Moving towards Understanding One An-Other: Cornelia Roux on Religion, Culture and Human Rights

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> Religion is not only a means whereby many different cultures categorize and define humane values and morals, but it also provides a way by which to understand diversity in humankind, our experiences with life, our interaction with one another and the 'other' and how one tries to deal with the quest for meaning (Roux 2012:29).

Abstract

Professor Roux is a pioneer in the field of interreligious, intercultural and human rights education. This article will focus on her contribution to understanding diversity in humankind and to enhancing inclusivity. An overview of her work demonstrates that she envisioned an understanding of diversity through education. She identified human rights values as common denominators within cultural and religious spaces of fear and resistance. She

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also focused on interreligious and intercultural dialogue in education as a means to enhance empathetic and caring interactions with others.

In recent years, Roux has initiated three projects: The first was titled *Understanding Human Rights through Different Belief Systems: Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue (2005 - 2008)*. A follow-up project, *Human Rights Education in Diversity: Empowering Girls in Rural and Metropolitan School Environments (2010-2013)*, focused on gender equity and social justice as priorities to facilitate an understanding of diversity (Roux 2012). An awareness of the importance of human rights literacy and human rights education in creating a sustainable environment for human rights and understanding within a multi-religious and multi-cultural society lead to the development of a third project titled *Human Rights Literacy: A Quest for Meaning (Roux & Du Preez 2013)*. Drawing on Bauman's (1994) conceptualisation of moral responsibility and relations of proximity and distance, our article uses data from this latest project to demonstrate how human rights literacy could facilitate moving towards understanding one an-other. Qualitative comments from participants, which were probed during the focus group discussions, seem to indicate that freedom of choice and association are often used to mask exclusion and protect spaces of sameness and distance. Some students' quest to move to understanding the other and in being responsible for the other, was illustrated by their description of the consequences of finding comfort in rights and the security of codes of conduct.

Keywords: human rights, diversity, difference, inclusivity, culture, religion, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, meaning, understanding, self and other

1. Introduction

Constant change in societies across the world requires educators, teachers and researchers to respond to fluctuating demands on a continual basis (Roux 2007:503). In the South African context, pre-1994 education was based on Christian Nationalist ideology, resulting in other belief systems and values being ignored in education (Roux & Du Preez 2006:150). Post-1994, pre-service teacher training programmes emphasised the importance of teaching

towards inclusivity – in other words, moving towards understanding difference (Roux & Du Preez 2006:150). Within this period of change, Roux and Du Preez (2006:150) concluded that teachers' perceptions of own and other belief systems influence educational praxis. In order to effect change, they argued, facilitating strategies should challenge negative perceptions and complement a deliberate discourse (Roux & Du Preez 2006:165).

Dialogue as a possible facilitating strategy towards change was explored in the international project funded by the South Africa Netherlands research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD[1]) *Understanding Human Rights through Different Belief Systems: Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue* (Roux 2008:2). The research focus was ethnographic and qualitative, guided by principles of participatory action research (Roux 2008:7). The research objectives encompassed exploring dialogue as a facilitating strategy and defining a framework and guidelines for dialogue strategies towards understanding religious and cultural difference (Roux 2008:2). The research group argued that within the South African educational context, shared human rights values could provide an adequate space in classrooms to facilitate the understanding of difference, whether cultural or religious (Roux 2008:5-6). This project defined human rights values as collective values, shared globally and locally, within which identity and respect for religious and cultural difference and diversity are acknowledged (Du Preez in Roux 2008:20). Shifting towards an ethical perspective on curriculum and human rights education, the notion of 'dialogue as a moral demand' within an ethical community emerged (Du Preez 2008:68). Consequently, in the course of annual workshops, the concept of a *community of educators* was developed to aid the project's dissemination process. Such a community was defined by using aspects of Wenger's (1999) theory on communities of practice (Roux 2008: 59-60; cf. Ferguson 2011).

These communities of educators were further developed into *communities in conversation* (De Wet & Parker 2014; Roux 2012:44) during a second SANPAD-funded project: *Human Rights Education in Diversity:*

[1] Since 1997, SANPAD has been financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SANPAD has facilitated and financed research projects, research capacity-building and research support activities over the past ten years. More information available at http://www.sanpad.org.za/sanpad2011/.

Empowering Girls in Rural and Metropolitan School Environments (Roux 2013). This project followed an auto-ethnographic feminist research paradigm with reflexive, conceptual and empirical interpretations (Roux 2012:32). A poster activity and narrative enquiry in its first phase explored girls' experiences of religious and cultural practices. In its second phase, which explored *communities in conversation* (De Wet & Parker 2014), the project aimed to empower girls and their female caregivers and teachers to respond to subtle and noticeable discrimination emanating from cultural, religious and traditional practices (Roux 2013:2).

Facilitating dialogue and conversation, however, pre-supposes the equal voicing of difference. In this regard, Roux (2013:1) argues that narrative writing and the *communities in conversation* gave voice, within safe spaces, to young girls, teachers, mothers and guardians who are sometimes silenced by cultural and religious traditions and customs. Within these *communities in conversation*, group members gained an understanding of one an-other as women and of one another's social, cultural and religious contexts by means of conversation (De Wet & Parker 2014) and dialogue.

Research conducted during the SANPAD projects indicated that a lack of content and pedagogical knowledge on human rights education results in superficial knowledge and classroom praxis (Simmonds 2010). The latest project initiated by Roux and funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF[2]), is titled *Human Rights Literacy: A Quest for Meaning* (Roux 2013). This project focuses specifically on the South African context and aims to 'develop a theory on human rights literacy which may contribute to the knowledge field of human rights education for teacher training at South African Faculties of Education' (Roux & Du Preez 2013).

The three research projects cited herein are all landmarks of Roux's journey towards gaining an understanding of our experiences with life and our interaction with one an-other by continually redefining humane morals and values (cf. Roux 2012:29). To arrive at such an understanding, Roux consistently explores religious and cultural diversity and difference within

[2] As an independent government agency, the NRF promotes and supports research in all fields of knowledge. It also conducts research and provides access to national research facilities. The NRF is mandated by the National Research Foundation Act (Act 23 of 1998). For more information, visit www.nrf.ac.za

human rights as a shared moral and legal framework by means of facilitating strategies such as dialogue and communities in conversation. This journey brought her to an awareness of the importance of human rights literacy and human rights education in creating a sustainable environment to understand self and other within a multi-religious and multi-cultural context such as South Africa.

This article draws on data from the project *Human Rights Literacy: A Quest for Meaning* to illustrate how human rights literacy may facilitate understanding of others, especially within the context of religion and culture.

2. Meeting One An-Other within Multi-religious and Multi-cultural Contexts

An overarching aspect of Roux's involvement in the respective projects referred to above is her concern with moving towards understanding one an-other within multi-cultural and multi-religious contexts. Culture may be described as an integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs and rules of conduct that manifest in conventions of behaviour such as dance, dress, music, art, food and other rituals. According to Arun (2002:21), culture is 'shared, learned, symbolic, transmitted cross-generationally, adaptive and integrated', whereas religion can be seen as an interpretation of the role humans play in the universe and a means to make sense of this role. Religion arises out of culture and provides a model of reality that brings meaning and order to our existence. Consequently, culture and religion are intimately intertwined, and the one cannot be understood separate from the other.

Roux defines multi-culturalism as the diverse experiences, traditions and viewpoints of persons belonging to a specific group or community (Roux 1998:80). South African society consists of people from different backgrounds – ethnic, racial, language, belief and value system – and can thus be deemed a multi-cultural as well as a multi-religious society (Rhodes 2004:25). In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, diversity and difference manifest in moral ambivalence, dissonance and disruption. The moral ambivalence of humans remains the core of 'human face-to-face' interaction (Bauman 1994:10). Dissonance occurs when experiences relating to the world and others *dis-orders* prior meanings and understandings (Jansen 2009:266; Becker 2013:29). Whereas dissonance results in feelings of

discomfort or disagreement, disruption is an active process. Disruption follows feelings of dissonance and cuts into, interrupts and questions prior meanings and understandings (Becker 2013:29). Disruption of meanings and understandings concerns the questioning of hegemonic understandings, more specifically in this context, the meanings by which the self, constructs human rights literacy and interacts with the other.

The search for possible ways to move to understanding and interacting with one an-other in a quest for meaning runs through both SANPAD projects (Roux 2008; Roux 2013) as well as the *Human Rights Literacy* project (Roux & Du Preez 2013). The exploration of dialogue as a facilitating strategy towards understanding different belief systems within multi-cultural and multi-religious contexts prompted Roux (2010:1013) to argue that understanding the other in diversity and difference, by means of human rights as a shared moral demand, will aid interreligious teaching and learning.

Using a hermeneutic approach, she conceptualises the circumstances within which multi-religious and multi-cultural dialogue can aid moving towards understanding the other (Roux 2010:996). She poses that the reception of the other as significant and embedded within social, religious and cultural contexts is crucial to multi-religious and multi-cultural dialogue, teaching and learning (Roux 2010:993). Describing the circumstances within which the process of reception becomes possible, Roux (2010:993-995) uses phrases such as *to be involved in the other, meeting the other* and *interaction.* Her description of the journey towards understanding the other implies a relation of proximity within which 'self' actively strives towards understanding the 'alterity embedded in the other' (Roux 2010:994). This is a fluxing process (Roux 2010:993) in which fixed knowledge of moral issues and concepts is not desirable (Du Preez, Simmonds & Roux 2012:87).

Meeting the other could take place, *inter alia,* through dialogue, which Du Preez (2008:68-71) conceptualises by drawing from Levinas's ethical conception of face-to-face relations between humans[3]. Dialogue is thus a moral demand requiring a face-to-face meeting with one an-other (cf.

[3] For dialogue conceptualised in reference to Levinas's ethical conceptions of face-to-face relations see *Dialogue as Facilitation Strategy: Infusing the Classroom with a Culture of Human Rights* (Du Preez 2008) and *Understanding Human Rights through Different Belief Systems: Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue* (Roux 2007).

Du Preez 2008:68-71; Roux 2008). The moral demand on the individual self in such a meeting facilitates the continual redefining of humane morals and values within disruptive spaces of proximity.

Roux's (2010:993) quest to move to understanding and knowing the other within relations of proximity featured strongly in the conceptualisation of a project titled *Communities in Conversation* (CiC) (Roux 2013; De Wet & Parker 2014). This project afforded women the opportunity to come to know their own and the other's uniqueness within safe and inclusive spaces (De Wet & Parker 2014). The women who participated became partners in equal difference when the other became 'an-other' (Bauman 1994:90; Booth 1999:31; Becker 2012:103; De Wet & Parker 2014). Meeting 'an-other' within a relation of proximity in safe communities (cf. Du Preez 2008:29; De Wet & Parker 2014) was further developed within the relation *self:other* (Becker 2013:26).

The conceptualisation of the relation *self:other* is premised on equal difference within a shared humanity. Within this relation moral responsibility for the other liberates the self to equal difference within a shared humanity: 'I am I as far as I am for the other' (Bauman 1994:78; Becker 2012:88). Holding the other to the self within a relation of intimacy and proximity, self:other embraces moral ambivalence, dissonance and disruption (Bauman1994:83; Becker 2012:89). Relations of proximity concern the unique *quality* of the ethical meeting of the other (Bauman 1994:87). Such a relation does not require the bridging of distance; it requires the suppression of distance (Bauman 1994:87-88). In this regard, Bauman (1994:87) holds, 'Proximity is not a very short distance, it is not even the overcoming or neglecting or denying distance – it is purely (though not at all simply), "a suppression of distance"'. Suppression of distance relies on moral responsibility which "conjures up the Face I face", demanding the self to be responsible *for* the other unconditionally (Bauman 1994:74).

Relations of distance are structured within the 'realm of estrangement and the law' in which self and other first have to evaluate the possible ends resulting from intentional (inter)action with the other (Bauman 1994:83-87). Within relations of distance, humans are categorised within categories of sameness and otherness as defined by rules, laws, regulations and customs (Bauman 1994:154). The strangeness of the other within a multi-religious, multi-cultural and diverse context, such as South Africa, 'render[s] us lost; we don't know how to act or what to do' (Bauman 1994:149). The resulting

unease, dissonance and potential for disruption are masked and controlled within relations of distances which include others like us, excluding others perceived to be alien to us (Bauman 1994:153).

Relations of distance manifest in self knowing *of* the other or being *with* the other: in being only with the other, separation and distance between self and other remains (Bauman 1994:70). In trying to bridge this distance, self and other rely on the law, rules and regulations (Bauman 1994:70). Being *with* the other or knowing *of* the other, therefore has a practical advantage over a face-to-face meeting as facing the other leaves us without the comfort and security of conventions and laws. When facing the other in relations of proximity we are confronted with the 'fearsome insecurity of responsibility' (Bauman 1994:78). It is only in meeting the other unconditionally that an-other is recognised as significant and acknowledged as embedded within a specific cultural, religious and social context. Within a face-to-face meeting, self and other answer to the moral demand to meet and dialogue towards gaining an understanding of one an-other, which could result in redefining humane morals and values.

3. Research Processes in the Project *Human Rights Literacy: A Quest for Meaning*

Assigning meaning to and gaining an understanding of difference and diversity, in/exclusivity, human rights values and the structuring of the relation 'self and other' within these identified areas remain of particular concern to Roux. To this end, the moral demand on one an-other, the ethical perspective on education and curriculum and human rights as a moral and relational construct is explored and further developed in *Human Rights Literacy: A Quest for Meaning* (2012-2014). As such, a group of researchers within the Research Unit: Education and Human Rights in Diversity (Edu-HRight), hosted by the North-West University, has as their overall objective 'to determine the knowledge field of human rights education in teacher education at South African Faculties of Education' (Roux & Du Preez 2013). Research follows a rhizomatic design based on grounded theory. The rhizome is a metaphor for postmodern epistemology, focusing on complex human and social knowledge, with grounded theory enabling theory generation (Roux & Du Preez 2013).

The project explores what *human rights literacy* entails and aims to

establish and develop an improved transformative curriculum and teaching-learning approaches (Roux & Du Preez 2013). Within the parameters of the research project, five specific areas of interest have been identified, namely culture and religious contexts, morals and values, curriculum development, social justice and gender. These five areas emanate from previous research projects conducted under the leadership of Roux (2008; 2013).

Ethical protocol, in accordance with the hosting university's policies has been followed and, in all instances, the research team liaised with relevant gatekeepers and stakeholders for permission to conduct research at the various sites. Qualitative and quantitative research data was collected by means of three different methodological processes: a walk-about, a survey and small focus-group discussions (Roux & Du Preez 2013). In order to protect the identity and privacy of the voluntary participants, pseudonyms and numbering are used when reporting findings, while data is stored in a secure environment.

In line with the rhizomatic approach, and in order to aid crystallisation, multiple research lenses such as phenomenology, critical, hermeneutics, and interpretive and post-modern perspectives are used when data is interpreted. In writing this article, we drew on Bauman's theory on postmodern responsibility and relations structured in proximity and distance. Data from the three different data collection strategies was crystallised and brought into conversation with each other and the theoretical framework. The authors employed discourse analysis and applied a postmodern lens with the intention of exploring meaning and understanding as subjective, non-linear, complex and multi-layered.

What follows is an explanation of the sampling strategies and the context and background pertaining to each participant as well as the research processes followed with reference to each of the three collection processes.

3.1. Walk-about

First, a 'walk-about' was conducted at three university campuses to explore the domain and inform possible questions for a questionnaire (November 2012). The 'walk-about' entailed making use of convenience sampling to probe under- and postgraduate students (from various faculties), concerning their conceptions and understandings of human rights. Students were asked

four questions in an informal manner: Whether they agree with human rights, what they thought the most important human right was, in what ways they lived out human rights and what their conceptualisation of human rights were. Data was recorded by means of field notes on interview schedules, and data from these field notes was transcribed and organised into tables before analysis commenced.

A total of 80 students participated in the walk-about. Of these participants, 43 (n=43/80) were male and 54 (n=54/80) female. Sixty-seven (n=67/80) of the participants attended a rural campus, 21 (n=21/80), a metropolitan campus and 15 (n=15/80) a semi-rural campus. Walk-about participants represent Economic and Management Sciences (n=31/80), Education Sciences (n=13/80), Legal Sciences (n=13/80), Natural and Agricultural Sciences (n=18/80) and Social Sciences (n=12/80). Some participants were post-graduate students enrolled for honours, masters or doctoral studies (n=6/80).

3.2. Survey

Following the 'walk about', a self-constructed questionnaire was piloted amongst 63 BEd Hons students. Based on feedback from this pilot exercise, the research team effected some changes and improvements to the questionnaire before launching the survey phase.

The questionnaire employed in the survey phase served as a starting point to determine basic knowledge construction on human rights literacy comprising five predetermined issues: socio-cultural contexts, morals and values, curriculum development, social justice and gender. Seventy-four questions were included to gather a mixture of quantitative data, by means of structured multiple-choice questions, and qualitative data, by means of open-ended questions and optional comment boxes provided.

Drafted as an online survey with the aid of the website Survey Monkey.com, most participants could complete the questionnaire online in computer venues on their campuses with the assistance of the researchers. However, at some of the sites, not all students were computer-literate, resulting in manual completion and manual capturing.

Purposive sampling for the survey relied on judgements as to those best suited to provide information for the purpose of the research team's

objectives. To this end, the research team employed a process involving different sampling strategies which enabled the selection of a number of participants regarded as best suited to provide the information needed for this study. We focused on beginner- and final-year pre-service teachers as education professionals trained in faculties of education.

The study encompassed selected full-time first-year and fourth-year BEd students from six different South African university campuses. To save time and costs and to overcome the problem of non-homogenous populations, students were divided into non-overlapping groups (clusters and strata) (Maree & Pietersen 2010:175-176) to choose from. Although both stratified and cluster sampling usually introduces some form of random selection (Maree & Pietersen 2010:175-178), the research team borrowed from both strategies in its purposive selection processes.

Three levels of sampling were employed: First, three *institutions* (clusters) were selected. From these institutions, six different campuses (strata), which the team referred to as *sites*, were selected in the second level of sampling. Finally, the team selected a sample of *first- and fourth-year students* from each of the six sites.

With reference to institutions (and/or clusters), thirteen of the 23 South African public universities offer a full-time BEd programme on one or more of their campuses. Figure 1 depicts the selected institutions and sites.

In the first level of sampling, universities (institutions) were regarded as clusters from which three were selected according to four criteria. All participating universities/ institutions had to:

- offer initial teacher education in the form of a full-time, four-year Bachelor of Education degree (BEd);

- have campuses that are representative of both rural and metropolitan areas;

- be representative of both traditional universities (offering academic programmes) and universities of technology (providing occupational programmes); and

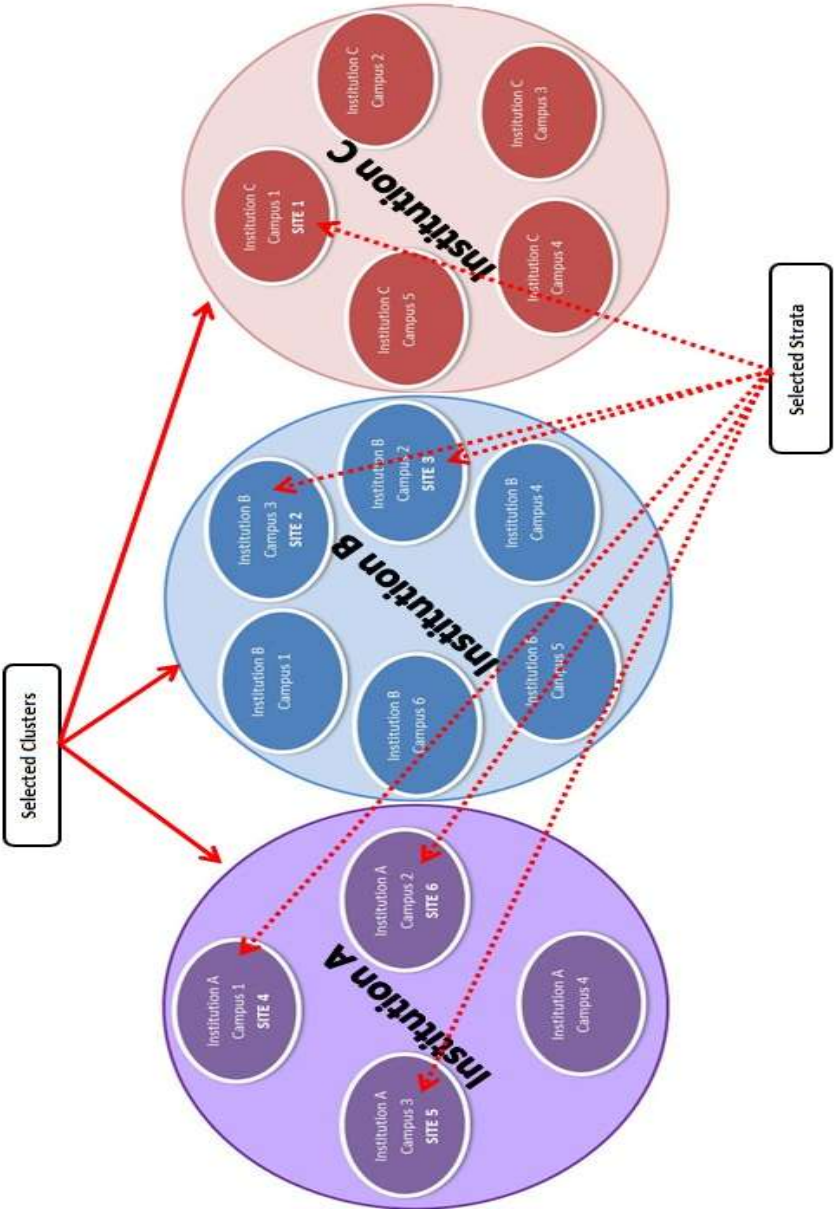
- have merged with technikons and/or colleges during the restructuring process of the South African Higher Education System (2001 to 2007)[4].

Institution A is a traditional university established in 2004. This institution merged a 'historically black' university servicing African students from the surrounding rural communities with a 'historically white' institution with a Christian character servicing Afrikaner students from Christian backgrounds. Before the merger, a College of Education of similar heritage had already been incorporated in the latter. Institution A has four different campuses in metropolitan, rural and semi-rural areas. It enrols about 70,000 students, more or less half of whom makes use of distance learning.

Institution B is a university of technology established in 2005 when two colleges merged. The first was established in 1920 as a technical college in a metropolitan area, whereas the second was established in a rural area as a 'Coloureds-only' college in 1962. Institution B has approximately 33,000 students and consists of five campuses in and around a large metropolitan area as well as a rural campus outside of the city. It is the only university of technology and the largest university in its region.

Institution C is a traditional university which came into being in 2004 when a historically white, English-speaking university merged with a university that was previously reserved for Black and Indian students. A former College of Education was already incorporated during 2001. This university has about 42,000 enrolled students of which 64% are Black Africans. It has five campuses in metropolitan and rural areas.

[4] Restructuring was aimed at breaking down apartheid's racial divides and transforming higher education in South Africa due to the need to unify the fragmented further and higher education systems inherited from the previous dispensation and to eradicate the profound inequalities and distortions of these systems (Wyngaard & Kapp 2004). In terms of organisational culture and ethos, the former 'white' universities were perceived as elitist and colonial, while their merger partners were regarded as a place of teaching and learning for the historically disadvantaged – often associated with political and economic oppression.


Selected Clusters
Selected Strata
Institution C
Institution C Campus 1 SITE 1
Institution C Campus 2
Institution C Campus 3
Institution C Campus 4
Institution C Campus 5
Institution B
Institution B Campus 1
Institution B Campus 2 SITE 3
Institution B Campus 3 SITE 2
Institution B Campus 4
Institution B Campus 5
Institution B Campus 6
Institution A
Institution A Campus 1 SITE 4
Institution A Campus 2 SITE 6
Institution A Campus 3 SITE 5
Institution A Campus 4

The three institutions have a total of fifteen campuses, which were regarded in our second level of sampling as strata. Most campuses are fairly homogeneous units in terms of the cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, political and social backgrounds of their students. According to Maree and Pietersen (2010:176), stratified and cluster sampling are similar in terms of forming non-overlapping groups, although they differ in that clusters are heterogeneous groups as opposed to fairly homogenous strata. Sites were selected from the fifteen strata according to three criteria:

- Campuses had to offer a *full-time BEd* teacher education programme.
- Campuses had to be representative of both *rural and metropolitan* areas.
- The diversity displayed amongst the campuses had to be representative of the diversity displayed amongst the total student population of all three institutions.

Six sites were selected:

Site 1, a former College of Education, is a metropolitan campus. It provides initial and in-service teacher education and offers higher degrees in a wide range of education disciplines in addition to its research and consultancy work. It has about 7,000 enrolled students, many of whom are bursary students. Students are mostly Zulu-speaking Africans who use English as language of instruction.

Site 2 is a metropolitan campus and is the hub of teaching activity for its institution, accommodating approximately 900 to 1,000 students. It is home to the Education and Social Sciences faculty, responsible for annually producing the largest number of teaching graduates in its province. Students on this campus come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but all use English as language of instruction.

Site 3 is a rural campus on a very picturesque site with approximately 800 enrolled students. It boasts a collection of beautiful historical buildings dating from the early 1800's. Students on this campus mostly represent

Afrikaans Christian students and use Afrikaans as language of instruction.

Site 4 is situated in a semi-rural area with Afrikaans as the main language of instruction, although some classes are presented in English or make use of interpreters. Students on this campus generally represent Afrikaans students from a Christian background. The campus started out as a small institution more than a century ago and is currently the university's largest campus with roughly 20,000 contact students.

Site 5 is situated in a metropolitan area. The campus is just over 50 years old with English as the main language of instruction, although some classes are presented in Afrikaans. The roughly 6,500 students on this campus represent a variety of languages, ethnicities and cultures although a large majority are followers of the Christian religion.

Site 6 is a rural campus which originated in the early 1970s as a community-initiated institution. This site uses English as main language of instruction, although some classes are presented in Setswana. The more than 10,000 students on this campus are mostly Setswana speakers, most are Christian, and many come from surrounding rural areas.

First- and fourth-year full-time BEd students from the six sites were regarded as possible participants. The total number of first- and fourth-year students enrolled for BEd at the six sites was 4,953 (Population; N_{total} = 4,953), of whom 2,837 ($N_{1st\ years}$ = 2,837) were first years and 2,116 ($N_{4th\ years}$ = 2,116) fourth years. Full-time first- and fourth-year BEd students from each site were invited to participate in the survey which involved administering a questionnaire in a structured environment according to arranged times and venues. Students who were willing to participate did so and could, therefore, be regarded as forming a convenience sample in a third level of sampling. A total of 1,086 students completed the questionnaire (n_{total} = 1,086). Five hundred and fifty one of these students were first years ($n_{1st\ years}$ = 551/1,086), while 535 were in their fourth year ($n_{4th\ years}$ = 535/1,086). Figures 2 and 3 provide a picture of first-year and fourth-year survey participants respectively.

FIGURE 2: FIRST-YEAR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS PER SITE

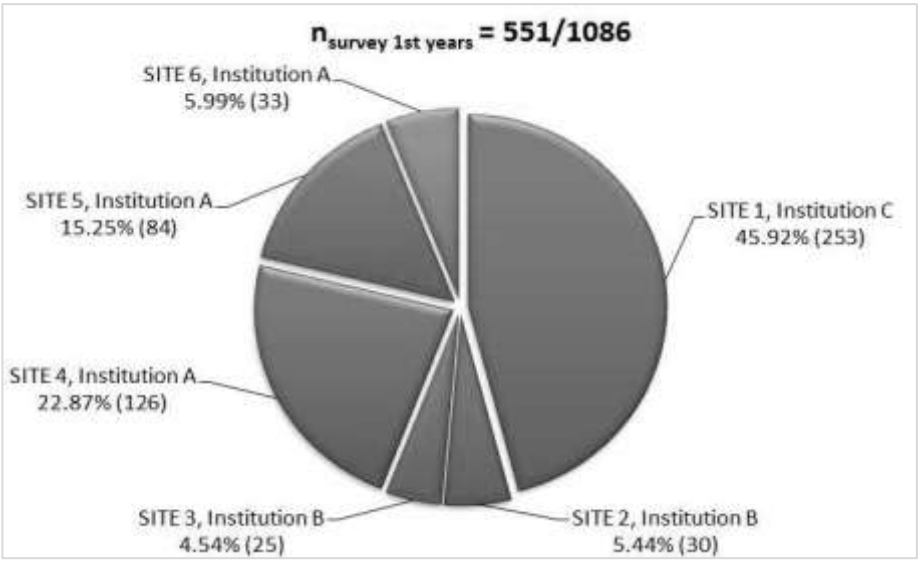
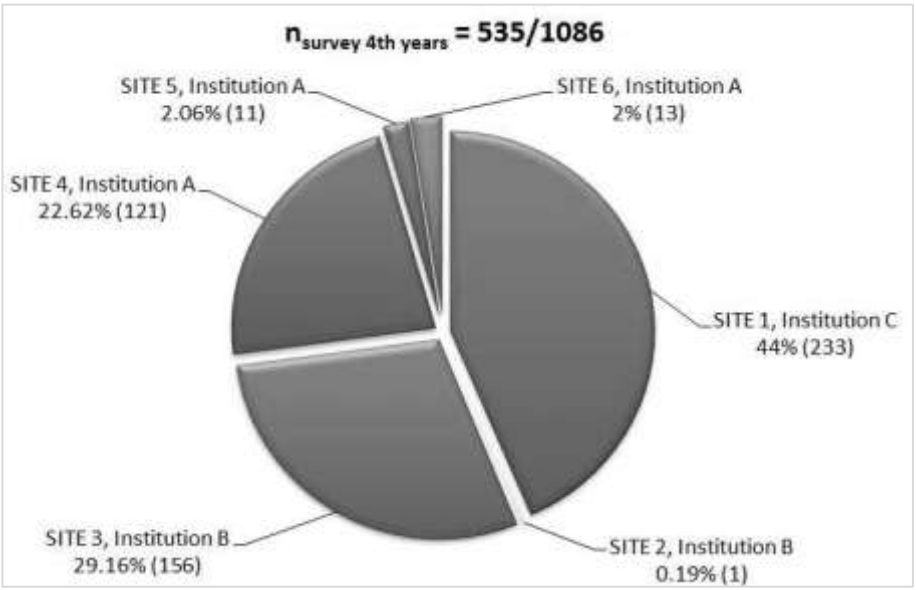


FIGURE 3: FOURTH-YEAR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS PER SITE



Using the data analysis tools of the SurveyMonkey website, quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed by means of descriptive statistics (frequency distribution). For the purposes of this article, we employed the lens of postmodernity to look for complex, non-linear, multi-layered meaning and understanding. Qualitative data from open-ended questions and comment boxes was analysed through the same lens by means of discourse analysis within the process of data crystallisation.

3.3. Small Focus Groups

Focus-group interviews allow face-to-face contact with the participants involving unstructured and generally open-ended questions (Cresswell 2009:181). According to Nieuwenhuis (2010:90), focus groups differ from group interviews in which groups of participants are asked a set of (semi-) structured questions without giving them the opportunity of dialogue on the responses generated. In contrast focus groups aim to allow the flow and development of conversation, encourage debate and conflict and encourage participants to discuss a topic with other participants rather than with the researcher only (Nieuwenhuis 2010:90). Smaller groups are preferable in the case of complex issues when greater levels of sharing and discussions are needed and people are likely to have strong feelings about the topic (Krueger & Casey 2009:68-69; Greef 2005:305).

In this project, data from other collection strategies was validated, feedback was challenged, and literature and epistemological understandings were re-evaluated during small focus groups (Roux & Du Preez 2013). Furthermore, focus groups aimed at eliciting dialogue about human rights and probing participants' conceptions and ontology and to disrupt fixed meanings and understandings. Most focus groups met twice, although some met only once. Separate focus groups were held with first years and fourth years, except for one meeting on Site 6 which combined first and fourth years. The sizes of focus-groups varied from three to nine. Discussions were initiated by means of one question 'Do human rights exist?', and in most cases, the conversation flowed easily with researchers probing further issues as they arose. Another form of probing used in second meetings (or later on, in the case of one meeting) was to give scenarios which were discussed by the participants.

Four different scenarios drafted by the research team sketched fictitious events in diverse socio-cultural, gender and religious contexts, including possible human rights violations within an educational context. Scenarios covered the five determined issues (socio-cultural contexts, morals and values, curriculum development, social justice and gender) and provided short stories that probed these issues. Participants related the scenarios to their own life experiences, and through dissonance, disruption and reflection, the universal truth paradox of human rights was explored. This also provided opportunities for participants to express and explore their own unique understandings and experiences of human rights and construct new knowledge through the expression of others' understandings and experiences of human rights. Focus-group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed before being analysed. Drawing on Bauman's theory on postmodern responsibility and relations structured in proximity and distance, focus-group data was analysed by means of discourse analysis within the process of crystallisation.

To enable the team to involve students in focus-group discussions, we used snow-ball sampling: On each of the six survey sites, we invited students who had, during the survey, indicated their willingness to participate in focus groups and who, in turn, invited other BEd students from their year-groups who voluntarily joined the discussions. A total of 68 ($n_{focusgroups}$ = 68/1086) students participated, of whom 29 ($n_{focusgroup\ first\ years}$ = 29/68) were first-year and 39 ($n_{focusgroup\ fourth\ years}$ = 39/68) were fourth-year students. Twenty-seven of the focus group participants were male (14 first years and 13 fourth years) and forty-one were female (15 first years and 26 fourth years). Focus-group participants were between 18 and 28 years old, represented six of the 11 official South African languages and were mostly Christian (with three participants who indicated they were Muslim). Figures 4 and 5 indicate the first-year and fourth-year focus group participants per site respectively.

3.4. Crystallisation

Trustworthiness was achieved through practices such as crystallisation, multi-vocality and member reflections.

FIGURE 4: FIRST-YEAR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

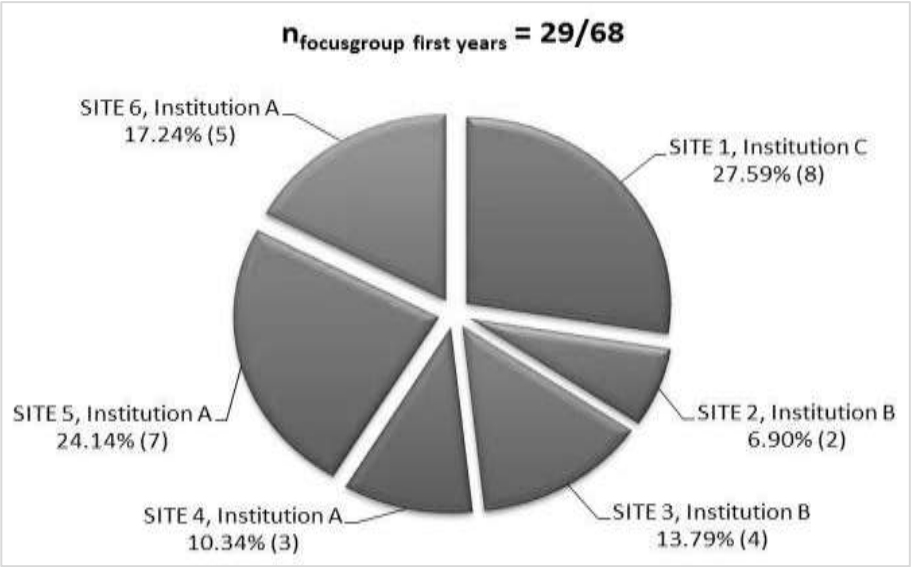
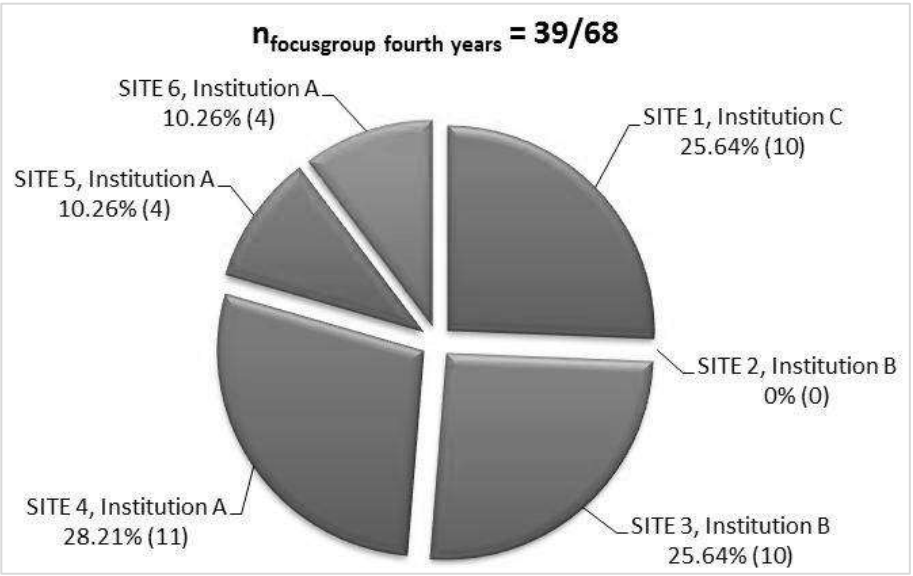


FIGURE 5: FOURTH-YEAR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS



In employing crystallisation, the research team used various methods, multiple data sources, forms of analysis and lenses in order to explore complexities and multiple views, thus building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematises its own construction (Tracy 2010:843; Ellingson 2009:4) and allowing a more complex and multi-layered understanding of human rights literacy to crystallise. To this end, the researchers employed reflective and reflexive practices and processes (Nicholls 2009:121) that contributed to crystallisation within an understanding that 'knowledge is situated, partial, constructed, multiple and enmeshed in power relations' (Ellingson 2010:10).

4. Creating Relations of Distance and Proximity: Findings from Three Collection Strategies

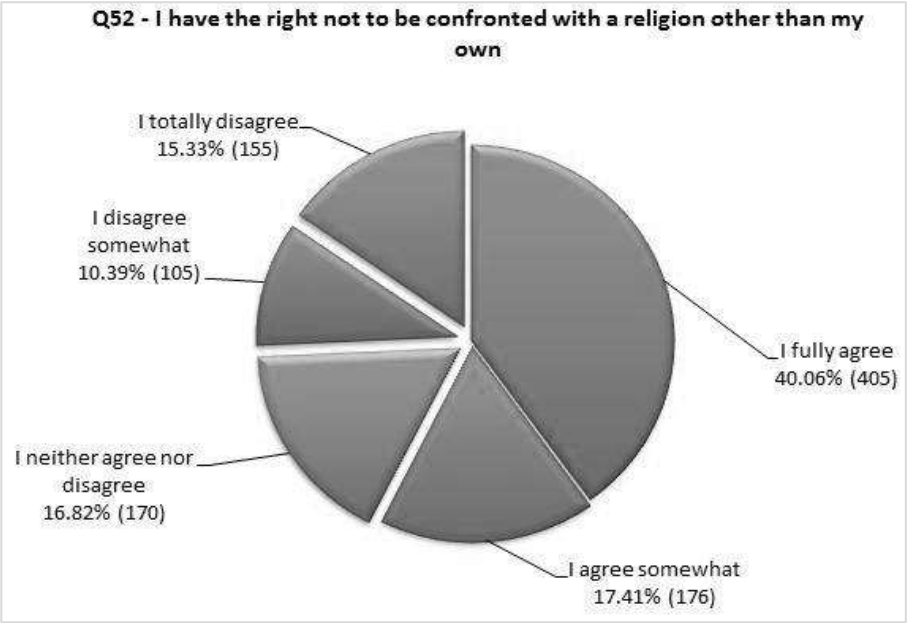
Descriptive quantitative data is presented in this section by means of graphs and frequency tables, while in-sentence indications in parenthesis provide the number of responses for a specific question. For example, Question 20 (n=1,002/1,086) indicates that 1,002 out of the total of 1,086 respondents have answered question 20.

To embrace the discourses embedded in the qualitative data, extracts are presented *verbatim* to illustrate how students move to understanding the other (or not) through relations of distance or proximity. We have referenced the data in terms of the data source: 'WalkAbout' for responses from the walk-about collection strategy, 'SurveyComment' for open-ended responses in the questionnaire and 'FocusGroup' for data emanating from focus-group discussions. Focus-group references indicate the site, year group and meeting. For example, FocusGroupS1Y4M2 refers to data from a focus group at Site 1(S1), fourth years (Y4) second meeting (M2).

The questionnaire administered in the course of the research included some questions which elicited the views of respondents in terms of interreligious and intercultural interaction. Responses to these questions reveal many respondents' preference for relations of distance in which they could rely on the law and their rights for security and comfort. In particular, Question 52 requested respondents to indicate whether they feel they have the right not to be confronted with a religion other than their own. Figure 6 depicts responses to this question (n=1,011/1,086). The chart indicates that

more than half of respondents (57.47%) agreed to some extent (either fully or somewhat) that they have the right not to be confronted with other religions. Two other questions probed respondents' preference towards choosing comfort and security when interacting with the other within multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts.

FIGURE 6: QUESTION 52 RESPONSES



Questions 53 and 61 respectively asked whether respondents were of the opinion that one needs to learn about different religions (Q53, Figure 7, n=1,012/1,086) and cultures (Q61, Figure 8, n=1,003/1,086) to avoid discrimination. In their responses to these two questions, most respondents (81%) agreed to some extent (either fully or somewhat) that it is necessary to learn about other cultures and religions to avoid discrimination.

In questions 53 (Figure 7) and 61 (Figure 8), most respondents agreed about the importance of not discriminating against others and appreciated that a level of understanding ('learning about') others may hamper discriminatory practices which may be a consequence of relations of distance.

FIGURE 7: QUESTION 53 RESPONSES

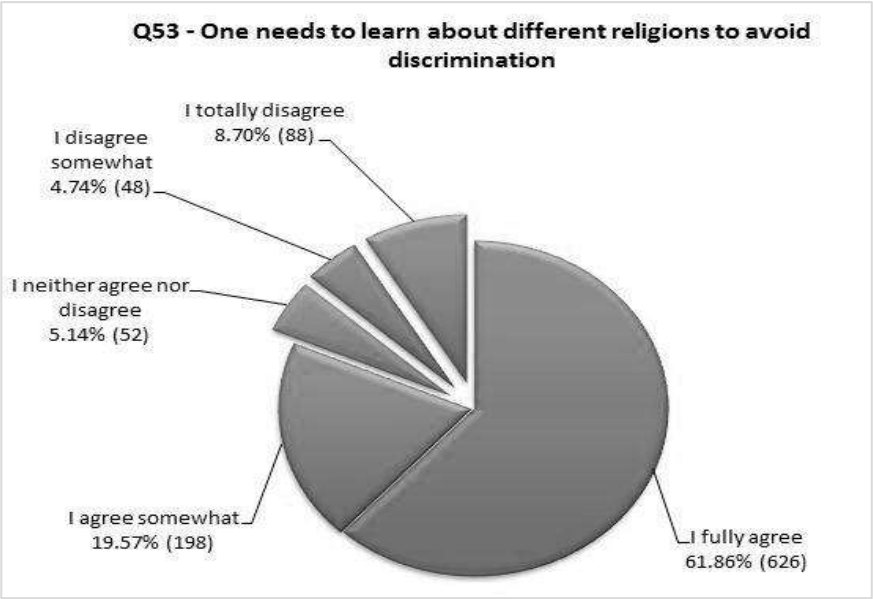
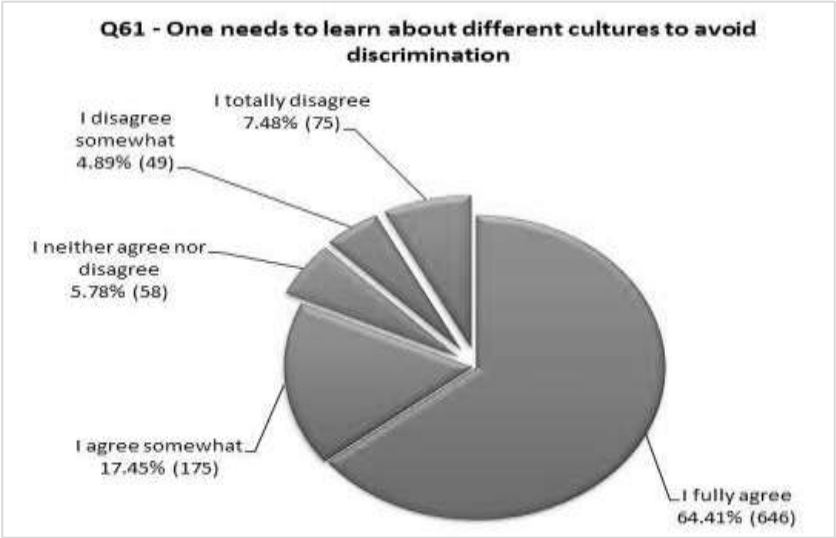


FIGURE 8: QUESTION 61 RESPONSES



Walk-about responses indicate the appreciation by students for notions of freedom to exercise or practice one's religion and equality, or not to be discriminated against on the basis of one's religion or culture. Some responses to the question 'What is the most important human right?' were as follows:

> *Freedom of practicing my religion. All religions can be practiced (WalkAboutQ2).*
> *Equality. Because of equality nobody is oppressed because of their culture, age and gender (WalkAboutQ2).*
> *Equality. Reason being because all people should be treated equally regardless of religion, race so that everyone has a chance in life (WalkAboutQ2).*

One response to the question 'How do you live out your human rights' referred to the notion of respecting equality and equal cultural and religious difference:

> *I do not discriminate. We have different cultural differences. But we are all human (WalkAboutQ3).*

Whereas responses to question 52 of the questionnaire indicated relations of distance, responses to questions 53 and 61 as well as the walk-about responses quoted above could be indicative of intention to bridge distance. However, further probing of the questionnaire responses and comparing it to qualitative-survey and focus-group data, a preference for relations of distance clearly emerges. Respondents acknowledge the necessity of 'knowledge *about*' others and accept that all people are equal and should not be discriminated against. Nevertheless, although they are happy with learning *about* other religions and cultures, they are not keen on being 'confronted with' (Q52) a religion, and maybe a culture, different to their own.

Often related to discourses on diversity, difference and in(ex)clusion is the notion of freedom of association and choice. Question 21 provided a list of 25 words or phrases which they associated with freedom and requested respondents to choose ten words or phrases which they associate with freedom. Freedom of association ranked seventh out of twenty-five options: 52.98% of respondents (n=1057/1086) had chosen it as one of the ten words

or phrases they associated with freedom. Table 1 depicts the top ten words and phrases respondents associate with freedom.

TABLE 1: QUESTION 21: WORDS OR PHRASES MOST COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH 'FREEDOM'

Rank	Answer choices	Percentage	Frequency
1	Freedom of choice	79.75%	843
2	To be able to vote	65.56%	693
3	Choice of opinion, belief and religion	64.71%	684
4	To live freely	60.64%	641
5	To express your own opinions	60.45%	639
6	Education	58.47%	618
7	Freedom of association	52.98%	560
8	Free to participate in culture	52.79%	558
9	Responsibility	43.24%	457
10	Express oneself	42.38%	448

Both freedom of choice and freedom of association are deemed by participants as important. The quantitative data alone, however, does not reveal in what manner respondents exercise or would exercise such freedoms. Whereas some participants rely on these freedoms (choice and association) in discourses about multi-culturalism and multi-religiosity to justify or defend distance, others rely on the same freedoms to meet and interact with the other in relations of proximity.

Question 53 and 61 of the questionnaire included an option for respondents to make comments in relation to learning about other cultures and religions to avoid discrimination. Comments obtained in this manner indicate some participants' preference to interact with 'others like us' and not others from a different religion or even to learn about a different religion or culture:

> *Your religions need to be respected. No need to learn about different religions (SurveyCommentQ53).*
> *South Africa is a diverse country but it is also my right not to attend any religious other than mine (SurveyCommentQ53).*

> *At this age I am content about who I am and not interested in many other things except what is necessary or unquestionable (SurveyCommentQ61).*
> *Learning about other cultures may be dangerous sometimes, being a Christian is against most traditional believes which make me to be against lesbianism, gayism and polygamy (SurveyCommentQ61).*

The responses above indicate that some participants are unwilling to move to understanding the other. However, not all participants feel this way. Some responses indicate an intention towards inclusive and intimate relations in which an-other is respected as equal and different at the same time. Responses in this regard were as follows:

> *There are people who judge other religions' values and beliefs which is wrong, so in order to avoid that it is very important that a person learn about other religions' values and beliefs (SurveyComment Q53).*
> *I would like to be exposed to other religions; it would make me more open minded about the practices that entail the different religions (SurveyCommentQ53).*
> *It is because of our ignorance that we discriminate … it would be better to learn about other religions (we don't have to follow them) so we can understand the perspectives of others (SurveyComment Q53).*
> *The more you know about other people's cultures the more accepting & tolerating a person will be (SurveyCommentQ61).*
> *We have to learn about different cultures to accommodate diversity as well as becoming multicultural (SurveyCommentQ61).*

Focus group-discussions revealed similar preferences. Some participants are in favour of having interaction with, being confronted with and learning about, with and from people from a religion or culture different to their own, whereas others are not. Issues stemming from in(ex)clusion (in terms of others like us and others not like us) were also evident in discussions regarding cultural practices. The conflict between cultural practices such as male circumcision (going to the mountains), the autonomy of schools and governing bodies and freedom of choice featured strongly:

> *I think it is important to go back and look at the issue of inclusion. What is inclusion – it is there to embrace each and every culture that is there, each and every culture of the learners and the community in which it is (FocusGroupS1Y4M2).*

This participant seems to value inclusivity and understand the importance of sharing our lives and spaces with people different from us. In this participant's view, education and schools should embrace and accommodate different cultures and cultural practices, which reflect the human rights values as outlined in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights (RSA 1996). Other students, however, had a different perspective. They argued that parents and children have freedom of choice and should exercise this right in choosing a school which would accommodate their specific cultural and religious practices:

> *But if I know my child is a Muslim child I cannot take my child and put her in for example in …. Girls school. I should put her in a Muslim school so that when they have these customs going on they could do it together and if there is a Xhosa school somewhere they should go there and if they want to do their customs they are together (FocusGroupS1Y4M2).*

Intolerance towards difference is also masked by arguing that schools have rules and codes of conduct and that parents and children should exercise their freedom of choice in order to accommodate own cultural and religious views:

> *I would like to say that when you are admitting a child to school you have a code of conduct given to you – a mission statement or what not and whenever you have questions about the school they do answer you … so now I am sure the parents knew that the school does not support this going to the mountains (FocusGroupS1Y4M1).*

Understanding the consequences of not answering to the moral demand and finding comfort in the security of codes of conduct and rules, one of the students asked:

> *If a school tells you: we cannot accept you because of maybe your*

> *religious background which is opposed to our code of conduct, how do you feel as a human being? (FocusGroupS1Y4M1)*

This participant seems to understand that exclusion violates human rights values. Other participants, such as a first-year from Site 1, expressed the desire for moving towards understanding within relations of proximity:

> *We don't mind getting to know other people. We don't mind intermingling. It is interesting to getting to know other's cultures and religions and how they do stuff (FocusGroupS1Y1M1).*

To follow is a discussion of the data presented here in terms of moving (or not) towards understanding the other within relations of distance and proximity through human rights values.

5. Human Rights Values – Moving towards Understanding One An-Other

The data from this study indicates various possibilities regarding moving towards understanding within relations of proximity or distance. Responses to the questions described above indicate that many respondents do not act on the moral demand made on the self by the other. It seems that they fear the moral ambivalence, dissonance and disruption which moral responsibility for the other and moving towards understanding the other, would demand. Many respondents therefore mask their fear of proximity within legally framed freedom of choice and association. Within relations of proximity the self remains bound to the other: 'I am I as long as I am for the other' (Bauman 1994:78) and the demand for moral responsibility transcend freedom of choice or association. Moral responsibility is demanded by the other: 'the Face that I face' (Bauman 1994:74), and is unconditional and non-reciprocal. It liberates both self and other to be for one an-other in equal difference within an inclusive shared humanity. Bauman (1994:250) therefore argues that moral responsibility is the most precious of human rights. South Africans, with the legacy of 'apartheid', have a 'racial consciousness' which informs their everyday consciousness and interaction with diversity and difference. Although racial consciousness is not unique to South Africa, what

is unique is that South Africans' racial consciousness resulted from 'an institutionalised, legislated system of racial oppression and segregation' (Welschen 2012: 9). We tolerate 'otherness' 'but prefer to live and generally socialise with culturally similar neighbours, and for their kin to marry within racial (that is, cultural) groups rather than outside them' (Seekings 2008:22).

The notion of freedom of association and choice featured strongly in the data pertaining to tolerance, diversity, difference regarding multi-cultural and multi-religious educational and social contexts[5]. Given the universal truth discourse on human rights, freedom of association and choice is posed as protecting diversity and difference and aiding inclusivity. The data, however, indicates that the discursive patterns of both freedom of choice and association often construct the conditions for exclusivity inhibiting moving towards understanding the other. As per the survey, Question 21 responses indicate the high value respondents attach to the right to freedom of association. Whereas the right to freedom of association and choice is protected by the South African Constitution (RSA 1996, section 16), exercising this right in protecting spaces of sameness and exclusion at the expense of the other and moving towards understanding others, does not correlate with moral responsibility (Bauman 1994:250) as being central to human rights and human rights values.

Not all respondents who partook in this survey intentionally structure relations of distance and exclusion. One should take note of the 40% of respondents in question 52 who do not think one has a right not to be confronted with a religion other than one's own. Though this does not necessarily mean these respondents are comfortable with meeting the religious other they do not see non-confrontation as a right, which would be a protected interest enforceable by law. Similarly, many of the respondents indicating in questions 61 and 53 that one needs to learn about other religions and cultures may also be quite comfortable with being confronted with otherness and difference, whereas others may only tolerate difference from a distance in order to adhere to laws, rules and regulations. The word

[5] In a South African television show, *The Big Debate*, for example, members of various racial groups debated issues of racism. Many of the speakers chose to identify or associate themselves with a specific group, and some indicated that they did not want to 'mix' with others (cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpLFdtSNwpU).

'discriminate', however, refers to treating people differently on the basis of one or more attribute, and when we structure distance solely because they are from a different religion or culture as us, it could amount to discrimination. Such discrimination is not necessarily unfair discrimination in terms of section 9(3) and 9(4) of the South African Constitution (RSA 1996) and, therefore, such behaviour would not necessarily be unlawful. Considering moral responsibility and human rights values, however, this would inhibit possibilities of moving towards understanding within relations of proximity and inclusion.

The South African Constitution, in its preamble, states that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity' and that South Africans should actively 'Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights' (RSA 1996). The dream speaks of a sense of being together in unity and diversity.

Qualitative data from this study shows that in post-1994 South Africa, some of the respondents understand that the moral demand of *an-other* within proximity extends beyond promoting intergroup harmony (Dixon 1997:361). Moving towards understanding can bring about an appreciation of the value of religious and cultural diversity, as indicated by one student who said 'I would like to be exposed to other religions; it would make me more open minded about the practices that entail the different religions' (SurveyCommentQ53). An understanding of human rights, and an internalisation of human rights values embedded in moral responsibility and relations of proximity is an important part of human rights literacy which, in turn, facilitates better understanding of the significant other and aids inclusivity.

6. Conclusion

Roux's life-work, and especially the most recent three projects, can be summarised with a quote from her chapter in *Safe Spaces* (Roux 2012:29):

> Religion is not only a means whereby many different cultures categorize and define humane values and morals, but it also provides a way by which to understand diversity in humankind, our

> experiences with life, our interaction with one another and the 'other' and how one tries to deal with the quest for meaning.

This indicates the close ties between religion and human rights, where human rights may be regarded as a redefined set of humane values and morals by which we come to understand diversity and our interactions with those different from or similar to us.

In this article, we traced Roux's journey from religion to human rights along the path of three human rights projects. These projects probed notions of difference and inclusivity and revealed the value of human rights in nurturing an understanding of others within relations of proximity. Findings from the project *Human Rights Literacy: A Quest for Meaning* were presented in this article to illustrate how human rights literacy facilitates understanding of others. The three projects together form an important part of Roux's legacy and inform us that human rights literacy could aid the construction of safe spaces in which humans can learn about, from and with one another, be it through disruption, dissonance, dialogue or conversation in equality and freedom.

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