

Geographies of friendship formation: Narratives of immigrant  
children in high schools

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## **SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Signed: .....

Name: Dr Antoinette D'amant

Date: .....

## DECLARATION

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Signed.....

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to God Almighty. Lord, I give thanks for completing this academic journey. May glory and adoration be unto You, Amen.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates factors which impact on the formation of friendships of immigrant learners in high schools. A qualitative approach was employed to understand the dynamics that influence the formation of friendships of immigrant learners as well as identify places and spaces where these friendships are formed. In the study, two data gathering methods were adopted namely: individual and focus group interviews. Open-ended interviews were designed and administered to eight purposively selected participants. Information generated from the participants was subjected to thematic analysis. The major findings emanating from this study include: the formation of friendships of immigrant learners is likely to occur among like-minded learners, with those in closest relationships, intimate/love relationships and acquaintances; the major dynamics that influence the formation of friendships of immigrant learners revolve around the character of the person, gender, nationality, racial affiliations, linguistic homogeneity friendship, self-disclosure, reciprocity and frequent contact with one another. The football field, social networks, classrooms, sports grounds and school library have been found to be places and spaces in which immigrant learners navigate the formation of friendships.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ADHD..... Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

ANOVA..... Analysis of Variance

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

South Africa is seen as a country with enormous economic opportunity and promise, and has therefore attracted millions of immigrant people from Africa and globally. The phenomenal increase in contemporary immigration to South Africa by countries the world over has given rise to a record number of immigrant children who, regardless of place of birth, are raised in immigrant families. After the demise of apartheid in 1994, a generation of immigrant children and children of immigrants has become the fastest growing and the most ethnically diverse segment of South Africa's child population. According to the official government statistics, there are 2.35 million legal immigrants in South Africa today (Amit, Monson, Vigneswaran & Wachira, 2009). Out of this number, 1.22 million are children of school-going age. It is also on record that of the 1.22 million immigrant children, approximately 26.3% live in KwaZulu-Natal province. In addition to the above, the central city of Durban has the largest number of immigrant children, who are diverse not only in the context of their national origin, but by their ethnic affiliation, cultural tradition and generational status. This could have been the reason why the recent xenophobic attacks on immigrants in April 2015 were severe in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. In the province, several immigrants were massacred and over 16 000 were displaced as the violent attacks on the basis of nationality continued unabated (Hlatshwayo, 2015).

With the high number of immigrant children residing in KwaZulu-Natal, there has been a corresponding influx of these immigrant children into South African public high schools in the province. In the school environment, the immigrant school learners exhibit their cultural and linguistic dispositions which are at variance with that of South Africans. For instance, most Malawian and Zimbabwean girls plait a unique hair style which is quite different from the South African girls (Everatt, 2008). Soto (1997) and Fischer (2004) argue that the immigrant children come to the host society bringing their culture and language, and depending on their experience in the host society, they are invariably subjected to either negotiating their culture and language with those of the host country or rejecting them. The existing differences of language and culture often results in immigrant children being

discriminated against by the locals. Discrimination against immigrant learners in school most often occurs in the form of xenophobic violence (Osman, 2009). However, in spite of the relative scarcity of cross-race and inter-country friendship (Fischer, 2004), it has become a vital benchmark in efforts at reducing racial segregation and discrimination. In the view of Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (1998), because friends share affection for one another, they might be expected to provide the beneficial elements of close intergroup contact, namely individualised, collaborative and trusting contact (Pettigrew, 1998).

In South Africa, while same nationality friendships among immigrant children has increased dramatically in the last 15 years of the country's practice of democracy (Finchilescu, 2006), most studies have arrived at the findings that cross-race relationships are problematic (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996; Moody, 2001; Kawabata, 2009). Not only are cross-race friendships fewer in number than same-race or same-nationality ones among immigrant school children, but their duration and quality may be lower (Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987). This study intends to investigate the factors influencing friendship groups among immigrant children in high school in KwaZulu-Natal.

## **1.2 Focus and objectives of the study**

As a result of worldwide waves of immigration, an increasing number of immigrant learners are attending public schools with the local children in South Africa. This development leads to an unprecedented increase in the number of racially and ethnically mixed school classes. As a result of this, immigrant learners at school are challenged to learn cooperative forms of interracial and ethnic friendship formation by crossing cultural group boundaries. In light of this, the intention of this study is to investigate what dynamics affect friendship formation among immigrant learners in high school, by focusing on the geographies and the dynamics that influence the formation of friendship groups among immigrant learners in high schools.

The study has the following objectives:

- To investigate the stories that immigrant learners tell about friendship formation in high school;
- To investigate what dynamics affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school;

- To investigate ways in which immigrant learners navigate places and spaces of friendship formation.

Based on these research objectives, the following research questions have been developed to guide this research study:

- What stories do immigrant learners tell about friendship formation?
- What dynamics affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school?
- How do they navigate the places and spaces of friendship formation?

### **1.3 Motivation and rationale for the study**

The motivation to conduct this study began when I arrived in South Africa from Nigeria to pursue further studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. On the Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I observed that there were immigrant students from Cameroon, Turkey, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, among others. On closer observation, I discovered that these students formed friendships based along racial and nationality lines. It was very common, for example, to see students from Cameroon making or forming friendships among themselves. The same thing also applies to students from the other countries mentioned. It is quite evident that Zulu students form friendships among themselves, while students from Indian extraction, Coloured or White students also make friendships based on racial identity. My observations are echoed in Pattman's (2009) study on students' identities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. Pattman (2009) found that despite the merger of the two universities (University of Natal, University of Durban-Westville), 'race' still emerged as a major influence on student identifications, affecting associations on campus, what people did, where they went to in their break times and their attitudes to others. My observations on the formation and composition of friendships among immigrant learners was further strengthened when I discovered a similar development in one of the high schools I taught in during the teaching practice component of my studies. This correlation between the university and the high school I taught in sparked my curiosity and lead me to embark on this research study.

Literature has shown that much research has been done on immigrant learners and education in South Africa in particular and the world in general. For instance, on the international front



scholars such as Aboud and Mendelson (2003) investigated cross-race peer relations and friendship quality; Spiel and Strohmeier (2003) researched immigrant children in Austria; Buckholz (2014) researched peer conversations about inter-racial and inter-ethnic friendships, among others. On the national level, Osman (2009) conducted a study on the phenomenon of xenophobia as experienced by immigrant learners in the inner city schools of Johannesburg; Adebayo (2010) looked at educational and socio-cultural challenges of immigrant students in a South African school; Rautenheimer (2011) conducted research on the friendships of young men, among others. From the literature I discovered that very little or nothing has been researched on the geographies of friendships: narratives of immigrant children in high school. It is this existing gap that has prompted me to embark on this study in order to better understand the dynamics that affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in South African schools.

#### **1.4 Definition of terms**

In this section, I provide both conceptual and operational definitions for some key words or phrases that are either important or may be unclear to my audience. The words, phrases, and concepts as used in this thesis are explained below.

##### **1.4.1 Friendship**

The discovery of friendship is a major step in a child's acquisition of social knowledge (Dyson, 2010). Before a child forms friendships, their social bonds are primarily between the child and parents or other adult caretakers (Conradson & Latham, 2005). In this study, friendship is regarded as a relationship in which the partners respond to one another with an individualised concern and interest, and commit time to one another in the absence of constraints toward interactions that are external to the relationship itself.

##### **1.4.2 Geographies**

From the geographical perspective, geographies connote literal, physical and geographical places and spaces. For the purposes of this study, the term geographies refers to not only the actual physical places and spaces in the school where immigrant children engage in friendships, but also refers to the emotional and social places and spaces which impact on the nature of friendships which immigrant children build.

### **1.4.3 Immigrant children**

In this study, ‘immigrant children’ refers to all categories of foreign-born children that enter South Africa legally with their parents for temporary or permanent residence, from countries such as Turkey, Nigeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, Congo, among others. In this study, these children are not regarded or classified as refugees because their parents are gainfully employed and hence contribute to the South African economy.

### **1.4.4 Narratives**

The most inclusive meaning of the term narrative refers to any spoken or written presentation. In this study, narrative refers to the stories which the participants share in relation to the phenomenon under study. In a written report, the narrative portion is that part written in the form of essay. In this study, these spoken narratives will be recorded and transcribed into written narratives, which will be analysed and interpreted and snippets and sections of these narratives will be presented as data.

## **1.5 Overview of the study**

Chapter one comprises a general introduction and overview of the phenomenon under investigation. It discusses: the background to my study; the focus and objectives of my study; the research questions; and, my motivation and rationale for conducting this research. Furthermore, I define and explain certain concepts as I use them in the dissertation.

Chapter two is a review of the literature related to my study. Selected readings on geographies of friendship formation nationally and internationally are given prominence in this chapter. Furthermore, different scholars’ views on the conceptualisation of friendship, dominant forces affecting the formation of friendships among immigrant students and among others, are discussed. In discussing these themes, approaches on geographies of immigrant children’s friendship formation will be critically interrogated in line with a social justice standpoint.

Chapter three of this study focuses on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Firstly, I begin by looking at the conceptual framing which underpins the notion of children’s geographies. Thereafter, I present both intergroup contact and homophily theories as a means of making sense of the ways, places and spaces in which immigrant children in high school form friendships.

In chapter four I explain the research design and methodology adopted for the study. I explain that because of the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, a qualitative approach has been adopted, as well as my decision to utilise an interpretive paradigm as the most appropriate paradigm for my study. I go on to explain that I have selected narrative inquiry for the specific purpose of generating relevant and appropriate data for my study. Furthermore, this chapter presents a discussion on the research site, the sampling technique, the sample size, and the methods of data collection which I have adopted for this study. Lastly, the chapter highlights the method of data analysis I have chosen to employ and outlines ethical issues which are pertinent to this study.

Chapter five is my data analysis chapter. In this chapter, I employ narrative analysis to analyse data generated from eight individual immigrant children who have been selected as participants in this study and the focus groups that were conducted. The various themes that emerged from the open coding analysis of the data are analysed in this chapter. The findings are subsequently discussed in relation to my literature and conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

My chapter six is the summary and conclusion of my dissertation. In this chapter, the overview of the thesis is presented once again and the major findings from this study are highlighted. My contributions to the body of knowledge in the field of social justice education will be explained. Lastly, I highlight the limitations of the study, and suggest other research areas in which further research needs to be and can be conducted.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

I began this chapter by giving a general background to the study. Furthermore, I looked at the focus and the objectives of this study. In line with the study's objectives, I presented the three key research questions that were developed to guide this study. Thereafter, I discussed the motivational factors that spark this research endeavour. I also explained the various key terms I have used or applied in this thesis. Finally, I gave the outline of this study. The next chapter (chapter two) reviews literature related to this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced and provided both the background and the rationale for the study. I also stated the research questions developed for the study. This chapter focuses on a review of the literature related to my study and the definition of terms pertinent to my study.

According to Fink (2005), a literature review is regarded as a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners. Thomas and Nelson (2001) view a literature review as a critical and in-depth evaluation of previous research. Punch (1998) sees a literature review as a process of reading, analysing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly materials about a specific topic. A literature review is central to any research effort. It is important that a researcher knows to some degree, the extent of documentation of available research results, other scholarly views, researchers and other stakeholders in the field of study pertinent to his/her research. According to Boote and Beile (2005), a substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive thorough and sophisticated research.

The importance of a literature review in qualitative research has been advanced by scholars. For instance, Olayinka and Owumi (2006, p. 61) highlight the importance of literature as “providing a conceptual framework for the research, providing an integrated overview of the field of study, helping in establishing the need for the research, helping in clarifying the research problem and helping to demonstrate the researcher’s familiarity with the area under consideration.” Booth, Papaionnou and Sutton (2012) argue that a literature review helps a researcher to better understand the phenomenon under investigation. In other words, a literature review assists a researcher in identifying what has been researched and what remains to be explored. According to Hart (1998, p.52): “a literature review is important because of the following reasons: it describes how the proposed research is related to prior research in statistics, it shows the originality and relevance of your research problem, it

justifies your proposed methodology and it demonstrates your preparedness to complete the research.”

A literature review therefore, goes beyond the mere search for information on a topic related to one's intended research, as it includes the identification and articulation of relationships between existing literature and one's field of study. In light of the above, the importance of a literature review in this study is to create a firm foundation for advancing knowledge on the geographies of friendship formation among immigrant learners. My review of related literature will be presented according to the following themes: the conceptualisation of friendship, the types of friendships among immigrant learners, the places and spaces of friendship formation among immigrant learners in school, and dominant forces affecting the formation of friendships among immigrant learners.

## **2.2 Conceptualisation of friendship**

Friendship is very important to children's well-being and happiness. Furthermore, it lays important foundations upon which later relationships in adulthood are built. In order to understand the meaning of this concept (friendship), I will look at the definitions of friendship that have been advanced in the late nineteenth and twentieth-century by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists.

From the philosophers' perspectives, Aristotle's texts on friendship encompass the most decorative theory of friendship among the philosophical writings of Greek antiquity. Aristotle (1979) sees friendship as an essential expression of human virtue, and an essential component of a happy life grounded in virtues. This great scholar distinguishes between what he believed to be a genuine friendship and two other forms of relationship, namely: one that is based on mutual usefulness and the other one based on pleasure. According to Aristotle (1979), these two forms only last for as long as there is utility and pleasure is involved, whereas a genuine friendship does not dissolve but, is instead, long lasting. To provide some evidence for the above claim, Aristotle (1979, p.10) listed some characteristics of genuine friendship as including: “a mutual attitude of non-instrumental active benevolence (benevolence exercised for the other person's sake), a reciprocal desire for the other to continue existing and living, not motivated by mere self-interest, a shared life, a correspondence of preferences and proneness to share the other's joys and sorrows.”

Drawing from Aristotle, Pangle (2003, p. 131) suggests that the traditional idea of friendship has three components: “friends must enjoy each other’s company, friends must be useful to one another, and friends must share a common commitment to the good.” However, in contemporary societies, Pangle (2003) avows that we tend to see friendship in terms of the first component, and find the notion of utility a difficult one to place within friendship. In another vein, Benette (2005) defines friendship as a distinctively personal relationship that is grounded in a concern on the part of each friend for the welfare of the other, for the other’s sake, that involves some degree of intimacy.

From the psychological perspectives, many psychologists have offered different meanings of friendship. For instance, Chu (2005) saw friendship as a feeling of comfort and emotional safety with a person. Way, Gingold, Rotenberg and Guriakpose (2005) define friendship as a dynamic, mutual relationship between two individuals. Bagwell and Schmidt (2011) opine that friendship is a dyadic, co-constructed phenomenon characterised by reciprocity, closeness and intimacy.

From the sociological point of view, scholars like Fine (1981), Corsaro and Eder (1990), and Deegan (1996), among others, have given different definitions of friendship. For example, Fine (1981, p.52) provided a threefold conceptualisation of friendship which is grounded in symbolic interactionism as “a staging area for interaction, a cultural institution for the transmission of knowledge, and a crucible for the shaping of selves.” According to Corsaro and Eder (1990), friendship is an ideal arena for the highly individualised conception of personal agency that is central to modern notions of personal freedom. These scholars went on to say that friendship is grounded in the unique and irreplaceable qualities of partners, defined and valued independently of their place in public systems of kinship, power, utility, and esteem, and of any publicly defined status. The view of Bowlby (2011) on friendship cannot be ignored. He argued that friendship is an interpersonal relationship between two or more people that is voluntarily entered into and may be similarly dissolved. Bunnell, Yea, Peake, Skelton and Smith (2011) avow that friendship is a form of intimacy that appears increasingly vital in our urbanising, mobile and interconnected world. Their view of friendship is commonly understood as a relationship satisfying cognitive and emotional needs and characterised by reciprocity, trust, openness, honesty, acceptance, and loyalty (Berenskoetter, 2007).

From the various definitions given above, it would not be out of place to conclude that friendship focuses on a degree of intimacy and comfort developed between or among people. In spite of the different meanings of friendship advanced by these scholars, an area of consensus seems to be on the intimate relationship of the persons involved. This leads me to another important issue pertinent to this research - friendship formation among immigrant learners.

### **2.3 Friendship formation among immigrant learners in school**

Friendship formation focuses on how friendships occur and are built. Through their research that was conducted in a large midwestern city of Iraq, Urberg, Luo, Pilgrim and Degirmencioglu (2003) established that immigrant learners tend to make friends with those they perceive as being similar to themselves. For instance, immigrant learners with the same grades are often assigned to the same classes so they have more opportunities for social interaction, and often become friends with one another. Belonging to a group can limit the immigrant children's ability to make friends with other immigrant learners or any learners in different groups. Berenskoetter (2013) argues that similarity between friends is associated with the formation of friendships. Some immigrant learners have friendships with their contemporaries who are different from themselves, but as Berndt (1999) points out, they want to change their own place in the structure of the peer social world. Whether or not immigrant children usually form friendships with other children like themselves has not yet been determined.

From the studies conducted by Larson (1994) and Oelsner (2014) in South America, it was declared that schools positively influence friendship formation among immigrant children, specifically noting that high school extracurricular activities are key organisers of friendships among immigrant children. A study conducted by Parke and Bhavnagri (1989) indicates that parents of immigrant children influence friendship formation through determining where their son or daughter lives and attends school, what organisations he or she joins, as well as by monitoring youth activities and interactions. Aside from this, Herbert (2003) reports that there are social skills that are thought to be important in building friendship, such as making small talk and fitting in with groups of people. This scholar is of the view that immigrant children who lack social skills, lack the ability to make small talk and lack accurate impressions of other people, have lonely lives. This leads me to the next issue which begs discussion, the types of friendship formations among immigrant children

## **2.4 Types of friendship formations among immigrant learners**

Scholars such as Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977); Trice and Elliot (1993); Woolf (2007); Currarini, Jackson, and Pin (2010) have come up with different types of friendships that exist in the world. Bochner *et al.* (1977) has developed an effective model to explain friendship formation among immigrant students. These scholars classify immigrant students' friendships into three different groups on the basis of their functions. These classifications are as follows: a co-national network whose function is to affirm and express the culture of origin; a network with host nationals, whose function is the instrumental facilitation of academic and professional aspirations; and, a multi-national network whose main function is recreational.

### **2.4.1 Co-national friendships**

Studies have shown that immigrant learners' primary friendships comprise of co-national friends (Trice & Elliot, 1993). According to Woolf (2007), co-national friendships give immigrant learners an opportunity to improve their understanding of the new culture through discussions, social interaction and intellectual exchange with other learners who are experiencing the same emotions. Kim (2001) argues that co-national friendships can serve to lessen the stress that immigrant learners often experience when crossing cultures. Furthermore, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) observe in their study that a strong friendship with co-nationals was found to increase the global self-esteem of immigrant students. In a similar vein, Maundeni (2001) argues that co-national friendships are immensely beneficial for immigrant learners as they provide a feeling of cultural identity and offer emotional support. In light of the above, Ward and Searle (1991) declare that this reinforcement of cultural identity also makes them less willing to adapt to the local customs. As a result Church (1982) argues that the dependence on co-national friendships may inhibit immigrant learners from forming friendships with individuals from the host culture.

From the studies conducted by Pruitt (1978); Currarini, Jackson and Pin (2009), it was found that learners who spent time with their fellow citizens were relatively uncomfortable with their social and physical environment. Maundeni (2001) observes that friendships between immigrants in British schools can also adversely affect language acquisition and have negative implications for adjustment. From Kim's (2001) perspective, these co-national contacts offer short-term support but hinder the long-term adaptation process. This scholar went on to say that the greater the co-national interpersonal communication, the lesser the intercultural transformation (that is, functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural



identity). Kim (2001) further states that the greater the host national interpersonal communication, the greater the intercultural transformation. Consequently, Kim (2001) argues that friendships with people from the host country are equally beneficial and more important to the adaptation process.

#### **2.4.2 Host national friendships**

Studies conducted by scholars such as Klineberg and Hull (1979), Church (1982), Hayes and Lin (1994), among others, have shown that the majority of immigrant learners prefer friendships with host nationals and also desire more contact with host nationals. Church (1982) argues that while immigrant learners desire friendships and interaction with host nationals, they are often disappointed and discouraged when their expectations of having local friendships are not met. This author went on to say that immigrant learners who had more contact with host nationals reported higher levels of satisfaction, less homesickness, and less loneliness in their experience of studying abroad. In a similar development, Ward and Kennedy (1993) opine that immigrant learners who have more contact with host nationals are able to adapt better to life overseas, have fewer social difficulties, have improved communication competence, and tend to have more positive feelings about the host culture. In sharp contrast, Maundeni (2001) declares that in the absence of intimate friendships with host nationals, the process of immigrant learner adjustment is greatly hindered. Zimmerman (1995, p.329) goes further to say that “the most important factor in immigrant students’ adjustment to United States of American culture was frequency of interaction with the American students.” Kim (2001) in turn states that the interactions with members of the host culture play an integral role in the cross cultural adaptation process and contribute to an individual’s host communication competence. Kim (2001) reports that from these contacts, immigrant learners are able to gain insight into the minds and behaviours of locals, and are therefore able to better understand why people behave, communicate, and interact the way they do, hence placing previously unexplained behaviour into context and making it more understandable.

Sam (2001) argues that the formation of friendships with host nationals has proven to be more difficult to achieve because of several inherent factors working against these friendships. These factors include: language, ethnic prejudices and culture. Yamazaki, Taira, Shun-ya and Yokoyama (1997) declare that immigrant learners’ poor command of the host language adversely affects them in forming friendships with host nationals. Similarly, Kudo

and Simkin (2003) argue that spoken English skills are a prominent factor affecting the development of intercultural friendships and in many cases linguistic knowledge inhibits individuals from getting to know each other.

Leong and Ward (2000) postulate that many immigrant learners report perceived discrimination and find that individuals in the host environment hold racial or ethnic prejudices against them. Woolf (2007) in turn states that immigrant learners find it extremely difficult to adjust to a new environment because of the host culture. As a result of these factors, immigrant learners are less open to new friendships. Literature on immigrant learners and their friendship formations consistently finds that host national friendship formation is integral to the adjustment process. Church (1982) declares that the number, variety, and depth of social interactions with host nationals may be the most important variables related to adjustment of immigrant learners.

### **2.4.3 Multi-national friendships**

Another type of friendship which immigrant learners develop is the multi-national friendship. According to Kim (2001), several immigrant learners form enduring friendships with other immigrant learners. In Kim's (2001) view, this happens when immigrant learners arrive in a new country and they immediately begin the search for new friendships. The common bond created by being an immigrant person, that is, 'a stranger in a strange land' (Perry, 2002) enables the formation of friendships with other immigrant learners. Literature indicates that friendships with multi-nationals were found to predominate in a study investigating immigrant learners' friendship networks.

According to Yum (2001), there are merits in forming friendships with multi-national learners. The author gives three benefits which can be derived from multi-national friendship formation: immigrant learners who study abroad have the opportunity to not only learn about the host culture but learn about other cultures as well. Furthermore, immigrant learners have certain sense of commonality that makes them feel as if they are not alone in a new environment (Yum, 2001). Scholars have characteristically counted the number of host national, co-national, and multi-national friends in each network, but Kim (2001) argues that few systematic attempts have been made to determine the importance of the strength of these relationships. This leads me to the issue of factors affecting friendship stability among immigrant learners

## **2.5 Factors affecting friendship stability among immigrant learners**

Studies concerning friendship stability raise important questions about individual differences (Poulin & Chan, 2010). Significant variations in friendship stability may be observed from one immigrant learner to another, in that some immigrant learners may maintain stable friendships, while others have unstable friendships and still others may present a level of stability in between. Interestingly, the individual differences may not be random, but rather, associated with specific personal characteristics that contribute to immigrant learners' psychosocial adjustment (Poulin & Chan, 2010). Three individual variables have been identified by Poulin and Chan (2010) as the major causes of friendship stability among immigrant learners, and these include: gender, behavioural characteristics (internalizing and externalizing behaviour), and psychosocial adjustment.

### **2.5.1 Gender issue**

A study conducted by Rose and Rudolph (2006) found that girls' and boys' interpersonal relationships differ from each other in many respects. In light of the above, boys and girls differ in their conception of friendships. It was reported that boys tend to be engrossed in activities with larger groups, which may consist of peers who are their acquaintances or playmates and not necessarily friends (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Claes (2003) argues that boys' interactions tend to be activity-based which involve sports and games requiring multiple participants.

In sharp contrast, Eder and Hallinan (1978) state that girls are inclined to be more exclusive in their friendships and are more likely to interact in small groups of friends. Rose (2007) in turn opines that because girls are more relationship-oriented, their friendships are mainly based on intimacy and disclosure of personal thoughts and feelings. Subsequently, Poulin and Chan (2010) held that gender differences in friendship patterns may lead girls to react more negatively when faced with interpersonal stress. A study conducted by Benenson and Christakos (2003) has shown that girls tend to be more distressed than boys when imagining the potential termination of their friendships. In a similar vein, Degirmencioglu, Urberg, Tolson, and Richard (1998) declare that girls easily change friends when they perceive a violation of friendship norms.

The level of which gender differences extend to friendship stability is unclear. A study conducted by Cairns, Leung, Buchanan and Cairns (1995) did not indicate gender differences

in friendship stability among children and adolescents. Instead, the findings support the notion that girls' fondness for exclusive relationships serves to maintain their friendships over time compared to boys. Conversely, in some empirical studies in which gender differences in friendship stability were established, the balance reliably leaned in favour of boys. In the words of Benenson and Christakos (2003), girls' friendship stability tends to be lower than boys'. These scholars have indicated that compared to boys, girls' friendships tend to be of a shorter duration. In furtherance to the above, Poulin and Chan (2010) argue that girls' need for intimate relationships can make them extremely sensitive to potential distress within their friendships, and this can result in intense conflicts that possibly contribute to lowering girls' levels of friendship stability compared to boys.

### **2.5.2 Behavioural characteristics of friendship**

A study conducted by Rudolph and Clark (2001) indicates that various indicators of internalising behaviour have been linked to friendship stability, principally depressive symptoms, shyness/withdrawal and peer victimisation. However, Rudolph, Hammen, and Burge (1997) argue that a theory of depression based on cognitive-interpersonal approaches in recent time have received heightened attention in research. On one hand, Baldwin (1992) opines that the cognitive models of depression postulate that individuals who carry a negative perception of their relationships may be at risk of depressive symptoms. In another vein, Brendgen, Vitaro, Turgeon, and Poulin (2002) establish that compared with well-adjusted learners, depressed learners keep a negatively biased view of their peer friendships. On the other hand, a study conducted by Coyne (2009) indicates that interpersonal models of depression illustrate a bi-directional link between depressive behaviours and interpersonal difficulties. However, Joiner (1999) observes that the model has been tested among immigrant learners and the findings indicate that depressive symptoms are associated with self-report measures of interpersonal problems, such as loneliness and rejection. In furtherance to the above, Chan and Poulin (2009) say that elevated depressive symptoms at one point significantly predicted an increase in friendship instability by the following month among their immigrant learner sample. Specifically, immigrant learners' depressed mood appears to be associated with instability in their closest most intimate friendships and in their school friendships.

Additionally, scholars such as Joiner (1991), Rubin, Wosjlawowiz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce, and Burgess (2006), and Chan and Poulin (2009) have examined friendship stability

among shy, withdrawn immigrant learners. Rubin *et al.* (2006) declare that shy or withdrawn immigrant learners seem to be as likely as non-withdrawn learners to have stable close friendships over a school year, despite the lower quality of their friendships. In a similar development, Rubin *et al.* (2006) opine that social withdrawal may become more salient and negative to peers with age, so that shy immigrant learners may experience greater difficulty in maintaining friendships.

Lastly, Ellis and Zabatany (2007) observe that the experiences of peer victimisation may be linked to friendship stability. A study conducted by Bowker (2004) indicates that victimised immigrant learners experience difficulty forming new friendships at school. Furthermore, Ellis and Zabatany (2007) submit that when girls in a class are victimised, their friendships remained relatively stable, but when only one girl is victimised, the friendship with other members of the class is more likely to be terminated. Another scholarly work by Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Burgess, Booth-LaForce and Rose-Krasnor (2006) indicates that immigrant learners who maintain stable friendships display low levels of victimisation. On the other hand, Demir and Urberg (2004) argue that immigrant learners who lost friendships became more victimised over time, while those who gained friendships over time became less victimised. In summary, from the studies it is clear that friendship stability may be associated with low levels of peer victimisation.

According to Poulin and Chan (2010), friendship stability is also influenced by externalising behaviour in immigrant learners. Based on Patterson, Reid and Dishion's (1992) coercion model, aggressive immigrant learners are often rejected by their peer groups, and this can lead them to be deprived of positive social experiences with peers. However, such deprivation may have a positive impact on the stability of the rejected immigrant learners' friendships. This is because the immigrant learners have fewer opportunities for developing the social skills required for sustaining their relationships. In summary, a study by Bachman and Hinshaw (2002) found that the friendship stability of immigrant learners who display externalising behaviour is lower compared to well-adjusted immigrant learners. A study conducted by Parker and Seal (1996) on immigrant girls with attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and girls without ADHD revealed that the former display difficulties in making and maintaining friendships, in contrast to the latter group. Furthermore, immigrant girls with ADHD were more likely to have no friends and less likely to have multiple friends than the immigrant girls without ADHD. In another vein, Blachman and Hinshaw (2002) in

their study argue that immigrant girls with ADHD had higher levels of negative friendship features such as conflict and relational aggression than the comparison group which may contribute to their friendship difficulties.

A similar study conducted by Ellis and Zarbatany (2007) suggests that both relational and overt aggression predicted friendship instability among immigrant children who had aggressive friends. Furthermore, Ellis and Zarbatany (2007) went on to suggest that aggressive immigrant learners did not necessarily have difficulty making new relationships, but had difficulty sustaining their friendships.

Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, and Gariépy's (1988) study on anti-social immigrant learners reveals that although they have friends and are central members of their social networks, their friendships tend to be lower in quality of short duration. Immigrant learners' friendships are more conflictual and are characterised by the use of directives and negative exchanges (Cairns *et al.*, 1988). The study equally suggests the presence of a bi-directional link between anti-social behaviour and friendship instability. For instance, a study embarked on by Poulin, Dishion and Medici (1998) indicates that friendship instability predicted an increase in anti-social behaviour and, in return, anti-social behaviour led to greater friendship instability among immigrant learners.

### **2.5.3 Psychosocial adjustment**

According to Berndt (1999), friendship stability was found to be associated with several parameters of social adjustment in immigrant learners. Parker and Seal (1996) argue that friendship stability among immigrant learners is associated with higher levels of pro-sociality (caring, sharing and honesty) and popularity. In another development, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Burgess, Booth-LaForce, and Rose-Krasnor (2006) conducted research in which they identified various trajectories for friendship stability and formation. From this study, it was discovered that immigrant learners with different trajectories presented distinct behavioural profiles. For instance, immigrant learners who rotated through friendships over time, that is, low stability and high formation, had both positive qualities that allowed them to attract others to them (such as a sense of humour), and negative qualities that contributed to their difficulty in sustaining relationships, (such as aggression). Alternatively, immigrant learners who experience a sharp decline in the size of the friendship linkage, that is, low stability and low formation, exhibit pro-social characteristics, such as caring, sharing and honesty.

However, Parker and Seal (1996) declare that immigrant learners differed in the rate at which they lost friendships and formed new ones, and these individual differences were associated with immigrant learners' personal characteristics. In a similar vein, Wojslawowicz *et al.* (2006) in their study observed the behavioural characteristics associated with different patterns of friendship stability among immigrant learners. In their findings, it was discovered that the stability of having any close friendship across time may be as important to immigrant learners' adjustment as maintaining the same friendship over time and that losing a close friendship is linked to increased adjustment difficulties.

Finally, according to Poulin and Chan (2010), friendship stability has been associated with school adjustment among immigrant learners. Ladd (1990) in his study says that immigrant learners who maintained their friendships liked school better as the year progressed and that making new friends in the classroom was associated with gains in school performance. Furthermore, Ladd and Price (1987) observe that stable friendships allowed immigrant learners to view school in a favourable light, particularly during the stressful school transition phase. In light of the above, it can be concluded that friendship stability appears to contribute to school adjustment among immigrant learners. This leads to another important issue pertinent to this research, that is, the places and spaces related to immigrant learners' formation of friendships in school.

## **2.6 Places and spaces of friendship formation among immigrant learners in school**

A school is an institution where serious academic exercise is conducted (Yildirim, Ayas & Küçük, 2013). Aside from this, a school is an organisation in which friendships are formed. Collins and Coleman (2008, p.26) view schools as 'common places' where certain activities such as teaching, learning, friendship formation, play, sports and games take place. According to Epstein and Johnson (1998), school is an important site of socialization and social reproduction. Schools are found in every urban or rural neighbourhood, serving as meeting points for friendship formation among learners, educators and even non-teaching staff. Friendship formations play major roles in the identity production of learners in school. In a school, there are many places and spaces in which friendships are formed, both physical, emotional and social. Chatterjee (2005) lists the physical and social places and spaces in which friendship occurs among immigrant school learners as including: social networks, classrooms, sports and games grounds, and the school library.

### **2.6.1 Friendship formation through social networks**

In recent times, interest has grown in the extent to which the internet is used in friendship formation (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 2002). According to McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002), the most frequent use of the internet is for communication purposes and that computer-mediated communication facilitates not only the maintenance of social ties but also the formation of new relationships among learners. For immigrant learners, the internet is becoming another location to meet and socialize, and relations created via the internet tend to migrate to other settings (Mesch & Levanon, 2003).

The use of the internet for friendship formation is of particular interest among immigrant learners. A study conducted by Gross, Juvonen and Gable (2002) indicates that the use of the internet by immigrant learners in school is mainly for social purposes. Through the internet, immigrant learners meet new friends, communicate before, during and after school hours, exchange information about homework, provide and receive social support (Gross *et al.*, 2002). Recently, a survey in the United States of America indicates the existence of these relationships, and reports that 14% of U.S. immigrant learners have formed close online friendships (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2003). In a similar development, Sheldon (2013) says that 93% percent of immigrant learners have a Facebook account and these numbers are increasing. Forming online relationships might be one of the most appealing aspects of internet use among immigrant learners, given that forming social relationships is virtually a developmental imperative of adolescence (Mesch & Talmud, 2006).

Scholars such as Sheldon (2008), Anderson-Butcher, Ball, Brzozowski, Lasseigne, Lehnert and McCormick (2010), among others, have proposed two opposing hypotheses in response to the question of why immigrant learners opt for utilising social networking sites. According to Sheldon (2008), the answer to the question is the ‘rich get richer and social compensation theories.’ This means that immigrant learners who already have well-established peer groups use internet websites as additional peer communication to reinforce already formed friendships and keep in touch with either short or long distance friends (Anderson-Butcher *et al.*, 2010). In another vein, less socially adept immigrant learners illuminate their online social networking as a place to anonymously self-disclose and make friends when they might be too uncomfortable to do so (Sheldon, 2008). Immigrant learners are using online social



networking to compensate socially, thus displaying the second theory of social compensation (Anderson-Butcher *et al.*, 2010).

There have been debates and contradictory study over which of these variables takes precedence because past study has shown that less socially capable immigrant learners are more likely to turn to the worldwide web while recent research is showing the opposite. Sheldon (2008) conducted a study in which she investigated immigrant learners' motives for creating and maintaining a Facebook account and the relationship between unwillingness to communicate and Facebook usage. This scholar's intention was to discover what immigrant learners' motives for Facebook usage were, if those who did not like face-to-face communication had different motives for utilising Facebook, and if unwillingness to communicate could predict immigrant learners' behaviour and attitudes in their online social networking. In this study, Sheldon sampled 172 immigrant students from a large university. These immigrant students were required to complete a questionnaire that asked them to report on their demographics, motives for having a Facebook account, the amount of time they spent on Facebook, unwillingness-to-communicate, their attitude toward online social networking, and its effect on immigrant children's social development. From the analysis, Sheldon discovered that maintenance of relationships and passing time were the two motives for Facebook usage that scored highest. When comparing the motives for employing Facebook and unwillingness-to-communicate, it was established that immigrant learners who did not enjoy or felt anxiety about face-to-face interaction used Facebook to pass the time and feel less lonely, but were far less likely to believe online communication would aid them in making new friends (Sheldon, 2008).

### **2.6.2 Friendship formation in the classroom**

The most important factor that promotes the formation and development of friendship among immigrant learners is the amount of communication they engage in in the classroom. According to Hallinan (2009), the classroom is a place where immigrant learners form friendships with other learners in the school. Several factors have been highlighted as the possible causes of friendship formation among immigrant learners in the classroom. These include: study groups, learners' level of intelligence and sitting patterns in the class (Albrecht-Crane, 2005). In the context of study groups, Albrecht-Crane (2005) argues that the majority of friendships formed by immigrant learners are as a result of their interactions

during the study group. Wentzel and Caldwell (1997) argue that there is a strong link between friendship and academic achievement. In a similar vein, Berndt and Keefe (1995) opine that the immigrant child who enters kindergarten with existing friends and those who are able to make new friends appear to make better adjustments to the classroom than those who do not.

In the area of learners' level of intelligence, Albrecht-Crane (2005) says that the majority of immigrant learners form friendships with their peers because of having the same level of intelligence. In other words, immigrant learners who are gifted intellectually make friendships with fellow learners who are also intellectually gifted. Concerning the issue of sitting patterns in the classroom, Albrecht-Crane (2005) observes that 95% of immigrant learners in the classroom form friendships based on where they sit in the classroom. Immigrant learners who sit close to each other are more likely to become friends. Perhaps, this might be the reason Hallinan (2009) reports that the seating patterns of immigrant learners in the classroom have a direct positive effect on their friendships and interactions.

### **2.6.3 Friendship formation in the sports and games arena**

Studies have shown that the majority of friendship ties among learners are done on the sports and games field. According to Harvey (1999), sports and games provide a cultural avenue for male learners to share mutual experiences with other males that are often based on masculine norms (Harvey, 1999). Additionally, Sapp and Haubenstricker (2008) declare that making friends is the reason learners give most frequently for their participation in sports. Similarly, in a study conducted by Gould, Feltz and Weiss (1985), similar results emerged in their study of 365 male and female swimmers between the ages of eight and nineteen. The participants rated having friends as the most important reason for participating in swimming. In a similar vein, Ladd, Kochenderfer and Coleman (1996) state that friendship making is considered as the basis for learners' participation in games such as football, rugby and table tennis. Hanks and Eckland (2009) state that learners' participation in extracurricular programs such as sports serves two important functions for schools: the reinforcement of educational goals via exposure to a network of friendships, and the facilitation of achieving such goals by empowering learners with personal resources, such as interpersonal skills and self-confidence. In light of the above, it is clear that friendship formation among immigrant learners takes place on sports and games fields. However, as Harvey (1999) argues, the friendships formed within the sports and games subculture are moulded by and adhere to the

group norms and expected behaviour such as aggression, athletic aptitude, domineering and vocal challenges.

#### **2.6.4 Friendship formation at the library**

Another place in which friendships among immigrant learners are formed is the school library. A study conducted by Tupper (2008) on learners' perception of out-of-classroom formation has been very interesting. In the study, 42 learners participated in the survey that required them to rank-order a list of school spaces from most to least preferred and most to least frequented in which friendship occurs. Furthermore, Tupper (2008) included an open-ended question which provided immigrant learners the opportunity to note anecdotal information on school locations that were significant to them, and to give reasons for their significance. Findings from the study show that over 78% of immigrant learners indicated the school library is a place and space in which friendship frequently occurs.

In another development, Uptis (2004), in his study on immigrant learners' friendship formation in school, indicates that immigrant learners specifically mention the school library as a place conducive to large-scale social interactions (friendships) and activities. In a similar vein, Hall (2011) argues that some immigrant learners made friends in a space and place like the school library and that this leads to the facilitation and enhancement of complex immigrant learners' interaction. Additionally, Mathur and Berndt (2006, p.47) found in their study, that the school library serves as a "rallying point" for friendship formation among learners of diverse racial groups in an American high school.

#### **2.7 Determinants of friendship formation among immigrant learners**

The world over, friendships do not just occur but have to be initiated, developed and then be maintained. An important element of friendship formation is that immigrant learners do not simply select their friends at random. Several sociology and psychology scholars such as Haveman and Wolfe (1995), Moody (2001), Bifulco, Fletcher and Ross (2011), among others, have studied the determinants of friendship among immigrant children. From these studies, it has been established that nationality, gender, race and linguistic homogeneity are the major factors that positively promote friendship formation among immigrant learners. I discuss each of these factors below.

### **2.7.1 Friendship formation based on nationality**

A study conducted by Ting-Toomey (2012) indicates that friendship formation among immigrant learners is influenced strongly by the nationality and background of the learner (where the learner is assumed to belong). In this study, nationality refers to the country from which the immigrant learner comes from. Furthermore, research by Rumbaut (2008) shows that nationality has a major role in creating strong friendship bonds and a sense of emerging identification. In some cases, nationality can be used for identification, especially if there are many differences between the host and immigrant's culture (Ting-Toomey, 2012). According to Nesdale, Rooney and Smith (1997), these differences usually lead to difficulties in acculturation (a member of one ethnic group adopting the beliefs and behaviours of another group) among immigrant learners, which often get intensified when a particular national begins to discriminate against others (Chao, 1997). Nationals with high involvement in their heritage group perceive themselves to have more knowledge about the rules that control social interaction and govern the group. However, nationals with high involvement in their heritage group would prefer to interact with other nationals within that group rather than initiate interactions with others (Chao, 1997). In sharp contrast, Van Oudenhoven, Prins and Buunk (1998) argue that minority nationals who show signs of adapting to the majority culture such as language use, and style of dress can be more appealing to majority group members. In such cases, the minority nationals have a greater opportunity to interact and communicate with the majority nationals and create meaningful relationships with members of the host society.

### **2.7.2 Friendship formation based on gender**

The formation of friendships among immigrant learners, based on gender, is well documented. Williams (2009) in his study on gender friendships, observes that immigrant boys and girls communicate differently in interpersonal relationships and that the differences are consistent with differences in instrumental and expressive gender roles. In comparison to immigrant boys in school, the girls develop higher levels of friendship and intimacy (William, 2009). This is because as Caldwell and Peplau (1982, p. 21) put it, "immigrant girls place greater emphasis on disclosure and discussion of feelings, while boys often emphasise shared activities such as playing cards." Reis, Senchak and Solomon (1985) argue that even when the emphasis is not restricted to friendships, immigrant girls tend to rate their friendships as more intimate than boys (Dindia & Allen, 1992). Traditionally, boys have been

found to be initiators of friendships, while girls have been established to be on the receiving end, which is, benefiting from a range of support including emotional, appraisal and logistic support (McMichael & Manderson, 2004).

In another circumstance, Berry (2006) avows that immigrant girls were found to be more prone to depression than boys if they did not have friends in whom they could confide, but immigrant girls who did have such support often reported lower levels of depressive symptoms. Furthermore, immigrant girls who do not have same-sex close friends in whom to confide are less satisfied with their lives than girls who do have a friend confidant (Martinovic, van Tubergen & Maas, 2011). In sharp contrast, Gijsberts and Dagevos (2005) opine that though friendship formation among immigrant learners is based on the same-sex, instances abound where friendship among immigrant learners is in fact based on cross-sex intimacy. Immigrant boys, because of a high level of sexual attraction, prefer to make friends with girls (Hand & Furman, 2009). Interestingly, Afifi and Faulkner (2000) observe that cross-sex friendships can be very beneficial psychologically and socially. Like same-sex friendships, cross-sex friendships provide immigrant learners with intimacy, social support, identity exploration, companionship and shared activities (Afifi & Faulker, 2000).

### **2.7.3 Friendship formation based on racial affiliation**

Another important factor that influences friendship formation among immigrant learners in school is the race the learner belongs to. Way, Gingold, Rotenberg and Kuriakose (2005) looked at friendship formation among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. These scholars discovered that Hispanic and black immigrant learners establish and maintain friendships for a longer time within their racial group. The findings of the study also indicate that Asian American learners are least likely to form close friendships because they are often discouraged by their parents from spending time with other learners outside their race group.

Furthermore, in their study, Abound, Mendelsen and Purdy (2003) have shown that there are stronger intra-racial and intra-ethnic friendships among immigrant learners in school than inter-racial or inter-ethnic friendships. In my view, the above assertion may have been the reason Vaquera and Kao (2005) argue that if inter-racial relationships are harder to form given societal pressures, one may expect heterogeneous friendships to be more intimate once they are formed. In a similar vein, Astin (1993) argues that inter-racial friends share fewer activities than those in intra-racial relationships. Additionally, Chang (1996) declares that in

general, greater racial diversity in the undergraduate student population positively affects the frequency of friendships across race. This view is supported by Anaya (1992) who found that friendships across race is associated only with discussing racial issues in college, taking ethnic studies courses, attending racial awareness workshops and promoting racial understanding.

In spite of an array of studies which have found that friendship formation among immigrant learners is influenced by intra-racial affiliation, Moody (2001) examined overall levels of friendship segregation, dividing respondents into same-race and other-race categories and using a single index for school racial diversity. In line with the black-white studies, the findings of this study indicate decreasing rates of cross-race friendship with increasing racial diversity, although the increase is not linear. In a similar vein, Antonio (1998) argues that if a learner's close friends are all of a different race from his/herself, then it is highly likely that he/she has frequent and negative inter-racial interactions, regardless of whether those contacts are through dining, studying, or rooming together.

#### **2.7.4 Friendship formation based on linguistic homogeneity**

Linguistic homogeneity is another determinant of friendship formation among immigrant learners in school (Erwin, 1999). This scholar has established that in the course of interaction, verbal communication involving language, serves an important tactical function. Language is important because it initiates relationships and also relates the level of intimacy. A number of studies indicate that language reflects and influences positively the level of friendship and intimacy in immigrant learners. For instance, the groups of Chinese immigrant learners who speak Mandarin with one another, Sudanese refugees who speak Arabic with each other and local learners who use English as a medium of communication almost exclusively at school seem to be a clear-cut case of language determining who one is friends with (Willoughby, 2007). In a study on friendship among European immigrants in Canada, Montemayor and Flannery's (2007) findings indicate that European immigrants who have better language skills have a higher chance of forming friendships and socializing with members of the host society members as compared to other groups of immigrants such as South African immigrants.

### **2.7.5 Friendship formation based on reciprocity**

Another important factor affecting friendship among immigrant learners is the degree of reciprocity in the relationship. According to Laursen and Hartup (2002), reciprocity refers to social interaction that involves giving and taking or returning in kind matched or mutually equivalent exchanges or paying back of what one has received. A norm of reciprocity suggests that a learner is more likely to select his or her school mate as a friend if that mate regards the learner as a friend. In other words, in the relationships of immigrant learners, the notion of reciprocity is extended to more specific activities and psychological characteristics. Here, relationships are seen as requiring the mutual accommodation of equal partners (Erwin, 1999). According to Hallinan and Williams (1989), the positive effect of reciprocity is likely to occur regardless of the personal characteristics of the members of a group. Subsequently, Hallinan and Williams (1989) declare that the immigrant learner is more likely to make a cross-race friendship choice if the person chosen regards him/her as a friend.

In another development, Hartup (1996) states the meaning attached to friendships involves symmetrical reciprocity to a large extent, and that complementary reciprocity does not ordinarily attract immigrant learners to each other. Rather, immigrant learners and their friends enjoy horizontal or symmetrical relationships because the norms governing them call for equivalence in rights, privileges, and obligations rather than complementarities (Hinde, 1997). Though reciprocity is a defining feature of friendships and other social relationships at any age, the construct is both similar and different among immigrant learners as compared with adult immigrants (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998). However, both young immigrants and adults use reciprocity norms to interpret and guide their social behaviour. According to Laursen and Hartup (2002), pro-social reciprocity norms suggest that immigrant learners have to return favours, that is, 'do unto others' and buy in to aggressive reciprocity norms that permit retaliation, that is, 'an eye for an eye.'

### **2.8 Conclusion**

I began this chapter by looking at the importance of conducting a literature review for the purposes of this study. The chapter further investigated the meanings of friendships, friendship formation among immigrant learners and the types of friendships immigrant learners form in school. The issue of factors affecting friendship stability among immigrant learners was also raised in this chapter.

In summary, therefore, this literature review, aside from identifying areas in which studies have been conducted on friendship formation and providing justification for the study, has also filled the gap in the context of identifying places and spaces in which friendship formation takes place and the main determinants of friendship formation for immigrant learners in school. The next chapter presents another important issue in this study which is the adaptation of appropriate conceptual and theoretical frameworks.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter two, I discussed the review of the literature. In this chapter, I will focus on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning my study. The conceptual and the two theoretical frameworks adopted for the study are as follows: children's geographies, intergroup contact group and homophily theories. These theories are explained below.

#### **3.2 Conceptual framework**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 18), a conceptual framework is “a visual or written product, one that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied-the key factors, concepts, or variables-and the presumed relationships among them.” Conceptual framework is of great importance to a research study. In this study, however, ‘children's geographies’ forms the conceptual framework and it is discussed below.

##### **3.2.1 Children's geographies**

This study revolves around the concept of children's geographies. The notion of ‘geographies’ is suggestive of tangible ‘spaces or places’ which can be readily and singularly described and visited (Horton & Kraftl, 2006). From the human geography perspective, children's geographies focus on the detailed and explicit attentiveness to everyday spatialities in the lives of young individuals and in social institutions (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). In other words, children's geographies is a new field of study under the broader banner of human geography, that focuses on the places and spaces where children live, interact and play with peers and adults. Ansell (2009) argues that places and spaces are intertwined, mutually dependent and often consist of the concrete, abstract and social. There is a general belief among scholars that place is sited as a space (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004).

According to Panelli (2009), children's geographies is sometimes coupled with the geographies of childhood, while differing slightly from each other. While the former has an interest in the everyday lives of children, the latter has an interest in how adult society conceives of the idea of childhood and how this impacts on children's lives in various ways (Panelli, 2009). This, from all indications, consists of imaginations about the nature of children and the related spatial implications.

Panelli (2009) argues that children's geographies can be seen through the lens provided by multiple foci, thus emphasizing the plurality which is encouraged by human geographers. McKendrick (2000, p. 41) opines that the foci consist of (but are not restricted to): environmental hazards (traffic, health and environment, accidents), the history of its emergence (key authors and texts), children in the environment (home, school, play, neighbourhood, street, city, country, landscapes of consumption, cyberspace), social issues (children's fears, parents' fears for their children, poverty and deprivation, work, migration, social hazards, crime and deviance), indirect experience of place (not medium specific, literature, television and cyberspace), designing environments for children (children as planners, utopian visions), the nature of the child (geographical concepts, family contexts, society contexts, gender variation, age-based variation, cultural variation), citizenship and agency (environmental action, local politics, interest in the environment), and children's geographical knowledge (environmental cognition, understanding the physical environment).

### **3.2.2 Children in the school environment**

Although a school is a relatively big institution in any community, Collins and Coleman (2008) argue that this environment has received little recognition and attention when one compares it to institutions of health. They make a strong argument for the centrality of schools in children's everyday lives, as schools are found in almost every urban and rural neighbourhood and most children spend a considerable amount of time within this environment in their day-to-day lives and interactions (Collins & Coleman, 2008). MacCrae, Maguire and Milbourne (2002) opine that the role of this environment in every child's life is pivotal to their development, particularly in relation to the inclusionary and exclusionary processes of society which is experienced first-hand in the school. According to Olweus and Limber (2010), the manifestation and implications of social exclusion such as bullying, is an inter-personal socio-spatial aspect which has been extensively researched both within and outside of school boundaries. School, therefore, is not only a place where children learn quantifiable subjects, but is also a learning ground of life interaction skills and the formation of friendships.

### **3.3. Theoretical frameworks**

A theoretical framework is important in any research. This is because it provides a well-supported rationale in which a study is conducted, and also assists readers to understand the researcher's perspective (Trochim, 2006). In this study, therefore, the theoretical frameworks

underpinning the study are intergroup contact and homophily theories. These theories are explained below.

### **3.3.1 Intergroup contact theory**

From all indications, intergroup contact theory was first propounded by Gordon Allport in 1954. Based on Allport's disposition, other social scientists such as social psychologists, historians and sociologists began to theorise about intergroup contact after World War II. Allport's theory proved to be the most dominant by specifying the critical situational conditions for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice. Allport (1954) argued that positive effects of intergroup contact occur only in situations marked by four principal elements such as equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities, law, or custom.

Relying on Allport's disposition, Moody (2001) summarises intergroup contact theory as having three compositions: equal status of participants, cooperative interdependence and explicit support for inter-racial mixing from recognized authorities in the setting. A combination of setting, purposes and attitudes leads to inter-racial friendships, and when one of these three elements is lacking, inter-racial relationships may ultimately result in conflict.

Despite the fact that social psychology has been challenged for an overemphasis on the individual's prejudices and stereotypes, Van Dijk (1987) argued that intergroup contact theory has taken into account the necessary social dimension of ethnic interaction. While acknowledging the difficulty of conceptualising an in-group, Allport (1954) noted that participants of an in-group all use the word 'we' with the same essential significance. According to Pettigrew and Tropp (2008), separateness in these groups is viewed as a common phenomenon which is in agreement with intergroup contact theory. The manner in which people worship, visit, date, eat, play and live follows an automatic cohesion that is simply convenient.

Furthermore, Allport (1954) argued that people form groups which traditionally tend to stay apart, but did not see this as a manifestation of prejudice. Rather, Allport (1954) clarified it in the context of human's desire to be with their own nationals, which is easier and takes less effort (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003). This preference for one's nationals produces a natural prejudice against those who are out-group (Chavous, 2005). These common

prejudices create common bonds which further strengthen this social friendship. The in-groups which originated from these common prejudices are vital to physical and social survival and individual's self-esteem. The familiar characteristics in others tend to be the preferred characteristics and those that individuals gravitate towards. Persons who are outside the in-group are seen as somehow less in status and quality, but are not necessarily viewed with hostility in every circumstance (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003). Therefore, according to Allport (1954), the in-group loyalty exists without any awareness of corresponding out-groups.

In another vein, some groups manifest a need to outrightly reject out-groups and maintain an ethnocentric positioning. But for other groups, in-group membership is just daily living. The membership consists of a web of connections that are supported because of habit and simplicity. At this level, human beings do not exhibit prejudice as a matter of asserting superiority as much as showing a preference for the familiar. Friendships are formed with people who are most like 'us'. It is when contact with the unfamiliar happens that people begin to feel threatened and frightened (Allport, 1954).

Using Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory as a foundation, many scholars have chronicled the characteristics and importance of in-groups. For instance, van Dijk (1987, p. 195) confirms Allport's ideas about prejudice as being a "group attitude", emphasising that prejudice is not merely an individual preference, but also the views held by the entire group. Furthermore, this difference, as small as one that is assumed, in any social dimension forms an 'out-group' which in the context of racial attitudes is premised on racial characteristics (van Dijk, 1987). From all indications, the racial attitude is developed, transferred and implemented by members of the in-group to perceive and socially interact with members of the out-group. According to van Dijk (1987), the challenge is that the interaction generally structurally favours the in-group and its members. From Jackman's (2005) perspective, another important challenge is that people's attitudes are constrained by the in-group to which they belong, and deviating from that pre-selected 'menu' may cause social repercussions. The in-group thus exerts pressure on individuals as they make friendship choices. As a result, social stigma may exist with people who have friends from an out-group. According to Jackman (2005), out-groups are regarded as fewer variables, more monolithic, and 'all alike', whereas in-group members are perceived as varied and having a continuum of qualities. In Fiske's (2005) view this is the basis for prejudgments of out-group members.

### **3.3.2 Intergroup contact theory: critique**

Although Allport's intergroup contact theory has occupied a place of importance for those scholars who have tried to unravel the mysteries of friendship formation, this theory has been challenged by others. In other words, not all aspects of intergroup contact theory have been left without criticism. Scholars such as Jackson (2005), Pettigrew (2009), Smith and Pettigrew (2011) have raised questions about the theory's emphasis on the individual. For example, Eagly and Diekmann (2005) argue that intergroup contact theory is seen as being hostility driven. It has been criticised for being over simplistic and not able to accommodate the complexities of intergroup attitudes and discrimination. Jackson (2005) observed that there are developments in intergroup relations that cannot be completely resolved within the confines of Allport's framework. This scholar (Jackson) maintained that the keys to the understanding of attitudes and behaviours of in-group and out-group members are created within the in-group's social organisation and the limitations and prospects that go along with this organisation.

Another shortcoming of Allport's intergroup contact theory from Gaertner and Dovidio's (2005) perspective is that Allport did not anticipate the importance of majority-minority group distinctions and that some people would opt for full assimilation while others would prefer to engage in multi-cultural acculturation configurations.

In spite of these shortcomings, Allport's intergroup contact theory still has the potential to provide a solid and measurable tenet that unpacks how immigrant learners in South African high schools form friendships.

### **3.4 Homophily theory**

Another theoretical framework I adopted for this study is known as homophily theory. The concept 'homophily' originates from 'homo' (meaning self) and 'philia' (meaning love), and refers to the well demonstrated tendency for human actors to form relational ties with similar others (McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). This theory was developed by Robert Merton in 1954 to explain how individuals associate with others similar to themselves. Homophily theory has been extensively documented across a wide array of different characteristics including race, age, ethnicity, profession, religion, and various behaviours (Golub & Jackson, 2008).

This theory gives meaning to a popular adage which says that ‘birds of a feather flock together.’ McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin and Cook (2001) argue that similarity breeds connection. Furthermore, homophily is the principle that allows the “like to associate with like” (McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001, p.14). In a similar vein, Kossinets and Watts (2009, p.406) argue that “friends, spouses, romantic partners, co-workers, colleagues, and other professional and recreational associates all tend to be more similar to each other than randomly chosen members of the same population with respect to a variety of dimensions, including race, age, gender, socio-economic status, and education.” These scholars argue that the pervasive fact of homophily shows that cultural, behavioural, genetic, or material information that flows through networks, tends to be localised. Homophily therefore denotes that any social entity that depends to a substantial degree on networks for its transmission will tend to be localised in social space and will obey certain fundamental dynamics as it interacts or associates with other social entities in an ecology of social form (McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). Homophily theory focuses on why friendships between people with similar characteristics are more prevalent and stronger than those among dissimilar people.

### **3.4.1 In support of homophily theory**

According to Monge and Contractor (2003), there are two main lines of reasoning that support the theory of homophily. These include: similarity-attraction hypothesis and theory of self-categorization (Monge & Contractor, 2003). From Leenders’ (1996) view, the similarity-attraction hypothesis predicts that individuals are more likely to interact with those with whom they share similar traits or characteristics. In the area of the theory of self-categorisation, Turner (1987) declares that people tend to self-categorise themselves and others in the context of race, gender, age, education, among others, and that they use these categories to further differentiate between similar and dissimilar others. For instance, Mr Green will perceive Mr Stephen to be more similar to him when Mr Stephen belongs to the same social categories as himself than when Mr Stephen belongs to a different social category. Furthermore, as Ibarra (1992) explained, because interpersonal similarity increases predictability of behaviour and reduces communication apprehension, communication is more likely to occur among people who are alike (Yuan & Gay, 2006).

Empirical studies conducted by scholars such as Feld (1982), Ibarra (1992), Leenders (1996) and Mollica *et al.* (2003) have found strong support for the homophily hypothesis,

particularly in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, status, among others. According to Yuan and Gay (2006), persons who are homogeneous in age, ethnicity, educational level, and status are much more likely to interact with each other than with people who are heterogeneous in these respects. This is because people are more comfortable interacting with others that are similar and that individuals feel familiar with. Furthermore, Leenders (1996) posits that team members are more likely to exchange task-related information with people of the same gender and/or race.

In a similar circumstance, McPherson *et al.* (2001) declare that homophily mechanisms could in principle operate with regard to any feature that two people may share in common, from racial categorisation, to gender, to sub-cultural styles. A category could equally encompass several nested levels of ‘concentric’ differentiation, as Tilly (2006) had contended, with regard to spatial groups (neighbourhoods nested within cities, cities within regions, among others). When concentric differentiation exists (Wimmer & Lewis, 2010), Tilly (2006) says that the degree of homophily decreases with an increasing inclusiveness of the categorical distinction. Here, Wimmer and Lewis (2010) observe that this represents only one potential relationship between subordinate and superordinate forms of homophilies.

### **3.4.2 Common features of homophily**

As earlier highlighted, Mollica *et al.* (2003) list features (race, age, same personality and geographical location) that facilitate individual’s association with each other. These include race, age, same personality and geographical location.

#### **3.4.2.1 Race homophily**

According to Mollica *et al.* (2003) same-race preference is actually an important attribute that facilitates people associating with each other. This notion was supported by Tilly (2006) who argues that homophily based on race is true for the homogeneity of networks of Asians, which is largely the reason why South Asians befriend other South Asians, Chinese other Chinese, and so forth. In a similar vein, in their study, Baron and Banaji (2006) indicate that Hispanic children as young as five have shown in-group preferences for Hispanic over black, but they also show preferences for Hispanic over white. McPherson *et al.* (2001) looked at other variables such as attending the same elite high school as the basis for friendship formation. McPherson *et al.* (2001, p.12) argue: “if two white students befriend each other, it

might be due to a mutual preference for graduates of elite high schools, who largely tend to be white, rather than due to a preference for white students per se.”

#### **3.4.2.2 Age homophily**

Another feature that plays a vital role in friendship formation is the age bracket of individuals. The patterns of age homogeneity in conventional friendship formations are consistent. Van Mastrigt and Carrington (2013) indicate that friendship ties are almost exclusively age-homogeneous and that non-kin ties ranging from friendship to general associations are also overwhelmingly made with others in the same general age bracket. In his study, Marsden (1988) indicated that age heterogeneity was less than half of that expected for non-kin relations, a finding which Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2006) have replicated. A study by Burt (1991) has shown that the primacy of age homophily in tie formation is rather constant across the life-course for most relational forms, some dips in the age-graded nature of network formation have been observed in socio-emotional support networks. Daly (2005) submits that age homogeneity is extremely visible at young and older ages, but dips in middle-age.

#### **3.4.2.3 Same personality homophily**

Studies have shown that children and even adults of similar personality appear to move together. Doreian’s (1989) study on homophily and assimilation among sport active adolescent substance users, observed that smoking, drug-taking and alcohol use tended to be similar between friends. Still in the context of substance usage, Friedkin (1998) reported that two or more people with the same substance use behaviour pattern would be more likely to share a friendship bond. According to Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce, and Burgess (2006), friends are more similar than non-friends in such behaviours as aggression, shyness/withdrawal, and pro-sociality.

From the level of dyadic, however, a study conducted by Centola (2011) on homophily in the adoption of health behaviour and diffusion has indicated that homophilous ties can promote the spread of behaviour between individuals. The reason given for this is because individuals are likely to be influenced by others who have similar behaviour to themselves. In a similar vein, a study on social influence has also suggested that the effects of status can interact with those of homophily (Pearson, 2006). Massen (2014) argues that homophily among high-status people positively helps in promoting diffusion, but low-status people may be more



likely to be influenced by heterophilous ties to high-status others than by homophilous ties to similarly low-status people.

#### **3.4.2.4 Geographical location**

Literature indicates that the most basic source of homophily is that of space and location. Kaufer and Carley (1993) observe that people are more likely to come into contact with those who are closer to them in geographic location than those who are distant. Hampton and Wellman (2000) argue that it takes more energy to connect with those who are very far away than with those who are nearer. Similarly, Campbell (1990) opines that local networks are a source more of contacts than close ties. Michaelson (2008) submits that this tends to become less important over time as other types of homophily trump mere propinquity. As Calderia and Patterson (1987) pointed out, even simple elements as seemingly trivial as the arrangement of streets, dorm halls, and legislative seating can positively influence the formation of stronger friendships. Moore (1990) says that women are more likely than men to form close ties within their neighbourhoods. This is because as McPherson and Lynn Smith-Lovin (1986) declare, they are less likely to be tied to extra local foci of tie formation like work, and their voluntary associations are more likely to be geographically local. Fischer (1982) in turn says that older people are also more constrained by their immediate geographic location and have networks that are more reflective of this. From all indications, there has been a wide acceptance of the homophily theory by scholars. In light of this, homophily theory is used to explain why immigrant children form the kind of friendships they form in school. It is an obvious choice of theoretical framework for this study.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the conceptual and theoretical frameworks selected for use in this study. Investigating the geographies of friendship formation among high school immigrant learners places my study clearly within the conceptual framework of children's geographies. The two theoretical frameworks selected, namely: intergroup contact theory and homophily theory, were obvious choices in that they will guide and facilitate an understanding of the dynamics that influence immigrant learners' friendship formation in South African high schools. The end of chapter three leads me to another important chapter of this dissertation which is the methodology chapter. In other words, chapter four looks at the manner in which this study was conducted.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I focused on both conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin and frame my study. In this chapter I deal with research methodology, research design, paradigm and the methods adopted in conducting my study.

Research is the most important tool for advancing knowledge, for promoting progress and for enabling man to relate more effectively to his environment, to accomplish his purposes and to resolve his conflicts (Merriam, 2009). In the field of academic research there are three broadly defined research traditions namely: the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

My study investigates ways in which immigrant children form friendships in high school. It is worth mentioning that the literature that motivated this study revealed a gap with regard to research methodology that has been used in the related studies. The most widely adopted research methodology in contemporary studies of immigrant children and friendship is based on quantitative methods, a good example being the study conducted by Bowman (2008) on self-disclosure among same-sex friendships. In the study various questionnaires were used to elicit information from the participants. Thereafter, multiple regressions were used to establish young men's subjective experiences of friendship.

In another circumstance, Hendrickson, Rosen and KellyAune (2010) conducted research on the analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. The methodology adopted in conducting this study was one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) which shows that international students tend towards forming friendships with individuals from their own country.

In my study, however, I did not want to follow a quantitative approach like other researchers mentioned above because it is very limited. Furthermore, a quantitative approach does not allow in-depth information to be elicited from the informant(s) (Merriam, 2009). In light of the above, I have employed a qualitative approach in my study in order to investigate the

phenomenon of friendship formation among immigrant children, with the view to generating in-depth data.

## **4.2 Qualitative approach**

This study draws on a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is seen by many researchers as almost the complete opposite of quantitative research. Huysamen (2001) opines that the main difference that exists between the quantitative and qualitative approach lies in the distinction between ‘explanation’ and ‘understanding’ as the purpose of inquiry. According to Patton (2002) quantitative approach requires evidence that is observable and testable. It is this evidence that enables a researcher to draw a logical conclusion about a variety of quantifiable variables. However, the data can be organised, described and interpreted using statistics such as percentage, chi-square and multiple regressions, among other methods (Trodux & Smith, 2006). Similarly, in a quantitative approach, truth and knowledge are understood as external reality which is separated from the knower, while qualitative research articulates a view of knowledge as a social construction and of situated knowledge (D’amant, 2009). In other words, a qualitative approach allows for alternate ways of knowing emerging out of inductive reasoning (Alastuutari, 2010).

According to Creswell (2008) a qualitative approach is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. A qualitative approach is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words rather than numbers, as data for analysis (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative approach can be viewed as research directed towards providing interpretative explanations that help to illuminate an understanding of social phenomena. The origins of the qualitative approach lie in the work of social anthropologists of the early twentieth century. Tuckman (2012, p. 58), using the typology of Bogdan and Biklen, identifies five features of qualitative approach. These are as follows:

1. The natural setting is the data source and the researcher is the key data-collection instrument.
2. It attempts primarily to describe and only secondarily to analyse.
3. The concern is with process, as much as with outcome.
4. Data is analysed inductively, as in putting together the parts of a puzzle.
5. It is essentially concerned with what things mean, that is, the why as well as the what.

From these characteristics, it is evident that a qualitative approach recognises the rich complexity of phenomena and sees the role of the researcher as aiming to capture some of this complexity through observation, description and interpretation (Merriam, 2009). Tredoux and Smith (2006) argue that it is not the role of the researcher to reduce phenomena to a set of predetermined and narrowly defined variables, but rather that the researcher is open to new ideas, insights and meanings of reality as the research process unfolds. Basically, a qualitative researcher is interested in understanding the meaning human beings have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. The main strength of a qualitative approach lies in an in-depth understanding of social phenomenon under investigation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Based on the reasons advanced above, I adopted a qualitative approach in order to understand the geographies of friendship formation among immigrant children in South African high schools.

### **4.3 Adopting an interpretive paradigm**

The term 'paradigm' has its roots in the Greek word '*paradeigma*', which means pattern. The term 'paradigm' was first used by Thomas Kuhn in 1962 to signify a conceptual framework which is shared by a community of scientists providing them with a convenient model for examining problems and finding solutions. According to Kuhn (1977), a paradigm is an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached to corresponding methodological approaches and tools. In other words, a paradigm means a research culture - a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research. Patton (1990) believes a paradigm to be a world view, a general perspective and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Guba (1990) sees a paradigm as an interpretive framework which is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. From Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlop's (1992) perspective, a paradigm implies a structure, pattern and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions.

In this study, I will be using an interpretive paradigm. Willis (1995) views interpretivism as being anti-foundationalist, which implies that there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge. In other words, an interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. According to

Huysamen (2001), an interpretive approach is concerned with understanding psychological and social phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved. Gephart (1999) says that the interpretive researcher assumes that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation, and, as such there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking and reasoning humans. In a similar manner, Myers (2009) submits that the premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. In light of the above, central to the interpretive approach is the fact that human existence cannot be separated from its context. People cannot separate themselves from reality. Rather, they are immersed and absorbed in it.

In addition to the above, the interpretive researchers contend that only through the subjective interpretation of and intervention in reality can that reality be fully understood. The study of phenomena in their natural environment is the key to the interpretivist philosophy, together with the acknowledgement that scientists cannot avoid affecting those phenomena they study. Interpretive researcher admit that there may be many interpretations of reality, but maintain that these interpretations are in themselves a part of the scientific knowledge they are pursuing. Interpretivism does not have a tradition that is no less glorious than that of positivism, nor is it shorter. The central idea of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings which are already there or existed in the social world; that is, to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building blocks in theorising (Goldkuhl, 2012). From all indications, this approach is aimed at allowing the participants' experiences and insights to speak for him/herself and affording the researcher the chance to enter into the participants' 'real world', placing him/herself in the position of the participants (De Vos, 1998).

#### **4.4. Ontological and epistemological assumptions**

In this section, I will look at both the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my study. According to Gialdino (2009), ontology is a philosophical belief system about the nature of social reality, that is, 'what can be known and how.' Haverkamp and Young (2007) say that the conscious and unconscious assumptions, beliefs and questions that the researcher brings to the research endeavour serve as the initial basis for an ontological position. In another development, Staller (2012) sees epistemology as a philosophical belief system about who can be a knower. An epistemology focuses on how the relationship between the

researcher and participants is understood. These concepts (ontology and epistemology) and their relevance to this study are discussed below.

#### **4.4.1 Ontology**

An interpretive paradigm differs from other paradigms on the grounds of ontology. In an interpretive paradigm, ontology confirms that reality can be understood by studying what people think about, their ideas and the meanings that are important to them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Guba and Lincoln (1990) avow that the purpose of an interpretive paradigm in any research is to develop a greater understanding of how people make sense of the context in which they live and work. Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006, p.274) say that an interpretive paradigm involves taking people's experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them (ontology). It follows then, that interpretive paradigm researchers believe that 'reality' is socially constructed. This implies that there are many ways each individual sees the world and through the course of study the perceptions of each individual varies. However, being a researcher I view social reality as being co-constructed by individuals who interact and make meaning of their world in an active way. Furthermore, I approach the search for truth in people's lived experiences through rigorous interpretation. Since my study seeks to explore the dynamics of friendship formation among immigrant children, employing an interpretive paradigm will enable me, as the researcher, to uncover, understand and interpret those forces that positively influence the formation of friendships in high school among immigrant children.

#### **4.4.2 Epistemology**

In an interpretive paradigm, epistemology postulates that knowledge is created, interpreted and understood from a social or individual perspective (Maree, 2012). In other words, epistemology focuses on the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what should be known. In my study, what should be known is the geographies of friendship formation among immigrant children in high school. Though this researcher knows that immigrant children have friends in school through informal discussions, this was not important for the study; what seems to be important was the information that my research respondents gave relating to places and spaces in which they formed friendships. In light of the above, this researcher adopted an epistemological stance by engaging in both individual and focus group interviews as interactive methods of collecting data.

## **4.5 Research design**

The concept of research design has been well discussed by qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods researchers. Since this is a qualitative research, I will look at the meaning of research design from the perspective of qualitative studies. A research design is a plan or strategy which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Similarly, Durrhiem (2006) says that a research design is a strategic framework for action and serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. In any research, a research design should provide a plan that specifies how the research is going to be executed in such a way that it responds to the research questions (Durrhiem, 2006). The plan is the overall scheme or programme of the research. It includes an outline of what the researcher will do from the research questions to the final analysis of the data. In other words, a research design expresses both the structure of the research problem and the plan of investigation used to obtain empirical evidence on the relations of the phenomenon under investigation (Kerlinger, 2012). In light of the above, I have adopted narrative inquiry as my research design. This is discussed below.

### **4.5.1 Narrative inquiry**

The word 'narrative' is pregnant with meanings and it is used in various ways by different disciplines. In research, narrative inquiry allows researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness. According to Webster and Mertova (2007), narrative inquiry illustrates the temporal notion of experience, recognising that one's understanding of people and events changes. Narrative inquiry is based firmly on the premise that, as human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through story (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008). According to Riessman (2008), narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through collaboration between researcher and participants. In Carr's (2004) view, narrative inquiry is not associated with short term elementary experiences and actions, but instead, pertains to longer-term or larger-scale sequences of actions, experiences and human events. Carr went on to say that the action, life and historical existence are themselves structured narratively, and the concept of narrative is our way of experiencing, acting and living, both as individuals and as communities, and that narrative is our way of being and dealing with time.

Narrative inquiry is set in human stories. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways human beings experience the world. Narrative inquiry rests on the assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures on them (Bell, 2002). Human beings choose those elements of experience to which they will attend, and also pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect stories available to us (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative is not an objective reconstruction of life, instead it is a rendition of how life is perceived (Bell, 2002).

In light of the above, narrative inquiry is based on the respondent's life experience and entails chosen parts of their lives. However, when research participants engage in the practice of storytelling, invariably they do so because narrating has effects in social interaction that other modes of communication do not. D'amant (2009, p. 121) highlighted the power of narrative inquiry to include: "drawing on the voices of participants/foregrounding the authentic voices of participants, capturing the situatedness of participants and capturing the subjective complexities of their realities and experiences." Due to the nature of my research, utilising narrative inquiry in my research design will not mean that the personal narratives of participants will be all-encompassing, as is the case in life histories, but instead it focuses on the geographies of friendship formation among immigrant children and how immigrant children navigate places and spaces of friendship formation in high school.

#### **4.6 The research site**

I have selected two schools from the Pinetown district in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. For the purpose of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for the two schools, namely: Fumilayo High School and Lindiwe Secondary School. One of these two schools is located in a rural area while the other is located in a central business district. The reason for choosing one school in the rural area and one in the urban area is to ensure that my findings are valid and reliable.

##### **4.6.1 Fumilayo High School**

This school is located in the centre of Pinetown district. The school is a co-education institution. From my observation, the school is made up of learners from different racial backgrounds. The population of the learners in the school is approximately 865. Immigrant children in the school make up about three per cent of the entire population of learners in the school. The academic staff strength stood at 23, while non-academic staff consisted of 12.



There are about five big buildings that house 16 classrooms. There are two offices for the principal and deputy principal. There is a common room that serves as a staff room for all the educators. There is a big library in the school with a sitting capacity of 85 learners. There are eight different toilets in the school, three are for males and the other three are for female learners. The remaining two are for the staff (one for the males and one for the females).

#### **4.6.2 Lindiwe Secondary School**

This school is located in a rural area. The majority of learners are from one particular racial group (black learners). The learner population of the school stood at 517. There are pockets of immigrant children in the school. The population of academic staff stood at 14, while non-academic staff strength is seven. The school has three buildings. In each of the three buildings, there are about four classrooms. The building adjacent to the school's main gate has in it the school principal's office and the deputy principal's office. There is a big football field, volleyball and lawn tennis courts. At the back of the third building, there are toilets for both male and female learners. From my observation, this school is under resourced. Although there is a library in the school, it is not stocked with books. The only laboratory is not well equipped.

#### **4.7 Research population**

A population is an aggregate or total of all the objects, subjects or members that conforms to a set of specifications (Meree, 2012). According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2011), a research population consists of all the subjects a researcher intends to study. A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that are the main focus of a scientific query (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). However, due to the large sizes of populations, researchers often cannot test every individual in the population because it would be too expensive and time-consuming. For this reason researchers rely on sampling techniques to select their sample size. The population which I am interested in for the purposes of this research is all immigrant children in South African schools. Such a research population would be too large to research in practical terms. I have thus decided to adopt a particular sampling technique in selecting a more realistic sample size for this study.

##### **4.7.1 Non-probability sampling**

In research, a non-probability sampling method is often adopted which is less vigorous and tends to produce less accurate and less representative samples than probability or random

samples (Pascoe, 2014). Non-probability sampling connotes that not every element of the population has an opportunity of being selected in the sample. Similarly, non-probability sampling is used when it is extremely impossible to determine who the entire population is or when it is difficult to again access to the entire population. Furthermore, in non-probability sampling, randomisation is not allowed therefore there is no basis for determining the associated sampling error (Neuman, 2011). Consequently, the generalisability of the sample characteristics is grossly limited. Ideally, generalisations or inferences are not supposed to be made from non-probability samples. Non-probability sampling plans are therefore generally used for obtaining a rough impression of a group of subjects/participants. According to Pascoe (2014), the prominent non-probability sampling techniques are as follows: systematic sampling, quota sampling, purposive or judgemental sampling and accident sampling. From the non-probability sampling techniques listed above, I have decided to select purposive sampling for the purposes of my research. The reason for my choice is based on the nature of the research design which relies on a qualitative approach.

#### **4.7.2 Purposive sampling**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) see purposive sampling as a feature of qualitative research where a researcher hand picks the participants to be included in the sample. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2011) argue that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects units to be sampled based on their knowledge and professional judgment. In purposive sampling, specific elements which satisfy some pre-determined criteria are selected. The criteria used are usually determined by the researcher's judgment. According to Maree (2012), the researcher exercises this judgment in relation to what he/she thinks will constitute a representative sample of participants with respect to the research purpose.

Adopting a purposive sampling technique in order to obtain qualified participants will provide the most credible information for my study. The advantage of this method of sampling is that I can ensure that each participant in my sample will assist with my research, because each participant fits in with the population parameters of the study. If an element does not fit, I will be able to disregard it. From this perspective, I will employ a purposive technique to select immigrant children from the population.

Creswell (2007) stresses the importance of selecting the appropriate participants for research purposes. Creswell also suggests the importance of acquiring participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information and their stories. It might be easier to conduct the interviews with participants in a comfortable environment where the participants do not feel restricted or uncomfortable to share information.

#### **4.7.3 Eligibility of participants**

As established in any research study, the participants that the researcher uses in the study should meet specific criteria before he/she is considered for being selected. The following attributes and characteristics form the basis for the selection of immigrant learners as participants for my study. These include:

1. Participants should be immigrant school learners between the ages of 14 and 21 years;
2. Participants should be immigrant school learners who can communicate in English fluently;
3. Participants should be immigrant school learners who are doing Grade 10, 11 or 12;
4. Participants should be immigrant learners who have lived in South Africa for a period of two years or more; and
5. Participants should be immigrant learners who are willing to participate in the interview.

#### **4.7.4 Sample size**

For the purposes of my study, I purposively selected four immigrant learners from each of the two schools chosen in line with the criteria listed above. For clarity purposes, the reason I decided on the sample of four participants from each of the two schools is because of the following: immigrant learners were willing to participate in the interview, they were doing Grade 10, 11 or 12, they were able to communicate in English fluently, they had lived in South Africa for a period of two years or more and they were between the ages of 14 and 21 years. For confidentiality purposes, I have used pseudonyms in the description of my participants. From Fumilayo High School, the following four immigrant learners were selected: Oscar, Arnold, Mary and Alice. Patrick, Rose, Angela and Okon were selected from Lindiwe Secondary School.

#### **4.7.5 Biographies of participants**

##### **Oscar**

Oscar is a boy of about 15 years of age. He is from Zimbabwe. He has stayed in South Africa for over 12 years. Apart from his local dialect, Oscar speaks the English language and IsiZulu very fluently. He is currently doing Grade 11.

##### **Arnold**

Arnold is a boy of about 16 years of age. He hails from Malawi. He has been in South Africa for the past eight years. Presently, Arnold is in Grade 12. He speaks both his indigenous language and the English language. He is also quite fluent in the IsiZulu language.

##### **Mary**

Mary is a girl. She is 15 years of age. She is from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She has been in South Africa with her parents for over 12 years. She is currently in Grade 10. She is very versatile in the English language and IsiZulu.

##### **Alice**

Alice is a girl from India. She is about 16 years of age. Alice came to South Africa with her parents in 2005. Currently, Alice is doing her Grade 12. She speaks the English language only.

##### **Patrick**

Master Patrick is a boy of 14 years of age. He is from the Republic of Kenya. Patrick has been in South Africa for eight years. He is presently doing Grade 11. He speaks English and the IsiZulu language fluently.

##### **Rose**

Rose is a girl of about 16 years of age. She is from Lesotho. From all indications, she has been in South Africa for the past 10 years. She is at present in Grade 11. She understands and speaks English, Sotho and IsiZulu.

##### **Angela**

Angela is a girl. She was born in 1998 in a town known as Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She moved to South Africa with her parents about 10 years ago. Angela enrolled in Lindiwe Secondary

School on arrival in South Africa. At present, she is in Grade 10. She speaks the English language and IsiZulu.

### **Okon**

Okon is a boy of 15, who hails from Nigeria. He was born at Uyo in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. He arrived in South Africa in 2010. Okon settled in Pinetown with his parents. He is in Grade 12. Okon speaks his native dialect (Ibibio), IsiZulu and the English language.

## **4.8 Methods of data generation**

In any study, data generation is an important aspect of research. This is because inaccurate data collection can influence the results of a study and ultimately lead to invalid results. Against this background, I decided to employ individual and focus group interviews as the major data generation methods. These have been explained in pages 48 and 49 respectively.

In this study, open-ended interviews were used to elicit information from my participants. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) opine that an open-ended interview refers to the interview for which the response patterns or answer categories are provided by the respondent, not the interviewer. Open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit,2011). Additionally, Merriam (2009) states that open-ended interviews permit an unlimited number of possible answers, and respondents can answer in detail and can qualify and clarify responses.

### **4.8.1 Guidelines for conducting a good open-ended interview**

According to Ortiz (2003) there are guidelines for conducting good open ended interviews. Ortiz says that having a good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee is very necessary and has to be established before the interview begins. The interviewee's co-operation and participation can only be assured if there is rapport between the interviewee and the interviewer.

This can be done by using the first few minutes for a short informal conversation which will enable the interviewee to feel relaxed and free to share information about their lives and their experiences. Furthermore, assuring the interviewee that the responses will be treated

confidentially and will be for the research purposes only, will help in establishing a relaxed atmosphere (Ortiz, 2003).

The use of technical terms or jargon should, as much as possible, be avoided in the interview (Ortiz, 2003) as interviewees could feel intimidated and threatened by these. Where it is necessary and unavoidable to use such terms, their meanings should be explained to the interviewee before he/she is asked to respond. Additionally, to avoid incorrect interpretations of interview questions or prompts, some context has to be provided to each question (Ortiz, 2003). This serves as a common frame of reference for both the interviewer and interviewee which should enhance the effectiveness of communication between them. Furthermore, it is usually advisable to probe further the response given by the interviewee for more details. Having stated this, Ortiz cautions that it would not be in the best interests of generating reliable and rich data if the researcher was to press one issue for further comment or elaboration to the extent that the respondent feels uncomfortable. Whenever this kind of situation occurs, the interviewer should change to another issue and perhaps return to the original issue after some time and in such a way that is not threatening to the respondent. Lastly, it is important to avoid the use of leading questions. A leading question is one which tends to suggest a particular form of response. If a researcher is attempting to generate authentic data, then it would not be in the best interests of such research if leading questions were asked and participants' responses were coerced. From all indications, the features listed above provide a ground to prepare adequately for the interview with the participants.

#### **4.8.2 Advantages of open-ended interviews**

There is no doubt that the open-ended interview technique provides a very useful and powerful means of collecting data on significant phenomena. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), open-ended interviews allow for the collection of in-depth information from the respondents on a wide range of issues. The skilled interviewer can get his/her respondent to supply any information on certain issues he/she would ordinarily not supply in a questionnaire. Furthermore, the interviewee can seek and obtain clarification on any question that appears confusing just as the interviewer is at liberty to seek information for clarification purposes from his/her respondent/s on any responses that do not seem to be clear. This eliminates the possibility of misinterpretations on either side (Kumar, 2011).

Since the researcher records the responses him/herself, he/she will be sure that what is recorded is the actual response from the participants. This recording eliminates any confusion in transcribing and decoding the information. Based on the strength of open-ended interviews highlighted above, I have adopted and developed the instrument in my research to elicit information on the dynamics that surround the phenomenon of friendship formation among immigrant learners in high schools.

#### **4.8.3 Focus group interviews**

Similarly, another data generation method known as the focus group interview was selected for use in conducting this study. In a qualitative study, focus group interviews comprise the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously as a group (Maree, 2012). According to Hyden and Bulow (2003), a focus group is the contrived setting that brings together a specifically chosen sector of the population that were previously unknown to each other, to discuss a particular given theme or topic, where the interaction within the group leads to the generation of data. The participants constitute a focus group in the sense that they bear something in common in relation to the study's questions.

Robson (2012, pp. 254-5) highlights the importance of focus groups in qualitative studies. These include:

- a) Orientation to a particular field of focus;
- b) Developing themes, topic and schedules flexibly for subsequent interviews;
- c) Generating and evaluating data from different sub-groups of a population;
- d) Gathering qualitative data;
- e) Empowering participants to speak out within the group situation and in their own words;
- f) Encouraging groups instead of individuals to voice their opinions; and
- g) Generating data quickly and at a low cost.

Based on the strengths of focus group interviews highlighted above, I chose to utilise this method to generate rich data on the immigrant learners' experiences and beliefs on the phenomenon of friendship formation. In my study, focus group interviews were conducted with groups of immigrant learners in each of the two schools (Fumilayo High School and Lindiwe Secondary School). In each school, one focus group of four immigrant learners was

created. In each of the groups, the interview was conducted once and it lasted for 45 minutes each.

#### **4.8.4 Access to participants**

I want to state categorical clear that this study is part of Prof. Muthukrishna's bigger project, therefore, the ethical clearance issued for the project also covered this study (see appendix 1). I wrote an official letter to the principals of the schools selected requesting permission to conduct the study. I also wrote another official letter to the Department of Education informing them of my intention to conduct research on geographies of friendship formation among immigrant learners. The replies from the three letters were positive. The copies of these official letters are in the appendices (see pages 115 -118).

Furthermore, two days before the date on which the interviews were to be conducted, I telephoned the principals to remind and update them on the date for the interview. In a similar vein, since the interview was to be conducted on immigrant learners between the ages of 14 and 18, I was compelled to write a letter to the parents of my participants (see appendix 4). The letter was written in English, but I was conscious of the fact that some of my participants' parents may not understand the English language. Therefore, a provision was made to translate the content of the letter into their native dialects. Though this provision was made, it transpired that all my participants' parents were able to read the letter that was written in English.

#### **4.8.4 Tape recording**

On the interview days I went to these schools with a tape recorder. In research, the recording of audio data through devices such as tape recorders has been a significant development within qualitative study. According to Sapsford and Jupp (2006), a tape recording reduces the subjectivity of the interviewer, since data can be transcribed exactly and the actual authentic words and responses of the participants are then able to be studied thoroughly.

As with any other research methods, tape recording participants' responses has its own limitations. The presence of the tape recorder changes the interview situation to some degree, as the respondent may feel somewhat intimidated and nervous about having his/her responses recorded and may therefore be reluctant to express his/her feelings freely (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). In spite of this limitation, it was necessary to record the interview sessions. I explained



this to my participants and put their minds at ease on this point, and was therefore able to use the tape recorder to record the responses of my participants. Aside from recording the participants' responses on the tape recorder, I also used field notes. This is explained below.

#### **4.8.5 Field notes**

Field notes are contemporaneous notes of observations or conversations which occur during the conducting of qualitative research (Thorpe, 2011). According to Flick (2006), field notes are descriptive in nature and serve as the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study. Furthermore, Flick maintains that field notes can be an important supplement to other data collecting methods. For instance, in conducting a recorded interview the meaning and context of the interview can be captured more completely if, as a supplement to the actual interview, the researcher makes field notes. The tape recorder misses the sight, the smell, the impression and the extra remarks said before and after the interview (Flick, 2006) when the recording device is not on. According to Wolfinger (2002), field notes serve to facilitate data analysis, as the information is readily accessible.

In qualitative research, Bogdan and Taylor (2009, pp.62-64) offer the following good field note practices to help the research process, and these include:

- a) A researcher should look for keywords in participants' remarks.
- b) A researcher should concentrate on the first and last remarks of each conversation.
- c) A researcher should record notes as soon after the interaction session as possible.
- d) A researcher should not talk to anyone about his/her observations until he/she has recorded the field notes.
- e) A researcher should draw a diagram of the physical layout and setting to facilitate any observations made with regard to movement throughout the space.
- f) On the diagram, the researcher should indicate where specific parts of the conversation occurred before the detailed field notes were written.

Bearing in mind the advantages of good field note practices highlighted above, I made use of field notes during and after the interviews.

#### **4.9 Conducting the interview**

On 11 August 2014, I arrived at Fumilayo High School at exactly 10h00 for the interview. On arrival, I reported to the principal of the school. As I have earlier said, I carried along with me the tape recorder, field notebook and pencil. I was welcomed by the principal of the school. I was informed by the principal that based on the nature of my research, the interview would be held during break time. During the break period all four immigrant learners were called to the principal's office. I began with the focus group interview. The decision to begin with the focus group interview was based on the fact that I wanted to establish my participants' collective views on the dynamics that influence their friendship formation and on the obvious reasoning that they might feel a lot more comfortable speaking to me initially in a group situation as opposed to individual interviews.

Before I started the interview I gave the consent form to all of them to sign. I also explained verbally to my participants that they could withdraw from the interview if they felt threatened or uncomfortable in any way. Furthermore, I assured them that the information they volunteered to give would only be used for research purposes and their confidentiality was guaranteed. After the signing of the consent form by my participants, I engaged them in the interview, which lasted exactly 45 minutes, which was the duration of their break. Before participants took their leave, I made arrangements with them to interview them individually the next day after the official school day was over. I left the school at exactly 12h42 and I bid the principal farewell. My decision to conduct the interviews after school was because I did not want to interfere with the learners' school activities. Since I had given the participants consent forms during the focus group interview, in my view, there was no need to make them sign another one. I only reaffirmed that if at any point they felt uncomfortable participating in an interview that they were free to withdraw.

On 13 August 2014, I arrived at Lindiwe Secondary School for the interviews. Since the principal had already been informed of my intention to conduct research in the school through the official letter and telephone interaction, on arrival the participants were already assembled in the principal's office. Luckily for me, that day the school was involved in sporting activities. Therefore, I used the whole day to conduct both the individual and focus group interviews. Before the commencement of the focus group interview, I gave consent forms to Patrick, Rose, Angela and Okon for their signatures. I began with the focus group interview, and thereafter moved to the individual interviews. Due to the sporting activities

that were held in the school, occasionally there were noises of spectators from the field. This was one of the limitations and it has been mentioned in my chapter six (see page 92). In spite of this, the interview went well.

#### **4.10 Data analysis**

Data analysis is defined as a practice in which unorganised or unfinished data is ordered and organised, so that useful information can be highlighted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In other words, it involves processing and working with data, in order to understand what the data is highlighting and revealing (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2011). In qualitative research, data analysis is a process where a researcher organises, analyses and interprets the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Similarly, data analysis is the process of systematically scrutinising and arranging field notes, interview scripts and other materials a researcher has gathered in the field, so as to increase the researcher's understanding of these and to present findings to others (Maree, 2012).

This study generated qualitative data. Based on the interpretive approach adopted in the study, I utilised two methods of data analysis namely: on-the-field and after-data collection analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). These analyses were necessary for two reasons. First, on-the-field analysis served to provide direction to the data collection because of the cumulative nature of my qualitative data. Secondly, after-data collection analysis constituted the major part of the analysis as it was undertaken when all the data was captured which enables the entire picture from the study to emerge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

##### **4.10.1 Transcription of the data**

After the collection of the data, I transcribed the data manually without the use of qualitative analysis software known as Nvivo. Working with the data manually from the early stages of the research process allowed me to familiarise myself with the data. This invariably helped in the ongoing process of analysing and making sense of my participants' narratives. In a qualitative research, transcription means a translation or transformation of sound from recordings to text (Duranti, 2007). However, the process is a selective one whereby certain phenomena or features of talk and interaction are transcribed (Tilley, 2003). After I came back from my interviews with the participants, I downloaded recorded materials to my laptop. I started listening to the narratives of my participants from the laptop repeatedly. I began the transcription of the recorded data using pencil and notebook. It took almost three

weeks to complete the entire individual and focus group interviews. This was a long, painstaking process, but enabled me the opportunity to be completely immersed in the participants' narratives and allowed me to become very familiar with their authentic voices and responses. After the completion of data transcription, I subjected it to open coding. This is explained below.

#### **4.10.2 Use of open coding**

After transcription, my transcribed data was subjected to open coding. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), open coding consists of labelling concepts and themes which emerged through the narratives, defining and developing categories based on their similar properties and dimensions. During this process of open coding, my data was broken down into various sections, which were then closely examined and compared for both differences and similarities to emerge. After open coding was done, categorisation and themes emerged, which were then subjected to analysis known as thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis refers to the ways in which researchers use stories to interpret the world. Drawing from Braun and Clarke's position, my intention was to use my participants' stories to make sense of and ultimately, to better understand the way in which immigrant learners form friendships in high school.

#### **4.11 Validity and trustworthiness of the data**

In a qualitative research study, validity refers to the extent to which research produces an accurate version of the world (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Validity was ensured in this research endeavour through employing a form of triangulation which refers to the use of multiple sources or more than one source of data generation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In order to ensure that my findings are credible, valid and reliable, I made sure that the trustworthiness of the data was assured by adopting triangulation. In this study, therefore, I used both semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research in question. In light of the above, this study was guided by the qualitative approach of trustworthiness which includes the qualities of credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and reflexivity. These qualities of qualitative research are discussed further in the following section.

#### **4.11.1 Credibility**

Stage and Manning (2003) argue that within the parameters of a research setting, population, and theoretical framework, the data generated from the research should be valid. In terms of transferability they argue that by stating the theoretical parameters of the research, those who make policy or develop research designs within those same parameters can determine whether or not the cases described can be generalized for new research policy and transferred to other settings. Furthermore, triangulating multiple sources of data can enhance a study's generalisability, for example, utilizing data from different sources (Stage & Manning, 2003).

#### **4.11.2 Dependability**

Maxwell (2005) argues that the assumption of an unchanging social world is in direct contrast to the qualitative/interpretive assumption that the social world is always changing. Koonin (2014) argues the dependability in the research study in the context of qualitative approach is the ability to replicate the processes used to obtain research results, even though in different contexts they may be completely different. In qualitative research, Maxwell (2005) opines that the methodological parallel to reliability is whether the results are dependable, and the research process is consistent and executed in line with the rules and conventions of qualitative approach. These are the qualities which qualitative researchers need to be considerate of in order to ensure dependable results. As such, the current study was guided by what Maxwell (2005) has outlined as important guidelines to certify the dependability of results. Firstly, a researcher needs to consider whether the research questions are precisely and logically connected to the research purpose and design (Maxwell, 2005). This was carefully attended to in my research by doing a separate thematic analysis for each of the specific aims of the study. Secondly, the researcher has to determine if there are parallels across data source (Maxwell, 2005).

#### **4.11.3 Transferability**

Transferability is concerned with the degree to which the findings of a particular research can be used in another situation. According to Merriam (2009), transferability is possible in positivist research. This is because the findings of the particular study at hand can be used to a wider population. The situation in qualitative research is completely different. Flick (2009) says that it is important to conclude that findings from a qualitative study are not transferable to other contexts. In light of the above, the findings of this study will be interpreted and

considered carefully as the sample studied reflects only the views and experiences of the immigrant learners in selected high schools.

#### **4.11.4 Confirmability**

In the context of confirmability, Patton (1990) aligns objectivity in natural sciences with the use of a research instrument that is not dependent on human skill and perception. This scholar recognises the challenge of ensuring absolute objectivity, since, as even the questionnaire is designed by researcher, the intrusion of the biases is inevitable by the researcher. In qualitative research, confirmability is the qualitative researcher's comparable concern to objectivity (Flick, 2007). In qualitative research, steps must be taken to help ensure that the research findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants, instead of the features and preferences of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). In this manner, the study attempts to come as close to meeting the requirements of validity, reliability and objectivity as is possible for this study. Every attempt was made to ensure that data generation methods were explicit, negative instances of the findings accounted for, strategies for data collection and analysis were all made public, participants' truthfulness was assessed and generalisability was made explicit (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

#### **4.11.5 Reflexivity**

In the area of reflexivity, Merriam (2009) argues that a researcher's background and position will affect what he/she chooses to investigate, the angle of the investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to observe and self-examine herself in relation to the different elements of the research process. As an immigrant student in a South African university, I have had my own experiences, which have impacted on my own formation of friendships. Given that I could very well have had some biases, I tried to be neutral as much as possible by ensuring that my experiences and views did not influence my participants' position. I wanted the data from this research to reflect their authentic experiences and geographies. This was achieved by constantly telling myself 'I am not conducting a self-study' and therefore, the participants' voice must be heard.

## **4.12 Ethical considerations**

In recent times, there has been increased awareness of ethical issues in the conducting of research studies. Wassenaar (2006) highlights four principles of ethical issues that must be followed by a researcher in conducting his/her research. From Wassenaar's perspective, these principles consist of not subjecting the participants to any form of harm, beneficence, respect for autonomy and justice. The following is the explanation of ethical consideration as described by Wassenaar (2007), and this was adhered to strictly in the course of conducting this research.

### **4.12.1 Violation of the participants' privacy**

In research, privacy implies the element of participants' privacy, while confidentiality suggests the handling of information in a confidential manner (Wassenaar, 2007). In this study, I used pseudonyms when referring to individual participants so as to protect their identities and privacy.

### **4.12.2 Informed consent**

Accurate and clear information was offered to the participants (immigrant learners) so that they would fully comprehend the investigation and consequently be able to make a voluntary, informed decision about their participation. Emphasis was placed on the immigrant learners who understood the purpose of the study and were competent to give consent and of their awareness to be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. I requested the participants complete a form indicating their consent to be a part of the research process.

### **4.12.3 Harm to participants**

Immigrant learners were thoroughly informed beforehand that there was no potential for my research study to have any personal impact on them, especially not in any negative sense. Although there was no harm, participants were still given complete freedom to share their stories or not in whatever way they wished or felt comfortable with.

## **4.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have looked at the research methodology and methods adopted in this study. Because of the nature of the study which borders on social phenomena, I adopted a qualitative approach. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm was used in order to understand the dynamics which impact on the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in

schools in South Africa. In the context of the research methods used, a purposive sampling technique was used to select eight participants. Moreover, two data gathering methods were used, namely: individual and focus group interviews. I adopted an open-ended interview format to generate narrative data from my participants. I explained that thematic analysis has been used to analyse the data. The next chapter (chapter five) will focus on the presentation and discussion of my findings.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapter four, I explained the research methodology and methods adopted for this study which explored the geographies and dynamics of friendship formation among immigrant children in high schools. In this chapter, I focus on the findings of the research participants' narrative moments and insights that have been selected from the transcripts of the data generated during the several periods of data collection, as they directly relate to the focus of the research.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2011), data analysis is a process where a researcher organises, analyses and interprets the data. I will therefore present and discuss the findings that have emerged, and will interpret, analyse and contextualise these findings in relation to the research questions. These findings will also be discussed in light of the literature and theoretical frameworks highlighted in chapters two and three respectively.

#### **5.2 The stories that immigrant learners told about friendship formation**

This first research question sparked various responses from the immigrant learners. Many immigrant learners interviewed understood the notion 'friendship formation' in various ways. Four main themes emerged in this respect. They are as follows: people of like minds, closest relationship, intimate/love ones and acquaintance.

##### **5.2.1 Like-minded people**

The majority of my participants said that friendship formation entails moving with like-minded people.

For example, Oscar declared:

*To me, friendship is just a safe heaven. If you have a friend, it therefore means that you won't fall. Your friend will be there for you always and you can count on his/her support. Therefore, my friend and I have like minds (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Mary went a step further to say that in a friendship one does not only have to befriend like-minded people. Rather, she stated:

*From my perspective, friendship means that the person should accept me as I am and he/she should accept me even when he/she doesn't agree with my ideas. Friendship also means that the person doesn't judge me and he/she is always open to me. If there is anything he/she is not sure about me, he/she is always free to come and ask me (Personal interview with Mary, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The focus group interview conducted also affirmed the assertion that friendship can only occur among people of like minds. Here is an excerpt from the focus group interview:

*Our understanding of friendship is that it is a type of relationship with people of like minds who care about each other. We want to say that true friends must be able to have the same characteristics. They should think alike and behave the same way. Anything short of this, they are not friends (Focus group interview, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The above quotations suggest that friendship among immigrant learners are formed between or among people of like minds. In other words, people who think differently cannot be friends because of the incompatibility in their lifestyle. This finding is in support of Berenskoetter's (2007) position who argued that similarity between friends is associated with the formation of friendships. Urberg *et al.* (2000) had earlier said that immigrant learners tend to find their friends from those they perceive as being similar to their person. Additionally, the finding was in line with the homophily theory adopted in the study which says that like to associate with like (McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001).

### **5.2.2 Close relationship**

Another theme that emerged from the narrative data was the issue of maintaining a close relationship with one's friend. When asked his understanding of friendships, Arnold replied:

*The way I made friends revolves around my closeness to the person in question. I can't make friends with someone I am not close to (Personal interview with Arnold, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Alice echoed:

*Friendship to me means I have to give you the ability to look into my life and get out the best out of me. I also give you the ability to relate to me and know all things about me which most non-friends don't know beside the point of interest that we connected with. In other words, I chose my friends based on our closeness with each other (Personal interview with Alice, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Another immigrant learner, Patrick, did not differ in his understanding of friendship. He was very categorical in his response:

*Friendship means the willingness to share anything in life with a friend, also my friend on his/her own part is able to share with me things which are beyond surface area stuff. Before this takes place, my friend(s) have to be very close to me to earn my confidence (Personal interview with Patrick, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The position held by Arnold and Patrick was not completely different from Angela who stated thus:

*From my point of view, friendship is a bond between people who have made a similar commitment and who possibly share a similar destiny. This bond between friends is based on their closeness. What I am saying is that there should be a close relationship before true friendship occurs (Personal interview with Angela, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Still on the issue of close relationship, the participants in the focus group responded as follows:

*Close relationship is the essence of friendship. This brings us closer to our people than many would like to admit. When people are close, they can find anything to enjoy jointly, time spent together tends to rapidly diminish. Not that we can't still care deeply about friends with whom we are no longer close to, but it is very uncommon for such friends to interact on a regular basis (Personal interview with focus group, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the quotations above, it appears that my participants regard friendship as a relationship in which one must know the other personality intimately. The use of the word ‘close’ denotes that friendship has a quality which separates it from other associations, which by implication are more superficial. This finding is in line with Bowlby’s (2011) understanding of friendship in which he argued that friendship is an interpersonal relationship between two or more people that is voluntarily entered into. This position was earlier canvassed by Berenskoetter (2007) who declared that friendship is commonly understood as a relationship satisfying cognitive and emotional needs and characterised by reciprocity, trust, openness, honesty, acceptance and loyalty.

### 5.2.3 Intimate/love ones

From the data analysis, it was also established that the understanding of the word ‘friendship’ by a few of my participants went beyond the issue of merely people of like mind and close relationships. Particularly, Rose and Okon understand friendship from the perspective of sexual intimacy. Rose said that one can be her friend if the person is in love with her. She declared:

*When I talk about friendship, I understand it from the point of view of love-making. My boyfriend can only be my friend. There is no way I can make friends with a person of the same sex because I am not a lesbian (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In the same manner, Okon stated:

*In this country, people do a lot of things in the name of friendship. Any person I take as my friend should be a girl. A boy cannot be my friend because I am ‘straight’ (Personal interview with Okon, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

When I probed further whether it is only his sex partner(s) that Okon regards as a friend, this participant responded:

*Yes, my sex partners are my friends, any other person of the same sex who moves with me is my peer (Personal interview with Okon, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From Okon's view, friendship and peers is not one and the same thing, but mean different things. This finding suggests that friendship from Rose and Okon's view is seen in the context of sexuality. Only the people Rose and Okon have sexual relationships with could they regard as friends. Any other people they move with or play together with, they see as their peers. This finding is completely at variance with the position held by Berenskoetter (2007) who sees friendship as a relationship that satisfies cognitive and emotional needs, that is characterised by reciprocity, trust, openness, honesty, acceptance, and loyalty. As indicated above, the social construction of friendship is viewed differently by my participants depending on their needs and the purpose the friendship fulfils in their individual lives.

#### **5.2.4 Acquaintances**

Still on the issue of understanding the phenomenon of friendship formation by the immigrant learners, the response from the participants in the focus group was completely different from the position held by Rose and Okon. In the focus group discussion, I noticed that the group (participants) understood friendship from the 'acquaintance' point of view. Here, acquaintances are mostly seen as people who one would be familiar with and relate to on an 'intimate' basis. It appears that the level of friendship shared is connected to how close a friend is with another friend. The following quote from the focus group interview, explains the term 'acquaintance':

*Yeah, there are different understandings of friendship. We look at our friendships in area of acquaintance. People who you play with, who you greet with some smiles and say hello or how are you going, and sort of relate to them in a very intimate and confidential way. This kind of friendship to us is acquaintance (Personal interview with focus group, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the above quotations, Rose's initial conception of friendship was at variance with the position held by Arnold in which he looked at friendship from the sexual point of view. From my interpretation, it appears that Arnold's nationality and orientation did influence his view of friendship. Similarly, Okon view friendship from the perspective of same-sex friendship. Here, this participant was totally against such friendship because of his cultural orientation which looks at it as a taboo in his country. However, this cultural belief is completely opposite what is obtainable in other countries such as USA, Britain and South Africa where

other participants comes from. This finding, from all indications, has not been supported or refuted in my literature, therefore, this serves as new knowledge in the literature.

### **5.3 Dynamics affecting the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school**

From the analysis, there are various forces that affect the formation of friendship among immigrant learners in high school. The major themes that emerged from the analysis are: the character of the person, gender friendships, nationality friendships, racially affiliated friendships, linguistic homogeneity friendships, self-disclosure, reciprocity friendships and frequent contact friendships. These points are presented and discussed below.

#### **5.3.1 Personal characteristics**

The findings indicate that a person's character significantly influences the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school. Oscar explained that the first thing that he takes into consideration when choosing his friends is the character of that person. Oscar declared:

*I can only make friends with someone whom I am compatible with. If a person does not have the same character as me, it will be impossible for the two of us to be friends. Listen, if you look at some animals you will realise that those which have the same character always move together (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In the same manner, Arnold went on to say that he chooses his friends carefully based on shared behavioural patterns. Arnold said:

*Let me tell you that I make friends with people that have the same characteristics as me. Person(s) who does not have my kind of characteristics cannot be my friend (Personal interview with Arnold, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

When I probed further what he meant by characteristics, Oscar replied:

*What I mean by characteristics is in the area of same behaviour. You see, friendship is based on having the same behaviour as your partner. Two or three people cannot*

*be friends if they have different behaviour (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Still within the context of friends sharing similar characteristics, Alice did not differ in her view on factors that influence friendship. She reported that:

*What brought us together as friends is the degree of our compatibility. You see, we move, think and behave the same way. This is a bonding force when you talk about friendship to me (Personal interview with Alice, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The three quotes above indicate that friendship can only occur when two or more people share similar characteristics and display the same behaviour. There is bound to be crisis or instability in friendship when the people involved do not have these things in common. This finding supports the theory of homophily which says that birds of a feather flock together (McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001).

### **5.3.2 Gender friendships**

Many of my participants are of the view that they form friendships based on gender affiliations. For instance, Alice says that to have friendships with boys is very difficult for her because where she comes from the society does not permit it. Alice went on to say that she can only make friends with girls in line with the societal norms. This is what Alice said:

*Oh! I can only make friends with girls because where I come from girls are not allowed to play or associate with boys for fear of being impregnated. In fact, your parents will beat you to death if they find out you associate with boys (Personal interview with Alice, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The above quote suggests that parents directly or indirectly choose friends for their children. This is done in order to prevent children from peer group influence. Mary's case is not completely different from that of Alice. This participant finds it difficult to share personal issues with boys. She prefers making friends with girls because according to her it is more comfortable to confide in her female friends than males. Secondly, Mary reported that having a stronger 'bond' with male friends is regarded as taboo in her country (Democratic Republic of Congo). From this finding, it appears that the society where Mary comes from significantly

frowns on cross-gender friendships. They prefer same-gender friendships because of early pregnancy which is often associated with cross-gender friendships.

The position held by Arnold, Patrick and Okon is completely the opposite of Mary and Alice's views. These three boys prefer to make friends with girls instead of boys. For instance, Arnold declared:

*Yes, I have different friends. In fact, I do have some male friends and female friends. But sincerely speaking, I am much more comfortable with female friends than male friends. My female friends are the ones I can easily talk to without interference and without hesitation. But with male friends, I sometimes get difficulties in associating with them on personal grounds (Personal interview with Arnold, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In a similar vein, Patrick was of the view that boys cannot be his friends intimately and that he prefers girls because they easily understand his problems. This is what Patrick said:

*I can only make friends with girls. My reason is that girls are accommodative and understanding. In fact, most of my girlfriends are like my mother. They usually advise me on many issues particularly on my school work (Personal interview with Patrick, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Okon described how he felt when he is in the company of girls. He mentioned that he is able to talk effortlessly to girls without hesitation. The participant said that he does not have difficulties in sharing 'personal problems' with his female friends. Okon declared:

*I am friends with girls, but as you know, my relationship with boys is not strong. I would say with guys the bond is not strong at all like the girls. I don't know what is really lacking with the boys to make the relationship less strong like the girls, but maybe it is just that I am a boy you knows how to relate to girls comfortably (personal interview with Okon, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The above three quotes demonstrate the degree of intimacy which is found within cross-gender friendships. The male participants describe that there is a 'bond' which exists in cross-gender friendships, and report that this bond is much stronger than the one shared with their



male counterparts. This finding goes to support the position held by Hand and Furman (2009) who reported that because of a high level of sexual attraction, immigrant boys prefer to make friends with girls. Afifi and Faulkner (2000) had earlier observed that cross-gender friendships can be very beneficial psychologically and socially. Unlike same-gender friendships, cross-gender friendships provide immigrant learners with intimacy, social support, identity exploration, companionship and shared activities (Afifi & Faulker, 2000).

In another development, the focus group interviews revealed that male participants view friendships with girls in the context of potential romantic interest. This is common when one considers the dynamics of cross-gender friendships. The focus group reported that friendships with girls do exist as they are 'meant to be in love'. In their point of view, friendships with girls are intended to reach 'another level.' This seems to imply that they intend to form a romantic relationship with girls when starting a friendship with them. In furtherance to the above, if a young man is seen around with a girl, people may view them as lovers in certain cultures. This next quote illustrates this view:

*What we have heard or seen is that there are people who make friends with boys and girls, but the majority of the people like making friendships with the opposite sex. This is because boys or girls are meant to be in love not just friends, that is our personal view. We do believe that there could be true friendships, this is because guys or girls most of the time have ulterior motives with the girls or guys (Personal interview with the focus group, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the findings, it is evident that friendships are commonly formed based on ulterior motives of the other 'partner'. In other words, the excerpt above suggests that boys and girls are meant to be involved in much more than a platonic relationship and that this motive underlies the reasons behind boys befriending girls.

### **5.3.3 Nationality friendships**

From the findings, it was found that the country from which the immigrant learners originate from significantly determines their friendship formations. In an interview with Rose, she said that despite the fact that she has stayed in South Africa for the past 10 years, most of her good and trusted friends are from Lesotho where she comes from. Rose declared:

*I have to tell you the truth, I don't like making friends with children from other countries. My reason is that children from particularly the host country (South Africa) look down on me. They always refer to me as 'Kwerekwere' (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.).*

The word 'Kwerekwere' was very striking to me. As a result, I asked Rose the meaning of this word. In her response, she said that 'Kwerekwere' means 'foreigner'. In furtherance to the above, the response from Angela was not different from Rose's view. Angela said that she can only make friends with learners from her own country or other countries in Africa but not from South Africa. This is how Angela put it:

*I want you to understand that my friends in this school or at home are all from my country. I don't have friends from South Africa because the majority of them don't like foreigners. They always called me all kinds of names which I don't like (Personal interview with Angela, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

This finding suggests that because of the unfriendly disposition of South African learners, immigrant learners refuse to form friendships with them. Instead, they prefer to have a fellow country person as their friend. This finding is in line with the earlier position held by Rumbaut (2008) who argued that nationality has a major role in creating strong friendship bonds and a sense of emerging identification. Aside from this, Ting-Toomey (2012) in his study has indicated that friendship formation among immigrant learners is influenced strongly by where the learner assumes he/she belongs.

On the issue of friendship based on nationality, Oscar, Okon and Arnold significantly differ from Rose and Angela's view. For instance, Oscar is of the view that friendship formation should cut across international boundaries. Oscar responded:

*To me, the issue of friendship formation is a topical one. I want to tell you that my friends are from everywhere. Many of my friends are from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Congo, and South Africa. I made my friends based on compatibility of behaviour not on ethnicity or nationality (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Similarly, cross-nationality friendship has been seen to be the best form of friendship. When Okon was asked where his friends come from, he replied:

*As you can see, I don't select my friends on the basis of where they come from. My friends are all over the world. I have many friends on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. My friends cut across many countries (Personal interview with Okon, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Furthermore, Arnold's view was not in any way different from the previous two respondents. I was informed by Arnold that although he selects his friends thoroughly, he did not select them based on the country they come from. He told me that only two of his friends are from his country, while the rest are from other countries in Africa. This is what Arnold said:

*Where my friends come from is not important to me. You know, I am from Malawi but my friends are from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Angola. This exposes me to many cultures (Personal interview with Arnold, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the above excerpts, it is evident that friendship formation among immigrant learners in high school does cut across countries. From all indications, my findings agree with Kim's (2001) argument that immigrant learners when they arrive in the host country form friendships with learners of other nationalities. Furthermore, Yum (2001) highlighted the gain derivable from multinational friendships to include learning about both the host and other cultures.

#### **5.3.4 Racially affiliated friendships**

The issue of friendship formation based on racial affiliation has been critically highlighted. For instance, Rose explained that race has nothing to do with how she makes her friendships. Rose stated:

*I made friends with all manners of people. I have friends who are whites, blacks, coloured and Indians. I don't segregate at all. In fact, most of my best friends are not blacks like me (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Patrick's view on the formation of friendship based on racial lines was similar to that of Rose. Patrick said that he does not select who should be his friends on the basis of race. To him, the issue of race is so insignificant in friendship. The most important thing in friendship formation is the level of trust and compatibility in behaviour. Patrick went on to say that three of his trusted friends are Indians.

Patrick's view notwithstanding, Angela stated that she made friends with people from all races such as blacks, coloureds, whites and Indians. Angela said:

*When it comes to the issue of friendship formation with children of other races, I have no problem with that. I am a social being, therefore, I make friends with all kind of people from various races either blacks, Indians, coloureds or whites. In doing this, I learn a lot from these people (Personal interview with Angela, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the above three quotations, it has been established that racial affiliation does not seem to affect the friendship formations among immigrant learners. Learners from different races interact with each other on a daily basis. My findings stand in total disagreement to the view of Way, Gingold, Rotenberg and Kuriakose (2005) who looked at friendship formation among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans and discovered that Hispanic and black immigrant learners establish and maintain friendships for a longer time within their racial groups. This position was earlier canvassed by Abound, Mendelsen and Purdy (2003), who have shown that there are stronger intra-racial and intra-ethnic friendships among immigrant learners in school than inter-racial or inter-ethnic friendships.

In sharp contrast, Oscar, Mary, Alice, Arnold and Okon unanimously agreed that their friendships with other learners were based on racial affiliation. Mary was very categorical in her response. She said:

*Please, I cannot make friends with people who do not have the same colour of skin as me. This can't happen because we are not alike. A black child cannot move with white children or Indians (Personal interview with Mary, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

When I asked Oscar to respond to the formation of friendships on racial lines, he thundered:

*This is very clear. You can't make friends with people who look at you as less human because of the texture of skin. No, such people cannot be my friends. My friends should look like me (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Similarly, the view held by Alice was that intra-racial friendship is possible within the South African context bearing in mind the long history of apartheid in the country. Alice declared:

*You can see that apartheid had destroyed this country. Friendships among people of diverse groups remain elusive because of the 'scar' left by apartheid. 'I' as a black person still look at white children with suspicion (Personal interview with Alice, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the findings, it has been established that friendship formation is possible within the framework of intra-racial groupings instead of inter-racial groupings. My findings are in agreement with the position held by Vaquera and Kao (2005) who argued that inter-racial relationships are harder to form given societal pressures. Similarly, Anaya (1992) found that friendships across race is associated only with discussing racial issues in college, taking ethnic studies courses, attending racial awareness workshops and promoting racial understanding.

### **5.3.5 Linguistic homogeneity friendships**

From all indications, language homogeneity is a primary tool that assists in the formation of friendships. Language competency is one of the factors that significantly influence the formation of friendships between immigrant learners and other learners, particularly at the initial stages of friendship development. My interaction with Mary indicated that she makes friends with other learners because she is able to do speak IsiZulu. This is what Mary said:

*To speak the truth, when I arrived in this country in 2002 I did not have any friends. The reason was that I could not speak IsiZulu, and other children could not speak my local language. Therefore, I was always walking or sitting alone in the school. Now I make friends with many students in this school because I can speak IsiZulu fluently (Personal interview with Mary, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In a similar manner, Rose reported that the IsiZulu language was an obstacle that she had to overcome in order to communicate with other learners in the school. Rose declared:

*My early years in this school were very challenging because of my inability to speak and understand IsiZulu. The majority of the learners were not able to speak English which was the official language in this school. Therefore to communicate with them was very difficult, this prevented us from being friends (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

I was forced to probe further if Rose has friends now that she can speak both IsiZulu and English. She replied:

*I have a lot of friends now because I can speak IsiZulu language. In fact, most of my friends want me to teach them my language also. You see, my understanding of IsiZulu makes me accepted by the majority of my classmates (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In the focus group interview, all participants said that the ability to speak the local (IsiZulu) language enables them to become involved in daily conversations with the host learners in the school. The group said:

*Initially, inability to understand or speak local language was a really big problem to us. Luckily, now we are okay when it comes to speaking IsiZulu. We don't have any problem communicating or making friends with some South African children in this school (Personal interview with the focus group, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the findings, it is evident that the ability to understand and speak IsiZulu is a major factor that positively influenced the formation of friendships among immigrant learners. My findings support the view held by Erwin (199) who argued that linguistic homogeneity is a determinant of friendship formation among immigrant learners in school. In addition to the above, Montemayor and Flannery (2007), who conducted a study on friendships among European immigrants, said that European immigrants who have better language skills with Canadians have a higher chance of forming friendships and socializing with members of the host society members

### 5.3.6 Self-disclosure in friendships

Self-disclosure is another important factor in the formation of friendships among immigrant learners. Angela reported that self-disclosure is an important interactive technique that helps to reduce uncertainty in the formation of friendships among immigrant learners. This is a method of revealing and sharing personal and close information about oneself with another. Although people from different cultures disclose differently, Okon held that self-disclosure is still an essential part of friendship formation. In addition to values and beliefs, Patrick said that the more information is exchanged among immigrant friends, the more chance to learn about another immigrant's characteristics. Rose said that the breadth and depth of revealed information among immigrant learners reflects the degrees of closeness in friendships. Rose declared:

*I do share my private and personal things with other immigrants or host friends in the school and this definitely makes us friends (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In a similar circumstance, when Oscar and Mary were asked to narrate the dynamics that impact the formation of friendships among immigrant learners, they unanimously considered self-disclosure as a major factor. These participants (Oscar and Mary) said that they confide more in their friends than they do in their acquaintances, and this therefore makes them closer to those they call their friends. The focus group interview revealed that to be open to their friends helped them immensely. The focus group said:

*To be open with our friends is so important. This is because as a friend he or she will be able to support you in times of difficulty. If a friend is open with the other it becomes really easy for them to communicate and friendship becomes stronger (Personal interview with the focus group, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the excerpts, it is evident that self-disclosure significantly impacts the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high schools. This finding is based on the fact that when friends share their personal problems with each other, the bond of friendship becomes stronger and more stable. There is nothing in the literature which speaks to this issue. My finding therefore, contributes to this gap in existing literature.

### 5.3.7 Reciprocity friendships

The majority of my participants are of the view that making ‘advances’ of friendship to people and having the person reciprocate the gesture is an important factor in friendship formation. In this study, reciprocity focuses on social interaction which involves giving and taking or returning in matched or mutually equivalent exchanges or paying back what one has received. Arnold reported that friendship should not be based on selfish principles designed to maximize personal gain. Rather, friendship should be from the perspective of symmetrical reciprocity. Arnold declared:

*Let me tell you something, I cannot make friends with someone who is not willing to be my friend. My friendship with other people should be mutual, there are exchanges of confidences and trust (Personal interview with Arnold, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Patrick’s view on the principle of reciprocity in friendships was not in any way different from that of Arnold. He maintained that in his own case, he holds the principle of reciprocity in friendships in high esteem because according to him it is the basis on which a stable relationship is built.

Arnold and Patrick’s view notwithstanding, Okon was of the view that a stable friendship should take into consideration the issue of ‘give and take’. Okon reported:

*People make friends for selfish reasons. It should not be like that because this is parasitic behaviour. Friendship should be symbiotic, where all parties benefit (Personal interview with Okon, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The findings revealed that the issue of ‘give and take’ is the basis for a stable friendship among immigrant learners. For friendship to be long lasting, what one person puts into the relationship should be ‘exactly equivalent’ to what that person gets out of the relationship. In my literature, Laursen and Hartup (2002) have argued that a learner is more likely to pick his or her school mate as a friend if that mate regards the child as a friend. In furtherance to the above, these scholars suggested that immigrant learners have to return favours, that is, ‘do unto others’ within aggressive reciprocity norms that permit retaliation, that is, ‘an eye for an eye.’



### 5.3.8 Frequent contact friendships

Findings revealed that immigrant learners' frequent contact with other learners in the school brings about the formation of friendships. Angela was of the view that because of frequent contact with other learners on the sport grounds or in the library, this resulted in her forming friendships with them. These are Angela's words:

*Once I leave my parents' house every morning to go to school, for almost eight hours I am in contact with other children in school. This constant and frequent meeting with some of my classmates makes us friends (Personal interview with Angela, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Similarly, Mary reported that frequent association with both immigrant and the host learners in the school served as a primary source of friendship formation. She went on to say that it was very possible and convenient to make friends with people one meets on a regular basis compared to people one meets once in a year.

Patrick's view was not entirely different from the views of Angela and Mary. He explained that internet services have brought people closer to each other. Patrick declared:

*Internet services have brought people closer these days. I meet my friends frequently but not on a face-to-face basis. Rather, through WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. This medium allow us to meet constantly, this promotes our friendship (Personal interview with Patrick, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the excerpts, it is evident that technological innovations in the world today had broken down geographical boundaries and provided immigrant learners the means to establish friendships with their peers. Aside from the social networking that promotes friendship formation, Oscar went on to say that it also helped him to maintain long distance friendships.

Patrick explained:

*Thanks to the internet, my friend and I are still connected. We still see and talk to each other and laugh together on Skype. We share our stuff on WhatsApp frequently*

*even when he is far away in Nyeri, Kenya (Personal interview with Patrick, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

When I asked Rose how her frequent contact with other learners promotes her friendship with them, she responded by saying that with the advent of the internet, immigrant learners easily and frequently stay connected with friends in the school and even at home. These are Rose's words:

*It is nice to stay in touch with friends. In fact, I respond to my friend's Facebook posts and through this medium I still know what is going on in my friend's life. Before now, it was extremely expensive when we had to call each other, but now we get to know what is happening at home. I would talk to my friend in Lesotho who went home and before she arrived, she would say to me, 'I am almost home.' I think this has really helped us. I think it is one of the things that help us to maintain our friendship (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the findings, it is evident that frequent contact among immigrant learners either on a face-to-face basis or through internet services significantly promoted friendship formation and stability. This finding is in line with the position held by Anderson-Butcher *et al.* (2010) who argued that internet services reinforce already formed friendships and enable learners to keep in touch with either short or long distance friends. Earlier, Gross *et al.* (2002) maintained that through the internet, immigrant learners meet new friends, communicate before, during and after school hours, exchange information about homework, and provide and receive social support.

#### **5.4 Navigating the places and spaces of friendship formation**

The issue of places and spaces in which immigrant learners navigate friendship formation were explained in detail by my participants. From the findings, the football field, social networks, classrooms, sports grounds and the school library were places and spaces in which friendships among immigrant learners are formed. This is presented in detail below.

#### **5.4.1 Friendships on the football field**

The issue that relates to friendship formation among immigrant learners on the football field emerged clearly. For instance, Arnold reported that he had met most of his close friends on the school football field. Arnold said:

*I want to tell you that the place in which I meet most of my closest friends is on the soccer field. Since we have football practice every evening, this is an avenue for us to meet and interact not only on the issue of football but also on our social life (Personal interview with Arnold, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Arnold's view notwithstanding, Okon narrated how he made friends with other boys on the school football field. This is Okon's narration:

*Before I joined the school football team, I usually had two friends in this school. But as soon as I was introduced into the school football team, the number of my friends increased. I want to make it clear to you that as a footballer I make friends with other footballers in the field. Even the spectators associate and relate with me after the game (Personal interview with Okon, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Mary also narrated how she made her friends on the football field. She declared:

*I am a member of the female football team in this school. Each time we play with another team from other schools I normally have new friends (Personal interview with Mary, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the excerpts, it is evident that the school football field is a major place and space in which friendship formation takes place. Relying on the interpretive paradigm that I adopted for this study, my view regarding the school football field as a major place and space for the formation of friendships among immigrant learners, is that it is a good arena for free interactions between friends without unnecessary interference or restrictions by the teachers. In my literature, it was reported by Ladd, Kochenderfer and Coleman (1996) that friendship formation is considered as the major ground in which learners participate in games such as football, rugby and table tennis. Additionally, Sapp and Haubenstricker (2008) declared that

‘making friends’ is the reason learners gave most frequently for their participation in games at the school.

#### **5.4.2 Friendship formation through social networks**

The issue of friendship formation through social networks was raised and reported by all my participants. Oscar said that Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Dating sites, Myspace, Skype and Yahoo Messenger are places that the majority of learners form friendships.

Oscar narrated:

*I want to inform you that in this modern time, friendship formation has gone far. I mostly rely on Facebook to make my friends. At present, I have more than two hundred friends on Facebook (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Oscar’s narrative suggests that Facebook is one of the main places in which he makes new friends and equally maintains the existing ones. On the other hand, Mary said:

*Although Facebook connects people together, I prefer the use of WhatsApp and Yahoo Messenger to connect with my new friends all over the world. Aside from this, the use of internet services also assists me in knowing the events that happen in other parts of the world in which my friends reside (Personal interview with Mary, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The above quote suggests that immigrant learners are no longer dependent on other print media for information gathering, but instead, receive information through their friends via Facebook and Yahoo Messenger. From all indications, these avenues of information gathering appear to be the fastest and easiest. My findings support McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002), who argued that the most frequent use of the internet is for communication purposes and that computer-mediated communication facilitates not only maintaining social ties but also assisted in the formation of new friendships among learners. For Mesch and Levanon (2003), the internet has become another location in which immigrant learners meet and socialize with their friends all over the world. Apart from Mesch and Levanon’s view, a United States of America survey indicated the existence of friendships. Wolak, Mitchell, and

Finkelhor (2003) reported that 14% of U.S. immigrant learners have formed close online friendships.

It is clear from the findings that the majority of my participants agreed that internet services such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Myspace, among others are places and spaces where friendships among immigrant learners are formed. Alice went on to say that although these internet facilities were beneficial for immigrant learners in the formation and maintenance of friendships, these also resulted in their poor academic performance.

Alice said:

*In as much as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Myspace are very good in helping with the formation of new friendships, these facilities (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Myspace) have a serious negative impact on children's academic performance because the greater number of school children spend too much time communicating with friends to the detriment of their studies (Personal interview with Alice, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Alice's view was corroborated by Rose who reported:

*In the classroom, children are seen chatting with friends on WhatsApp and Facebook. They disturb other children from paying attention to the teacher. This has led them to not do and submit class assignments on time (Personal interview with Rose, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

From the narration, it is evident that although WhatsApp and other internet services are places and spaces in which immigrant learners embark on friendship formation with each other, these facilities also play a negative role in learners' academic performance. It was reported that learners spend a great deal of time communicating with their friends in the classroom instead of listening to and concentrating on the lesson. From all indications, this finding could not be supported or refuted by the literature.

### 5.4.3 Friendship formation in the classroom

Another place and space where immigrant learners form friendships is in the classroom. Arnold reported that the classroom is a place where a lot of activities take place from learning to power displays such as bullying to friendship formation. Arnold reported thus:

*You can see that a classroom is one place where a lot of activities take place ranging from teaching and learning, bullying to the issue of making friends. To me, the majority of friends one has in the school started in the classroom (Personal interview with Arnold, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Responding to how immigrant learners navigate the places and spaces of friendship formation, Patrick indicated that:

*The classroom is one place one makes friends. In fact, sitting close to someone in the class encourages you to be acquainted with that person. The aftermath of this acquaintance culminated into friendship formation in the class (Personal interview with Patrick, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Similarly, sitting close to one's classmate significantly promotes friendship formation for immigrant learners. Okon was of the view that constant interaction among classmates on the basis of 'group assignments' enhances friendship formation. This is Okon's narration:

*I won't say that sitting close to someone in the classroom does not influence friendship formation, but the one which really influences friendship most is doing group assignments with other children. You see, when this happens one becomes very close to his/her group members (Personal interview with Okon, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The narrations suggest that sitting next to someone in the classroom positively influences friendship formation between learners. This finding is in agreement with Hallinan's (2009) view who reported that the sitting patterns of immigrant learners in classrooms have a direct positive effect on their friendships and interactions. Similarly, Albrecht-Crane (2005) had earlier observed that 95% of the immigrant learners in the classroom form friendships based on the classroom seating arrangement.

Findings indicated that group assignments given in the classroom by the teacher also plays a crucial role in the formation of friendships. This finding is in line with the position held by Albrecht-Crane (2005) who argued that the majority of friendships formed by the immigrant learners are as a result of their interactions during the study group. However, Wentzel and Caldwell (1997) reported that there is a high link between friendships and academic achievement.

#### **5.4.4 Friendship formation on the sports grounds**

The issue of friendship formation on the sports grounds was raised by my participants. Angela stated:

*Just like the friendship formation on the football field, immigrant children form friendships on the sports grounds, such as the swimming pool, tennis court, badminton court and around the chess board. Friendship occurs when one frequently engages a fellow player on the said sport ground (Personal interview with Angela, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In the same vein, Patrick narrated that:

*As the school badminton player, I made my friends with other players in the field of play. We normally debate on which side is going to win, this makes us work as a team, and as a result friendship occurs on the playground (Personal interview with Patrick, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The view of Angela and Patrick notwithstanding, the opinion expressed by Okon on the formation of friendships on sports grounds was:

*To me, sports grounds are the meeting point of many school children either immigrants or locals. Most times, some of us will quarrel with each other in the classroom but once we are on the sports ground, we become friends automatically (Personal interview with Okon, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The position held by my focus group was that friendship formation on the field of sport is a common phenomenon especially among male immigrants. They based their views on the

grounds that the majority of male immigrants unlike their female counterparts engage in different kinds of sports ranging from athletics, swimming, snooker to table tennis.

The findings indicated clearly that sports arenas are places and spaces where immigrant learners form friendships with each other and the local learners alike. My findings are in agreement with Harvey's (1999) view that sports provide a cultural avenue for males to share mutual experiences with other males that are often based on masculine norms. Sapp and Haubenstricker (2008) went a step further to report that 'making friends' is the reason learners participated frequently in sports. Furthermore, Gould *et al.* (1985) in their study submit that 'to have friends' was the most important reason why immigrant learners participated in swimming.

#### **5.4.5 School library a place of friendship formation**

Another important place which my participants mentioned as the place and space that immigrant learners usually form friendships with each other is the school library.

Oscar narrated:

*I have spent four years in this school, during this period I made use of the school library to read and do my all assignments. I made many of my friends in the school library while I read for my assignment or examination (Personal interview with Oscar, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

Mary was very categorical in her response and she said:

*There are subjects very difficult to read and understand such as physical science, mathematics and computer technology. In order to pass these subjects in the examination, we formed a friendship group. Since our classroom is not always conducive for reading, we meet at the school library all the time (Personal interview with Mary, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

In a similar vein, Angela reported that the place in which they often met was the school library. Angela cited enough space in the school library as the possible reason for their frequent meeting. Furthermore, she declared:



*I love meeting with my friends in the school library. If you look at our library, there is enough space, tables and chairs are arranged in such a way that five of us can sit together around a table to discuss (Personal interview with Angela, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2014).*

The findings indicated that friendships are formed in the school library. The reason given by my participants for using the school library as their meeting point was because of the conducive nature of the library's environment. The tables and chairs are positioned in such a way in the library that immigrant learners are able to have 'conference talks' among themselves.

Interestingly, this finding is in support of Upitis's (2004) view, when he conducted a study on immigrant learners' friendship formation in school, and it was indicated that immigrant learners used the school library as a place conducive for large-scale social interactions (friendships) and activities. Additionally, in their study, Mathur and Berndt (2006) have found that the school library serves as a 'rallying point' for friendship formation among learners of diverse racial groups in American high schools. Furthermore, in his study, Tupper (2008) argued that over 78% of immigrant learners have indicated that the school library is a place and space in which friendship formation frequently occurred.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

I presented the discussion of my findings and my interpretation and analysis of these in line with the research questions developed for my research endeavour. Findings indicated that stories that immigrant learners tell about friendship formation were in the context of people being like-minded, closest relationship, intimate/love ones and acquaintance.

Findings also established that the dynamics affecting the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school included consideration of the character of the person, gender, nationality, racial affiliations, linguistic homogeneity, self-disclosure, principle of reciprocity and the frequency of contact among friends. Findings further indicated that the places and spaces in which immigrant learners navigate friendship formation included the football field, social networks, classrooms, sports grounds and the school library. The summary of this chapter led me to the last chapter of this dissertation which features the summary and conclusion reached.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I present a brief overview of the study as presented in this thesis. I will summarise the key findings, consider the limitations of the study and attempt to identify areas for further research.

#### **6.2 A brief overview of the study**

The focus of study was to investigate the geographies and the dynamics that influence the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high schools. In light of this focus, the study had the following objectives:

- To investigate the stories that immigrant learners tell about friendship formation in high school;
- To investigate what dynamics affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school; and
- To investigate ways in which immigrant learners navigate places and spaces of friendship formation.

Based on these objectives, three principal research questions were developed that guided the study. The three questions developed were as follows:

- What stories do immigrant learners tell about friendship formation?
- What dynamics affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school?
- How do they navigate the places and spaces of friendship formation?

In the area of the rationale for the study, I did say that it was based on my personal observation and academic ground. My personal rationale for embarking on this study was based on my discovery both at the Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a high school in the Pinetown district, that there were immigrant students and learners from Cameroon, Turkey, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Lesotho, among others, who made friends with each other based on racial, linguistic and ethnic lines.

Academic literature has shown that while much research has been done on immigrant children and education in South Africa in particular and the world in general, very little or nothing has been researched on the geographies of friendships, with particular emphasis on narratives of immigrant learners in high school. My personal observations and this existing gap lead me to embark on this study.

My chapter two looked at the review of the related literature, wherein other scholarly views and research endeavours that related to my study, were discussed. Selected readings on the geographies of friendship formation nationally and internationally were given prominence. Special emphasis was given to the conceptualisation of friendship, and dominant forces affecting the formation of friendships among immigrant learners.

My chapter three focused on both the conceptual framework and two theoretical frameworks which underpinned my study: namely the notion and concept of children's geographies; and the theories of intergroup contact and homophily. In order to understand the geographies and dynamics that impact the formation of friendships among immigrant learners, these concepts and theories were deemed appropriate for and were adopted for the study.

The research methodology chapter stated clearly that a qualitative approach was adopted for this research, based on the nature of the study under investigation and the review of the literature. The adoption of a qualitative approach to this study led naturally to the further adoption and application of the interpretive paradigm. A purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the eight participants. Narrative data was generated through face-to-face interviews.

Chapter five focused on the data analysis. It is pertinent to state that I employed narrative analysis in interpreting my data. My interpretation of the data relied heavily on the literature review conducted and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks selected, and featured significantly in the presentation and discussion of my findings.

In conclusion to this dissertation, the major findings from the study will be highlighted and its implications discussed in this final chapter. I also identify areas for further research in this last chapter of my dissertation.

### 6.3 Summary of key research findings

This study has provided insights into the key research questions which drove the research:

- What stories do immigrant learners tell about friendship formation?
- What dynamics affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school?
- How do they navigate the places and spaces of friendship formation?

Under the umbrella of the first research question, the following findings emerged. The stories which immigrant learners tell about friendship formation revolve strongly around the notion that friendship formation is associated with making friends with learners who are like-minded to the participants. In other words, immigrant learners were of the view that learners with ‘like minds’ are likely to be friends. From the interpretive perspective, ‘like minds’ connotes that immigrants having the same behavioural pattern, reading habits, characteristics and thoughts are most likely to form friendships. For instance, it is very common to see immigrant learners who are intellectually gifted forming friendships among themselves. This is possible because their level of intelligence quotient is high compared to average or below average learners. My position was earlier canvassed by Berenskoetter (2007) who argued that similarity between friends is associated with the formation of friendships. This finding supports the homophily theory which presents an argument in favour of the adage that birds of a feather flock together (McPherson *et al.*, 2001).

Another finding which emerged from my data was that friendship is understood in the context of close relationship. It was established that when two or more learners are close to each other, there is a likelihood that friendship will occur between them. From all indications, close relationship facilitates a cordial friendship. Learners who live in the same geographical location and usually go to and return from school together are unconsciously very close to each other. This close relationship leads to friendship formation. This is evident among immigrant learners living at the postgraduate building of University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, where they are often seen together.

In a similar vein, it was discovered that the word ‘intimate/loved ones’ was closely associated with the phenomenon of friendship formation. Almost all my participants explained that friendship should be viewed from the perspective of intimacy between loved ones. They were

of the view that for a person to be seen as a friend, the person in question must be loved. Most of my participants understood this concept of 'intimate/loved ones' from the point of view of sexual companionship. However, they were of the view that the issue of sexual intercourse is a core 'ingredient' in the formation of friendships. From my interpretive perspective, sex is synonymous to friendship among immigrant learners in high schools. It is very common to see immigrant learners in high schools engaging in unprotected sex in the name of friendship. This often resulted in an unwanted pregnancy and teenage mother/fatherhood. The above finding was in line with Berenskoetter's (2007) view, which sees friendship as a relationship that satisfies cognitive and emotional needs.

It was further found that friendship formation was also understood from the perspective of acquaintance. In this study, acquaintance is mostly seen as people who participants would be familiar with and relate to on an 'intimate' basis. In my view, acquaintance connotes associate. Therefore, immigrant learners who associate with one another are most likely to be friends. However, the association may take different forms such as reading groups, sports, games, among others. It is very common to see immigrant learners being acquainted with one another on the basis of sports and games participation.

Findings relating to the second research question indicated that the dynamics that affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school included: the character of the person, gender friendships, nationality friendships, racially affiliated friendships, linguistic homogeneity friendships, self-disclosure, reciprocity friendships and frequent contact friendships.

It was discovered from the data that the character of other learners positively influences the forming of friendships from the perspective of the immigrant learners in the study. In my view, if the learner's character is good, other immigrant learners will draw close to him or her. But if his or her character is negative, it will negatively impact the friendship formation. This assertion affirms a very common adage among Nigerians which says 'like pole attracts and unlike pole repels.' Aside from my findings corroborating the homophily theory, findings are also in line with the intergroup contact theory.

Findings further indicated that gender significantly played a major role in the formation of friendships from the perspective of the immigrant learners in the study. In my view, some

immigrant learners made friends with people of the same sex, while others (predominantly male immigrant learners) preferred cross-gender friendship. This was mainly accredited to a high level of sexual attraction which male learners felt for their female counterparts. The resultant effect of cross-gender friendship is the high level of teenage pregnancy witnessed among immigrant learners in South African schools. This finding goes to support the position held by Hand and Furman (2009) who reported that because of a high level of sexual attraction, immigrant boys prefer to make friends with girls.

Another important finding reached which related to the second research question was the issue of nationality. It was established that immigrant learners that share the same country of origin easily form friendships among themselves. In my view, the formation of friendships along nationality lines was based on the closely related issue of identity. My participants want to be identified as a national from a particular country. For instance, Rose, who comes from Lesotho, wanted to be identified as Basotho and she was willing to form friendships with other learners from her country. The formation of friendship on nationality grounds brings about oneness and unity of purpose among the nationals. However, it also inflames xenophobic attacks against the immigrant learners as recently witnessed in the city of Durban, South Africa. This finding is supported by Ting-Toomey's (2012) view that friendship formation among immigrant learners is influenced strongly by where the learner assumes he/she belongs, and by Rumbaut's (2008) argument that nationality has a major role in creating strong friendship bonds and a sense of emerging identification.

The issue of friendship formation based on racial affiliation also emerged from the data. Immigrant learners from a particular racial extraction interact with each other on a daily basis. For example, most black immigrant learners easily form friendships with one another. Similarly, immigrant learners from the Indian extraction made friends more commonly with learners who came from the same country. The findings indicated that it is very uncommon for immigrant learners from different racial groups to form friendships. In my view, the inability of a particular immigrant learner to form a friendship with another immigrant learner(s) from another racial group is based on the long years of apartheid policy which made learners from different racial affiliations suspicious of one another. This finding is reminiscent of what Abound, Mendelsen and Purdy (2003) said that there are stronger intra-racial and intra-ethnic friendships among immigrant learners in schools than inter-racial or inter-ethnic friendships. In furtherance to the above assertion, Way, Gingold, Rotenberg and

Kuriakose (2005) reported that friendship formation within a particular group of African Americans, Latinos or Asian Americans has been found to be longer lasting than inter-racial friendships.

From the data analysis, it was discovered that language homogeneity was a primary tool that promoted the formation of friendships among immigrant learners. Language competency was found to be a major factor that significantly influenced the formation of friendships between immigrant and host learners. It was established that the majority of the immigrant learners were familiar with the IsiZulu language. They speak the language (IsiZulu) in the classroom, library, during games and in the toilets. Apparently, speaking and understanding this language promotes friendship formation between immigrant learners and host learners. In my interpretation, the speaking and understanding of IsiZulu means the acceptability of Zulu culture by the immigrant learners. This invariably resulted in the 'Africa Unite' slogan which was aimed at promoting unity among Africans respective of place of birth, nationality, race, among others. This finding links directly to what Montemayor and Flannery (2007) had earlier established, that European immigrants who have better language skills with Canadians have a higher chance of forming friendships and socialising with members of the host society members.

Data analysis revealed that frequent contact with other learners in the school was more likely to bring about friendship formation. According to my participants, the issue of frequent contact goes beyond face-to-face contact. In my view, other mediums such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Yahoo Messenger, and other internet services were used to form friendships and maintain these friendships. The advent of social media significantly plays a crucial role in the formation of friendship among immigrant learners. In this digital age, loads of information and millions of messages are sent cross the world by immigrant learners through different cellular phones. Immigrant learners used some of these channels to form and maintain friendships within and outside the country. Gross *et al.* (2002) maintained that through the internet services, immigrant learners meet new friends, communicate before, during and after school hours, exchange information about homework, and provide and receive social support.

In relation to the third research question, the following findings emerged. The football field, social networks, classrooms, sports grounds and the school library were places and spaces in which immigrant learners navigated their formation of friendships in the school. In the area

of the football field, findings indicated that immigrant learners formed friendships on the soccer field. It was established that the soccer field is spacious and therefore conducive for friendships to be formed. Moreover, the game of football can be played in a friendly atmosphere. Players and spectators have to obey the rules of the game by being friendly to their opponents even in the face of competition and defeat. Most of my participants said that the football field is a good arena for free interactions between friends without unnecessary interference or restriction by their teachers. In my view, a football arena is a place and space where immigrant learners freely express themselves through their participation in football. The ability of the immigrant learners to express themselves without a teacher's intervention necessitated the friendship formation among learners. The finding links directly to Sapp and Haubenstricker's (2008) declaration that 'making friends' was the major reason school children gave for their participation in sport and games at school.

In another development, the findings also indicated that immigrant learners used the internet facilities as places and spaces for the formation of friendships. For instance, some of my participants mentioned Facebook, WhatsApp, Yahoo Messenger and Skype as places and spaces that they made friends not only with other immigrant learners but with host learners as well. In my view, aside from the formation of friendships, social networks also assist immigrant learners in the area of information dissemination. They (immigrant learners) sent and received information from their countries via this medium which was found to be the fastest and most reliable means of communication.

The findings also revealed that the classroom is another place in which immigrant learners form friendships. Sitting next to other learners in the classroom not only promotes friendship, it also stabilises it. One of my participants reported that if a learner sits close to another learner in the classroom, there is a possibility of engaging and communicating with each other. It was established that frequent interaction between the two classmates usually results in friendship formation. Aside from friendship formation, the classroom serves as a place and space for a critical intellectual engagement among immigrant learners. Teachers also ensure that immigrant learners use classrooms effectively by giving them group tasks. This undoubtedly makes the immigrant and other learners come together thereby unconsciously forming friendships. From all indications, my findings agree with Hallinan's (2009) view that the seating patterns and engaging immigrant learners in a group task has a directly positive effect on their interactions and the likely formation of a friendship between them. Similarly,



Albrecht-Crane (2005) had earlier observed that 95% of the immigrant children in the classroom form friendships based on where they sit in the classroom.

Another important place which my participants mentioned as the place and space that immigrant learners usually form friendships with each other is the school library. From the findings, it was discovered that the pattern in which tables and chairs were arranged in the school library promoted friendship formation. Similarly, the issue of doing group assignments with other learners was a possible reason for meeting in the school library and also forming friendships. One of my participants reported that their frequent meetings in the school library for group assignments resulted in the formation of friendship. In my view, although the library serves as a place and space for a serious intellectual engagement, immigrant learners were often seen brainstorming on other topical issues such as economic, social and political issues of their countries. The findings support Upitis's (2004) view that immigrant learners used the school library as a place conducive for large-scale social interactions (friendships) and activities. Furthermore, in their study, Mathur and Berndt (2006) established that the school library serves as a 'rallying point' for friendship formation among learners of diverse racial groups in American high schools.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the study**

Due to the uniqueness of the few high schools selected and the relatively small number of immigrant learners interviewed, this study has some limitations. First is the issue of generalisability. Labaree (2013, p.10) acknowledged this limitation as well when he said in his study "the relatively small and non-random nature of the study sample means that I ought not use it as a basis for making claims about Americans as a whole." Similarly, this study only used eight immigrant learners from the two high schools purposively selected for the research, therefore the findings can only account for the views of those who willingly participated in this research. In other words, my findings cannot be automatically generalised because of the uniqueness of the context in which the study was conducted.

Along a similar path of reasoning, the issue of transferability could very well be viewed as another limitation in this study. It is very unlikely that the findings of this study will match exactly with other similar studies from other high schools, even with comparable demographics. This limitation is not necessarily a setback to the study design, as the exact

research question may be investigated in a different geographical and cultural setting and still yields rich findings.

Last, though the issue of data generation for the study finally went well, there were pocket of challenges encountered. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the school sporting activities nearly marred the interview session. There were noises from the spectators and fans that watched the soccer match, athletics, long jump, table tennis and volley ball. This noise was minimised by closing the door during the period the interview lasted.

### **6.5 Implications of the study**

This study has explored the geographies and the dynamics that influence the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in two South African high schools. The research findings uniquely show the significance of mutual co-existence among friends, in contrast to the previous practice of racial segregation which engulfed the country prior to 1994. My research findings have important implications for the socialisation of all learners, local and immigrant learners, within the school and societal contexts, and may suggest ways through which the issue of xenophobia in South Africa may be eradicated. In other words, by learning and understanding what impacts positively on the formation of friendships between learners of different nationalities, my research study may prove helpful as a means of eradicating xenophobia. Furthermore, in the not-so-distant future, South Africa may be seen by other African countries and international communities as a ‘home for all’ because of the hands of brotherliness extended to nationals from other countries.

### **6.6 Recommendations for further study**

While my research findings have concurred with many of the findings which have emerged from other similar studies conducted internationally and in South Africa, they have also opened up other important issues that need to be addressed through further research endeavours. I therefore recommend that further studies be conducted in the following areas:

- a) Geographies of friendship formation among immigrant educators in high schools.
- b) Exploring the experiences of black immigrant undergraduate students in the context of their friendships with white South Africans.
- c) Internationalisation of the University of KwaZulu-Natal: myths or reality.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This study was undertaken with the intention of investigating the geographies of friendship formation among immigrant learners in high school. Interviews conducted with the immigrant learners indicated that learners of like minds, closest relationship, intimate/loved ones and acquaintance were the stories that immigrant learners told in relation to their friendship formation with others. It was established that there were various forces that affect the formation of friendships among immigrant learners in high school. These included: the character of the person, gender friendships, nationality friendships, racially affiliated friendships, linguistic homogeneity friendships, self-disclosure, reciprocity friendships and frequent contact friendships. Finally, research findings revealed that the places and spaces in which immigrant learners navigate friendship formation are the football field, social networks, classrooms, sports grounds and the school library.

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# Appendix 1



26 April 2023

Professor A Muthukrishna B45  
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 Morajele  
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids  
cc School administrator Ms S Shengu

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 3567/8330/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: [simdap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:simdap@ukzn.ac.za) /  
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mailing Campus: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



## Appendix 2

School of Social Justice Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
Ashley  
3605  
25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014

Research Division  
Department of Education  
Durban  
Kwazulu-Natal

Dear Sir,

### **Request to conduct research at schools in Durban**

I wish to apply for your authorisation to conduct interviews in some of the selected high schools (**Brettonwood High School, Amaphuphesizwe High School and King Shaka High School**) in Durban. I am a Masters student in the School of Social Justice Education, Edgewood campus of University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am doing research on the topic: **Geographies of friendship formation: Narratives of immigrant children in high schools in KwaZulu-Natal.**

Gratefully permit me to conduct the interviews before school examinations start and I would be grateful if you could email me permission to start immediately at the following email address: [larapretty4luv@yahoo.com](mailto:larapretty4luv@yahoo.com). Or post it to: For attention: Mrs Omolara J. Oluwatuyi, School of Social Justice Education, Edgewood campus, UKZN, Ashley,3605.

My interview schedules are also enclosed.

Thank You.

Omolara J.Oluwatuyi



### Appendix 3

School of Social Justice Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Edgewood campus  
Ashley  
3605

The principal,

.....

.....

Durban

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **Permission for conduct a research in your school**

I wish to apply for your authorisation to conduct interviews in your school. I am a Masters student in the School of Social Justice Education, Edgewood campus of University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am doing research on the topic: Geographies of friendship formation: Narratives of immigrant children in high schools in KwaZulu-Natal. I wish to bring to your notice that I have applied to and obtained the authorisation from the Department of Education, Durban (see attach).

Gratefully permit me to conduct the interviews before school examinations start and I would be grateful if you could email me permission to start immediately at the following email address: larapretty4luv@yahoo.com. Or post it to: For attention: Mrs Omolara J. Oluwatuyi, School of Social Justice Education, Edgewood campus, UKZN, Ashley, 3605.

My interview schedules are also enclosed.

Thanks.

Mrs O.J.Oluwatuyi

## Appendix 4

School of Social Justice Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood

12/07/2014

Dear Parent

### **Authorisation for your child to participate in the research**

I am Mrs Omolara Joy Oluwatuyi and a registered Master of Education student in the above named school. I am conducting a research titled: **Geographies of friendship formation Narratives of immigrant children in high school.**

Gratefully permit your child to participate in the study.

**Supervisor:** Dr. A. Damant

I understand that:

1. The participation of my child in this study is voluntary.
2. As a parent I reserve the right to withdraw his/her from the study at any time.
3. My child is not obliged to respond to the question of this study.
4. Interviews will be conducted in a safe place within the school, during normal time and tape recorded for the purposes of transcripts only.
5. Confidentiality in this study is guaranteed.

I do/do not give consent for my child to participate in the study.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

Contact: .....

## Appendix 5

### Letter to my Participants

Dear Participant,

My name is Mrs Omolara Joy Oluwatuyi. I am a student at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, and I am doing my master research. My supervisor in this research is Dr. A. Damant. I am conducting a study title: Geographies of friendship formation Narratives of immigrant children in high school. The focus of my research is to understand the dynamics that surround the formation of friendship among immigrant learners.

I wish to inform you beforehand that official permission were obtained from your parent and your school principal to participate in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. You have the right to leave the study without negative results. However, if you are willing to participate in the study, gratefully sign the consent form below.

Thanks.

Mrs O.J. Oluwatuyi

### Participants' consent form

Declaration

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent for the study to be conducted at .....Secondary School.

I was made to understand that a learner is at liberty to withdraw from the interview at any time should he/she desire.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 6**

### **A schedule for individual interviews with the Immigrant children**

1. What do you understand as friendship? What does friendship mean to you? What do your friends mean to you?
2. How did you form your friendships? Why did you become friends with your friends?
3. What is the nature of your friendships? Who are your friends – tell me about them.
4. What is your interaction like with your friends? Tell me about your friendships – what is it about them that makes you happy, comfortable, etc?
5. What are the important things that you look for when making friends?
6. How do you describe your friendship with other immigrant children? What are your friendships like with other immigrant children?
7. What are the binding issues in your friendships with other immigrant children?
8. In which place of the school did your friendship with others form?
9. In which geographical space of the school do you always meet as friends?
10. Which place in this school do you often meet to interact with other members of your friends?

## **Appendix 7**

### **A schedule for the focus group interview**

1. What story would you tell concerning friendship group formation?
2. How many people constitute your friendship group?
3. Which countries are your friends from?
4. As members of a friendship group, what would you say are the factors responsible for the formation of the friendship group?
5. As members of the friendship group, which geographical location do you often meet?
6. As members of a particular friendship group, what language do you people use in your interaction with each other?
7. As members of the friendship group, where do you meet to interact with each other?
8. How do members of your friendship group navigate the places and spaces of friendship group formation?