to hurt someone because the other person will be hurt. People are not to be hurt because they are human beings.

Researcher: What would you say to Lumka to make things right?

Learner: I would tell them to make up and hug each other. Make amends for wrongs.

(Learner 6, Vignette 1)

It is not right to fight – No, because this will encourage others to fight too...Yes they could have sat down and discussed the matter in a friendly way. Because when he gets older, people will demand his money and he will live an unhappy life.

(Learner 5, Vignette 2)

I would have felt bad to see them hurting each other, when they are supposed to be friends.

(Learner 2, Vignette 1)

I would have stopped Lumka from what he was doing. I would have told him to say sorry to Lungelo. I would tell Lungelo to forgive Lumka, and that he must not revenge.

(Learner 8, Vignette 1)

No, I think Yolisa hitting another child is not a good thing because the child may get hurt, and may even die.

(Learner 1, Vignette 2)

An analysis of the responses from learners suggest that their moral reasoning varied across the stages and levels suggested by Kohlberg (1981; 1984). It is not hierarchical in nature – within one learner, there may exist moral reasoning indicative of two different stages. In other words, there are elements of lower and upper, more advanced levels of reasoning depending on the scenario to which they responded. This suggests that reasoning may be contextual in nature.

In my study, the participants in their moral reasoning about right and wrong mainly referred to the consequences of the act for the victim, in particular the harm and distress the action could cause at an emotional and physical level. There was concern for the safety and protection of the welfare of others. However, Learner 1 made reference to the perpetrator, stating that a consequence of the act may be that in the future he may not obtain help when he is in need and this may cause him distress. The notion of reciprocal social skills emerges here.

I was going to ask Lumka why he pushed Lungelo, and I would say he must apologize to him, because they must play together safely and not hurt each other. I think Lungelo was wrong. Next time he will be the one who needs help, and it will be painful if he does not get any.

(Learner 1, Vignette 1)

4.2.3 Care, empathy, and the interests of others: a contradictory space

As explained in chapter 2, Gilligan (1977) was a critic of Kohlberg's in that she argued for both a justice and a care orientation in people's moral reasoning. However, most researchers in this field now disagree with Gilligan's claim that men and women differ in their moral reasoning. Many studies have now found that men and women use both justice and care orientations in their moral reasoning (King & Boyatzis, 2004; Hart & Carlo, 2005; Lehmann, 2011). In later years, Gilligan acknowledged that both care and justice perspectives are valid and complement one another (1977). In my study, I did not set out to examine gender differences in the moral reasoning of the participants. However, the ethics of care was evident in the responses of the children, namely, compassion, empathy, care for the welfare of others, protection from physical and emotional harm and hurt. The responses below are reflective of the care orientation.

Hurting someone is never good, because what Lumka did is not good, Lungelo was hurt and he was crying.

(Learner 1, Vignette 1).

I was going to feel very sad to see Lungelo being hurt by Lumka especially he was angry and hurting another child for his ruler.

(Learner 4, Vignette 1)

I was going to feel sad to see a bad child hurting the other child.

(Learner 3, Vignette 1)

I do not think it is ok to hurt another child because that could result to the child being injured and end up in hospital.

(Learner 5, Vignette 1)

On the other hand, Learner 3, although he shows empathy in scenario 1, in response to scenario 2, he asserts that making threats of physical beating in retaliation is acceptable.

Yes, if Yolisa had hit Mvelo it was going to be a good thing because Mvelo did not want to pay him back, secondly, he will be teaching him a good lesson that, when you have borrowed the money you must pay it back.

(Learner 3, Vignette 2)

A similar contradiction is evident from the response of Learner 2 who asserts that it is acceptable to berate, rebuke, and threaten to beat another child in certain circumstances, especially when a person breaks a promise that he or she has made.

What Yolisa did is good, because Mvelo did not want to pay back the money Yolisa lent him.

(Learner 2, Vignette 2)

4.2.4 Children's ideas about fairness

A component of morality that clearly emerged in the narratives of the children was "fairness", a concept closely related to other moral thoughts, including equality, impartiality, and justice. This involves what is right and equal, and being unbiased. *What is equal* may refer to treating others in a fair, just manner. Reuell (2012) explains that recent studies show that children as young as three years old may have a far more advanced concept of fairness than previously thought. This challenges the thinking that young children are egocentric.

As discussed in chapter 2, the study by Ahn (2013) emphasised the significance children attribute to being fair to others in their environment, be it friends in the preschool or adults as teachers and this makes one to begin to comprehend how morality and spirituality interactions among children occur. In reference to stage 2, level 1 reasoning, Kohlberg (1984) argued that although children between ages of seven and 11 years old may sound amoral, they do sense of right action. For example, they have acquired the notion or principle of *fair*

exchange or fair deals and the principle of returning favours. This was evident in my study in that Learner 3 and Learner 7 seemed quite irate that Mvelo did not honour a promise made or acknowledge the favour executed by Yolisa at a time when Mvelo was in need.

What Mvelo did is not right; he is not a good boy because he now does not want to pay the money which he borrowed from Yolisa, forgetting that Yolisa helped him. Lungelo was angry. Yolisa had offered him assistance.

(Learner 3, Vignette 2)

Mvelo is no right, because he is not keeping to his promises.

(Learner 7, Vignette 2)

Learner 4 and Learner 5 below suggest that when one is recipient of a favour based on trust, it is only fair that the person must commit to a contract made as a moral obligation. Learner 4 asserts that being unfair can be hurtful to the victim.

I think Mvelo did was ungrateful because, before Yolisa gave him the money he explained to him that the money belonged to his brother to buy some pens for school.

(Learner 5, Vignette 2)

People like Mvelo should not be helped because they are not trustworthy.

(Learner 4, Vignette 1)

I think Mvelo did a hurtful thing to Yolisa. Yolisa was kind to borrow Mvelo the money which did not belong to him, his brother's money, and now he is not paying it back.

(Learner 4, Vignette 2)

All eight (8) participants were critical of, and clearly unsympathetic towards the perpetrator of unfair behaviour and actions. In contrast, they were supportive of the victim. In the above excerpts, the manner children perceive a moral and immoral act is based on the principle of fairness. Some of the participants such as Learner 8 (cited in the following excerpt) were

rather adamant that the perpetrator should or would bear the cost of being unfair, for example, he should not be helped in the future because he is not to be trusted as he broke a promise. The children seemed to highlight the importance of reciprocity, a sense of responsibility and accountability in social interactions and relationships. In response to Vignette 1, participants suggested that the perpetrator was unfair, as he did not see the situation from the victim's point of view. Lungelo did explain that he could not lend the ruler to Lumka for fear that it may get lost.

People like Mvelo should not get any help because they do not pay back. When it is time to pay they run away.

(Learner 8, Vignette 2)

Lumka and Lungelo are in the same class. One day Lumka wanted to borrow a ruler and Lungelo said he cannot lend his ruler as he is afraid the ruler may get lost.

(Learner 5, Vignette 1)

The data from my study shows that children do possess a sense of fairness that would develop further in contexts that model fairness. It was interesting to note that although Lungelo in Vignette 1 did not share a resource; the ruler, and maybe deemed selfish and unfair, participants were sympathetic towards him because he had a valid reason which he clearly articulated. Thus, the context of 'fairness' needs to be taken into account in the analysis of children's enactments of the norm of 'fairness'. To explore this notion of fairness and sharing, future studies should be designed to engage children in the distribution of goods and valued resources to examine their willingness and ability to allocate the goods or resources in a fair and equitable manner, as in the research by Sommerville, Schmidt, Yun and Burns (2013) and Blake and McAuliffe (2011).

4.2.5 Children's conceptions of spirituality

From many disciplines, spirituality is seen as an innate quality common to every human being whether he or she is religious or not and is part of a person's psychological being, frame or consciousness (Geisenberg, 2007). Hyde (2005b) states that it is a "natural human disposition" (p. 23). Spirituality is a personal or group search for the sacred in life and it is an

important aspect of the worldview of people in search for transcendence, meaning, and purpose in life, a sense of connection among all living things (Plante & Sherman 2001).

Spirituality may involve a rapport with a transcendent being or a higher power, such as God however, as Geisenberg (2007) explains that spirituality is the “state of being” and the religious aspect of spirituality is the “state of doing” (p. 11). Spirituality comes from within a person and constantly changes as the individual interacts with the social environment. Moodley (2008) explains that “spirituality includes experiences of transcendence, good and evil, belonging and connectedness, meaning and purpose” (p. 2) while transcendence is “the state of being or existence above and beyond the limits of material/human experience” (The Free Dictionary, no date). This may be a belief in or adoration of a God, a transcendent reality or a cosmic force etc. Moodley (2008) explains that religion is “a shared belief and social structure within which spirituality is shaped for most people but not all” (p. 2). Thus, spirituality is a much broader concept and involves principles, doctrines, beliefs, and values that may or may not be shaped by a religious organisation.

Spirituality is reflected in a person’s individualities of compassion, love towards, and wonder and awe about the environment, sense of beauty, values such as respect, perfection, a sense of hope; faith in humanity (Moodley, 2008; Thompson, 2009). Hart (2005) explains that experiences of awe and wonder, wisdom, love or compassion, and metaphysical reflection the outcomes or processes inherent in a spiritual life. The search for wisdom is a common principle in many spiritual texts (Hart 2005), and is not about what or how much we know, but rather it is about how we live and express knowledge and compassion in our lives. As wisdom is reflected in how we spread peace, non-violence, and forgiveness, and in our recognition of pain, hurt and suffering thus is wisdom a consciousness or awareness and about knowing (Hart 2005). According to Hart (2005), a sense of wonder can be seen in a moment when a child is overwhelmed by the beauty of a flower, or in an awareness of a *sacred other*.

Spirituality carries meaning, purpose, hope, and is embedded in relationships with others and a higher power (Ingersoll, 2013; Mulder, 2014). Children’s description of purpose, hope, and relationships is communicated in many forms, both abstract and concrete, and can be in the form of verbal and written communication including art. Spirituality could have an important influence on morality by developing behaviour with moral meaning, by serving

both as a protective factor from various risk-taking behaviours and as a contributing factor in positive prosocial behaviour (Furrow et al., 2004). Hart (2005) argues that love or compassion are a kind of relational spirituality and are stressed in most religious traditions. He states that human encounters are the basis of a *relational* spirituality. In other words it happens at the intersection of 'you and me' - the 'inter-being' (Hart 2005, p. 21) and can be seen in a sense of pain, empathy, or joy in relationships with others.

As explained in my research methodology and design chapter, I used various child friendly participatory techniques to examine my participants' conceptions of spirituality. My aim was to actively listen to my child participants. Guided by the research of Geisenberg (2007), in my study I took the view that spirituality can be expressed outside a religious tradition (Hyde, 2005b). My aim was to examine everyday activities, phenomena or happenings for clues and insights into the spiritual aspects of children's lives thus I explored children's conceptions of God by getting them to write a letter to God and complete a drawing of God. Conceptions of God, however, did emerge in the other activities I designed, including the two vignettes used to explore children's conceptions of morality. Children were requested to draw a dream they may have had and to depict their conception of 'love'. I hoped these activities would illuminate their spiritual knowing. I hoped their drawings and descriptions of a dream might reveal the spiritual aspects of their lives. Geisenberg (2007) states that dreams are an important part of a person's spirituality.

In the sections below, I examine how participants experienced, conceptualized and navigated spirituality in their lives.

4.2.6 Children's conception of God

Across the various instruments I used to produce my data, children's narratives depicted their experiences and conceptions of a transcendental power, in this case, God. I was interested to find out how children experience, think, and talk about God. The "conversations with a picture" and the "letter to God" activities provided valuable insights into children's conceptions of God. The children were required to describe a picture and talk about what the picture depicted. The picture reflected a child lying ill in a hospital bed (Appendix 7). This activity produced the bulk of the data and rich insights on children's conceptions of God. The analysis of children's responses enabled me to arrive at an understanding of the God concepts

held by the children. I found eight sub-concepts: 'Healer'; 'Comforter'; 'Jesus'; 'Provider'; 'Guardian'; 'Creator'; 'Saviour'; 'Father'.

Children described God as a **'Healer'** who helps people who are ill or those who have been injured. In the picture of a child sleeping in bed was shown, most participants reported that the child is in a hospital setting and is ill. Certain participants expressed that seeing the child would make them sad and that they would pray to a higher power, the sacred other, to heal the sick child.

Mmmm...Maybe this boy is thinking about painful and sad things that have happened to him. I can say to this boy, don't lose hope God will help you. God. God stays in us. God is powerful and He is able to answer our prayers.

(Learner 2, Conversation with a picture)

This child is sick, tired and in pain. This child is thinking that God will help him to feel better. I think God will help the child to feel better. I can tell him to pray to God. God is Maria Ocwebileyo (Holy Mary). God is in heaven.

(Learner 7, Conversation with a picture)

Children were also seen as a 'Comforter' in situations of helplessness. In the conversation with a picture activity, many participants reported they think they can comfort the child by telling the child to turn to God for help with his illness. Participants also shared that when a member of the family was ill, people from the church prayed for them to be healed. Children also referred to Jesus as a God the father who is a strong protector.

When I was in hospital, it was not nice and I was scared. I was always worried about injections. My mother used to pray for me when she was leaving. My mom told me to close my eyes while she is praying, sometimes we would sing like we sing at church. We pray to Jesus. Jesus is strong; Jesus is powerful and is the King. I have never seen Jesus; I only hear that... he is the father from heaven.... He comes to us, and flies back. Jesus is strong, people say to him, Mninimandla Onke (Almighty God).

(Learner 8, Conversations with a picture - drawing of God)

Below is a drawing by Learner 8, depicting his conception or understanding of God.



FIGURE 1: DRAWING GOD

Learner 8 explained his drawing:

This is Jesus, flying down to people carrying his stick in his hand. Two angels are besides him.

God was also seen by learners as a **‘Saviour’** of people, and that he lived and died for the sins of people. Again, Jesus is referred to as a God. Learner 7 drew this picture of Jesus/God below and explained it as *In this picture, God is dying for our sins.*



FIGURE 2: DRAWING OF GOD BY LEARNER 7

God is also viewed by certain participants as the **'Creator'**. Learner 4 explains:

God is the one who created us and is powerful. Everything was created by God. At church, they say children come from God. They call God, 'Nkulunkulu', 'Simakade', 'Jehova' Or 'Mdali'.

(Learner 4, Conversation with a picture)

Across the narratives of the participants, God is seen as the powerful **'Guardian'**, **'Provider'**, and **'Protector'**. God also watches that children behave according to acceptable social norms, that is, care for each other, and do not harm one another.

I would say they must leave this and stop fighting, because fighting is not a good thing in the LORD'S eye. If you keep on fighting you will not see the kingdom of God. Stop this and become good friends.

(Learner 5, Vignette 1)

In the drawing below, Learner 6 depicts God.



FIGURE 3: DRAWING OF GOD

Learner narrative: *This is God – he is opening his arms so that everyone can come to him.*

Many participants hold the belief that God is a provider. *“God gives us food to eat. God is a person in the bible. God is Holy Mary”*. Another participant is of the view that *“God stays within us and is able to answer our prayers, and He does what people ask. God lives up in heaven. This is what they tell us in church”*. Others heard about God at home, mother, pastor in church and/ or grandmother who told them when praying that *“God answers our prayers”*. The letter to God activity below depicts God as the provider. The drawings of God often reflected out-stretched arms.

The *Letters to God* by Learners 4 and 5 below further depicts God as the protector of his family.

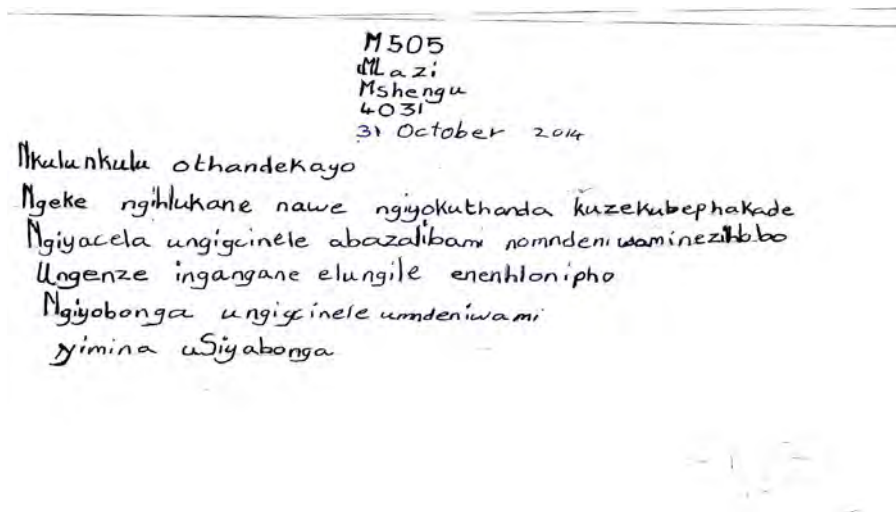


FIGURE 4: LETTER TO GOD (LEARNER 4)

English version:

Loving God

I will not forsake you, I will always love you. Please protect my parents, my family and my relatives. Make me a good and obeying child. I will always thank you for keeping my family safe.

Yours Siyabonga¹

¹Learners were asked not to sign the real names

m 5-11
Po Umlazi
01 Kuzwezi 2 014

Baba Nkhulunkulu
 Ngiyabonga konke osunzile kona mawubungela
 ngabe ngijani ngiyocole ukuthi ughubene nokuthi
 usivikele usigcine kuzo kubo phakade.
 Yimina uAyanda.

FIGURE 5: LETTER TO GOD BY LEARNER 5

English version:

Dear Lord

I thank you for everything you have done, without you I do not know how I would have been. Please continue protecting us, now and forever more.

Yours Ayanda

It was interesting that in my study, none of the eight participants mentioned ancestral worship – a religious form of worship which foregrounds the influence of deceased family members and relatives on the living and that it is acceptable for the living can communicate with the dead. It has a strong ethical and social function. Ancestral worship is practiced in many African communities – often alongside the dominant religion, such as Christianity. This form of worship is not a religion per se but a kind of religious expression that acknowledges a power beyond human control. It is clear that the Christian faith as a strong influence on shaping children's spirituality, particularly in respect of a transcendent being.

4.2.7 Examining other significant elements of spirituality

As I have explained both in Chapter 2 and in this chapter, the notion of spirituality or being spiritual is much broader than religion, although it can incorporate some aspects of religion. Being spiritual is about connecting with a transcendental being or something sacred (maybe a God or a deity) or with nature (being in awe of and appreciating a beautiful sunset), each other (feeling love, compassion, empathy), and ourselves (e.g. questioning: Am I a good person? Can I be a better person?). Spirituality is about a search for meaning and a purpose

in life. It is a universal. Further, emotional wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing influence and shape one another. To explore other aspects of spirituality I had the children complete two activities or tasks, influenced by the research by Giesenberg (2007) on children's spirituality I decided to use children's drawings as a data generation tool. I requested the children to draw or paint pictures of a 'dream' and the concept 'love'.

There have been a limited number of studies that examined how children describe love. Bosacki & Ota's (2002) study in the UK revealed that children believe that mothers are good and they take care of them, love them, and teach them. The researchers also found that children's view of their mothers as loving was based on the mother's capacity to forgive mistakes. Children in this study viewed love as an unconditional way of understanding their weaknesses and mistakes and creating an environment in which they are supported and not constantly reprimanded (Bosacki & Ota, 2002). In a study by Kelley (2008), in the United States, the finding was that children believe that they can personally feel the love of God directly or through others. This study concluded that children's parental love was key to developing children's spiritual capacity for spiritual love. Furrow et al. (2004) argued that religion is a resource for children in developing personal meaning and concern for others, and this can shape prosocial behaviour.

- ***Portrayal of 'Love': what is love?***

From the literature reviewed, it is apparent that love is viewed as a significant spiritual characteristic (Giesenberg, 2007). The children in my study depicted 'love' in their drawings, and then explained the drawings to me. All learners were able to provide their understanding of 'love' through their drawings, which was portrayed mainly in the context of interpersonal relationships, for example, between parents, friends. What emerged in the drawings was that love is about closeness; kindness; being a good person; empathy; sharing; feeling safe and protected; caring; receiving and giving love. Being loved builds a healthy spirituality as explained by Giesenberg (2007). Selected drawings and children's explanations are presented.

Learner 1 depicted love in the relationship between mother and child.



FIGURE 6: DRAWING OF "LOVE" (LEARNER 1)

Learner 1 explained that he has drawn a picture of a mother and a son holding each other's hands and walking down the road. They are happy and talking. The mother is telling his son that she loves him so much. The boy also responds by telling the mother that he loves her too. They are both going to town to buy toys, a football, food, and clothes.

Learner 4 depicted the love shared between his mother and father in the context of a trip to a large shopping complex. The learner used red hearts and bright red flowers to depict love.



FIGURE 7: DRAWING OF "LOVE"

Here in my drawing, I have drawn two people, my father and my mother. They are holding hands and are going to Mega city to buy food. My mother is wearing a red dress. I also drew small flowers, these flowers show the love they have, and that they are happy. It is also that I love my father and my mother. They said they will take me to Mega city when it is the end of the month.

Learner 4

Learner 8 depicted the interaction between two mothers.



FIGURE 8: WHAT IS LOVE?

This is my drawing of love. Here I have drawn two mothers. One mother is carrying food parcels with both hands. The other mother is not carrying anything. So the other mother with all her love decides to give the mother, who has nothing,

one food parcel. Now they both have food parcels. What is important is the love the other mother has for other people.

Learner 8

Learner 4 explained his drawing of a heart.

This drawing is about love. I drew a heart - this heart is full of love. I love my parents, my granny, and my little sister. I love eating and playing. Below my drawing, I wrote "Inhliziyo ekhombisa uthando" meaning "the heart that shows love". Love stays in the person's heart. A person who loves is good and kind.



FIGURE 9: WHAT IS LOVE?

Learner 3 drew a greeting card depicting love, and situated love in a broader context of humanity and making all of humanity feel safe and protected through love.



FIGURE 10: DRAWING OF LOVE

In his narrative, he explains:

I did a card to show the person I love, how much I love them. I then decorated my card to make it look beautiful. On the card I then wrote a message "Uthando luyisiphephelo kubantu" meaning "Love is a shelter to mankind". With this I mean that when people are loved or they love one another, everyone can be safe and every place can be safe. Our homes can be safe places too.

Learner 2 was the only participant to associated love with nature

This is my drawing about love. I love the sun because it makes light. I am happy when there is sun. At night I am scared because it is dark. I drew the red flowers and green grass. I

*also drew the blue sky because I love the sun, flowers, grass,
and the sky.*



FIGURE 11: LOVE AND NATURE

As in the study by Giesenberg (2007), I found that children in my study across the age groups were very aware of the concept of love. Their narratives showed that they could think and make meanings at an abstract level, contrary to Piaget's (1969) theory, for example. The participants were able to quite clearly demonstrate their understandings through the pictures they drew. Love and interrelated concepts such as compassion, empathy, closeness, etc. are a part of their developing spirituality. Baring's study (2012) in the Philippines found that the sense of kindness is developed in the context of concrete acts and deeds displayed by adults with whom they interact, as also reflected in the drawings of love above.

- **Children's dreams**

I attempted to further explore children's spirituality by means of a task on dreams. I requested children to draw a picture of a dream they may have had. My assumption drawn from my readings of literature was that dreams are our inner worlds, and that most dreams of young children's can provide a window into their everyday waking lives. Using dreams as a tool for data production may be criticised because young children may not have the language to describe their dreams in a rich and complete way. My thinking was that making it a drawing activity might address this possible limitation. My main aim was to see whether children's dreams could give me insights into characteristics or traits of spirituality that they have

acquired, for example, care, compassion, love, charity, empathy etc. I did not interpret the dreams myself; I wanted the children to narrate the story in the dreams with me.

Presented below is a selection of dreams and learners' descriptions they had shared with me. In my study, the majority reflected secret fears and anxieties. The dream of Learner 2 reflected the spiritual traits of caring, compassion, and concern for the welfare of children. The fear of child kidnapping emerged in the dream, and reflect the secret hope for a safe environment, which also emerged in the drawings of love.



FIGURE 12: MY DREAM (LEARNER 2)

Learner narrative:

This is the drawing of a dream that I dreamt about on Thursday. While I was asleep, I dreamt as if my mother was standing on a big stone. She was shouting, alerting the neighbors about the red car, which was going around kidnapping children. I was so terrified that I suddenly woke up to find that I was dreaming

Learner 5 portrayed fear of the force of the elements in his dream, and that belief in the power of prayer to counter harm and damage from severe weather such as heavy rains.

Learner 5: narrative on dream

I dreamt that I was at Port Shepstone visiting my granny at the farm. It was at night and we were sleeping with granny in

her rondavel. It was raining hard. Granny was telling me to wake up so that we could pray. I got up and so the dream was over. That is me on the bed.



FIGURE 13: DREAM OF LEARNER 5

The next two drawings by Learner 6 and Learner 3 reflect fears and anxieties that may be deep seated and contextual in nature. The narrative by Learner 6 is below, followed by the drawing.

I was at home sleeping and I dreamt as if there is this man who was pulling me towards the sea. As I was trying to run away the man held me tight and started pulling me harder, when I was about to drown I slipped off from the man's hands and I managed to run away. As I was running away I was crying and my mother shouted at me. Then I immediately woke up. That is how my dream ended.

Learner 6

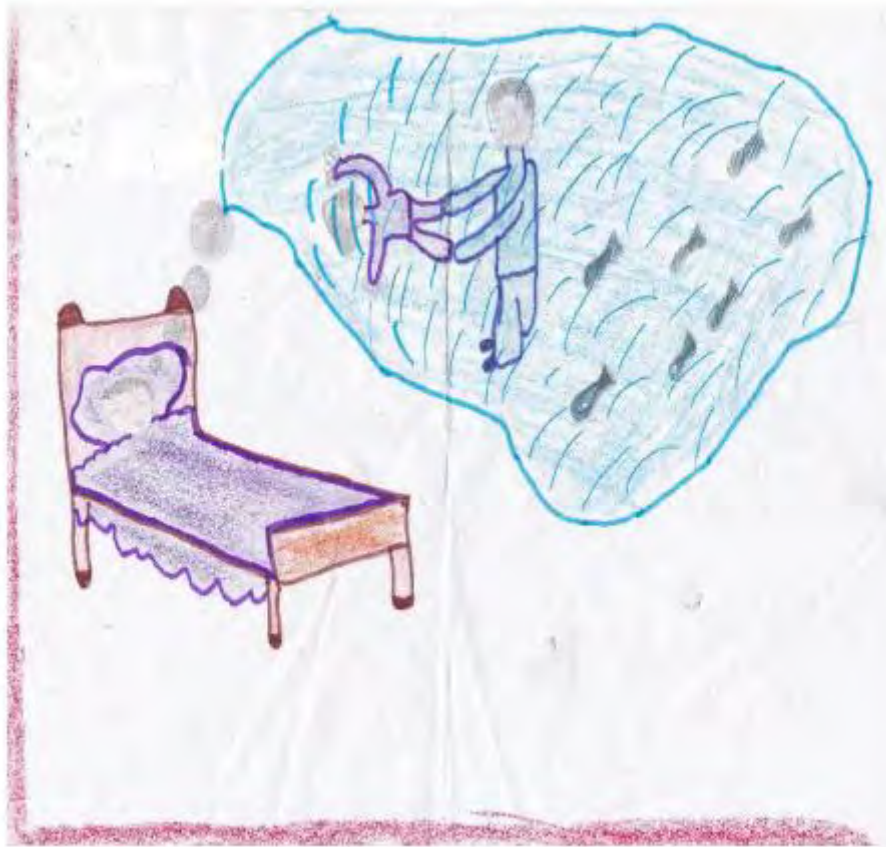


FIGURE 14: DREAM OF LEARNER 6

Learner 3 Narrative:

Here I am sleeping in my bed. I dreamt as if I was walking in the forest with long trees, and I was lost and could not find my way home. Now I was worried that maybe giants would catch me, and my mother will punish me when I come home late.



FIGURE 15: DREAM OF LEARNER 3

4.2.8 Influences that shape children's conceptions of spirituality and morality

Killen and Rizzo (2014) state that research on moral knowledge has indicated that children acquire moral knowledge early in development, and that their social interactions and experiences influence their moral judgements. I would argue that this also relates to the development of children's spirituality. My study revealed that various factors in the children's environment shape their emerging conceptions of morality and spirituality. My analysis revealed that the main influences are significant others in the children's lives, including parents, grandparents, and teachers.

Further social institutions set up by communities are the places and spaces in which moral and spiritual values are being developed such as the church or other places of worship; the home; the school and the classroom. The belief in a divine power or a transcendental being is clearly inculcated by the church and this impacts children's conceptions of morality and spirituality. Presented next are selected pieces of data from the children's responses to the data generation activities.

I often hear about God at home, granny tells me she is praying to God because God answers our prayers. God can do anything. My mother and I go to Nazareth Church, and my granny goes to Ndongeni to worship.

(Learner 2, Vignette 2)

Jesus lives in heaven ...it's not easy to see Jesus because heaven is up there (pointing). When we ask something, God does it for us. God is a father, because people say father.

(Learner 4, Vignette 2)

It is not ok to hurt someone because one will report this to the teacher and you will be punished.

(Learner 3, Vignette 1)

Learner 5 was exposed to an act of kindness from a friend, which clearly had a positive impact on him.

When I fell, my friend helped me to stand up. I was crying and it was so painful. He tried to stretch my arm as he was apologizing. They accompanied me home then my mother took me to hospital.

(Learner 5, Conversation with a picture)

There is never a need to fight. Mvelo should pay the money, and they must stop shouting or fighting. My class teacher says she does not want fighting children because they will get hurt.

(Learner 2, Vignette 2)

Thus, morality and spirituality do not emerge in a vacuum. These concepts and children's understanding of them originate and develop through the daily interactions the children's experiences with peers, adults, family members, teachers, and friends. Hay and Nye's British study (2006) with children aged between six to 11 years of age, found that

spirituality among children was a very deep seated and complex mental activity. These researchers contend that are exposed to various facets of spirituality in their environment including conceptions of God, and that they hold various assumptions and interpretations of spirituality, as I found in my study. Hay and Nye study (2006) conclude that young children were aware of spirituality *within them*, and the 'connection' they have with God and other people around them.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the findings of my study. A justice orientation emerged strongly in the children's responses to the two scenarios. Children clearly had a sense of right and wrong. The data showed that children reason in terms of rules and norms or ideals they have been socialised to value; fear of repercussions and punishment. Morality is also interpreted as a goal of pleasing others by acting as a good person in society. Some of the participants engaged in moral reasoning in terms of the avoidance of punishment. However, two learners seemed to reason at a more advanced level beyond the stage of obedience and punishment when they focused on themselves as members of a society or community. The focus of the children was on obeying laws and maintaining social order such as in this case of keeping the school and community safe. An analysis of the responses of the learners suggest that their moral reasoning varies across the stages and levels suggested by Kohlberg. This seems to suggest that children's reasoning is contextual in nature.

The ethics of care (Gilligan, 1977) was evident in the responses of the children, namely, fairness, compassion, empathy, care for the welfare of others, protection from physical and emotional harm and hurt. I did not examine gender differences in the care orientation of the participants. The data from the eight learners revealed that being spiritual is about connecting with a transcendental being or something sacred (maybe a God or a deity) or with nature, and with significant others in their lives (feeling love, compassion, fairness, empathy).

My study illuminated the key spaces and places in which children are d in respect of their conceptions spirituality and morality, which includes friends, the family, places of worship, and the school. Zinnbauer and Pargament's study (2005) in the United States found that the family is the main interpersonal context within which a child is exposed to moral and spiritual principles and traits. Boyatzis et al. (2006) found that spaces in the parent-child

relationship were predictive of positive moral or spiritual outcomes. These qualities such as upholding sacred activities such as prayer; love, warmth or openness modelled by parents deeply shape children's morality and spirituality. A study by Baring (2012) in the Philippines found that the influence of mother and father in family socialization processes have positive and significant support for the shaping of moral values in children.

Drawing on findings from their study, Fowler and Dell (2004) assert that the quality of social and emotional interactions provide the backdrop for the child's future human development of spirituality and conceptions of good and bad. Hart and Carlo (2005) from a human development perspective state that there is a complex interaction between family, culture, peer relationships in various settings, including school in regard to spiritual and moral influences on children. This is what shapes and influences the uniqueness of children's moral and spiritual development. Roeser et al. (2008) suggest that children's moral and spiritual development depends on the quality of care they receive.

My study revealed that children have acquired interesting meanings around the concept 'God'. Furrow et al. (2004) have shown religion to be a resource for children in developing spirituality, that is, personal meaning and care for others that can prompt prosocial behaviour. Templeton and Eccles (2008) have recognized spirituality to be a primary influence on children moral development, particularly the ethical responsibility to care for others.

As posited by Ingersoll (2013) the inner lives of children are very significant indicating that children draw their strengths from their inner lives. Ingersoll explains that this is where children get to know and understand the meaning of existence. My study shows that children get to learn spirituality and morality mainly by internalizing experiential interactions within their social and material environment. In the next chapter, I present the conclusion of my study and the implications for future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The study aimed to examine children's conceptions of spirituality and morality, and the influences that shape the meanings they make. The research questions were:

- What are children's conceptions of spirituality and morality?
- What influences shape children's conception of spirituality and morality?
- How do children navigate spirituality and morality in their everyday lives?

5.2 Research methodology and design

My study was located within an interpretive paradigm, as I wanted to understand children's conceptions of morality and spirituality. It was a qualitative case study and the unit of analysis was a phenomenon: the children's *conceptions* of children of spirituality and morality. A case study approach was appropriate, as I was able to explore a particular phenomenon within its context using various data sources. Baxter & Jack (2008) explain that the phenomenon can be explored through many lenses rather than just one lens, enabling multiple facets of the phenomena to be illuminated and understood.

I used multiple data production methods including individual interviews and participatory techniques such as vignettes or scenarios depicting a moral dilemma; children's drawings; conversations with a picture and a letter to God. The data production techniques utilized gave children the autonomy to children to represent spaces and places in which they experience and learn about spirituality and morality.

5.3 Theoretical framing of study

My study had a conceptual framework with the concepts morality and spirituality being the key concepts for analysis. In addition, the study was framed by perspectives from the new social studies of children or New Childhood Studies and the sub-field of Children's Geographies. The above framing had many strengths. I allowed children to speak for themselves rather than obtains insights into their conceptions of morality and spirituality

through the lens of adults. I used data collection tools that were respectful to children and considered them as partners in research rather than mere objects of research.

My study had a geographical focus, which enabled me to examine the everyday spaces in which they develop moral and spiritual orientations, for example, the family, church, and school. Homes and schools are places but also spaces with their own geographies with various kinds of power relations play out.

5.4 Key findings

My study has shown that a sense of morality occurs early in development, and the participants' responses reflected a strong justice orientation. From a justice orientation, the children were able to examine moral problems and dilemmas from the perspective of rules, principles, and values. The participants were able to think in terms of various moral concepts.

The study revealed that children between ages seven and 11 years have moral knowledge and apply moral goals involving fairness, sharing, avoidance of harm to others, a sense of responsibility, protection of others welfare, equal treatment, accountability and reciprocal social skills. All eight children appear to be functioning at Kohlberg's pre-conventional morality stage where morality is seen in terms of rewards and punishment. However, there were a few children who seem to have progressed to the conventional morality stage in which morality is interpreted as an ideal in society and the focus is on being a good member of community and having concern for the safety of others in the community, including the school community.

The study also illuminated a care orientation in children. It was found that children analysed moral issues from the perspective of relationships and the impact of various actions can have on people with whom one interacts. The children hold the two orientations to moral problems. Gilligan (1977) stated that the two perspectives are not totally separate and are not gender specific. The study indicates that young children can reason in terms of fairness, justice, care and in the interests of other individuals.

The study found an interaction between family, the church, and school in regard to spiritual and moral influences on children. An interesting finding in the study was the strong religious influence (namely, Christianity) upon the young children and they are actively gathering meanings from this environmental force. There are rich textured meanings behind

children's conceptions of God, for example, God the healer and protector who is all-powerful. They have a positive image of God and seek in God care, comfort, and love. It was interesting that the children did not speak of other transcendental beings, particularly found in ancestor worship that is practiced in many African communities.

5.5 Reflections of participatory approach

My main aim in designing my study was to ensure that my data production techniques were child friendly. My view was that children are social actors with agency and that I had to explore their views, ideas and meaning making in their own right. Such an approach promotes the rights of the child. I used a mixture of oral, visual, and written activities (e.g. vignettes; conversations with a picture, children's drawings). I believe my approach was successful. I learnt that children are very capable of expressing their feelings, views, and conceptions in a research context that respects their views, where the research process is adapted to their ways of communicating, and where they can see that the researcher is interested in their views.

The child participants felt comfortable with me, the researcher, and were active participants in their research. The children were interested and highly engaged in the various participatory tasks and were eager to share their experiences and views through conversations with me. As can be seen in chapter 4, the study produced rich, nuanced data that illuminated my research questions.

5.6 Implications of the study

Within the African context, there was found to be a limited number of studies that examined children's conceptions and perspectives on spirituality (for example, Moodley, 2008). The spirituality and morality of children is different from that of adults, and therefore, greater insight is required of the nature of these phenomena. My qualitative case study provided a nuanced account of the conceptions of spirituality and morality held by young children. The study mapped out the spaces and places of spirituality and morality in relation to young children. There is a need for more research on the unique characteristics of spirituality and morality in children and their meaning making in varied contexts. This study has implications for the curriculum in schools as these institutions have a critical role to in developing future

members of society, and they have the responsibility to understand, acknowledge, affirm, and nurture children's spirituality and morality.

5.7 Limitations of the study

It is conceded that the study had a small sample drawn from one bounded reality, a particular school setting and participants were in a specific age group. However, the goal qualitative case study research is not generalisation across populations and contexts. Case study research produces knowledge that is contextual, concrete, and practical, situated in a particular social reality. A case study in many ways remains open and raises questions for other researchers and practitioners (Flyvbjerg, 2004). In analysing my data, as a novice researcher, I did find that at times I had missed opportunities to probe the participants on views and ideas fully. I found that in such instances I missed potentially good opportunities to gain a deeper account of children's meanings and understandings of an issue raised.

5.8 Concluding thoughts

My journey in this research has been a great and humbling experience. I discovered the vast knowledge children have of GOD. Knowledge gathered through their interactive with significant others, friends, peers etc. During our communications, the values and teachings or lessons were so apparent. This evoked in me the importance of teaching the society in particular, the children the value of spiritual growth in the developing self and in creating and discovering ones identity.

As an educator, I realised that I also have a vital role to play in developing this self, considering that the school is one environment where they learn, and unlearn behaviours, morals, and values. They are pruned and moulded into responsible and autonomous individuals who can withstand pressures of life through their faith and spirituality. To conclude, the study has taught me that indeed we are all born spiritually inclined, whether religiously or not. Children too can impart knowledge or impact on the adults' spiritual growth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Consent letter to school principal



Faculty of Education
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605

15 September 2014

The Principal
Esiphethwini Primary school

Dear Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct research at your school

My name is Gugu Mable Gumede and I am a Masters student at the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I plan to undertake a study titled:

Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of eight Grade 3 learners.

I hereby request your permission to conduct a study at Esiphethwini Primary School. The participants in the study will be learners from your school. They will be required to participate in individual interviews and focus group interviews that are expected to last between 90-120 minutes, in approximately two sessions.

Please note that:

- The school and participants will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinion.
- The school's or the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstance.
- All learner responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.

- Audio- recording of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participant is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Yours sincerely
G. M. Gumede
(972159121)

Any questions contact myself or my supervisors, Professor Nithi Muthukrishna

Email: muthukrishna@ukzn.ac.za
Cell no: 0842459096

Co-supervisor: Melanie Martins
Email: Martim@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

I,, (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at Esiphethwini Primary School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Appendix 2 – Consent letter to learner



Faculty of Education
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605

15 September 2014

Dear learner

Re: Request For your participation in a research project

I plan to undertake a study titled: **Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of eight Grade 3 learners.**

I kindly ask your permission to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be learners from Esiphethwini Primary School. I value what you think about your schooling and how you are experiencing schooling. You will be required to allow me to interview you individually and in focus groups. The interviews will be approximately 90-120 minutes. We will meet in two sessions on two different days that is convenient for you.

Please note that

- The school and learners will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion.
- The school or your identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All learner responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used (your real name and the name of the school will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them. You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what you do not want to tell us.
- Audio- recording of interviews will only be done if you give us permission.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

Yours sincerely

G.M.Gumede
Cell no. 0732759576
Email: gugumable@gmail.com

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself:
Professor Nithi Muthukrishna
muthukri@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below.

I,, (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby agree to take part in the project at my school. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Appendix 3 – Consent letter to parent



Faculty of Education
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605

15 September 2014

Re: Request your child's participation in a research project

My name is Gugu M. Gumede and I plan to undertake a study titled:

Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of eight Grade 3 learners.

I kindly ask your permission for your child to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be learners from the various schools. I value what your child thinks about his/her schooling and the environment. We will meet in two sessions on two different days that is convenient for the child. I will be requesting permission from your child to work with him in the project.

Please note that

- The school and learners will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- Your child expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect his/her own personal opinion.
- The school's or your child's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All your child's responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (your child's real name and the name of the school will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, your child will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to him/her.
- Your child will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what he/she do not want to tell us.
- Audio- recording of interviews will only be done if you and your child give us permission.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you

Yours sincerely

G M Gumede

Cell no 0732759576

Email: gugumable@gmail.com

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Professor Nithi muthukri@ukzn.ac.za or my co-supervisor Melanie Martins on martins@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below. I,, (Full Name), the parent /caregiver of..... (Name of child) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby agree to my child taking part in the project. I understand that he/she can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Appendix 4 – Letter to gatekeeper – consent and declaration



04/02/2014

Dear Principal,

My name is Gugu Mable Gumede, student number: 972159121. I am a MEd student under the supervision of Professor Nithi Muthukrishna at the School of Education and Development, Edgewood Campus University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study on emotional experiences of teenage girls in schools. The title of my study is:

Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of 8 Grade 3 learners.

I am seeking your consent for your learners' participation, which will involve extensive interview and story account sessions, and they will be required to take photographs of their activities at school over a period of one (1) months. Your learners' participation in this research is voluntary, and continued participation is also by choice. You have the right to choose not to have your learners participate, and to withdraw your learners from participating at any time.

There is no penalty if a learner chooses not to participate in this research or chooses to withdraw from participation at any time. The outcome of this research may be published. In the event of this being the case, learners' name and identity will not be used.

All information you and your learners give concerning this research will be confidential. A code or number will identify the information your learners provide. Only authorized persons from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will have access to review the research records that contains your learners' information.

There is no benefit to your learners participating in this research. Please note that:

- Any information given by your learners cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

- The research aims at understanding how migrant learners in South African schools experience schooling in South Africa.
- If you are willing for your learners to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not Willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

If there is any question you wish to ask concerning the research or the participation of your learners in this research, please you can contact my supervisor Professor Nithi Muthukrishna or myself.

Professor Nithi Muthukrishna

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Contact details

Tel: +27 (0) 31-2603432

Fax: (27)31-2603650

Cell: +27 (0) 78 675 0652

Email: MUTHUKRI@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Sincerely,

Gugu Mable Gumede

Appendix 5 - Ethical clearance certificate from the University Of Kwa-Zulu Natal



26 April 2013

Professor A Muthukrishna 845
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013

Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries:
Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

Expedited approval

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Dr P Morojele
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MNI Davids
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee
Professor S Collings (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: kimbap@ukzn.ac.za /
sriymannm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



Appendix 6 - Ethical clearance certificate from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref: 2/4/8

Prof. N Muthukrishna & Dr P Morojele
P O Box X03
ASHWOOD
3605

Dear Prof. Muthukrishna and Dr Morojele

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING IN KWAZULU-NATAL: NARRATIVES OF CHILDREN, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2013 to 31 March 2014.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education:

Umlazi District
Sisonke District
Zululand District

Othukela District
Pinetown District
Illembe District

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 19 November 2013

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 Fax: 033 392 1203

EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;

*dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty*

WEBSITE: www.kzneducation.gov.za

Appendix 7 – Scenarios presented to each participant

Each of the following four scenarios was presented to each respondent. This was done to provoke each responded to talk about issues of spirituality and morality.

Scenario 1

(The following stories were read to each learner in IsiZulu language and each learner was provided with a copy to follow as the researcher read through.)

Lumka and Lungelo are in the same class. One day Lumka wanted to borrow a ruler and Lungelo said he cannot lend his ruler as he is afraid the ruler may get lost. The next day Lungelo was leaving the classroom to go outside. It was break time. As he reached the stairs, Lumka pushed Lungelo from behind, Lungelo fell down three steps. Lungelo was hurt and began crying, Lumka just stood there and laughed at Lungelo.

Scenario 2

(The following scenario was read to the participant in IsiZulu language and the participant was provided with a copy which they used as the researcher read through each story)

One day after school Yolisa and Mvelo were arguing. They go to the same school. One day Mvelo begged Yolisa to lend him R10 because he was hungry and wanted to buy chips from the school tuck shop. Yolisa gave him the money. Mvelo promised to return the money on the next day. Yolisa told Mvelo that the money was his brother's money. His brother asked him to keep the money for him. His brother wanted to buy pens for school with the money. Two weeks gone by-Mvelo kept hiding from Yolisa and Mvelo did not pay the money. Yolisa was very angry. He caught Mvelo after school and was shouting at him, and threatened to hit him. Mvelo was also shouting at Yolisa-saying that he will return the money one of these days.

Scenario 3

Each learner was shown the picture below and asked to respond to questions. The picture was used to arouse the learner's interest and to provoke the learner to talk about issues on morality and spirituality.



FIGURE 1: PICTURE SHOWN TO PARTICIPANT

Scenario 4

Two tasks were given to each learner. Task 1: each respondent was asked to draw a picture that depict 'Love'. Task 2: each learner was asked to draw a picture depicting what they 'dreamt'. Each drawing was used as a starting point in which the learner was then asked to explain them. This was followed with questions from the researcher probing further on issues of spirituality and morality.

Appendix 8: Turn it in report

Turnitin Originality Report

- Processed on 12-Jun-2015 8:21 PM CAT
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CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF SPIRITUALITY AND MORALITY: NARRATIVES OF 8 GRADE 3 LEARNERS

by Gugu Mable Hlatshwayo

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Appendix 9: Letter from editor

V Maduray
10 Benevolent Street
Croftdene
Chatsworth
South Africa
4092

vaneshree.maduray@yahoo.com
C: 072 467 2797
H: 031 401 2062

12 June 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have:

- carried out language editing
- made suggestions for the student to address at his/her discretion on the dissertation:

Children's conception of spirituality and morality: Narratives of eight Grade 3 learners

By

Gugu Mable Hlatshwayo



V Maduray
(Language Editor)