



Developmental psychological aspects of personal  
identity in the characterisation of the biblical Nehemiah



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## **SUMMARY**

Personal identity is a complex and essentially contested concept in various contemporary academic disciplines. These include, among others, philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, and theology. Biblical scholarship in general and Old Testament studies in particular are inevitably intertwined with concerns and categories derived from related discussions, albeit mostly with reference to the themes associated with social and political identity. The gap in the research identified in this study is the relative lack of research on how historical, philosophical and psychological perspectives on personal identity may be compared to what is incidental and implicit in the characterisation of Nehemiah. In response to this, the questions posed in this study are twofold. First, what philosophical and psychological views on personal identity are available. Second, what happens when a particular thinker's ideas are adopted as an experimental lens through which some of the associated assumptions are noted in the book of Nehemiah.

The corresponding objectives of this study will be to outline the history of related ideas and to determine the pros and cons of applying a particular point of view to an ancient text, the focus of which lay elsewhere. The hypothesis of the study is that such an approach will provide not only a novel way of looking at the text, but also present challenges arising from the difference between biblical and philosophical/psychological foci, and between experimental psychology and the involvement of a particular theory within a literary ontology limited to characterisation in a narrative.

The chosen method adopted in this study will therefore not be philosophical analysis or psychological assessment but will be a form of comparative metacommentary whereby related remarks already present in research on Nehemiah are brought into dialogue with the theoretical framework and its topics selected for the comparison. More specifically, some elements in the theories of Marcia on the formation of personal identity in the context of personhood and personality development will be used for the purpose of the comparison with comments in research on general aspects of characterisation and identity in Nehemiah.

Concerning outline, following an introduction to the various themes involved in the research presented in this study (Chapter 1), the conceptual history of personal identity in philosophy, psychology, and elsewhere (Chapter 2), will precede an outline of the chosen framework (Chapter 3), its application with reference to Nehemiah scholarship (Chapter 4) before

drawing the relevant conclusions (Chapter 5). Although the primary discipline is that of Old Testament studies, introducing and experimenting with new theoretical frameworks are considered to justify dedicating a comparably large proportion of the study to the relevant conceptual-historical background. The application of the chosen approach to the study of Nehemiah cannot be justified without sufficient attention to the relevant details included in the discussion.

Conversely, given how much could possibly be said with reference to the book of Nehemiah, subsequent comments on personal identity in relation to this text will be limited to a selection of texts and theological themes as an illustration of the application. Much more could be said, which will be the task of future related research. Finally, the relevance and novelty of such an inquiry lie not only in its very specific interdisciplinary interests and theoretical topics, but also in its attention to both possibilities and problems associated therewith. Its relation to past and present research is therefore more supplementary and complementary than critical or confirmatory.

*Keywords:* Biblical scholarship (interdisciplinary), Old Testament, Book of Nehemiah, Characterisation (narrative criticism), theology (concept of God), psychological biblical criticism (PBC), Identity (social sciences), Personal Identity (philosophy), Identity Development (Psychology), Identity Formation (Psychology).

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## **1 PERSONAL IDENTITY AND NEHEMIAH**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Research on identity, in general, is part of many academic disciplines. Scholarship on the more specific concept of personal identity is, though likewise interdisciplinary, more associated with philosophical and psychological frames of reference. Here it remains essentially contested, with a challenge compounded by its nature as a “fuzzy concept”. That is, the notion itself is not only a topic for debate, what it is taken to mean is often relative to the discipline and theoretical framework in which it is used (see Behlohlavek & Klir, 2011:1).

For example, the concept of personal identity, as understood via a contemporary philosophical lens, is sometimes correlated with the concept of *self* (Stokes, 2008:645-646). One difference between personal identity and selfhood is perhaps the ways in which the former is often taken to encompass more than just a singular entity. Concordantly, there is a greater number and complexity of aspects that must be considered (Belohrad, 2015:282; Remes & Sihvola, 2008:1; Shoemaker, 2019:1). Generally speaking, much of the current philosophical debates associated with the concept revolves around the question of how personal identity is (not) to be understood, and assorted puzzles of diachronic identity (i.e. identity over time) (Hochstetter, 2017:2126; Melin, 1998:1-2; Shoemaker, 2019:2). Different philosophical traditions and thinkers represent an intricate variety of highly nuanced and often technical viewpoints on this issue (Bamberg, 2012:1; Korfmacher, 2019:1; McAdams & Cox, 2010:158).

In psychology, personal identity and the self are sometimes interchangeable concepts which are likewise used and approached in a variety of ways (Talaifar & Swann, 2018:1-2). Only a few examples among many will be mentioned here. First, in the field of developmental psychology, the focus falls on how an individual develops its identity throughout the human developmental cycle, this includes child, adolescent and adult psychological development (Louw, 2012:145; Mcleod, 2023a:n.p.; Rochat, 2013:378-379). Here older philosophical assumptions and considerations, though providing the conditions of possibility for these disciplines, are only the starting point for applied empirical research. Second, given the relational nature of the self, in social psychology, i.e., there is an overlapping concern with personal identity in the scientific study of how individuals think, feel and behave in a social context (Brown, 2006:6;33; Kassin *et al.*, 2011:5; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:129). Third, in

the psychological study of personality, the theory of personology is particularly interested in individual traits and variations, which includes the understanding of human nature in everyday life (McAdams, 2024:n.p.). This approach is aimed at establishing a coherent conceptual framework for the purpose of describing, elucidating, and forecasting human behaviour, encompassing the capacity to ascertain the identities of individuals (Mayer, 2017:2-4;14; Meyer, 1999:3; Meyer & Moore, 2013:3; Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2016:22;52-53).

As for other disciplines with related interests, sociology's study of personal identity centres on analysing social factors that impact interpersonal interactions and behaviours (Ferrante, 2013:25; Hornsey, 2008:205-207; Kehily, 2009:1-2; Puentes *et al.*, 2024:276). For example, Charles Cooley's research enabled sociologists to comprehend how our self-concept is influenced by the dynamic interaction between our own self-perception and the assessments we receive from others (Puentes *et al.*, 2024:276). Joan Ferrante (2013:25) defines this as "the manifestation of social imagination". Social imagination is "a cognitive capacity that allows individuals to acknowledge and comprehend the impact of remote and impersonal societal influences on their personal life story, or more concisely, their unique identity" (Ferrante, 2013:25; Puentes *et al.*, 2024:278). Sociologists studying personal identity aim to comprehend the influence of individuals on society, their family dynamics, educational attainment, and religious beliefs on the development of their self-concept (see Deschamps & Devos, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Sociology's examination of personal identity highlights the dynamic interaction between individual experiences, social influences, and cultural environments (Andriot & Owens, 2021:n.p.; Brensinger & Eyal, 2021:288; Puentes *et al.*, 2024:280-281).

Anthropological research has been captivated by the way people and groups develop and comprehend their own identities as well as the identities of others (Golubović, 2011:25; Griffiths, 2018:n.p.). Although one does not read about identity in the earlier work of anthropologists, one can find terms in the field that carry the same notion as the concept of identity. Identity as we know it today only sprang to prominence during the 1960s, mostly because of the work of psychologists like Erik Erikson, who concentrated on the psychosocial development of human identity (Cuypers, 2017:15-18; Griffiths, 2018:n.p.). Jon Mitchell (2010:368-369) confirms this when he explains that the concept of identity in anthropology has undergone a significant transformation from its original understanding in early

anthropological study to its contemporary interpretation. Anthropologists primarily study collective identity, which encompasses several types of identity such as ethnic, political, religious, and gender identities determined by the group (Alcoff, 2006:84; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000:1-2; Rockrohr, 2015:145). Although this did help in understanding identity in the case of the Old Testament (OT), it still does not explain the concept of individualisation, since identity is portrayed as symbolic in anthropological-theological discussions (Newsom, 2021:1,3-4).

When examining the notion of identity in politics, it is important to acknowledge that sociological identification significantly influences associated theories (Smith, 2021:n.p.; Yunespour, 2011:1). To comprehend the concept of identity in politics, it is imperative to grasp that the notion of identity tends to be seen as exemplifying both subjective and objective attributes (Yunespour, 2011:1). Introducing personal identity into the equation amplifies the intricacy of the issue. An individual typically forms a psychological connection with a certain group. The hierarchical classification of identity exerts a substantial influence on the perceived factors underlying political activities based on identification (Smith, 2021:n.p.; Yunespour, 2011:1). While there is a vast body of research on identity in politics, one could contend that it ultimately boils down to the notion that one's affiliation with a certain group influences their political activity (Mbabvu, 2017:206; Smith, 2021; Yunespour, 2011:1).

The discipline of theology has produced a substantial amount of literature on identity. According to Vanhoozer (1997:159), the Bible uses theological reflection to understand the significance of the human predicament. Dickson (2014:201) in turn contends that the Bible exhibits a profound understanding of human nature, which becomes apparent upon reading it. From the perspective of Rosner (2017:37) the Bible has as its primary focus addressing concerns that may come from the scrutiny of human identity. He explains that it includes three categories of identification: humans, individuals, and groups. Human beings are intrinsically social, meaning that a person's identity is shaped by the collective aspects they experience in their relationships with others (Rosner, 2017:37; Vanhoozer, 1997:201). In addition to this, some contemporary philosophers continue to debate the relationship between physical and mental states (e.g., consciousness, a core self, etc.). These developments have formed the basis for the ideas on the nature of the self that are currently present in many academic works (Gallagher, 2011:18-19; Viljoen, 2013:24).

Last but not least, there has also been a change in the associated religious language within many theological traditions' reflection on personal identity, i.e., from discussing the soul to engaging in a conversation about the self (Di Vito, 1999:219).

From the above, the complexities involved in reflecting on personal identity should be readily apparent. Also evident is the potential for the conflation of the semantic fields of identity across disciplinary and theoretical frameworks. That is, in the literature, it is possible and often necessary to distinguish concepts like 'identity', 'personal identity', 'self', 'the subject', 'person', 'personality', 'personology', and others. Conflation of concepts invariably leads to problems as regards nuance and specificity in theoretical reflection and subsequent application in different contexts.

## **1.2 Background**

In related research on the OT, perspectives on personal identity remain rare. Where present, interests that overlap with those concerning personal identity appeared in discussions of "theological anthropology", often commenting on the perceived correlations and contrasts between Hebrew/biblical and Greek/philosophical thought about personhood (see Barr, 1961; Boman, 1960; Wolff, 2012). More often than not, identity was more broadly conceptualised as socio-political and religio-cultural identity (see Albertz, 1994; Usue, 2006).

In other words, approaches to textual assumptions about personal identity are more focussed on collective social relations of the person. The self in different OT texts thus became relatively decentred and undefined within the relations structuring its ontological boundaries (Di Vito, 1999:221; also see Gill, 2009; Reagan, 2002; Remes & Sihvola, 2008). As such a person appears as the smallest part of a family, i.e. 'the father's house' (Di Vito, 1999:221). The oldest living paternal ancestor was the head of this unit, which ideally was constituted by a basic household of four generations. Supplementary to this are extended households comprising several families, which could represent the ideal norm that shaped the families in which individual Israelites would find their personal identity (Di Vito, 1999:222). Therefore, the individuals were also united in a clan (family), overseen by the village leadership (i.e. that included the patriarchal head of the nuclear family) (Di Vito, 1999:222-223). Furthermore, the personal identity of characters in the world of the text was seen to be lacking a sense of 'inner depth' and as authentic only in heteronomy, that is, in dependence on one another (Di Vito, 1999:221). In this way, the OT was understood to have a very different collection of views of

personal identity than those of modern individuals best recognised as such in their nuclear or immediate context.

Becking (2011:129) and Di Vito (1999:220) both focussed on the social identity of the individual and acknowledge Charles Taylor's work related to the formation of identity in the modern world. Taylor also discussed what he understood to be good operational definitions of identity, which can nevertheless be comparatively applied to Ancient Near East (ANE) contexts (cf. Becking, 2011:129). Based on these definitions, identity could be described as a 'multidimensional matrix.' Supplementary to this, Taylor also traced constructions of individual identity through the ages. The story of identity (in the West), includes all the usual suspects, i.e. Augustine, Descartes, Locke, Kant, the Romantics, culminating in the stereotypical modern view of the human being as an autonomous subject, i.e., a 'self-responsible unity' (cf. Di Vito, 1999:220; Gill, 2009).

Ultimately, historical consciousness complicates any comparative attempt to adopt modern individualist conceptions of 'the self' to clarify ancient assumptions about what a person is at the core (i.e., his/her personality, self-image, or view of his identity). Linguistic awareness also enters the fray given the absence of these second-order terms (like "personal identity") within first-order religious language (where assumptions and conceptions, though present, are implicit, and only incidentally so). Literary-critical sensitivity requires distinguishing what can and cannot be inferred about personal identity in the worlds behind, of and in front of the text. The history of related concepts prior to the writing of the OT texts, narrative characterisations of persons, and subsequent interpretations from later frames of references should not be conflated. This in turn warrants a distinction between contemporary philosophical and psychological discussions of personal identity (often involving empirical research) and the experimental and auxiliary adoption and adaptation of philosophical and psychological perspectives aimed at comparing its conceptual content to related elements in ancient texts. As Leung Lai (2015:155) notes, despite the obvious fallacies at risk, an interdisciplinary approach remains relevant and has the potential to offer promising insights into what can legitimately be inferred about personal identity (the *self*), both in the OT and in biblical-scholarship, the focus of which often lies elsewhere.

### 1.3 Brief Literature Review

Some OT texts, such as the book of Nehemiah, lend themselves to the probability of looking deeper into the implied mind of an individual character. One of the reasons for this is the presence of sections that resemble what has been called a personal “memoir” (Clines, 1990:73; Leung Lai, 2015:157). This is something different from an autobiography, the latter referring to a genre that spans a lifetime. In comparison, the relevant parts of the book of Nehemiah only focus on specific scenes in the plot featuring the character called Nehemiah (Leung Lai, 2015:157). In this section, some examples of related research will be provided. These show not only that related interests are already present in biblical scholarship but also imply both the validity and novelty of personal identity as a concept lending itself to further clarification.

Bob Becking (2011), in his book *'Ezra, Nehemiah and the Construction of Early Jewish Identity'*, offers an example of related interdisciplinary research. He involves the ideas of Erik Erikson, who equated the term identity to the way an individual comprehends himself/herself as a discrete separate entity (also see Erikson, 1996; Marcia, 2009). In doing so, an attempt is made to relate the individual's perspective to the perspective of the distinctive virtues and values of the group, which, by implication, are not the same (Becking, 2011:128; Berzonsky, 2004:303-304).

An example of research more focussed on themes related to personal (as opposed to social) identity is found in the article by Barbara Leung Lai (2015:154), who takes a different approach to the identity question in Nehemiah, compared to that of Becking (see Becking, 2011). This is evident in the way she used the notion of the 'I'-voice to reconstruct an internal profile of Nehemiah and proposed the role of emotion as a 'port of entry' into the genre analysis of the memoir. The relevance of her investigation lies in the way she sought to uncover “new dimensions of Nehemiahic self”(Leung Lai, 2015:157).

Another example assuming the validity of the same concern, despite a radical denial of overlap between the historical and literary figure of Nehemia, is that of David Clines (1990:74). That is, though Clines' denial of the historical value of the characterisation should not be confused with a denial of the possibility of making inferences about assumptions related to the concept personal identity and limited to those implicit in the characterisation itself. According to Clines (1990:74), one cannot be too confident about the authentic representation in the Nehemiahic

memoir. The biggest problem highlighted by Clines is that the account was written in the first person (Clines, 1990:75). According to his analysis, it is near impossible for the narrator, in the first person, to have the knowledge about internal experiences of the secondary characters in the text (i.e. Nehemiah's knowledge of *Sanballat's* reaction to his arrival (cf. Neh. 4:1)) (Clines, 1990:83-84).

In another related discussion, Jacob Wright (2004) did an extensive study on identity, albeit of Israel, in the book of Nehemiah. He explains further that in each of the building phases the identity of the Judeans is newly defined. Wright's primary concern with the development of the Judean identity as a context for the personal piety of Nehemiah; it does not directly focus on 'I' the concept of implied personal identity of the character.

From the samples of overlapping research interests provided, it seems that discussing personal identity in Nehemiah is not necessarily distortive if one keeps in mind broader social aspects and the limitations of working with a character in a narrative. The first-person point of view of the character is also relevant. This allows for further exploration of the theme of personal identity in the book; as Berge (2005:103) notes, the narrated self in a strong narrative could be seen as more real than those with less developed narratives. In such narration, co-constituting the Book of Nehemiah, the conflict aiding the progression of characterisation requires not only the presence of assumptions about the identity of the character. Narrating part of the life story of a person as a character also presupposes aspects of identity construction and development. (Bamberg, 2012:1; Houkamau, 2008:1)

Following Bamberg (2011:2), cognisance can be taken of the fact that the beginning of a narration is not necessarily the beginning of the existence of that character it describes. Neither is the end of the narration the end of the existence of the described character. In other words, the narration is merely an extract of a certain period in the life of the character. In the construction of the character of Nehemiah, what is implicit about his personal identity can never be fully clarified, not simply due to the limits of interpretation but also in view of the absence of details about what his childhood was like or what happened later in his life. Because the reader only knows of a period of the adult life of Nehemiah, some limitations are incumbent on what can legitimately be discussed from a chosen philosophical and psychological framework put up for comparison.

#### **1.4 Research problem**

The Nehemiahic memoir seems to be a perfect case study for analysing aspects of personal identity, with special attention to those issues arising from the implied personality of the character. Such a discussion of 'personal identity', though involving anachronistic interests, is no more problematic for being such than discussing the 'narrative', 'character', 'social identity', 'self', 'community,' history, or 'text.' The writer never used these terms, spelt out associated assumptions, or clarified related conceptual content. Rather than this being a problem, it is, in fact, even more reason to try to ascertain whether and if anything related is in some way present in the text or not.

For sure, there is always the risk of committing exegetical fallacies, as the history of interpretation attests. One should still try to avoid attributing assumptions to a text where they are not present or fail to distinguish the adoption of anachronistic theoretical terms from related conceptual contents implicit in the world of the text, when approached from a chosen perspective. This is so, regardless of the auxiliary discipline involved, whether linguistics, history, literary criticism, social scientific approaches, or theological readings.

The fact remains that one cannot even criticise research on personal identity in Nehemiah without temporarily adopting the point of view involved to determine whether and how it is problematic. In doing so, however, one is already discussing the topic oneself, and the findings on its limitations are itself a form of insight. Moreover, as indicated above, most of the conceptual frameworks for discussing assumptions related to the concept of personal identity are already present within the second-order discourses of biblical scholars whose main interests lie elsewhere.

Although social and political dimensions of identity in the book of Nehemiah are widely discussed, some gaps remain in the associated literature. In the effort to address the relevant gaps already implicit in biblical scholarship, the main research question may be formulated:

- How is the concept of “personal identity” related to the characterisation of Nehemiah?

Given the essentially contested nature of the concept itself, its fuzzy nature in auxiliary disciplinary domains in biblical scholarship, its historical origins and development and the challenges of involving it in an ancient text not directly concerned therewith, several additional questions may be formulated to structure the response to the primary question:

- How was personal identity (broadly conceived) conceptualised in different periods, persons, presuppositions, problems, and perspectives in the history of Western philosophy as background to subsequent related research? What are some of the influential psychological theories, traditions, themes, terms and trends concerned with personal identity?
- What would be an example of a psychological perspective in some way concerned with personal identity that has not been utilised in related research on the book of Nehemiah?
- How might such a perspective be adopted, adapted and applied to the character of Nehemiah as discussed in associated biblical scholarship?

These research questions may now be mirrored in the objectives of the study.

### **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are the following:

- To show how can the concept of “personal identity” be used in related research on the book of Nehemiah.
- To offer an overview of how personal identity (broadly conceived) was conceptualised in different periods, persons, presuppositions, problems, and perspectives in the history of Western philosophy as background to subsequent related research.
- To provide an outline of psychological theories, traditions, themes, terms and trends in one way or another concerned with personal identity.
- To present an example of a psychological perspective in some way concerned with personal identity that has not been utilised in related research on the book of Nehemiah.
- To provide a preliminary illustration of what happens when the selected perspective is adopted, adapted and applied to what is already being discussed in associated biblical-scholarly literature.

### **1.6 Method**

To meet the objectives, the study combines a variety of approaches relative to the requirements of a particular chapter. Included are elements of conceptual-historical,

methodology (theory of method), narrative-criticism, psychological-criticism, and meta-commentary.

In terms of the psychological perspective experimented with in limited and comparative fashion, the work of James Marcia (2002) as a proponent of personology was identified and will be adopted, adapted, and applied as such. Regarding motivation and relevance, with reference to the chapters that illustrate interest, the choice for comparative-psychological analysis is, first, the potential relevance of Marcia's work on personality development in times of identity crises given the consensus on the presence of associated content in the literary construction of personhood in Nehemiah. Secondly, Marcia's ideas have not been used as often as those of other psychologists in associated biblical scholarship and therefore represent a neglected avenue of related research able to offer supplementary reading on overlapping variables in contemporary psychological perspectives on the personal identity of Nehemiah's character.

Any attempted direct and wholesale application of Marcia's work in reading the OT as ancient text is beyond the question, as it would involve many exegetical fallacies. Moreover, of course, Marcia's ideas have been exposed to valid critiques in contexts where their application value may not suffice. However, all this can be given in the approach adopted in this study, which will be limited to a careful and selective use of certain theoretical insights and interpretative tasks therein. In other words, only some of Marcia's relevant ideas will be adopted and experimented with as part of the conceptual clarification of comparative psychology of any related content already present in the Nehemiah research.

Another constraining factor in the application of Marcia already acknowledged as problematic for all psychological perspectives is that, in doing so, the ontological domain of the present investigation must be limited to textual characterisations of Nehemiah's self-worth in relation to his beliefs. Although such a cross-disciplinary application is obviously very different from analysing aspects of personal identity in modern psychological research, the chosen approach can easily be confined to hermeneutically warranted historically descriptive and comparative-psychological perspectives only.

Finally, although a psychological perspective on issues related to crises of personal identity is also presented, it appears only in the form of the reading of ancient and modern texts. As

such, the research does not involve any human participants, and consequently there is no associated ethical risk.

### **1.7 Central theoretical argument**

The central theoretical argument put forward in this study is that the history of philosophical and psychological perspectives on concepts associated with personal identity and the subsequent introduction to and illustration of applying Marcia's theory of personality development will compliment and supplement the already available data in contemporary research on the characterisation of Nehemiah.

### **1.8 Scope**

Rather than offering a repetition of novel attempts at a detailed exegesis of the texts of Nehemiah, the focus on methodological innovation means that the scope of the discussion devotes a relatively greater than usual proportion thereof to outlining historical and theoretical frameworks. Conversely, the application and illustration part are more limited to samples of what this means in relation to what is already implicit in existing OT scholarship that is related to the concept of personal identity in Nehemiah.

In other words, in this study, the focus will not be so much on all the problems related to scholarly discussions on the book of Nehemiah, e.g., issues related to authorship, dating, structure, composition, and redaction, relation to historical contexts, etc. This study will also not engage the Hebrew text of the book Nehemiah directly or involve a detailed exegesis of individual passages or a critique of the available scholarship, except in those cases where the Hebrew text could expand the understanding of personal identity, identity developments, or the self as (modern) concepts.

All attention will be on what is already available in expert research on the characterisation of Nehemiah (i.e., as found in articles, books, commentaries, relevant Internet resources, etc.), that has bearing on how the character's implied theological views relate to issues of personal identity, specifically those of identity development as reconstructed with reference to concepts of God in the history of Israelite religions (early Judaism).

### **1.9 Outline**

In the remainder of the study, the following will be the focus of each chapter.

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the history of the concept of personal identity as it appeared in different forms in the history of philosophy. Since this study offers a psychological perspective and psychology itself developed from and in dialogue with the history of philosophy such a reconstruction of the conceptual background adds the relevant historical consciousness and nuance to subsequent comparative conceptual clarification. Largely indebted to the helpful overview provided by Olsen (2019) and others, the chapter seeks to extract the relevant ideas from the various periods, persons, presuppositions, problems, perspectives and the rich variety of conceptual development over time and across different cultural contexts in Western philosophy.

Chapter 3 commences with a concise historical examination of psychological perspectives on personal identity, once the discipline diverged from philosophy, and attention shifted towards various models in the realm of developmental psychology. Included in the discussion are stage models, trait models, cognitive models, and social identity theory. The stage models aim to explain the development of the self by outlining the various phases that individuals experience throughout their lives. For experimental and comparative purposes, the theory of adult identity development proposed by Marcia, which draws on Erikson's psychosocial model, was selected.

Chapter 4 will then return to OT scholarship and research related to discussions of Nehemiah's personal identity by using James Marcia's adult developmental framework and the guidelines established by the method of psychological biblical criticism (PBC). Several challenges to the attempted analysis will be discussed, namely, the constraints of working with texts rather than people, of genre, of characterisation in narrative, and of structure. Associated content was noted in the book of Nehemiah, as evidenced in scholarship, with overlapping conceptual content restated in relation to Marcia's adapted theoretical framework.

Chapter 5 will offer a summary and conclusion of the findings of the study, with special attention to synthesizing the data and highlighting the insights generated within different parts of the research.

## **2 PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONAL IDENTITY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The objective of this chapter is to present a survey of the various philosophical viewpoints, underlying assumptions, and potential challenges that pertain to the examination of the notion of personal identity and to the understanding of how this can be emphasised in the theology of Nehemiah. Regarding the concept of philosophy, which is essentially contested, a commonly accepted definition is "the examination of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence" (see Lexico, 2021:n.p.). This approach to delineating the domain of study raises several metatheoretical inquiries, yet it is employed herein solely as an illustration of how certain academics have formulated the disciplinary structure. From this perspective, philosophy poses fundamental inquiries concerning our cognition of the self, which accounts for its extensive body of literature on the topic of personal identity. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the philosophical framework surrounding personal identity to demonstrate a cognisance of the intricate conceptual underpinnings that inform any discourse on personal identity in Nehemiah.

### **2.2 Philosophical presuppositions, problems, and perspectives of personal identity**

#### **2.2.1 Personal identity and personhood**

Personal identity in philosophy does not provide a single issue, but rather a number of interrelated concerns (Olsen, 2019:6; Shoemaker, 2019:660). Schechtman (2007a:1) confirms this by stating that there is not a single 'issue of personal identity' but rather a variety of identity problems that occur in different contexts, that are of differing importance and need a variety of responses. The inability to do so muddles the discussion in a way that impedes the resolution of any identity problem when dealing with personal identity (Schechtman, 2007a:1). Schechtman (2007a:1) also explains that personal identity theorists have the tendency to combine the 'reidentification' question with the 'characterisation' question. She describes a "reidentification question" as the aspect in which person ( $p$ ) at time ( $t_1$ ) is the same person ( $p$ ) at another time ( $t_2$ ), which means that the same person identifies himself at two different times while the characterisation question deals with the psychological characteristics that make the person who it is (Schechtman, 2007a:2).

The word "person" is derived from the Greek word πρόσωπον (*prosopon*), but it was not originally used in the modern sense (Bourgeois, 2003:67). Originally πρόσωπον referred to

participation in a theatrical or religious ceremony, but has since acquired a secular connotation encompassing social and legal elements. This is a great cry from current thinking, which contains two distinct definitions of what it is to be a particular individual (Martin & Barresi, 2006:29). One is that a specific person possesses a unique set of mental qualities at a given time, and the other is that one can be an individual without such a clear link between a person's mental state and his or her personhood (Olsen, 2019:2). The process of identifying an individual can be accomplished by discerning their mental attributes at a specific moment or by contemplating their persona independently of their cognitive state. This can be achieved even in cases where individuals are incapable of engaging in rational self-reflection.

The divergent viewpoints on the concept of personhood exhibit a paradoxical nature yet possess the potential to be mutually reinforcing. The problem of the persistence of persons is a topic of interest among philosophers. It pertains to the inquiry of whether an individual can maintain his identity in different circumstances, even in situations where self-awareness is absent. The issue at hand is commonly referred to as the problem of personal persistence (Olsen, 2019:2).

### **2.2.2 An overview on the development of personal identity**

According to popular Western traditions, ancient Greek philosophy has been a typical starting point for research on a conceptual history of personal identity. Comparatively philosophically speaking, this may be historically and culturally very limited, but it will suffice for the sake of this discussion. Additionally, the problem of how to understand the views of each philosopher, in general and on related matters (including questions pertaining to authenticity, historicity, consistency, translation and the like), although readily granted, cannot be discussed here, if only for practical reasons. The possibility of alternative interpretations of any given idea only briefly noted is readily granted, as is the additional depth of context and detail required for a holistic conception of what was involved.

Philosophical discussions of personal identity, at least in the context of conceptual history, often link it to older notions of 'the soul'. Different words used by ancient writers can be linked to the concept of having or being a soul, which is complicated by the fact that it too has a complex history featuring changing ideas over time (and diversity at any given time), in classical Greek and in historical-philosophical overview, perhaps the most familiar related term is the word *psyche*. To simplify and generalise out of necessity, the *psyche* could refer to

several things, including the combination of constituent parts of a person, life, personality, or life experience. It was also seen as an expansion of the physical function of emotion and appetite (Crabbe, 2001:2-3; McPherran, 1994:4; Sorabij, 2001:8-9). The soul (*psyche*) was also considered the seat of moral reasoning, decision making, and action, where vice and virtue exist (McPherran, 1994:2). Furthermore, the soul is different from the body and rules it from within; it may be considered the seat of all conscious experience (McPherran, 1994:3-4). In the writings of Homer (fl. 800 BCE), for example, one encounters different perspectives on the possibility of life after death and the survival of the soul (Lorenz, 2009:7; Martin & Barresi, 2006:9).

Another non-philosophical way in which problems associated with the belief of the persistence of personal identity instances of how personal identity was articulated can be seen in the writings of the comedic playwright Epicharmus (550 BCE–460 BCE). In one of his plays, a character who owes money to a lender asserts that he has changed since borrowing the funds and is therefore not responsible for the loan. This requires prior consideration of the practical consequences of personal identity and how contracts must treat the lender and borrower as identical individuals (Metzinger, 2005:191).

The most important details in this text are the views of certain philosophers who have delved into the concepts of selfhood and the problems of personal identity. These philosophers were 'soul and self-thinkers' by chance, and their perspectives have influenced subsequent thinkers about the concepts of the soul and self (Lorenz, 2009:2-3; Martin & Barresi, 2006:3).

Pythagoras (570–490 BCE) is regarded as one of the earliest thinkers concerned with the soul and the self (Huffman, 2018:1). He promoted reincarnation based on recollections of former life and presented the concept of a three-part soul. Empedocles (495 BCE – 435 BCE), a contemporary of Pythagoras, held a similar early philosophical perspective (Kingsley & Parry, 2020:3). Empedocles and Pythagoras thought that the soul persists after death, implying that the mind will outlive the body (Huffman, 2018:22-23; Kingsley & Parry, 2020:22; Metzinger, 2005:189-190).

Heraclitus (c 500 B.C.E) had a scientific interest in the soul and a careful concern for its health. He proposed the idea of an object's identity remaining constant over time and stressed the significance of self-awareness to the soul's survival after death (Graham, 2007:2,21; Huffman,

2018:14). Socrates (469 BCE - 399 BCE) felt that the soul is more valuable than the body, hence he advocated living in such a way that the soul is preserved (Nails, 2022:9-11).

Plato's (427–347 BCE) view of the soul was not only heavily influenced by Socrates, but also by Pythagoras and Empedocles (see Huffman, 2018:1; Kingsley & Parry, 2020:32; Martin & Barresi, 2006:10; Meinwald, 2020:n.p.). Plato believed that the soul is the source of life and consciousness, animating the body and serving as the moral compass of an individual (Campbell, 2021:523-524). He explains that the soul consists of three parts: the *logos* (*logistikon*), *thymos* (*thumoeides*) and *eros* (*epithumetikon*). Each has a specific function and place throughout the body (see Hommel, 2019; Long, 2023:003-004). The logos are related to logic and the management of other components, the thymos to spiritual matters, and the eros to desire. The immortal soul unites with the divine or is reincarnated, according to Plato's philosophy (Campbell, 2022:643; Kamtekar, 2016:122).

According to Aristotle (384 BCE - 322 BCE), the soul is divided into pieces, with the *nous* (the logical thinking element) being immortal (Macfarlane & Ploansky, 2009:108). In contrast to Plato, he was more concerned with the position of people in the grand scheme of things, as well as with the relationship of the soul to the body (Macfarlane & Ploansky, 2009:111). Aristotle thought that the soul consists of functional parts that contribute to personality and that the *nous* is the only portion that survives death (Macfarlane & Ploansky, 2009:115-116; 119).

The physician Hippocrates (460 BCE – 375 BCE) believed that the brain is the primary site where self-awareness exists. Therefore, it is not unexpected that he believed that mental health is dependent on brain health (Bartoš, 2018:66; Hippocrates, 1952:154,156). Others with similar foci, Herophilus and Erasistratus (about 330–250 BCE), investigated the nervous system to establish how the brain interacted with the body through the nerves (Smith, 2020:n.p). The Hippocratic community believed that *pneuma* (*soul*) played a significant role in the brain, and they were the first to describe the biological origins of the soul and explain that it endures as long as cognitive functions are present (Bartoš, 2018:77; Torello, 2015:1-2; Von Staden, 2000:79-116)

Zeno of Citium (335 BCE – 263 BCE) is acknowledged as the cofounder of Stoicism, which was polished into a comprehensive system by Chrysippus (280 BCE – 206 BCE) and was the first person to use the term consciousness (Long, 2006:11,380).

Epicurus (341 BCE - 270 BCE) believed that the ideal self is a pain-free consciousness, yet it is not immune to physical pain, which is part of the human experience (Long, 2006:157). The tranquillity of epicurean consciousness makes mortality more pleasurable than thinking about immortality (Long, 2006:158-159).

Hierocles (about 100 BCE) believed that animals are self-aware from birth, which indicates consciousness (Long, 2006:353). Individuals should define themselves according to their near-social surroundings, beginning with their personal issues, then their family, then their immediate community, and finally the most distant community (Long, 2006:331).

Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE) and Epictetus (55 CE–135 CE) were the first to define the individualization of the soul and the responsibility to realise one's true self (see Cole, 1923; Frede, 2007:153; Wehus, 2019:231-233). Lucretius (95 BCE–54 BCE) refuted the concept of an immaterial soul and personal survival of physical death, stating that the personality chain is broken at death and that a person in this situation is identical to one who has never been born (see Kramnick, 2010:65,67; Sedley, 2018:15-17).

Philo (fl. 20 CE – 50 CE) was of the opinion that Greek ideas, like the idea that God is not made of matter and will live forever, were based on Jewish ideas (Lévy, 2022:3). He blended Greek thought into Jewish beliefs and explained that the rational soul dies with the individual at death, but the irrational soul lives on (Lévy, 2022:37-38).

Paul of Tarsus (10 CE–67 CE), according to the biblical accounts (which vary in detail), was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, he encountered the risen Christ (see Acts 9, 22, 26; Gal. 1). The associated assumptions about personal identity, implicit in his revised eschatology, are traditionally understood to include a self-distinct from the soul, reconstituted through a resurrection of the body and the eternal life or persistence of the personality (Verster, 2013:20).

Clement of Rome (30 CE–100 CE) also wrote a letter to the Corinthians to elaborate and clarify Paul's analogy (Castellaro, 2016:211). He compared the eternal existence of the ego to a seed that dies and becomes a flower or to a phoenix that rises from the ashes as a new bird (Clark, 1942:27; Himuro, 1998:523). Justin Martyr (100 - 165) was an early Church apologist who used Greek philosophy to explain the resurrection of the body, proving persistence of the person even after death (Helleman, 2002:128). Platonism and Christianity hold that the same body

can be reassembled upon a person's resurrection, making them numerically the same individual (Justin Martyr & Falls, 1965:158-159; Latura, 2012:880).

Marcus Aurelius (121 -180) was an admirer of Epictetus' work and was interested in character and individualism. He believed that humans are a combination of form and matter and that the soul will never perish but rather be recycled and synthesised into new souls (Adamson, 2015:71). Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. 200 CE) contended that the active intellect is a transcendental being that approaches the soul from without and is capable of becoming active. He believed that the passible intellect is distinct from the material intellect and that the material intellect of the soul can achieve immortality by studying active intellectual conceptions (De Haas, 2020:13,23; Kessler, 2011:7; Tuominen, 2010:170-173). Tertullian (160 – 230) advocated the resurrection of the entire body, thinking that God could restore it to a healthier condition (Kuafman, 1991:172,179).

Marcus Minucius Felix (born in Africa? CE – 250 AD) argued that a person can survive bodily death through the resurrection of the body (Arbesmann, 2008:313; Britanica, 2022; Higgins, 2023). Origen of Alexandria (185 - 254) is regarded as the most important Christian thinker before the time of Augustine (Lyman, 2009:425). Origen thought that all souls started from God and were equal in perfection prior to sinning, and that a soul's current incarnation is affected by its past misdeeds. This introduced him as the first Christian philosopher to promote dualism (Martens, 2015:599-601).

Plotinus (204 - 270) advocated a hierarchical view of the universe and believed that the soul is not made of matter, since matter is too readily separated and will upset mental stability (Karfik, 2014:139-140). Methodius of Olympus (250 - 311) was a materialist who thought that the human body consists of the same material throughout life and that God changes this substance into something new after death (McGlothlin, 2018:211). Themistius (317-386) thought that the soul was the source of all knowledge. Passive intellect consists of emotions, imagination, temporal thought, and memory, all of which vanish with the body at death (see de Haas, 2018; Hendrix, 2010:1-2). In his discussion *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Gregory of Nyssa (335 – 395), argues that a person's soul begins at birth and has no end. Following death, the intellectual component of the soul holds all preceding components together to produce a similar, incorruptible life to that which existed before death (Gregory, 2002:97).

Aurelius Augustinus (354 – 430) maintained that the soul is immaterial and immortal, capable of modifying itself or being modified by the body, but not being confined by the body. He criticised the Platonic concept of the soul and argued that the body is not a prison for the soul but rather a temple where the spirit lives (Adamson, 2015:364-365; Stróżyński, 2016:91). Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480 CE – 526 CE) defined a *person* as “a substance that is individual, of a nature that is rational”, a definition that was accepted as standard in medieval philosophy. He also believed that the soul does continue to exist after death and that reparation and reward await the body’s subsequent demise (Koterski, 2004:204; Teichman, 1985:175). John Scotus Eriugena believed that humans were perfect before Adam and Eve sinned and that to return to this state, they needed to be redeemed by Christ. He also believed that after death, the soul receives a new spiritual body to reunite with its source (Steel & Hadley, 2007:397,402-403).

Ab al-Qsim Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allh bin 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hshim (570–632) is considered the final authentic prophet of God and the founder of Islam (Sinia & Watt, 2022:n.p.). Muhammad stated that knowledge is a fundamental human virtue and that each individual is responsible for his or her own sin and will be condemned based on his conduct. The possibility of life after death is contingent on God's benevolence, not the soul's immortality (Ahmad, 2013:187).

Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (980 - 1037) believed that the soul and body are separate things, with the soul governing and animating the body after the first animation. The body perishes at the moment of death, but the soul continues to exist eternally, maintaining its identity in the next life by the use of human intellect-acquired knowledge (Burrell, 2007:199,201-202). Averroës (Ibn Rushd) (1126–1198) thought that the human soul lacks the capability of serving as a vehicle for personal immortality and that it does not survive the death of the body. He believed that the human mind was a combination of three intelligences: material, agency, and speculative (see Taylor, 2007).

Philip the Chancellor (1165 - 1236) proposed that the soul is formed of hierarchical, material forms. From a vegetative soul to a sensitive soul and then to a reasoning soul, the soul evolves. These three sorts of souls combine into one, but only the rational soul survives death (Houser, 2002:534). Robert Grosseteste (1168–1253) thought that when the soul joined the body, the combination of the two resulted in a whole person, and that the vehicle used to assist the

union was light. This led to his research into light, which had a significant effect on medieval science (see Lewis, 2002:596). Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) considered the soul to be a unitary entity made up of three faculties: vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual. He thought that the vegetative and sensitive souls expire along with the body, however, the rational soul lives into the afterlife. Aquinas saw the soul as a substance since it possesses form and existence (Davies, 2007:651-657).

Nicholas of Autrecourt's (1300-1350) empirical account of the soul made the philosophical world sit up and take notice. He insisted that neither the presence (or absence) of something nor the existence (or absence) of anything else could account for it. This was his argument that the senses cannot be used to explain anything's existence. Despite this, he believed that everyone had an eternal soul (Copleston, 1974:249-251; Thijssen, 2021:9-11).

Marsilio Ficino (1433 -1499) saw the human soul as the centre of the universal hierarchy and even explained it as 'the greatest of all miracles in nature'. He used Plato as a basis to prove that the soul is immortal by using symbolic thought processes (Ursic, 2015:58). Pietro Pomponazzi (1462-1525) found a way for the soul to participate in the supernatural through the knowledge gained. He argued that only faith and revelation could prove that the rational part of the human soul is immortal (see Spruit, 2017).

Paracelsus (1493 - 1541) saw the human person as a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm, consisting of a physical body, an astral body, and a soul. He was the first person to attribute mental disease to physiology rather than demon possession and the first to coin the term 'unconscious' (Willard, 2014:526-528,539)

Bernardino Telesio (1509-1588) and Francesco Piccolomini (1523-1607) argued that the immaterial nature of the soul can be proven by its operations and its objects (Bidwell-Steiner, 2012:680; Giglioni, 2010:82-84; Krave, 1997:70; see Lines, 2014). Jacopo Zabarella (1533-1589) thought that the rational soul is a function of the body and that, as a result, the human person is wholly material and therefore mortal (Blank, 2015:93-94,96-97; Mikkeli, 2018:11-14). Michel de Montaigne (1533 – 1592) was an atypical thinker in tradition who explored individuality differently than it had been studied before. He called the self the "master form", even if it was incomplete and inconsistent, but fragmented and changeable (Countryman, 2012:1-4; Keller, 1957:43,46).

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) thought that the soul enters the human body through the heart and exerts authority from there. When a person dies, the soul exits via the heart to join other forms of existence; the form depends on how the soul lived during its human incarnation (Blum, 2012:104-105). The forces that move human bodies forward, according to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), are conscious concepts that individuals are capable of. Hobbes decided that an object's identity is relational and not subjective (Zagorin, 2009:99,101). The soul, according to Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) consists of two parts, i.e., materialistic and immortal. The materialistic side refers to the component of the brain responsible for producing physical effects, such as sensation, reproduction, and digestion. The second immortal part is capable of self-reflection and is immaterial (Fisher, 2014:9-16; Osler, 2004:59).

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) transformed the world's perception of science from one that included the spiritual to one that recognised only physically observable truths as scientific. This resulted in him using the term mind instead of soul in describing consciousness. He compared the way in which an animal's brain uses sensory information to respond to situations with awareness of one's own thoughts and consciousness. In doing this, Descartes revealed the reflecting nature of awareness but left unanswered issues regarding the essential constitution of the mind. This view of the mind laid the foundation for the establishment of psychology as an empirical discipline (Berzonsky, 2004:303; Korfmacher, 2019; Manning, 2012:2,4,6,9). According to Thomas Willis (1621-1675), the human soul is guided by an indestructible, ethereal, thinking spirit. Willis made substantial discoveries to neuroscience, particularly brain activity, through his vast studies on human and animal brains (Caron, 2015:526,533,536,542; O'Connor, 2003:141).

Benedictus (Baruch) de Spinoza (1632-1677) agreed with Descartes that mental and physical characteristics are fundamentally distinct, but he contended that these distinctions lead to a restricted worldview (Rice, 1971:642). Spinoza, like his forefathers, rejected fortuitous connections between the objective and the goal. Everything, he believed, could be anticipated based on previous actions and behaviours (Lin, 2005:246; Murray, 2013:82-83).

John Locke (1632 - 1704) had two fundamental beliefs about personal identity: the persistence of individuals cannot be derived from the underlying substance(s) the person is composed of, and the persistence of the person may be viewed as a unifying function in awareness

(Connolly, 2022:n.p.; Nimbalkar, 2011:269; Rogers, 2022:n.p.). He said that, while it is possible to see objectively if a person retains the same degree of awareness over time, this does not reveal anything about the immaterial soul. Locke's perspective on personal identification is problematic since, despite his definition, he used the terms self and person interchangeably. He eventually came to see the individual as a recognised object and the self as the object's sensory knowledge of the present environment. Lock devised a psychological process that begins with the organism's sensations of pleasure and pain, as well as the decision to be concerned with the quality of this self-experience when determining the genesis of the person (Nimbalkar, 2011:273; Uzgalis, 2022:13-42).

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) argued that the self is produced by appropriating human knowledge and applying self-concepts gained from reflexive awareness (see Fahrenberg, 2017). Both Samuel Clarke (1675 - 1729) and Anthony Collins (1676 - 1729) thought that a person's soul is made up of all of his or her previous incarnations up to and including old age. Clark and Collins' disagreement signalled the shift from the old, non-empirical approach to soul definition to the new, empirical one (see Wigelsworth, 2001). Joseph Butler (1692-1752) argued against Locke's relational theory of personal identity, claiming that the self as seen now may not be the same self as seen tomorrow or any other time in the future (Butler, 1897:28-29; also see Butler *et al.*, 2008). David Hartley (1705-1757) thought that persons are divided into two parts: the body and the mind, with the mind serving as the centre of psychological experience. Moreover, he believed in the immortality of the soul and that human behaviour can be traced back to a person's experiences and thoughts (Allen, 2021:1-3; Porter, 2000:553). The agent-casual theory of free will was established by Thomas Reid (1710-1796), while Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1710-1751 AD) expanded Descartes' theory of automata to include humans (Nichols, 2010:14; Nichols & Yaffe, 2021:1,7-12; Riskin, 2000:471-473; Walusinski, 2012:100).

Using the example of a theatre to demonstrate the psychological concept of persistence, David Hume (1711-1776) suggested that the mind builds a succession of interconnected impersonations that comprise the identity (Froese, 2009:96-99; Morris & Brown, 2022:46-52). Denis Diderot (1713-1784) claimed that because of their limited psychology and experience, children had little opportunities to establish themselves as autonomous persons, but that if

they had a broader sensory experience, they would be able to do so (Wolfe & Shank, 2022:35-36).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) believed in God, soul immortality, and personal responsibility. Moreover, he believed that all individuals are socialised as a consequence of a reciprocal relationship between the person and society, which he referred to as the Social Contract (Bertram, 2020:1,11-12,23-24; Canivez, 2004:393,406). A more radical empiricist perspective of the self is credited to Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715-1780) (Falkenstein & Grandi, 2017:23-25). Another, Paul-Henri d'Holbach (1723-1789), thought of human selves as creations of nature, and the capacity to think logically and ethically is only a mechanical process (LeBuffe, 2020:8-9).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) identified two distinct worldviews: the phenomenal world and the noumenal world. He argued that true reality differs substantially from the world represented by an individual's experience and that Locke's concept of a passive mind is dubious. Kant's perspective on personal identity connects it to rationality, but at least a portion of personal identity must be physical in order for a specific individual to be identified. He also explained that conceptions are only thoughts when they are brought together by the purposeful subject, or transcendent ego (Britanica, 2020a:n.p.; Brook & Wuerth, 2023:2-3; Petitot & Smith, 1996:233; Rohlf, 2020:38-51; also see Williams, 2023).

Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) explains that children build self-concepts as they explore their world, and the brain could be responsible for behaviour. Although he emphasised the benefits of personal identification, the importance thereof was downplayed. On the persistence of identity he thought that physical of it resurrection is impossible (McEvoy, 2022:n.p.). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) felt that humans are alone in a universe of competing forces and that although some individuals might discover themselves, others would not (Davis, 2018:5,51,113; Doerr-Zegers *et al.*, 2022:1-2). Pierre Cabanis (1757-1808) stated that the brain is the organ of consciousness in the same way as the stomach is the organ of digestion, providing a physiological framework for explaining the emergence of consciousness (Smart, 2022:3; Turgeon & Whitaker, 2000:415-416).

Johann Fichte (1762-1814) proposed a scientific theory of transcendental idealism on subjectivity or the "pure self." Fichte believed that self-awareness illuminated consciousness. The ego is spiritually unlimited and must be investigated and abstracted to be understood

(Breazeale, 2022:17-21). Maine de Biran (1766-1824) held that the human ego evolves from a primordial, sensitive state to one of choice and freedom, culminating in transcendent spiritual experiences (see Montebello, 2020).

German philosopher Goerg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) believed that "the rational is real" and attempted to explain the role of reason in the universe. Hegel foresaw three "moments": the stable moment, the dialectical instant, and the positively rational instant that forms basis of the self (Maybee, 2020:3-4; Milne, 2002:63). Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) explains that self-formation distinguishes humans from animals and is necessary to realise personal identity progress. Coleridge said that denying people the opportunity to grow makes them revert to their animalistic nature, whereas loving care creates the best nature (Taylor, 2002:707-711; also see Uehlein, 2021).

James Stewart Mill (1773–1836) defined object identity as time-related resemblances. A person who doesn't recall but feels they exist relies on others' verbal confirmation based on physiological and psychological continuity and resemblances between person phases (Ball & Loizides, 2021:22-27). Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) felt that a transitive item must connect mind and matter as its own predicates and that transitivity develops when subjective thinking overrides objective knowledge. Schelling's identification theory defines existence as self-disclosure/revelation (Bowie, 2020:1,13). Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) believed in physiological processes that shape the self-concept. After forming the self-concept, people tend to view their thoughts as an impersonal ego or an ongoing experience (Beiser, 2021:237-240). The assertion put forth by Thomas Brown (1778-1820) posits that the identity of the mind is constitutional in nature. Furthermore, Brown contends that comprehending our emotions in a sequential manner is contingent upon recognising them as states or affections of a singular thinking entity (Brown, 2022:55,90,175-177; also see Rand, 1912).

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) defined sociology as a scientific approach to social history and how society should be constituted. Comte stated that Descartes' conception of the 'I' lacks a scientific object since it is destined to reflect a manifest mythical condition (Bourdeau, 2023:27-29). In Gustav Theodor Fechner's (1801-1887) dual-aspect theory of mind-body connections, there exists a singular entity that manifests both internally and externally (Beiser, 2020:31-33). John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) explained that a person's current feelings are the

conclusion of a long chain of events that reaches back as far as memory allows. He went on to suggest that these attributes were indicative of a person who was constant but dynamic throughout their life (Mander, 2023:515).

In *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, published in 1871, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) demonstrated how each successive generation gets more moral and spiritual. Darwin published *The Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals* in 1872 to establish a connection between human and animal behaviour and emotional states. He believed that animals could exhibit feelings. Evolutionary theory rendered the human body animalistic and provided an explanation for how humans developed from simple to sophisticated forms. This also provided the foundation for the organic rationalisation of morality and the inherent human personality (Crawford, 2011:167-170; also see Fisher, 2011; Richards, 2005:167-171).

According to Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), passion is the underlying root of human existence, arguing that life should be experienced rather than analysed. Humans live both inside and outside time. Time and eternity are considered opposing factors in human life. These types of paradoxes should be accepted as a part of life rather than as obstacles. Kierkegaard classified the stages of self-development as aesthetic, ethical, and religious. As most successful people reach the ethical stage, the religious stage is the summit of the stages (McDonald, 2023:10-18; Obinyan, 2014:4-6).

Karl Marx (1818-1883) argued that human consciousness reflects underlying material social connections and that sociohistorical influences on self-identity can impact it. He used Hegel's premise that historical processes move dialectically, driven by conflicts between opposing components, and argued that consciousness drives existence rather than the other way around (Byron, 2016:378-379; also see Sayers, 2003; Struhl, 2016:78-79).

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) founded the human sciences as an alternative to natural science. Through historical, linguistic, literary, and institutional viewpoints, the humanities describe the human mind. Human behaviour that is "universally and eternally legal" cannot be scientifically described in order to grasp humanity's current perspectives (Kornberg, 1972:295-296; Makkreel, 2021:1; Martin & Barresi, 2006:196).

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) was an influential philosopher who investigated the self with psychology as a foundation (Anderson, 2022:37). He denied both the conventional

immortality of the soul and the customary simplicity of the soul's essence. He felt that the most influential attitudes in the formation of the self are drives and emotions (Anderson, 2022:38). The soul is a highly intricate composite entity that is susceptible to dissolution. Nietzsche's psychology defines the self as a constructable entity, rather than as part of a person's metaphysical equipment with which they are born into the world (Anderson, 2022:40-42).

Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) and Josiah Royce (1855-1916) regarded the mind as the root of the cosmos and human identity as a question of degree (Candlish & Basile, 2023:20; Royce & McDermott, 2018:770). Bradley criticised Locke's memory-based theory of personal identity, thinking that memory may be deceiving, and that identity must be based on previous experiences, not current consciousness (Candlish & Basile, 2023:14-15). Royce believed that religion formed human loyalty and that consciousness is formed by the reflection of the self in others (Royce & McDermott, 2018:659).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) created a transcendental personality account to better explain concrete subjectivity than his transcendental ego description. Using phenomenological reduction, he showed that transcendental awareness drives material object formation (Hahn, 2012:131). He then investigated the architecture of personhood from the most basic levels of subjectivity to the passive base of personality (Hahn, 2012:239). His ontologically reductionist approach emphasises subjectivity and the world, and instincts are a sort of intentionality that passively forms things via the emotional appeal of hyletic information (Hahn, 2012:240-241; Sawicki, 2023:n.p.).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) argued that human nature is not subjective and that cultural and linguistic developments have hidden the underlying reality of the self. His primary intent was to get to Dasein (human existence), a temporal structure with a purpose. Dasein always returns to what it was from the possibility of being itself and prepares for the future by looking to the past. This "coming back" to what it has been allows Dasein to pass on to itself its own historical "legacy," meaning the possibilities of being that have passed down to it. Heidegger argues that the phenomenon of original history depends on the recurrence of possibilities of being of what has been (Korab-Karpowicz, 2023:n.p.; also see Wheeler, 2020).

As a proponent of logical atomism and set theory, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) did not have much to say on the topic of self- and individual identity. However, his research in these areas

proved that two experiences shared by the same person had an empirical link that could be ascertained by analysis. Like Locke, he was devoted to a relational view of what it means to be an individual now and in the past. Instead of trying to explain them, as Locke did, he only pointed out that they link together the experience (Irvine, 2022:10-11).

Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) contended that knowledge of the material world is objective, and that the person is the opposite of the natural being. Only when the individual can surpass society can the former offer the latter purpose, and society becomes actualised. Society is what ensures the foundations of a person's constitution, and the stronger the individual, the stronger the society (Rodrigues & Franciscatti, 2017:259-260).

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) said that self-confidence is equivalent to the self-confidence of others. He claims that indirect self-consciousness arises through the ego's knowledge of things rather than as an object itself. He also said that guilt arises from making oneself appear bad in front of others and that the *For-itself* matches the *For-others*. Existence links a person's past and future, liberating mankind (Reynolds & Renaudie, 2022:5-10).

Michel Foucault (1926–1988) criticised Cartesian self-transparency and Kantian autonomy. He theorised that knowledge systems are creative and like books reference their authors, so does the knowledge system reference its pioneers and creators. Foucault distinguished truth, power, and individual behaviour. He felt we must "free ourselves from ourselves" and constantly "customise" ourselves since a stable "real self" is unachievable (Foucault, 1989a:458; 1989b:466; Rabinow, 1994:xxxix).

The fundamental thesis of Alasdair MacIntyre about human nature is that humans are story-telling animals that respond to the inquiry "What should I do?" We join human society with one or more attributed personalities and must learn what they are to comprehend how others respond to us and how our replies are likely to be interpreted. This necessitates that a person be the subject of a unique and singularly significant history, and that personal identity is the identity presupposed by character unity. Without such cohesion, there would be no subject matter for narratives. (MacIntyre, 1984:216-217; Murphy, 2022:n.p.).

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) criticised structuralism and believed language is unstable and nonreferential. Derrida believed that all systems want to solve their problems and realise their

full potential. Decentring eliminates allusions to a centre, subject, origin, or archia, and Derrida believed that *différance* returns all absolute centres as traces. He called this alternative logocentrism "bricolage" (Derrida, 1976:158; 1978:278-279,286; 1981:39).

Based on James' distinction between the *I* and the *me*, Bakhtin's concept of the polyphonic novel, and Ricoeur's dialectical relationship between the self as creator and the self as character, Hubert Hermans and his colleagues have offered a definition of the "dialogical self." They claim that when we adopt a narrative and reflective stance above selves, we transform into a "self" that is relatively free to switch the *I*-position between characters or selves (Mead, 1962:195,154,160).

Daniel Clement Dennett III defines consciousness as a set of brain-produced narratives designed to logically interpret things and experiences. Under his competing narrative theory, which is more inclusive, the self serves as the "centre of narrative gravity." Sometimes, the brain is unable to achieve overall coherence within a single level, resulting in mental disorders such as dissociative identity disorder. In response, the brain creates multiple "selves", each with its own narrative gravity centre (Britannica, 2022:n.p.; also see Dennett, 1991a; Dennett, 1991b:163-173; Humphrey & Dennett, 1991:144-161,355-363). The self-consciousness idea of Humphrey (1976:303-317) posits that if we had access to our mental states, we could use them to duplicate the minds of others and forecast our hypothetical reactions.

According to Derek Parfit (1943-2017) (1984:222), it is imperative that every phase of human development is firmly linked to its preceding stages. Parfit posited that our interconnectedness as human beings are rooted in psychological bonds that are intricately intertwined, much like the strands of a rope. The author posited that *q*-memory (*quasi-memory*) is equivalent to memory, but with a notable differentiation (Parfit, 1984:220). Specifically, the assertion that an individual *q*-recalls a particular experience indicates that the said individual solely recollects that another person underwent the said experience (Martin, 1998:80-85). The author posits that an individual's personality is contingent upon the organ in which it resides, as well as the memories formed with others regarding said personality, rather than the physical body in which it endures. Parfit posits that identification is dispensable for the purpose of establishing existence and that it is more straightforward to acknowledge this without recourse to the notion of existence (Parfit, 1984:200-201,284-285).

Antonio Damasio postulated the presence of a neurological self, which is a connection between the self and the external environment. The core self is a regulatory mechanism in the brain and brainstem that monitors and controls internal body functions, including respiration, body temperature, and sympathetic nervous system activity. All states of consciousness, according to Damasio, involve a representation of the fundamental self in relation to the external environment, which is mostly stable despite being prone to change (Mosca, 2000:1-13; Patterson & Mastracci, 2019:186-188).

Dan McAdams suggested that identity is a narrative creation, an internalised and developing life story that connects the reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future to provide a feeling of coherence and purpose to a person's existence. According to him, the tone of a story's narrative is established during infancy, and the personal myth is formed throughout late adolescence. The narratives produced during this historical period are basic and unreal, and self-portraits are frequently one-sided and idealised. The goal is to give significance to one's entire life, not just a single event or chapter (McAdams, 1995:365-395; 1997:46-78; Zeigler-Hill & Schackelford, 2017:n.p.).

Mary Gergen (1938-2020) and Kenneth J. Gergen concurred with McAdams that the conventional view of the self is fundamentally incorrect. In their view, a person's current identity is the result of a life story in which the meanings of events have been negotiated with others and in which the actions of others significantly contribute to the narrative progression. Moreover, they believe that the activities of others contribute considerably to the narrative order (Gergen & Gergen, 1988:18; Hermans *et al.*, 1993:210).

Julia Kristeva stated (cf. Bartky, 1997:177) that feminist personal identity theorists have contested the Enlightenment ideal of the independent *self* due to its patriarchal political goals. In order to develop explanations that support and increase women's respect, they have contributed their own insights into identity to preexisting social concepts. Nancy Chodorow's "relational theory of the self" highlights the significance of emotion, desire, and interpersonal ties in self-development and acknowledges the worth of feminine traits. She feels the absence of fathers in childrearing has led to the development of highly independent, overly rational, and compartmentalised personalities (Alcoff, 1994:22). Judith Butler argued (2003:29-56) that everyone, regardless of whether they are mainstream or marginalised, possesses a gender identity that is flexible and intrinsically linked. Fundamental to homosexual theory is

the notion of identity as amorphous, which asserts that identities do not represent the true person but are rather the consequence of certain behaviours. *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender, and Subjectivity (1995)* by Amina Mama expands upon DuBois and Fanon's perspectives on how racial politics has modified psychology. According to Mama, the real purpose of psychological models of black subjectivity is not to get a deeper understanding of what it means to be black, but rather to aid social administrators' administration of blacks (Alcoff, 1994:5-22; Anderson *et al.*, 2021:18-27; Haslanger, 2000:31-55).

### **2.3 Conclusion**

The current chapter has given a broad look at the various philosophical aspects related to personal identity. The concept of personal identity posits that an individual can be considered as such solely based on their capacity to be acknowledged as the same person over different points in time. A subsequent investigation was conducted on the development of personal identity in the field of philosophy. The concept was thoroughly discussed by ancient philosophers and continues to be explored by modern scholars. The evolution of the concept over time and its speculated lack of necessity for survival were fascinating observations. Some experts in the field argue that personal identity can be understood through an individual's actions and cognitive functions.

### **3 PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONAL IDENTITY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Modern culture has been greatly influenced by psychology, as it is evident in the widespread use of psychological vocabulary and assumptions in all areas of life (Benjamin Jr, 2000:318; Kille, 2001:ix,5; Scheffler, 2001:148,154; Weiten, 2013:3). When it comes to the application of psychology to the Bible it has been understood as a symbolic representation of the complexities of the human psyche. One need to keep in mind that psychology is an academic discipline that employs empirical methods to study the intricacies of human conduct, encompassing fundamental behaviours, experiences, and cognitive processes (Kille, 2001:xi; Rollins, 1999:vii; Smith, 2004:432; Weiten, 2013:20). Furthermore, developmental psychology examines the progression and maturation of individuals over their whole lifespan. The aim is to understand the processes individuals experience when changes and development from childhood to late adulthood occurs (Alkire, 2002:181-182; Cherry, 2023:n.p.). These developments involves multiple facets, such as cognitive and emotional growth, language acquisition, moral reasoning, physical skill development, personality development, self-perception, and the impact of social and cultural variables (Cherry, 2023:n.p.; Tau, 2022:1).

This chapter aims to analyse the development of personal identity from a psychological standpoint. Further to this, the present chapter is organised thematically, while the previous one followed a historical structure. Although using historical connections to link the now separate disciplines, the subsequent discussion will be extended to include not only personal identity but the related psychological perspectives on identity development (including theories of personality and the like). Considering that the biblical narrative of Nehemiah only depicts him as a grown-up, it is essential to scrutinise contemporary theories that especially explore the formation of personal identity at this phase of life. The following sections aim to understand the psychological processes involved in the development of personal identity in adult humans.

The chapter will begin with a historical overview of some of the most influential thinkers in the field, before moving on to a more thematic discussion of different models of identity development, followed by trait models, cognitive models of development, and ultimately the model of sociological development of adult growth.

### 3.2 A brief history of psychological perspectives on personal identity

Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) developed experimental psychology after Helmholtz and Fechner. He divided self-formation into sensation and consciousness and sought to quantify experiences using Weber's law. Representation, willingness, and emotion comprise consciousness, and all representations need a psychological synthesis of experience. Representational synthesis is a unique feature of consciousness (Kim, 2022:12-14).

Théodule-Francois Ribot (1839-1916) introduced brain-based personality fragmentation. Ribot suggested that conscious and unconscious consciousness is fractured. Organisms must coordinate consciousness to maintain stability. The ego (mind) integrates conscious and unconscious physiological processes to ensure biological equilibrium. Psychology studies mental mechanisms that maintain stability (Nicolas *et al.*, 2016:527-529; Vincenti, 2020:1009).

The intellectual movement known as pragmatism, which was founded on the idea that the usefulness of a concept determines its value, made William James (1842–1910) a key contribution (Goodman, 2022:1-2). Dissociative events make hidden feelings and thoughts that are a part of secondary personal identities visible since consciousness is a complex reality (Leary, 1990:101). The empirical self, which consists of the physical, emotional, and spiritual selves, and the pure ego are two different types of "*the self*." Additionally, James claimed that certain things appeal to the primal, innate urges that lie at the core of human conduct and self-expression (Leary, 1990:107). Each cognitive consciousness pulse, or *thought*, eventually vanishes, and is replaced by a new one. Each *thought* also transmits the "title" of a collective self to the succeeding one. An empirical person and a temporary segment of a thought stream are what constitute personhood in its purest form (Goodman, 2022:9,11; Leary, 1990:111,117).

From the investigations Breuer conducted on his renowned patient Anna O, Josef Breuer (1842-1925) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) initiated a new perspective of identity. Freud was the one who truly delved deep into the notion of the self (Thurschwell, 2009:21). His depth psychology altered the way most ideas concerning persons are seen in current times. His theory of the unconscious and therapeutic advances is best shown by his concept of the tripartite organisation of the mind or personality, his id, ego, and superego. Sigmund Freud described mental health as the harmonious interplay of the three components of the mind (Sproel, 2019:6; Thurschwell, 2009:21).

James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934) claimed that imitation or mimicry was the foundation of social interaction and the milieu in which infants first began to understand the concept of a person (Meueller & Runions, 2003:30). According to his hypothesis, infants become aware of others before they become aware of themselves as individuals, and they must "eject" their inner feelings onto others to understand how they feel. Baldwin's thesis proposes that the social is personalised in the individual self and that the building blocks of selfhood are digested and assimilated during the socialisation processes (Meueller & Runions, 2003:39).

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) rejected the traditional concept of the mind as a separate entity from the body and described it solely in terms of physiology or neurology. He stated that only through experience can a person develop a sense of self. The "me" is an ordered collection of the attitudes of others, and the "I" is the organism's response (Gould, 2009:439). William Edward Burghardt DuBois (1868–1963) claimed that "I" is a symbolic representation of social structure, and "Me" could not exist without it. People are not restricted to a single, generalised other because human society is made up of several members. This establishes the social identity of an individual (see Gooding-Williams, 2020).

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) saw the conscious mind as a component of the ego, while the personal unconscious includes any aspect of the mind that is now unconscious but has the capacity to become conscious (Allen, 2020:66). Humanity is linked to the collective unconscious via archetypes, which include the self, shadow, anima, animus, persona, hero, wise old man, and trickster (Allen, 2020:69). The self is the centre of the mind and completes personality, while the shadow represents the dark, inferior, emotional, and immoral brain. The persona is the clothing or cloak we wear to present an image while concealing our actual selves. The wise old man is often used to depict the metaphorical self-associated with saints, sages, and prophets, and the trickster is a metaphor for the juvenile ego (Allen, 2020:70). Jung's personality theory states that individuation and selfhood occur in midlife, which he referred to as self-realization (Allen, 2020:72).

Ludwig Binswanger (1881-1966) empathetically entered his clients' worldviews, perceiving them as much as possible from their first-person perspectives. He emphasised their independence over instinctive desires. Wittgenstein's opinions on the first-person pronoun I and proper names usually generate questions about the self and personal identity. Typically, identification is based on physical characteristics; nevertheless, there are norms for language

use. Dual identities are not required to be handled by deciding identification based on recollections (Lanzoni, 2003:185-186).

Lev Vygotsky's (1896 - 1934) idea of the social character of the human mind was influenced by both the French sociological school and Marx and Engels' philosophical writings (Leontiev *et al.*, 2017:100). He established the notion of higher psychological functions, which are social in their origin, mediated in their structure, voluntary and purposeful in their operating capacities, and mediated by their structure. According to his "interiorization" theory, mental functions in humans emerge genetically from processes that were previously scattered amongst people (Leontiev *et al.*, 2017:101). In addition, he developed the mediation concept, which enables individuals to control their own behaviour and mental processes (Leontiev *et al.*, 2017:102). Lev Vygotsky stated that personality is the most important "higher mental function" and that self-control or self-regulation is the defining characteristic of personality (Leontiev *et al.*, 2017:104).

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) said that personality is founded on two fundamental needs: freedom and the impulse to belong. Moreover, he said that people dread freedom because they want to escape selfhood into destructiveness. He maintained that fundamental heart transformations are humanity's last chance for survival (Cherry, 2020:n.p.; Zingale & Piccorelli, 2012:213)

In the 1950s, Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) established his own psychoanalytic theory based on Freud's *id*, *ego*, and *superego* framework (Ruhs & Bernstein, 2015:213). He rejected Freud's realism and developed the theory that the self or subject is nothing more than "a moment in speech" and is based on linguistically mediated interactions. The emphasis of Lacan's theory was not on how infants become civilised, productive adults, but on how they acquire the illusion of the self. Throughout the journey from infancy to maturity, he proposed three phases of development: the actual, the imagined, and the symbolic (Ruhs & Bernstein, 2015:214-215).

Carl Rogers' (1902–1988) self-theory is a significant addition to personality study centred on the notion of self or self-concept. He thought that everyone had a real self that is related to their inner personality and is the component of themselves that feels the truest to what and who they are. Self-respect is fundamental to a person's life and is expressed in a complete system designed to foster peace and harmony. Rogers believed that everyone of us has a

focused drive to grow, to seek out new and varied experiences, and to realise, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism. The actualizing urge has two aspects: the psychological and the biological. Rogers believed that people develop their innate goodness when society promotes and supports them, and that to achieve self-actualization, they must be congruent (Ismail & Tekke, 2015:2089-2094).

Erik Erikson's (1902–1994) worked mostly with the development of the ego (person). There are eight sequential stages in Erikson's theory of ego development. Each stage presents the individual with a new skill-acquisition challenge. The stages are as follows: infancy - trust versus mistrust; toddler - autonomy versus shame and doubt; preschool - initiative versus guilt; school - industry versus inferiority; adolescence - ego identity versus role diffusion; young adulthood - intimacy versus isolation; middle adulthood - generativity versus stagnation; and late adulthood - ego integrity versus despair (Shirayev, 2017:147-149).

According to Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), explained the personality in terms of needs with physiological needs which are the lowest. Self-actualization (the ideal personality) requires meeting these needs. Self-actualizers are more comfortable being alone, rely on their own experiences and judgments, value ethnic and individual diversity, cherish intimate personal relationships with few, prefer to poke fun at themselves rather than others, accept people as they are rather than try to change them, and are more spontaneous (Koltko-Rivera, 2006:303).

Ulrich Neisser (1928-2017) identifies five phases of self-knowledge or five varieties of self in his study of the self. Each is associated with a certain mechanism within an organism and possesses a wide variety of material sources, regional and temporal distributions, developmental patterns, and illnesses. Neisser contends that one or two of the selves he recognises are naturally sociable and that the majority of information gained by this self-mechanism comes when two (or more) individuals interact (Neisser, 1988:35-36).

Considering the relatively young history of psychology as an academic field compared to theology and philosophy, this section aimed to explore the key figures who have shaped the concept of personal identity in psychology, from its early beginnings to the present day.

### **3.3 Psychological presuppositions, problems, and perspectives of personal identity**

Busacchi and Martini (2021:2) argue that psychology and philosophy provide malleable theoretical frameworks and extensive vocabularies on the notion of the self. Derek Parfit's

reductionist theory explains that the most plausible criterion for the significance of identity to survival is psychological (Parfit, 1984:210-211; Shoemaker, 2019:21). McAdams and Cox (2010:158) explains that the study of the self is a daunting task to undertake, and that it should be drawn from multiple disciplines in psychology. The purpose of this study is to determine how Nehemiah's character grew, with a focus on the character's evolution rather than other possible psychological underpinnings in the field. To analyse the development of the self, an attempt will be made to investigate the stage, trait, and cognitive models of personal identity (Louw, 2012:144).

### **3.3.1 Stage Models**

The psychological development of personal identity is segmented into distinct phases in stage theories, which are determined by qualitative behavioural attributes. Age-related personality development tendencies are manifested in these reflections, which necessitate the overcoming of additional challenges at every stage. Omitting specific phases may result in subsequent challenges (Hayslip *et al.*, 2006:115-116; Louw, 2012:145).

#### **3.3.1.1 The Psychosocial Model**

Erikson's psychosocial development theory assesses the progression of development across the entire lifespan, with a particular emphasis on the maturation of the ego and the stage-based model of personality development.(Carducci, 2021:46; Gross, 2021:179-180; Louw, 2012:145).

##### **3.3.1.1.1 Erikson's psychosocial stages of development**

Erikson describe the outcome of each stage of development to a distinct characteristic such as hope, will, purpose, competence, loyalty, love, care, and wisdom. These characteristics aid in the transition from one developmental stage to the next (Erikson & Erikson, 1998:58; Gross, 2021:180). Erikson's theoretical framework is founded on the epigenetic principle, which posits that the resolution of each crisis is a prerequisite for advancement to the subsequent developmental stage. Opting for the most favourable outcome or advancing in age does not necessarily imply the completion of a developmental stage, however, this can potentially result in complications during subsequent stages of development (Erikson & Erikson, 1998:50,59; Louw, 2012:146).

#### **3.3.1.1.1.1 Trust vs mistrust**

The resolution of the psychological struggle between trust and mistrust is contingent upon the quality of the mother-child relationship within the initial 18 months of life. Thus, the provision of sustenance assumes a paramount role in this process. (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Erikson, 1963:249; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:200). The formation of reliable relationships and interactions holds greater significance than those that lack trustworthiness, as it facilitates the development of a sense of trust in both the infants themselves and their surroundings (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Sege & Harper Browne, 2017:S80). The establishment of trust between infants and their carers has been found to have a positive correlation with the development of trusting relationships in the future (Pitula *et al.*, 2018:2). The establishment of trust in of the individual in the environment synthesis the virtue of *hope* for the future (Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:200).

#### **3.3.1.1.1.2 Autonomy vs shame and doubt**

The second stage of childhood is characterised by the psychosocial conflict of *autonomy* versus *shame and doubt*. During this developmental phase, toilet training represents a pivotal milestone that facilitates children's cognitive processes, fosters self-awareness, promotes error-based learning, cultivates autonomy, and enhances emotional self-regulation (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Lewis & Abell, 2020:338). Shame is an introspective affective state that has the potential to exacerbate psychological disorders (Han *et al.*, 2022:741; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:201). Erikson's (1963:254) theoretical framework suggests that it may be beneficial to offer children the chance to engage in autonomous interactions with their surroundings during this developmental phase.

#### **3.3.1.1.1.3 Initiative vs guilt**

Erikson's developmental phase spanning from ages 3 to 6 is commonly referred to as the *initiative* versus *guilt* stage. This developmental phase emphasises the importance of engaging in exploratory and playful activities, as they facilitate the integration of the attribute of intentionality within individuals (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:201; Sugarman, 2005:57). Experiencing guilt can be considered a potent reaction to instances of inadequacy, resulting in feelings of disappointment and humiliation. Achievement during this phase is contingent upon maintaining a robust equilibrium between exhibiting proactivity and undergoing feelings of culpability, which fosters a sense of direction and expedites the

development of leadership proficiencies (Erikson, 1980:84; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:202; Sugarman, 2005:90).

#### **3.3.1.1.1.4 Industry vs inferiority**

The developmental stage spanning from 6 to 11 years of age is marked by a psychosocial crisis that involves a conflict between *industry* and *inferiority*. This conflict ultimately results in the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of the characteristic of competence (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:202). In order to cultivate a sense of industriousness, it is imperative that a child possesses a perception of self-efficacy and competence (Meyer & Viljoen, 2013; Schonert-Reichl *et al.*, 2013:346).

#### **3.3.1.1.1.5 Identity vs role confusion**

During the stage of adolescence, individuals experience psychosocial challenges related to their identity and role confusion. The primary focus during this period is to foster social connections (Block, 2011:782; Cherry, 2022:n.p.). Identity refers to an individual's subjective understanding of themselves and their conviction that their self-concept is in harmony with the prevailing societal norms and values. In order to adequately tackle a psychosocial dilemma, it is crucial to determine the degree of alignment between an individual's self-concept and their societal role (Erikson, 1963:261; Louw, 2012:148; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:202-203).

#### **3.3.1.1.1.6 Intimacy vs isolation**

During the stage of young adulthood, individuals commonly experience a psychosocial conflict that involves the tension between *intimacy* and *isolation*. This conflict raises the question of whether an individual will receive affection or face solitude throughout their adult life (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Louw, 2012:148). Intimacy encompasses a broader scope than mere sexual interaction, as it involves the mutual sharing of responsibilities and the navigation of challenges that may arise in life. The antithesis of attaining intimacy is experiencing self-imposed seclusion and being unable to attain complete reciprocity with another individual. The attainment of intimacy with another individual results in the manifestation of traits that are indicative of genuine love (Carducci, 2021:48; Erikson, 1963:266; Gross, 2021:181; Louw, 2012:148; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:204).

### **3.3.1.1.1.7 Generativity vs stagnation**

The developmental phase of middle adulthood is distinguished by the psychosocial conflict between *generativity* and *stagnation*. Erikson's theory of generativity pertains to a proclivity for guiding and mentoring the subsequent cohort, which originates from a desire to experience a sense of usefulness (cf. Ehlman & Ligon, 2012:332). Notable achievements in this stage encompass the act of raising a child and providing guidance to a fellow professional. The absence of generativity has the potential to result in personal stasis and can be linked to unresolved developmental conflicts in early childhood as well as broader societal influences (Erikson, 1963:267; 1964:131; Gross, 2021:182; Louw, 2012:148; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:204).

### **3.3.1.1.1.8 Integrity vs despair**

Erikson refers to the concluding psychosocial crisis as *integrity vs despair*. The primary question that must be answered at this stage is whether or not the individual lived a good and meaningful life. This final stage occurs between the age of 65 and the individual's death and necessitates the individual to reflect on his or her life (Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Erikson, 1963:268; Louw, 2012:148). *Integrity* of the ego is only possible once the individual has reached a point where he or she recognises that life has been meaningful and that the individual's contribution to society has been significant. The culmination of a well-lived existence produces *wisdom* (Erikson, 1963:168; Gross, 2021:182; Louw, 2012:149; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:204). The opposite of this is the individual's belief that he or she made no meaningful contribution to society, which causes *despair* in that individual's existence. Consequently, there is no synthesis of the virtue of wisdom (Carducci, 2021:49; Cherry, 2022:n.p.; Erikson, 1964:133; Louw, 2012:149; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:204-205).

### **3.3.1.1.1.9 Reflection on the Erikson's developmental stages**

The conception of Erikson's eight developmental stages has been criticised, particularly with regard to the development of late maturity. Other theorists have proposed adding extra stages to the original eight, especially to those which focuses on adult development (Louw, 2012:149-150; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:212). In response to this, Joan Erikson (1998:105) proposed an additional stage, the ninth stage, in which the previous eight stages are revisited, but with the quotients reversed (cf. Erikson & Erikson, 1998:106; Gross, 2021:182; Mooney, 2007:78). During adulthood, individuals may relive the eight stages, which are characterised by a decline in physical ability and social status (Gross, 2021:182).

### **3.3.1.2 Marcia's ego-identity status model**

James Marcia sought to expand on Erik Erikson's work, and he did so by proposing four identity statuses that describe an individual's progression through the adult stages of Erikson's theory. These statuses explain how an individual decides which identity to adopt in order to reach the stage-specific synthesised characteristic specified by Erikson's theory (Kroger, 2017:6).

#### **3.3.1.2.1 Identity Status Development**

In order to comprehend how Marcia (1980:159-160) derives his various identity statuses, it is prudent to comprehend the terms used to do so. The first term is identity, which can be defined by asking the individual which role they identify with. A person may identify as heterosexual, a plumber, a student, a mother, and so on. The next step is exploration, which asks how thoroughly the individual investigated the various alternative identity options. This is determined by how much thought went into the selection of a particular identity or whether the final solution was predetermined by external sources. Following exploration, commitment is the individual's level of dedication to their chosen identity. Some identity options may be presented to the individual, and the individual may be more committed to certain options than others (Collin, 2019:n.p.; Marcia & Josselson, 2013:620-621).

With the preceding information in mind, it is now possible to investigate Marcia's identity statuses, which are identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement (Marcia & Josselson, 2013:619; Marcia, 1980:161). When an individual demonstrates a low level of commitment and exploration, this is known as identity diffusion. This is when a person has not yet committed to or explored a particular identity in a particular area. When there is a low level of exploration but a high level of commitment, there is identity foreclosure. This indicates that the individual has already decided which identity they wish to adopt, with little exploration of the other options. When there is a high level of exploration but a low level of commitment, there is an identity moratorium. The individual investigated all identity options but did not commit to any of the options. High levels of exploration and commitment are necessary for identity achievement. Thus, the individual has investigated all available options for selecting an identity and made a commitment to one of those identities that is the best fit (Berzonsky & Adam, 1999:558; Collin, 2019; Marcia, 1980:161-162). Kim (2016:n.p.) illustrate the above cycle of decision making inside the crises with the matrix below:

		Exploration of Crisis	
		LOW	HIGH
Commitment to Identity	LOW	Diffusion	Moratorium
	HIGH	Foreclosure	Achievement

### 3.3.1.2.2 Developmental Sequences

In light of Marcia's refinement of Erikson's work on identity formation, it was necessary to expand this to other adult stages outside adolescence. The classifications 'integrated,' 'non-exploratory,' 'pseudo-integrated,' and 'despair' have been added to the epigenetic phases as a result of these studies (Marcia, 2009:11).

To attain intimacy, Orlofsky, Marcia, and Lesser (1993:115) designed an interview that categorised young adults as intimate, pre-intimate, pseudo-intimate, stereotyped, or isolated. Intimate persons cherish the depth of their relationships, but pre-intimate individuals are unable to establish a connection in which their values and talents may be realised. Pseudo-intimate persons have the appearance of an intimate connection, but lack the content of an intimate relationship, whereas stereotypical folks have superficial interactions. These individuals have little interest in the profundity or longevity of their relationships. Isolated individuals are those who have rejected connections entirely.

Cheryl Bradley (1997:281) designed an interview to measure the stages of generativity in the psychosocial stage. This divided the generativity vs stagnation crisis resolution into generative, agentic, communal, conventional, and stagnant identity stages. Individuals who scored as generative included others in a broad sense and displayed caregiving-related behaviours. Those who scored as agentic exhibited generative behaviour so long as those involved were useful to their pursuits. An individual who scores as communal acted in a caring manner so long as the recipient acknowledged the care provided. Individuals who only show compassion for those who share their worldview and values are considered conventional. A static individual is one who is uninvolved in either their own efforts or those of others (Bradley, 1997:281-282).

Simon Hearn (cf. Hearn *et al.*, 2012:2-4) has established four integrity statuses for elders based on the criteria of commitment, connectedness, continuity, and detachment. Those with a high level of integration held firm beliefs, felt connected to others, and appeared to have a sage perspective on the world. Those with a non-exploratory status led unexamined lives, whereas those with a pseudo-integrated status appeared perpetually preoccupied with patching their lives with quasi-philosophical slogans.

Table 1 below is an adopted version of the table compiled by Marcia (2009:11-12) to illustrate the relationships between the aforementioned topics. This table combines the research conducted on the theories of Erikson, Marcia, Orlofsky, Lesser, Bradley, and Hearn in order to simplify the explanation of the sub-statuses one must attain in order to gain insight into the resolution of psychosocial crises. An individual who achieves identity in late adolescence is expected to become intimate in young adulthood, creative in middle age, and integrated in old age, according to epigenetic development. The relationship is descriptive rather than developmental at the phenotypic level. As a person progresses through the psychosocial stages, he or she will typically undergo a transitional identity status that culminates in identity achievement. In the resolution of psychosocial statuses, this is also true for pre-intimate and pseudo-generative individuals. The last two rows of the table below describe the potential development pathway that an individual may pursue when identity statuses are either foreclosed or diffused in late adolescence.

TABLE 1 - Identity and adult psychosocial development sequences

Developmental sequences between identity stages and adult psycho-social stages				
Stage Number	5	6	7	8
Basic Virtue	Fidelity	Love	Care	Wisdom
Possible Age Group	12-18	18-40	40-65	65+
Erikson's Psycho-Social Stages	Identity vs Identity Diffusion	Intimacy vs Isolation	Generativity vs Stagnation	Integrity vs Dispair
Epigenic Development	Exploration, Commitment	Depth and Commitment in Relationships	Inclusivity and involvement in care of others, projects and oneself	Commitment to values and beliefs. Continuity with others and one's past and nostalgic detachment
Phenotypic, Descriptive, Transitional Stages	Identity Achievement Moratorium	Intimate Pre-Intimate	Generative, Pseudo-Generative, Agentic, Communal	Integrity Non-Exploratory

Possible Developmental Pathway (Identity Foreclosed)	Foreclosure	Pseudo-Intimate	Conventional	Pseudo-Integrated
Possible Developmental Pathway (Identity Diffused)	Identity Diffusion	Stereotyped Isolated	Stagnant	Disparing

### 3.3.1.2.3 Development within the psycho-social statuses

Using the psychosocial statuses in conjunction with Erikson's epigenetic chart, one could hypothesise that some foreclosure and moratorium individuals would develop a sense of identity during late adolescence. If they are punished or discouraged during their exploratory phase, these individuals may resort to foreclosure or diffusion. The greater their exposure to relationships, the more likely it is that young adults who are stereotyped will develop a deeper sense of intimacy. Individuals in middle and late adulthood find it more difficult to discover growth opportunities, primarily because they are unwilling to risk losing their mental health. This is particularly true for those who have been un-explorative in the past (Marcia, 2009:13-14).

### 3.3.1.2.4 Reconstruction of Identity in the adult psycho-social stages

During adolescence, individuals construct their identity through both conscious and unconscious processes, drawing upon elements that may have been established as part of their identity since early childhood. The formation of identity is a process that involves interrogating existing identity structures in response to challenges presented during a particular stage of life (Marcia, 2009:14). The aforementioned challenges elicit varying degrees of distress for each person, and a given challenge may not necessarily prompt the same level of introspection of one's present identity in another individual. Challenges encompass a variety of experiences, including but not limited to falling in love, job loss, job transitions, loss of a loved one, divorce, marriage, and the birth of a child. Individuals experiencing identity diffusion may exhibit resistance towards questioning their current identity due to a lack of a well-established identity structure from their previous life stage (Berzonsky, 2016:268-269; Berzonsky & Papini, 2015:74-75; Kroger, 2017:4; Marcia, 2009:15).

The process of reconstructing one's identity can be clarified through the identity statuses formulated by Marcia (1980:161-162) during the period of adolescence. Figure 1 (adapted from Marcia, 2009:16) serves as a tool for interpreting the process of identity reconstruction throughout various stages of life. The process of reconstruction may entail the resolution of prior identity crises through the examination of one's identity during a particular stage of life.

This holds particularly true when individuals find themselves in a state of diffusion. Ideally, an individual should initiate the process of self-examination from a position of achieved identity status. This will lead the individual to enter an active state of identity moratorium, wherein various alternatives are actively explored and tentative commitments are made. The consequence of engaging in active exploration is the development of a structured new identity (Marcia, 2009:15; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:34).

The duration required to attain a particular status is contingent upon the unique characteristics of the individual and the social environment in which they are situated. According to Whitbourne, Sneed, and Skultety (2002:38), the duration of these cycles is impacted by the process of ageing. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted (Flum, 1994:492-493; Marcia, 2009:15). One advantage is that as individuals age, their eventual identity tends to become broader and more inclusive. James Marcia (2009:16) explains that it can be argued that there exists a complexity and profundity within these identities. According to Marcia (2009:17), the diagram's conical shape symbolises the progressively expanding scope of knowledge acquired by the recently formed identity. The author elaborates that the process entails the development of previously underdeveloped aspects of one's personality, as well as the incorporation of novel elements.

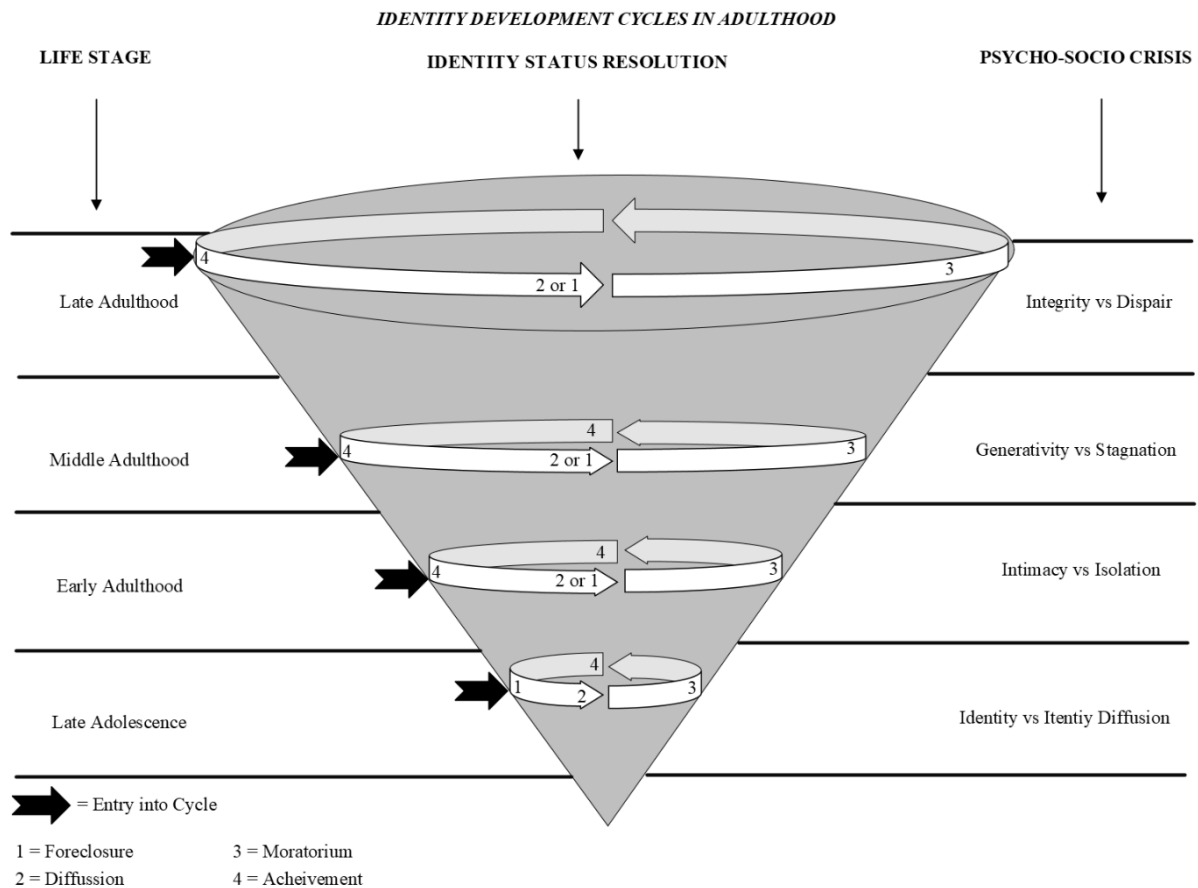


Figure 1

### 3.3.2 Life structure and life transitions Model

The development of adult identity was a central concern for psychologist Daniel Levinson, who posited a specific life structure as a framework for human growth and development. The author outlines the life structure of an individual as a configuration comprised of their social engagements, interpersonal connections, and vocational pursuits (Levinson, 1986:3; Louw, 2012; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.). The periods of stability and transition are two seasons that exert a consistent influence on the framework of existence. During a period of stability, individuals tend to make important life decisions due to the consistent nature of their circumstances. The transitional phase denotes the conclusion of a particular phase of life and the commencement of the subsequent one (Levinson, 1986:3-4). Levinson (1986:5-6) proposed a theoretical framework for understanding the various stages of life, which comprises seven distinct phases. The stages of early adulthood, entering adulthood, adulthood, age 30, settling down, midlife, entering middle adulthood, and late adulthood are considered to be transitional phases (Louw, 2012:152; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.).

### **3.3.2.1.1 Early adulthood transition**

During the novice phase, which typically encompasses the age range of 17 to 22 years, individuals achieve emotional and financial autonomy from their parents. As individuals mature, they tend to take on greater adult responsibilities, such as engaging in a professional pursuit and entering into a marital union (Levinson, 1986:5; Louw, 2012:153; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.). Levinson (1986:5) also saw this as the first step in the process of individuation.

### **3.3.2.2 Entering the adult world**

Typically, individuals who transition into this developmental stage are within the age range of 22 to 28 years. Levinson (1986:7) postulated that during a particular period, individuals undertake four essential tasks. The aforementioned tasks involve the process of envisioning and preparing for a desired future, establishing a professional career, cultivating relationships with mentors, and fostering romantic relationships. The concept of a dream can be understood as an individual's personal vision, aspirations, and fundamental strategy for navigating their existence within this world (Levinson, 1986:7; Louw, 2012:154; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.).

### **3.3.2.3 Age thirty transition**

The age range of 28 to 33 is commonly associated with a transitional period that is precipitated by a distinct alteration in one's life framework, stemming from a particular crisis or re-assessment of one's present circumstances. The individual endeavours to assess whether their current state of being aligns with their desired life trajectory (Levinson, 1986:7; Louw, 2012:154; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.). Levinson (1986:7) explains that contemporary life has become increasingly earnest and pragmatic.

### **3.3.2.4 Settling down**

During the period of 33 to 40 years of age, individuals tend to establish their role within their community and family, while also excelling in their chosen career. This stage is characterised by a sense of accomplishment and stability. According to Levinson (1986:7-8), it is crucial for individuals to identify their niche in their professional and social environments during this particular stage. In addition, it is necessary to demonstrate advancement in one's life framework, specifically through the augmentation of competencies, heightened creativity, and increased productivity, among other factors (Levinson, 1986:7-8; Louw, 2012:154; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.).

### **3.3.2.5 Midlife transition**

During the phase of midlife transition, individuals engage in introspection and begin to question the trajectory of their chosen life path. Individuals in this stage typically inquire about the significance of their life up to this point. During this phase, individuals typically fall within the age range of 40 to 45 years, and the challenges they encounter may potentially result in suboptimal decision-making. This holds particularly true if the individual experiences a sense of dissatisfaction with their accomplishments thus far in life. During this phase, individuals may be inclined to endorse charitable causes that provide significance to their existence (Levinson, 1986:7-8; Louw, 2012:154; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.).

### **3.3.2.6 Entering middle adulthood**

This is a period during which an individual undertakes new responsibilities and modifications to their lifestyle, such as altering their relationships with their children, spouse, and colleagues. Individuals within this developmental stage typically fall within the age range of 45 to 50 years (Levinson, 1986:7; Louw, 2012:154; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.).

### **3.3.2.7 Age fifty transition**

Individuals between the ages of 50 and 55 years undergo a transitional phase. During this phase, the primary objective is to evaluate accomplishments and setbacks in relation to the predetermined aspirations, which is similar to the midlife stage. The phenomenon of mid-life crises may manifest differently among individuals, with some experiencing more intense symptoms than others (Levinson, 1986:7; Louw, 2012:154).

### **3.3.2.8 Late adulthood**

The stage of late adulthood commences at the age of 60 and is characterised by a inclination towards introspection regarding a life that has been lived to the fullest or the acknowledgement of unfulfilled aspirations. This implies that an individual's development does not come to a halt, rather it persists until the end of their life (Levinson, 1986:7; Louw, 2012:154-155; Mazarin, 2012:n.p.).

### **3.3.3 Evaluation of stage models**

The significance of stage models lies in their ability to assess an individual's identity development throughout their lifespan, while also being easily comprehensible. This observation suggests that individuals undergo development and transformation as they age,

thereby offering encouragement to those dissatisfied with their present circumstances (Louw, 2012:157).

Notwithstanding the favourable aspects, there exist a few limitations associated with utilising stage models. One issue is the failure to account for individual variations in the ages at which significant developmental milestones are achieved. There can be significant variations in development among individuals of the same chronological age, which may have an impact on their transitions. One additional limitation pertains to the exclusivity of the samples employed in the studies, which were restricted to a highly specific segment of the population. This implies that the application of the theory to diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts may pose challenges (Louw, 2012:157). Marcia's study appears to have a more diverse sample base compared to earlier research.

### **3.3.4 Trait models of personality**

A trait is a consistent and persistent attribute that differentiates one person from another. Personality traits can be assessed based on an individual's patterns of behaviour, emotions, attitudes, and habits (DeYoung, 2015:35; Louw, 2012:158). The delineation of traits is a complex task and may encompass a vast array of descriptors, numbering in the hundreds or even thousands, in order to accurately capture and articulate particular patterns of behaviour. Several psychologists have endeavoured to streamline the personality traits into a more manageable number, such as Raymond Cattell, who employed factor analysis to diminish the inventory to 171 traits. Gordon Allport reduced the number of dimensions in personality to 16. Hans Eysenck's seminal work posited that there exist solely three fundamental traits, namely extraversion-introversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism (Costa & McCrae, 2008:224; Louw, 2012:159; Weiten, 2013:447).

#### **3.3.4.1 The Five Factor Model or "Big Five"**

According to Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (Costa & McCrae, 2008:224; Weiten, 2013:477), the majority of traits can be attributed to five trait dimensions, with other traits being influenced by these factors. The NEO Personality Inventory was created to assess the aforementioned higher-order traits. The outcome of this endeavour is commonly referred to as the Five Factor Model of traits, or alternatively, the abbreviated term "Big Five." The aforementioned model had a significant impact on the field of personality research, as it differed from other models in its focus on the stability and change of personality over the

course of adulthood. The aforementioned dimensions of traits include neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 2008:224; Louw & Louw, 2012:160; Weiten, 2013:478).

#### **3.3.4.1.1 Openness to Experience**

Individuals who exhibit curiosity, flexibility, vivid fantasy, originality, artistic sensitivity, and unconventional attitudes are commonly linked with the trait of openness. This category encompasses individuals who exhibit a range of curiosity and interest in diversity, as opposed to a preference for uniformity. Individuals with high levels of openness tend to demonstrate a greater capacity for tolerating ambiguity and a decreased tendency to seek closure on matters (McCrae & Sutin, 2009:258-259). The attribute of openness, denoting a disposition to accept innovative concepts and encounters, has been recognised as a pivotal determinant in shaping the political attitudes and ideology of individuals towards liberalism (Flynn, 2005:817). Based on empirical evidence, it has been observed that individuals who exhibit a greater degree of the personality trait of openness tend to exhibit reduced levels of prejudice towards minority groups as compared to those who exhibit lower levels of openness (Costa & McCrae, 2008:244-245; Louw, 2012:161; Weiten, 2013:478).

#### **3.3.4.1.2 Conscientiousness**

Individuals who exhibit conscientiousness are characterised by their ability to maintain discipline, organisation, punctuality, and reliability. The conscientiousness trait is attained through the resolution of the conflict between discipline and organisation versus aimlessness and negligence. Conscientiousness is linked to the capacity for self-regulation and self-discipline (Roberts *et al.*, 2009:377). Several additional studies have demonstrated that conscientiousness is positively associated with the development of industriousness and reliability within professional settings (Costa & McCrae, 2008:245; Louw, 2012:161; Lund *et al.*, 2007:39; Weiten, 2013:478).

#### **3.3.4.1.3 Extraversion**

Individuals who exhibit elevated levels of extraversion tend to display characteristics such as sociability, assertiveness, expressiveness, friendliness, and a generally outgoing and upbeat demeanour. In order to establish the definition of this characteristic, it is necessary to assess the spectrum of extroversion versus introversion. Individuals who score higher towards the outgoing pole are perceived as having a more positive emotional disposition. Individuals who

exhibit extraverted personality traits tend to experience higher levels of subjective well-being and display optimistic tendencies. They actively seek out social interaction, intimacy, and interdependence with others (Costa & McCrae, 2008:244; Louw, 2012:161; Watson & Clark, 1997:780; Weiten, 2013:478; Wilt & Revelle, 2009:27-28).

#### **3.3.4.1.4 Agreeableness**

Individuals who exhibit traits that are situated at the antipodal end of this particular personality dimension are typified by a tendency towards suspicion, antagonism, and aggression. The trait of agreeableness has been found to have a positive correlation with the utilisation of constructive methods for resolving conflicts, thereby resulting in a lower tendency for individuals possessing this trait to engage in quarrelsome behaviour as compared to those who do not possess it (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001:336). There exists a positive correlation between agreeableness and both empathy and proclivity towards aiding others (Costa & McCrae, 2008:245; Graziano & Tobin, 2009:52; Louw, 2012:161; Weiten, 2013:478).

#### **3.3.4.1.5 Neuroticism**

Individuals exhibiting elevated levels of neuroticism are more likely to display traits such as anxiety, hostility, self-consciousness, insecurity, and vulnerability. The concept is operationalized through the quantification of characteristics along the continuum of emotional instability and stability. Individuals who score higher on the neuroticism scale exhibit a tendency to overreact in response to stressful situations. In addition, individuals with these characteristics exhibit a tendency towards impulsivity and emotional instability (Costa & McCrae, 2008:245; Louw, 2012:161; Mroczek & Almeida, 2004:365; Weiten, 2013:478).

#### **3.3.4.1.6 Traits and stability**

Costa and McCrae's (2008:226,234) NEO inventories are utilised for the evaluation of broad personality characteristics. The aforementioned characteristics of an individual encompass a broad spectrum of emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal, and motivational traits. However, it is important to note that these characteristics alone do not comprise a comprehensive psychological evaluation (Costa & McCrae, 2008:231). The aforementioned evaluation exhibits a considerable degree of consistency throughout an individual's lifespan, as evidenced by correlation coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.85. This phenomenon is particularly applicable to individuals who have surpassed the age of 30 (Louw, 2012:162). The

aforementioned statement suggests that the five-factor model posits that individuals tend to manifest enduring personality traits that are evident from an early age (Costa & McCrae, 2008:249; Louw, 2012:161-163).

#### **3.3.4.1.1 Traits and change**

Previous research has demonstrated that mean-level changes in adults reveal a decline in extraversion from the age of 30 to 90, with a significant decrease occurring after the age of 50 (Allemand *et al.*, 2008:552). The trait of agreeableness tends to exhibit an upward trend as an individual advances in age. The trait of conscientiousness exhibits an upward trend as an individual progresses in age, culminating in its apex between the ages of 50 and 70, followed by a subsequent decline. The trait of neuroticism exhibits a decrease in prevalence as individuals progress through the ageing process, however, it appears to experience an increase once again following the attainment of 80 years of age (Donnellan & Lucas, 2008:558-559). The trait of openness to experience appears to exhibit an upward trend during the early stages of adulthood, followed by a decline during the later stages of adulthood. Research in cross-cultural studies has revealed that the impact described above is equally applicable to differences in age among individuals (Costa & McCrae, 2008:249; Louw, 2012:163-164; Srivastava *et al.*, 2003:1050-1052).

#### **3.3.4.1.2 Factors contributing to change and stability of traits.**

The aforementioned may prompt inquiry into the stability of said trait throughout the course of adult development, particularly given that these traits are typically attributed to a biological aetiology and reach maturity during early adulthood. Individuals who study the contextual factors that shape human behaviour may argue that the notion of a straightforward development of traits throughout one's life is overly simplistic, given the intricate nature of this process. The development of traits is influenced not only by biological factors, nor solely by contextual circumstances. Rather, it is the combination of that contributes to the formation of a given trait (Louw, 2012:163).

Research in genetic behavioural studies has demonstrated a complex interplay between an individual's genetic composition and the environmental context in which they are situated. The amalgamation of the two entities operates in tandem to ascertain a steadfast and uniform persona through dual means. The first type of consistency is cumulative consistency, which occurs when a trait is reinforced through the interaction between the environment and the

specific genetic makeup, resulting from repetitive behaviour (Caspi *et al.*, 1989:402-403; Louw, 2012:163-164).

Interactional consistency pertains to the instantaneous social influence resulting from an individual's personality style. In both of these scenarios, the particular trait is strengthened as a result of environmental factors interacting with the individual's personality. Environmental correlations with personality are a significant factor in the development of genetic traits. Typically, an individual tends to gravitate towards an environment that fosters a sense of comfort, thereby strengthening the corresponding personality trait (Caspi *et al.*, 1989:402-403; Louw, 2012:164).

### **3.3.4.2 The New Five Factor Model**

The five-factor model has been deemed a significant contribution to the field of personality psychology; however, there remain areas that require further investigation. In order to comprehend these disparities, it is crucial to acknowledge that the objective of personality psychology is to furnish a cohesive structure for comprehending the individual (McAdams & Pals, 2006:204). The five-factor model of Personality posits that dispositional traits account for broad variations in human functioning, while personality features that are more contextually nuanced and psychosocially constructed are directly related to how individuals respond to social tasks and derive meaning from their lives. The aforementioned principles possess implications for both clinical practise and counselling (McAdams & Pals, 2006:204). Academic literature typically employs a methodical chapter-by-chapter approach to expound upon assumptions regarding individuals. However, it is imperative to have a comprehensive framework in place to fully comprehend these assumptions (McAdams & Pals, 2006:205).

It is with this in mind that McAdams and Pals (2006:205) developed an alternative big five in which is designed to address the shortcomings of the original five-factor theory. The new big five encompasses the distinct manifestation of an individual's developing human essence, which is demonstrated through a configuration of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and self-defined life narratives, all of which are embedded within intricate and diverse cultural and social environments. These principles provide a comprehensive framework for researchers, professionals, and other knowledgeable academics to contemplate when attempting to comprehend the psychological aspects of an individual's life (McAdams & Pals, 2006:205).

#### **3.3.4.2.1 Evaluation and human nature**

In order to comprehend psychological individuality, it's vital to consider the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (EEA). It offers the fundamental concepts for any scientific understanding of the traits typical to the species that make up human nature. The focus is mostly on psychological demands, with relatedness, competence, and autonomy being crucial for social life in the EEA. According to Hogan's (Blickle & Hogan, 2020:5128-5130) socio-analytical perspective, adaptive social functioning entails cooperating and advancing. The ability to learn, communicate, and participate in ritualised social interactions, as well as the desire to cooperate and compete, and the display of aggressive and altruistic conduct, are prioritised by evolution. These characteristics could be thought of as the fundamental dispositional attributes (McAdams & Pals, 2006:206-207).

#### **3.3.4.2.2 The dispositional signature**

Personality traits are fundamental characteristics of human individuality that exhibit interindividual consistency and continuity in behaviour, cognition, and emotion across diverse circumstances and throughout the lifespan. These traits are expansive, unconditional, decontextualized, typically linear, and bipolar in nature. Individuals tend to display a unique and consistent behavioural pattern across different contexts and timeframes, which can be recognised as their identifiable signature (McAdams & Pals, 2006:206). Longitudinal studies have revealed that personality traits exhibit a sustained stability in individual differences over time. The aforementioned observation implies that personality traits are solidified after the age of thirty and tend to exhibit stability over an extended period of time. Several studies have demonstrated a correlation between distinct personality traits, specifically extraversion and neuroticism, and the neurological processes of the brain. The Big Five is a noteworthy, edited anthology that outlines thirteen personality dimensions in a sequential alphabetical order (McAdams & Pals, 2006:207).

#### **3.3.4.2.3 Characteristic Adaptations**

The comprehension of motivational, social-cognitive, and developmental adaptations can be enhanced by examining personal action constructs (PACs) and middle-level units in personality. Studies have investigated potential associations between dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations. Characteristic adaptations are a manifestation of an individual's persistent psychological foundation, which enables them to assimilate into the dynamic social

context. Personality characteristics are distinct from traits in their function within a comprehensive study of individuals, as they provide specific information and account for contextual nuances (McAdams & Pals, 2006:207-208).

#### **3.3.4.2.4 Life Narratives and the challenge of modern identity**

Theoretical frameworks centred on narrative perspectives of personality posit that individuals actively construct their life experiences as ongoing narratives that influence their actions, establish their sense of self, and facilitate their integration into contemporary social structures. Scholarly investigations have prioritised the recognition of structural attributes and thematic elements within life narratives and their associations with personality traits, motivational factors, and psychological well-being (McAdams & Pals, 2006:209; Pléh, 2018:237). Research has demonstrated that the act of constructing coherent and meaningful stories from personal life experiences can lead to enhanced psychological growth, development, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being. The distinctiveness of narrative identity among individuals cannot be simplified to variances in dispositional traits or characteristic adaptations. However, empirical evidence has revealed significant associations between these factors (McAdams & Pals, 2006:209-211; Nasby & Read, 1997:962-963).

#### **3.3.4.2.5 The differential role of culture**

The impact of culture on personality is intricate and multifaceted, with its most significant influence being observed at the level of an individual's life narrative. According to McCrae and Costa's (1999:141) argument, dispositional traits remain unaffected by social and cultural factors, while cultural influences play a role in shaping the observable manifestation of these traits. Characteristic adaptations are subject to the influence of social, cultural, and developmental contexts, and are anticipated to undergo modifications as time progresses. The selection of narrative choices can elucidate an individual's connection to culture, as they navigate between various competing narratives and adapt them to suit their distinct personal circumstances (McAdams & Pals, 2006:211-212; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993:498-500).

#### **3.3.4.3 Concluding Trait Models**

According to research, there is a place for examining personality in terms of attributes because it has been found to be consistent and dependable from a biological standpoint (Louw, 2012:165). As a result of Cattell, Allport, and later Eysenck's factor analysis of traits, the complexity of traits has been considerably reduced. This allowed Costa and McCrae to do

research on the five-factor model to offer a manageable way to look at the relationship between personality and the traits that serve as building blocks.

Despite this, the five-factor model faced criticism because it ignored factors such as the individual's context, assumed that people will evaluate themselves objectively, and reduced people to a collection of numbers and statistical data (Louw, 2012:165). With their guidelines for using the five-factor model, McAdams and Pals did set out to rectify this. They contemplated using this to solve the issues brought up by the five-factor model detractors. Schemas, scripts, and autobiographical memory have long piqued the interest of cognitive psychologists, while personality research on distinctive adaptations and dynamics complements life stories (Louw, 2012:165; McAdams & Pals, 2006:214).

Regarding the advancement of the trait model, additional investigation could be conducted to elucidate the underlying causes of individual differences and to identify the factors contributing to such variations. According to DeYoung (2015:34), cybernetics may provide a potential solution for determining a resolution on this matter. The rationale behind cybernetics is to employ feedback mechanisms in order to assess the degree of goal attainment, make necessary adjustments to the goals based on the feedback, and subsequently re-evaluate the goals using feedback, as posited by Paul Pangaro (2010) and Pangaro and Dubberly (2010:6-7). The pursuit of this topic is intriguing; however, for the purpose of this dissertation, an examination of the traits will suffice in comprehending the characterisation of Nehemiah.

### **3.3.5 Cognitive models of personality**

The cognitive perspective on personality emphasises an individual's cognitive processes, including perception and interpretation, in relation to their life experiences. This approach posits that personality plays a significant role in shaping an individual's response to various life events. The reactions encompass the strategies employed by individuals to assess circumstances and subsequently react in a particular manner to said circumstances. The significance of events is perceived by individuals based on the degree of proximity between the event and the individual. Cognitive theorists employ self-concept models and identity models to comprehend the process of personality development (Louw, 2012:166).

### **3.3.5.1 Self-Concept Models**

#### **3.3.5.1.1 The Self-concept**

The self-concept refers to an individual's perception or mental representation of oneself. The cognitive framework that an individual possesses regarding their own personality traits and characteristics is referred to as the self-schema. Schemas are integral in shaping an individual's self-concept by facilitating the identification of salient self-relevant information and guiding the cognitive processing of such information (Kassin *et al.*, 2011:56). Schemas can be perceived as cognitive structures that regulate an individual's behaviour and aid in decision-making processes, serving as the fundamental frameworks that organise behaviour. This schema exerts an impact not only on present behaviour, but also on past, present, and future behaviour. The self-concept comprises a collection of schemas that are associated with diverse domains within the self-concept. The aforementioned domains encompass the physical, occupational, social, and psychological aspects of an individual's being. The significance of each domain varies among individuals, with the domain that holds the greatest personal value being of utmost importance to them (Louw, 2012:166; Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:72-73; Wehrle & Fasbender, 2020:4676).

The idea of the possible self refers to a person's imagined future self and is also referred to as the hoped-for self or ideal self. The self that a person anticipates becoming in the future is the opposite of the self, also known as the feared self. The idea of the adult possible self can be used as a tool for assessing changes and coherence in a person's personality development. Young people frequently prioritise romantic relationships in their social self-domain, whereas middle-aged adults frequently show a larger interest with the growth and general welfare of their progeny. Elderly people are more concerned to not become dependent on their offspring for support, live independently, and show greater care for the health of their life partner (Bengtson *et al.*, 2009:13; Louw, 2012:171).

When assessing the possible self, it's necessary to take one's professional self and employment situation into account. When compared to individuals who were not working at all, people who were employed were thought to have a more upbeat view. A growing proportion of people who are employed display unfavourable attitudes as a result of the prospect of job insecurity or termination. Regarding the decision to retire or lighten one's workload, there are differing views among people. An individual's self-concept is significantly

influenced by their physical appearance (Bengtson *et al.*, 2009:21; Dittmann-Kohli, 2005:286; Louw, 2012:171).

In all phases of life, women show a larger predisposition towards the aesthetic elements of their physical appearance and a better awareness of their physical form. The idea of the temporal self emerges from the cognitive process through which people reflect on their personal identities over the course of their lifetimes (Hoppmann & Gerstorf, 2016:266; Labouvie-Vief, 2009:279; Louw, 2012:171).

#### **3.3.5.1.2 The Self-esteem**

Self-esteem, or a person's assessment of their own self-concept, is the affective evaluation component of their self-concept. People who have high self-esteem typically believe they are valuable, in contrast to people who have poor self-esteem. Self-esteem is a result of how an individual processes and interprets social situations, as well as a combination of self-knowledge and the opinions of others. Like self-concept, self-esteem also operates within a variety of domains, and the significance of a domain defines how it will affect self-esteem inside that domain (Dittmann-Kohli, 2005:277-278; Louw, 2012:170).

Although self-esteem tends to be more consistent throughout time, much like self-concept, there are times when it is less stable than other times. For instance, a young child has high self-esteem until they start school and receive less flattering feedback about their skills. This drop in self-esteem lasts until puberty when it hits its lowest point. Young adulthood is when it tends to pick up as the person begins to realise their own life goals and has a more solid sense of who they are. This tends to drop once more in late adulthood, though not necessarily because of the difficulties that old life may bring, but rather because the elderly is more modest and can more readily accept their own flaws (Bybee & Wells, 2003:258; Louw, 2012:171; Smith & Ryan, 2016:311-312).

Although self-esteem and self-concept have been found to be extremely stable over time, temporary instability may be caused by normative (like chronological age) and non-normative (like job loss, loved one's death, etc.) causes. The socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts are two additional factors that have a significant impact on one's self-concept and self-esteem. It has been discovered that these two, occasionally disregarded circumstances do have a considerable influence on how a person thinks and perceives themselves (Dittmann-Kohli, 2005:278; Louw, 2012:171).

### **3.3.5.1.3 The Self-concept and the self-esteem's relation to culture**

Joan Ferrante (2013:56) explains that culture can be defined as the collective way of life of a particular group of individuals, encompassing the various human-devised techniques employed to adapt to their environment and the living entities, including humans, that are an integral part of that environment. Culture is primarily transmitted from one generation to the next through parental guidance, that forms an primary aspect of an individual's environment (Ferrante, 2013:62,65). The prevailing categorisations of cultures are individualistic and collectivist. Individualistic cultures typically encourage individuals to strive for excellence and view themselves as significant to ensure their survival. In cultures that prioritise collectivism, the emphasis is placed on the group rather than the individual. Individuals are encouraged to view themselves as integral members of a significant collective that shares a common goal or worldview, as a means of ensuring survival. Individualistic cultures prioritise the survival of the strongest, while collectivistic cultures recognise the importance of the survival of their cultural group as a whole (Hooker, 2002:327; Kassin *et al.*, 2011:69-70; Louw, 2012:171).

This phenomenon significantly influences the development of self-concept and self-esteem among group members. Individuals who adhere to an individualistic cultural perspective base their self-concept on their personal performance in specific domains of life. Individuals will evaluate themselves against this criterion, which can have a positive or negative impact on their self-esteem depending on their level of performance. On the contrary, people who adhere to collectivistic values tend to construct their self-concept based on their ability to conform and excel within the social group to which they belong. Individuals would assess their own performance based on the collective success of the group. Consequently, the individual's self-esteem is adversely affected in the event of a group's decline, while it is positively influenced by the group's success (Kassin *et al.*, 2011:69-70; Louw, 2012:172,182-183; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005:159-160).

### **3.3.5.2 Identity Models**

Identity is a robust and deeply ingrained perception of self that functions as a guiding force for traversing the complexities of life's challenges. This facilitates the development of a cognitive-effective schema within an organisation, enabling individuals to interpret their experiences and potentially modify them. The phenomenon of ageing, in conjunction with psychosocial transformations and other life adversities, can present a substantial obstacle to

an individual's sense of self. This phenomenon elicits a sense of self-examination among the elderly population with regards to their present-day identity. The current objective entails adeptly manoeuvring through the emergent crisis in the personal life of the aforementioned individual (Dittmann-Kohli, 2005:276; Louw, 2012:171; Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003:P313).

### **3.3.5.2.1 Identity Process Theory**

The theory of identity process posits that the changes that occur in adulthood as a function of ageing are managed through the mechanisms of identity assimilation, identity accommodation, and identity balance. This theoretical framework is grounded in the utilisation of Erikson's theory of identity development and Juan Piaget's cognitive development theory (Levy *et al.*, 2002:P409-410; Louw, 2012:173; Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003:P313; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:30).

#### **3.3.5.2.1.1 Identity Assimilation**

The process of identity assimilation is employed by individuals to uphold a sense of self-consistency, despite encountering discrepant experiences or information pertaining to the self. Acknowledging undesirable aspects of oneself, such as physical and cognitive schemas, can be a distressing experience. An excessive dependence on identity assimilation could impede individuals from employing compensatory strategies to mitigate the impacts of ageing. Positive attitudes towards ageing have been linked to increased longevity and improved functional health during the later stages of life (Diehl *et al.*, 2002:648; Louw, 2012:173; Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003:P313-314; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:30).

#### **3.3.5.2.1.2 Identity Accommodation**

Identity accommodation refers to the phenomenon of modifying one's sense of self in reaction to various life events, potentially resulting in feelings of uncertainty and diminished self-worth. Moreover, it exhibits a high degree of sensitivity to unrelated factors, resulting in an exaggerated response to deteriorations associated with ageing. Research suggests that older adults who exhibit a high degree of self-concept differentiation, which is indicative of a fragmented self-concept, tend to experience lower levels of well-being (Diehl *et al.*, 2002:648; Louw, 2012:173; Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003:P314; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:31-32).

#### **3.3.5.2.1.3 Threshold experience and Identity Balance**

The process of identity formation pertains to a temporal progression wherein the assimilation of identity is consistently employed prior to the accommodation of identity. Achieving this

requires a balance between assimilation and accommodation, which represents the most advantageous strategy for coping with experiences that challenge one's sense of identity. The state of equilibrium in question is commonly referred to as the identity balance, while the experiences that are incompatible and have led to the crisis state are known as threshold experiences. Amidst the ongoing crisis, individuals are required to decide regarding their preferred course of action, which can be achieved through the processes of identity accommodation, identity assimilation, or identity balance (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003:P314; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:31).

Identity accommodation is a phenomenon in which individuals place significant emphasis on their threshold experiences, leading them to make drastic decisions regarding their identity. Individuals who opt to manage the experience through identity assimilation tend to exhibit an unhealthy tendency to deny the matter at hand and postpone taking proactive measures. The optimal strategy for an individual to adopt is to maintain a balance in their identity. Individuals who adopt this approach are inclined towards being proactive and are less prone to adopting a fatalistic outlook. While identity accommodation and assimilation may be utilised in the identity resolution process, it is not considered a biopsychosocially healthy behaviour (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003:p314-315; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:31).

Research has indicated that individuals who utilise identity balance and identity assimilation tend to exhibit greater levels of self-esteem compared to those who employ identity accommodation as a means of resolving the crisis of threshold experience. The phenomenon of identity accommodation is observed to be more common among younger adults, whereas identity assimilation and balance tend to be more prevalent among older adults. This implies that the occurrence of healthy identity adaptations is more widespread among older individuals as compared to their younger counterparts (Louw, 2012:176; Sneed & Whitbourne, 2003: P314; Whitbourne *et al.*, 2002:33).

### **3.3.5.3 Evaluating Cognitive Models of Personality**

The cognitive models of personality appear to be comparatively recent in comparison to the other approaches that have been discussed in this dissertation thus far. It is evident that comprehending an individual necessitates an understanding of how they integrate their life into a cohesive structure. It is worth noting that ongoing research in this field necessitates

withholding judgement on the model until further investigation has been conducted (Louw, 2012:177).

### **3.3.6 Social identity theory in adults**

Social identity theory asserts that individuals derive a portion of their personal identity from the social groups to which they belong. The theory outlines the mechanisms and fundamental social circumstances involved in intergroup behaviours, particularly in relation to prejudice, bias, and discrimination. The social groups to which individuals belong are significant sources of pride and self-esteem. Groups facilitate the individual's sense of belonging, purpose, self-worth, and identity (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:379; Harwood, 2020:1; Mcleod, 2023b:n.p.; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:129; Tajfel, 1978:63).

#### **3.3.6.1 Principles of Social Identity Theory (SIT)**

The theory of social logical identity comprises a psychological component and a social structural component. Psychologically, it explains the cognitive processes that underlie the development of one's identity, leading to the establishment of a favourable social identity. The social structural component explains the strategies of individuals for managing the adverse aspects of their identity (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:380-381; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:130; Tajfel, 1974:69). Social Identity Theory (SIT) seeks to understand the motivations behind individuals adopting a social identity and attempts to explain why they would engage in the identified social behaviour rather than acting only as individuals (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:381).

#### **3.3.6.2 Psychological development in social identity theory**

The psychological process in SIT interprets the variations in individuals' social identity and can be delineated into three stages: social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison. In addition, the psychological process encompasses identity management strategies such as individual mobility, social creativity, and social competition (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:381; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:130,133-134).

#### **3.3.6.3 Social Categorisation**

Social categorisation offers a means of navigating intricate social scenarios. In addition, it aids in the organisation of socially significant data and in anticipating human behaviour. Individuals within a category are classified together on the basis of a certain defining characteristic that sets them apart from others. Individuals are typically viewed based on the attributes

associated with the collective that define their social identities, sometimes overlooking their unique personal traits (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:381; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:131).

#### **3.3.6.4 Social comparison**

Social categorisation defines the process of grouping individuals into specific categories based on shared qualities. Social comparison, on the other hand, involves analysing the characteristics of one group in relation to another group to identify differences between them (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:381-382; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:132).

#### **3.3.6.5 Social identification**

Social identification is the recognition that oneself is part of certain categories and not part of others. In addition, it assesses the esteemed attributes of the category that relates to oneself. Social identification is the cognitive and emotional value that an individual attaches to their membership in a group. This phenomenon results in the safeguarding and assurance of the group's future by its members (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:132-133).

#### **3.3.6.6 Identity management strategies**

Given that individuals are part of a certain group, they are inclined to protect the unique qualities that define their group. Regrettably, there is an unequal valuation of different societal groupings. One fundamental aspect of SIT is the provision of solutions for individuals belonging to low-valued groups to enhance the worth of their social identity. These solutions encompass individual mobility, social creativity, and social competition (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:381-382; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:133).

##### **3.3.6.6.1 Individual Mobility**

An individual may employ a strategy to address the issue of belonging to a group with a lower social status by actively seeking personal mobility. This strategy involves the idea that an individual of lower social standing renounces their association with that social standing or strives to join a group of higher social standing, leading to the emergence of this phenomenon. Therefore, personal mobility functions as a mechanism to differentiate the distinct attributes of an individual from those of the larger collective. Although this may improve the individual's status, it does not contribute to the current group's progress (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:382; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:133-134).

### **3.3.6.6.2 Social Creativity**

An alternative approach to tackling the challenges faced by a socially disadvantaged group is to redefine the comparison between different groups by highlighting the positive characteristics of the group rather than focussing on the negative ones. The term used to describe this process is social creativity. Social creativity can be attained through three methods: by directing attention towards additional aspects of intergroup comparison, by incorporating other groups into the comparison, or by modifying the significance of belonging to a low-status group. This may help individuals manage their marginalised status in society and potentially improve their psychological well-being. However, it does not modify the ultimate result for the group (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:382; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:133-134).

### **3.3.6.6.3 Social competition**

Group members may also engage in conflict as a means of challenging and transforming existing dynamics within the group, which individual efforts and creative thinking alone cannot achieve. It differs from individual mobility by focussing on group dynamics rather than individual perspectives. Additionally, it diverges from social creativity by prioritising tangible or measurable results rather than the cognitive re-evaluation of the current state. To achieve change, social competition requires a collective effort. Groups engage in social competition, vying for dominance and influence within their respective domains, which ultimately impacts their social standing among one another (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:383; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:134).

### **3.3.6.7 Structural characteristics in social-identity formation**

Individuals do not go through the mentioned development on their own, but instead it is influenced by the perceived characteristics of the prevailing social structure. Societies are often bound by laws and cultural traditions that may impede the realistic progress that can be made. However, SIT does not pertain to these types of structures. Instead, it focusses on the objective belief structures of individuals, providing alternatives to the current situation and valid reasons for personal and collective growth. Within these structures, the SIT explores the concepts of permeability, stability, and legitimacy (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:383; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:134).

#### **3.3.6.7.1 Permeability**

Permeability refers to the subjective belief that individuals can act as independent agents within a social system. The main objective is not to eliminate the central characteristics of the group, as it is not realistic to completely change the membership of the group. It ultimately depends on whether the person feels limited in their ability to connect with other groups due to their current association or if they believe that they can still achieve a specific societal role regardless of their group affiliation. If the group boundaries were seen as a preamble, there would be a stronger inclination to seek individual mobility. In contrast these individuals may feel a strong sense of belonging to a group and strive to enhance the group's reputation in society (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:383; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:134).

#### **3.3.6.7.2 Stability**

Understanding that some group differences can be flexible and subject to change, while others remain consistent over time, leads to group stability. Individuals perceive the stable properties of the group as inherent and highly unlikely to change. Sometimes, individuals may perceive group outcomes as outdated rather than as a fundamental variation in group value. Such situations may encourage the individual to pursue a path of individual mobility. If this is not feasible given the strict limitations of the group, individuals may resort to employing social creativity strategies (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:383-384; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:134).

#### **3.3.6.7.3 Legitimacy**

Permeability and stability suggest the potential for change within the group, while legitimacy pertains to the moral beliefs that drive the group's desire for change. When individuals are included in a group based on characteristics that lead to incorrect assumptions about the group, the legitimacy of their inclusion can be called into question. The legitimacy of a group's status can be called into question when certain defining features are attributed to groups without any objective evidence to support such claims. Ultimately, it is not fair to assign greater importance to certain traits within a group over others. These various forms of illegitimacy can create a strong drive within individuals to bring about change and improve the current situation. It is worth noting that this action can be initiated not only by the groups or individuals who are disadvantaged due to the illegitimacy, but also by those who benefit from these unfair advantages and want to address the issue (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:384; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:130).

### **3.3.6.8 Evaluation of the Social Identity Theory's impact development of personal identity**

People often find a sense of self through the social groups they are a part of, which is known as their social identity. Social identity is formed through the psychological mechanisms of individual mobility, social creativity, and social comparison. This is accomplished within the framework of the individual's social structure. Understanding the role of social identity in an organisational setting is crucial for the individual's well-being and overall impact (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019:140-141). Although SIT can be seen as a comprehensive theory, similar to the "Big Five" mentioned earlier in this dissertation, it can provide valuable insights into a wide range of phenomena in various settings and situations (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012:393-394).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The field of psychology has assumed the role previously held by philosophy in exploring the intricacies surrounding the formation of one's personal identity. The field of personality psychology has given rise to a wide range of theoretical constructs, which explore the development and differences in an individual's personality.

## **4 EXPLORING THE PSYCHO-DEVELOPMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF PERSONAL IDENTITY IN THE CHARACTERISATION OF NEHEMIAH**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Psychology has experienced significant growth and development in modern culture, particularly in the Western world. The findings of this relatively young science have accumulated a great deal of attention (Benjamin Jr, 2000:318; Kille, 2001:ix,5; Scheffler, 2001:148,154; Weiten, 2013:3). It is no wonder that theology, which also explores the human condition, is intrigued by how this new information about the human condition could influence the interpretation of scripture. Scripture, being divinely inspired and written by human hands, also considers the welfare of individuals. Although the concept of wellbeing may differ in many ways from the field of psychology, the ultimate goal remains the same: to help individuals realise their full potential and live a fulfilling life (Hommel, 2019:n.p.).

The discussion of personal identity in general up to this point has focused on the developmental aspect of psychological and philosophical theories. In the experimental application to follow, the preferred framework for restating scholarly comments on Nehemiah's character the stage model of identity development will be adopted, adapted, and reapplied. This will be done in full awareness of the differences between current psychological research able to work with human participants and psychological perspectives on characterisation in biblical texts, the concerns of which lay elsewhere. Focussing on what is already implicit in related research allows one to provide a particular perspective that knows itself to be such and is concerned not only with correlations, but also with contrasts between different domains of discourse.

While there are several plausible theories for exploring Nehemiah's character development, one more recent theory that stands out as the most probable for investigating his growth is that of James Marcia. Although Marcia's theory draws from Erikson's work, it offers valuable contemporary perspectives on adult identity development, which is relevant in relation to the objectives of this study. Before considering ideas in biblical scholarship related to assumptions about personal identity in the characterisation of Nehemiah, this chapter will establish an experiment-interdisciplinary connection has to be establish. In this chapter, the focus will be on involving psychological biblical criticism within narrative criticism.

As noted earlier, the rationale for experimenting with such an approach is rooted in the way most research on identity in Nehemiah is concerned with broader social, political, and otherwise narrower narrative and religious identity. In other words, much remains to be said regarding the possibilities and problems arising from a philosophically informed personality psychological meta-commentary on the associated biblical scholarly literature. Additional specificity is lacking in the context of what, from the chosen perspective, are scholarly remarks that may influence the idea of individual identity development of Nehemiah's character in relation to the implied theological assumptions in the book.

#### **4.2 Psychological Biblical Criticism**

From a historically-conscious hermeneutical point of view the Bible exhibits a multifaceted relationship with historical, literary, socio-anthropological as well as psychological phenomena (Capps, 2012:47; Rollins, 1999:92). Generally speaking, biblical texts and scholarly commentary on them cannot but include constructions of various aspects of human behaviour, encompassing depictions of thereof in the form of carefully crafted conversations, engagements, personal characteristics, and communal connections (Rollins, 1999:77-78). A psychological-critical approach endeavours to analyse some of these diverse facets of texts, from the perspective of a particular psychological tradition, theory, and theme. Likewise, the objective of an adaptation, adaptation and experimental application of a modern psychological model in the reading of an ancient text is to better understand both the biblical and scholarly language in one way or another related to representations of cognitive processes, mechanisms, and tendencies (Kille, 2001:2-3; Rollins, 1999:78).

The origins of the psychological examination of the Bible may be traced back to early ecclesiastical works, whereby the word "psychology" emerged throughout the sixteenth century as a means to classify the investigation of spiritual phenomena within religious contexts (Kemp, 1986:98; Kille, 2001:1). During this period, the area of anthropology, including disciplines such as psychology and somatology, also saw significant development. The fields of psychology proper and psychological biblical criticism have a historical connection, since they reflect different ways for exploring basic questions about human existence, significance, and the pursuit of well-being (Vitz, 1999:966).

In previous eras, the theoretical frameworks used by biblical scholars were comparatively less advanced than those of their contemporary psychological counterparts. On the contrary, both

psychologists and biblical scholars offering psychological fallacies were prone to commit hermeneutical and exegetical fallacies a risk in the reading of ancient texts. Consequently, biblical scholars opting for a psychological perspective faced many challenges in navigating the censure emanating from their peers specialising in other forms of biblical criticism. Students interested in psychological questions often avoided pursuing them further, whereas others seeking to do so became associated with naturalist epistemologies and a denial of theological realism (Kille, 2001:6; Miell, 1990:571; Rollins, 1999:62-63).

Though part of mainstream biblical scholarship, psychological biblical criticism remains relatively marginal as a field of specialisation. For the most part, many of the challenges associated with earlier attempts at utilising psychology as an auxiliary disciplinary in reading ancient text remain, albeit usually in a context of more hermeneutical awareness. The latter especially pertains to important differences between research psychology concerned with personal identity development in human participants and psychological research in biblical interpretation analysing assumptions about aspects of personal identity incidentally included in literary characterisations. On the side of psychology itself, the revival of the field can be partly attributed to the emergence of new theories and methodologies on the one hand and the increasing influence of psychological perspectives on western society on the other (Ellens & Rollins, 2004:3-4; Kille, 2001:7; 2004:18; Rollins, 1999:66-67).

To adopt a psychological-critical approach towards the Bible, it is necessary to reassess five key elements, namely the origins of the Bible, the text itself, hermeneutics, the historical context of the Bible, and the fundamental objectives of the Bible. Reassessment of the Bible's origin is warranted, given its influence on the construction of meaning in the human psyche, the linguistic underpinnings of the text, the nature of consciousness, and the psychological understanding of religious phenomena (Rollins, 1999:110-111; Scheffler, 2001:151).

#### **4.2.1 Perspectives in psychological biblical criticism**

According to Kille (2004:21-22) , the engagement of human beings with the Bible inevitably entails the presence of psychological processes such as perception, cognition, knowledge acquisition, and socialisation. Psychological factors may influence the interpretation of the Bible and the application of hermeneutical principles. Kille (2004:22) addresses this challenging undertaking by categorising the method into three distinct dimensions: the

historical context preceding the book, the textual content itself, and the implications and impact of the text on the present and future.

Rollins (1999:127-131) proposes that the psychology of biblical personalities and the psychology of biblical religious experience could be a good means of exegeting the scriptures. The first of these perspectives examines scripture by analysing the enduring patterns of instinctual human conduct that are hypothesised to be consistent over successive generations. According to Jung (1960:261), the term used to describe this natural occurrence of human conduct over the successive generations is "archetypes". Rollins (1999:121) explains the use of Jung's archetypes in the context of psychological biblical criticism, offering valuable insights. However, it is important to consider the potential presence of unconscious elements when examining the cultural inheritance, transmission, and adaptation of religious motives and cultural practices within the Bible. The focus of this analysis is on the examination of psychological aspects within the literary portrayals of biblical figures, as discussed by Leung Lai (2011:8).

A different methodology for exploring the psychological aspects inside biblical texts is the examination of the religious encounter that takes place throughout the process of reading the Bible, together with the psychological encounters experienced by the biblical characters. This includes a variety of types of speech, including eulogies, exhortations, prayers, and religious ceremonies. The methodology involves analysing the impact of the religious encounter on the depiction of the biblical character and the reader's understanding of the text (Leung Lai, 2011:10-11).

Leung Lai (2011:11) agrees with Rollins (1999:111), and per implication Kille (2001:22), when she explains that in order to study the Bible from a psychological perspective, one needs to consider the elements in biblical studies, psychology and the tradition of rigorous, critical reading of the Bible. This point of view highlights the need to examine the development of psychological ideas alongside the field of biblical studies. In summary, one may assert that the application of psychology to the interpretation of the Bible serves as an additional resource for biblical scholars to analyse and understand scripture within the context of a psychologically orientated society.

#### **4.2.2 Possibilities, problems, and prospects in the field of psychological biblical criticism**

Upon first examination of the potential for analysing biblical texts via a psychological lens, there arises a sense of anticipation over the novel insights it may provide into the personalities depicted within the Scriptures (Rollins, 1999:78). The relationship between the Bible and psychology is readily apparent. Initially, the effort to approach the Bible from a psychological perspective may seem straightforward. However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent complexity of this endeavour, since several scholars who have dared to explore the psychological dimensions of the Bible have encountered this challenge in the past. Attempting to elucidate the psychological aspects of the 66 books of the Bible is a formidable challenge given their ancient origins, diverse authorship, and varying contextual backgrounds (Kille, 2004:22).

There is no limitation imposed on the use of a singular psychological technique in examining religious texts within the realm of psychological models or paradigms. For example, individuals can engage with various classical psychological approaches when examining scripture (van Aarde, 2015:482). These approaches include Freud's psychoanalysis, as well as the analytical approach of Jung, which explores the significance of archetypes. Additionally, behaviourism posits that human behaviour is preceded by collective cognitions, while existential analysis questions the existence of humans, and logotherapy focusses on the meaning of life. Humanistic theory investigates the behaviours associated with primary and secondary human needs, while phenomenal theory places the individual at the forefront of inquiry and aims to minimise subjective influences. Developmental psychology focusses on the psychological progression of individuals from the prenatal stages to the end of life. In a contemporary context, there exists a relatively unexplored perspective among psychological biblical critics regarding the fields of social psychology and positive psychology. Social psychology examines the psychological dynamics of individuals in the context of society. Lastly, positive psychology investigates strategies for maintaining mental well-being in humans (Scheffler, 2001:152-153).

It is essential to underscore that regardless of the psychological perspective used, it is crucial to acknowledge the absence of direct access to the original author of the book or the person or character under examination. By only directing attention towards the psychological dimension, one may arrive at an unconventional conclusion that might be seen as a psychological error (van Aarde, 2015:482). Both biblical studies and psychology are disciplines

that involve interpretation and have a common interest in understanding the human condition. The primary distinction is in the fact that psychologists have the opportunity to directly interact with and interrogate living individuals in order to gain understanding, but biblical scholars lack this privilege and must instead depend on other sources to analyse, question, and interpret the subject matter (Leung Lai, 2011:13). The use of psychological biblical criticism necessitates the use of established and effective exegetical methodologies to comprehensively comprehend the contextual backdrop, the textual content, and the potential influence of the text on its audience (Kille, 2001:22; Leung Lai, 2011:14).

Faith groups often exhibit a sense of scepticism when the topic of psychological interpretation of the Bible is discussed. The origin of this perspective may be attributed to a perceived deficiency in knowledge within this domain, as well as the early animosity that psychology exhibited against adopting a religious framework for understanding human conduct. In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in examining the psychological dimensions of religion and its influence on individual behaviour (Scheffler, 2001:154).

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the traditional elements associated with this topic, since those belonging to religious clergy were historically seen as wise authorities on matters pertaining to human challenges. In contemporary society, individuals exhibit a greater inclination to seek the services of psychologists for the purpose of addressing human concerns, while reserving consultations with clergy members primarily for matters of a theological nature. This prevailing tendency persists despite the fact that several members of the clergy possess substantial expertise in the realm of human behaviour (Scheffler, 2001:155).

The purpose of this psychological investigation is not to assert or disprove religion, but rather to provide light on its influence in fostering optimal mental well-being. If it is really accurate to assert that psychology has historical origins in theology, it may be inferred that psychology should be seen as a supportive discipline rather than an adversarial one.

#### **4.2.3 Psychological Biblical Criticism and the characterisation of Nehemiah**

When examining the character in a work like Nehemiah, it is crucial to recognise the interdependence of the socio-historical and psychological analyses of the text, as highlighted by Scheffler (2001:154). According to Scheffler (2001:149), the psychological exegesis may be

understood by analysing the literary text. This analysis helps to uncover the true nature of the characters in the story and their relationships with each other.

In psychological terminology, there is a strong focus on the interconnectedness between psychological analysis and biblical exegesis. This connection is often seen in academic discussions, since different exegetical techniques often include psychological interpretation without explicitly stating it (Scheffler, 2001:154). These examples include many aspects such as the sacrifice regulations, Job's mental distress, the search for meaning in Ecclesiastes, the unusual behaviour of Ezekiel, and the complex dynamics between Samuel and Saul, as well as the characterisation of Ezra and Nehemiah.

### **4.3 Psychological perspectives on people as characters in texts**

The evolution of biblical criticism has been significantly influenced by a diverse array of critical methodologies and novel approaches. The roots of these techniques and procedures are often not rooted in theology, but rather in other disciplines (Clines, 2015:1-2). One of the most notable methodologies in this field is literary studies, including many forms of criticism such as genre criticism, rhetorical criticism, new criticism (including formalism, close reading, and narratology), reader-response criticism, and reception criticism (Clines, 2015:2-12).

The classification of Nehemiah's memoir may be situated within the broad field of narratology, including both the narrative structure and the linguistic elements used in its exposition. The story incorporates several components, including events, people, locations, and their interrelationships, together known as the plot. The discussion revolves on the author's approach of presenting the tale. The term "discourse" may alternatively be understood as the approach or perspective that the author employs to guide the reader through the narrative being presented (Penhallegon, 2012:55). From a psychological standpoint, tales have the capacity to explore the basic aspects of human connection and communication. They have the power to captivate the imagination, therefore stimulating empathy and creativity (Rutledge, 2011a:n.p.). The human brain seems to exhibit a response to textual stimuli whereby it engages in a process of examining the narrative content and afterwards deriving meaning from the encountered experience (Rutledge, 2011b:n.p.).

It is evident from this that the act of reading and the subsequent engagement with it constitute a psychological phenomenon. In order to comprehend the text being read, the reader must engage in a process of discourse analysis to construct the narrative and derive

meaning from the intended message sent by the writer to the target audience. Nehemiah's memoir has a similar characteristic, which will become apparent in the following subsections.

#### 4.3.1 Genre constraints

The term "memoir" has its origins in the French language and refers to a literary genre where an author presents narratives of noteworthy events in their own life or that of an individual they have closely observed. It deviates from an autobiography by placing greater emphasis on external events relevant to the individual being portrayed. Memoirs typically centres around a specific timeframe in the author's life, while autobiographies offer a comprehensive narrative that encompasses the individual's entire lifespan (Bisschoff, 1992:286-287; Britanica, 2020b:n.p.; Dukes, 2023:n.p.; Leung Lai, 2015:157).

Nehemiah's memoir can be classified as belonging to the genre of professional or celebrity memoirs<sup>1</sup>, and it also displays certain characteristics that are also found in transformational memoirs. Nehemiah underwent a significant epiphany in his lifetime following his encounter with the severe conditions afflicting Jerusalem, which acted as a catalyst for the creation of a memoir that documented his profound and transformative expedition. The account of his participation in the reconstruction of the wall and his subsequent rise to the esteemed position of Governor of Juda can be classified as a memoir belonging to a notable public figure.

The Nehemiahic memoir presents a polyphonic narrative<sup>2</sup>, wherein the voices of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem are discernible, as evidenced in Nehemiah 2:19-20 and 4:1-3. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of the vocal expressions emanating from the clergy, aristocracy, and governmental authorities, whom Nehemiah sternly admonished in Nehemiah 5:6-13. These same individuals were subject to his final series of reforms as documented in Nehemiah 13. It is imperative to acknowledge the individuals who consistently provided updates to him prior to, during, and subsequent to his restoration efforts in Nehemiah 1:2-3; 6:19 and 13:7.

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<sup>1</sup> Dukes (2023) contends that the categorization of memoir as a subgenre within the narrative genre presents difficulties due to the extensive array of personal life experiences that individuals possess. There are distinct categories of memoirs, including transformation memoirs, confessional memoirs, professional or celebrity memoirs, and travel memoirs. These broader classifications tend to intersect, with transformational memoirs often written after a substantial personal transformation, confessional memoirs revealing the writer's intimate secrets, political or celebrity memoirs documenting noteworthy occurrences in the author's pursuit of prominence or political sway, and travel memoirs offering readers the opportunity to engage with diverse temporal and spatial contexts through the author's personal travel encounters.

<sup>2</sup> A polyphonic text is characterised by the presence of distinct voices that emerge from the text, a phenomenon known as polyphony. This occurs because any given text can be interpreted as a dialogue between the reader and the text, even if the text initially appears to be a monologue (Haye, 2008:159-161; Leung Lai, 2015:160; Schökel, 1998:178)

Examining the memoir through this lens provides a more profound comprehension of Nehemiah's character, as it not only conveys his individual emotions but also those of his contemporaries. Through the examination of this "dialogue" between Nehemiah and the polyphonic voices, a more comprehensive depiction of the character of Nehemiah is revealed. Curiously, the individual in question consistently engages in the act of prayer after acquainting himself with the proclamations put forth by his adversaries. However, when confronted with matters pertaining to reforms, he adopts a contemplative approach, meticulously formulating his thoughts prior to engaging in discourse with the intention of reproaching them for their failure to adhere to the legal precepts delineated in the Mosaic law (Leung Lai, 2015:161).

David Clines (1990:109) explains that it is evident that the memoir of Nehemiah may not accurately depict historical events. The author elucidates that a superficial reading of the text and accepting it as an unquestionable historical truth, according to contemporary standards, is inadequate. It is imperative to consider that the memoir was composed approximately fifteen years subsequent to the occurrence of the events. The author further elucidates that it is imperative to approach the Nehemiahic memoir with caution when considering its historical veracity.

The level of detail provided in the given information is as significant as the details that have been omitted. An instance of note is the appointment of Nehemiah to a prominent position in Jerusalem, akin to the responsibilities typically entrusted to a governor. However, it is only disclosed at a later point that he assumed the role of governor. It can be inferred that Artaxerxes I appointed him as governor prior to his departure for Jerusalem, as any alternative action would likely result in political destabilisation (Clines, 1990:98-99). Another notable concern pertains to Nehemiah's seemingly extensive knowledge regarding the sentiments and emotions of his adversary, Sanballat. Such insight into the inner workings of another individual, particularly when presented in the first-person narrative, is typically beyond the realm of plausibility. Given his personal experience with the issue, it is reasonable to assume that he possessed knowledge of it. However, the inclusion of this information in a memoir is peculiar, leading several scholars to posit that the chronicler may have authored this passage (Clines, 1990:91-92;99-100).

In addition to the concerns, Nehemiah expressed his decision to cease collecting taxes in the form of food from the populace. While this may be regarded as a commendable notion, it

poses a significant challenge for his successors. Undoubtedly, Nehemiah and his family possessed considerable wealth in terms of property and owing to his esteemed position within the Persian court. However, it is uncertain whether his successors would enjoy similar affluence. The imposition of this tax would be necessary to sustain their retinue of domestic staff, thereby necessitating its reinstatement, which may provoke a sense of discontent among the general population (Clines, 1990:81-82). One could thus see how this has an impact on the psychological mind set of the populace against successive governors which did not have the affluence of Nehemiah.

Although the memoir does not seem to be perfect in every sense of the word, it does present a wealth of information about his character. Despite his ignorance in the consideration of rules of the genre, it allows the user to read how Nehemiah handled his advisories and it tells the tale of a great leader who had the wellbeing of the people at heart (Pawson, 2018:698).

#### **4.3.2 Structural challenges**

The Nehemiahic memoir can be categorised into four segments consisting of authentic Nehemiahic memoir (NM) and seven segments comprising narrated accounts (NA) (see Figure 1 - Division of Nehemiah by Genre). The presence of a hybridisation of two distinct literary genres within a singular work, purporting to be a memoir chronicling the experiences of the protagonist Nehemiah, appears to be rather peculiar. According to Steinmann (2010:77), the intertwining of these two genres serves to enhance the narrative of God's actions within his community, resulting in a compelling and emotionally impactful portrayal.

The act of listing and documenting narrative events serves two distinct purposes within the text. First, it fosters a sense of unity and cohesion among the intended audience. Second, it generates a commemorative effect that is of significant value for people who possess a personal connection to the aforementioned events (Leung Lai, 2015:162-163). This facilitates comprehension regarding the inclusion of the narrated account within the book. When considering contemporary thought, individuals can easily establish a connection with this concept by situating it within the framework of their own social environment. The narratives recounted and the individuals mentioned in this occurrence elicited a profound emotional response that continues to resonate in contemporary times. The statement has significant significance, particularly for people whose families have experienced first-hand the consequences of the original exile from Babylon.

The narratives related to the wall reconstruction would also have a commemorative impact on the immediate recipients of this memoir. The comprehension of the structural composition of the book of Nehemiah is indeed logical, and the profound influence it exerts on readers possessing such comprehension is similarly evident. The memoir in question holds psychological significance for both the reader and the writer. It serves as a testament to the remarkable character possessed by Nehemiah, whose impact on readers even after centuries is truly remarkable (Leung Lai, 2015:163).

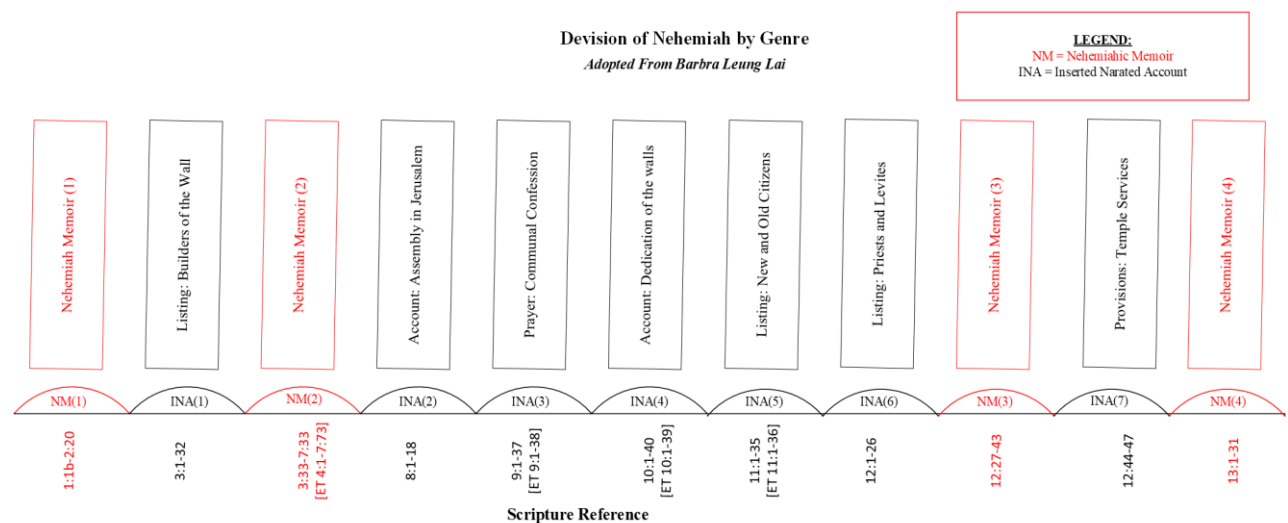


Figure 1 - Division of Nehemiah by Genre

### 4.3.3 Meta-commentary as data collection

The meta-commentary in this context simply refers to a discussion of what is already implicit in available scholarly comments on Nehemiah regarding conceptual content related to the concept of personal identity and identity development. It may be less problematic to offer a psychological restatement of what the second-order discourses of biblical scholars have assumed on related matters than making new claims about what is presupposed in first order discourse the focus of which lay elsewhere. This also means that the perspective adopted, though vulnerable in being dependent on interpretations which may become dated over time, is also flexible in being equally re-applicable to newly emergent readings. The following section will endeavour to elucidate the potential applications of psychological biblical criticism (PBC) in this context while examining these sources.

Jacob Myers (1965:96) explains that Nehemiah's occupation as a royal cupbearer made him a person who had high level of training and expertise. Further to this, it could be observed that

due to Nehemiah's high level of training, he would be capable of forming a comprehensive execution plan for wall reconstruction. This will then explain why Jacob Wright (2004:171) explains that Nehemiah presents himself in the text as a model leader. Lester Grabbe (2012:34) described Nehemiah as a strong-willed man who is entrenched and biased in his opinions, but as courageous in asking so much from the King (also see Throntveit, 2012:67).

Batten (2004:14) argues that Nehemiah knew how to carry tasks to completion; despite any kind of resistance, he kept his eye on the goal to be achieved. These may be skills that he has learnt in the Persian court. Nehemiah's political competence is demonstrated in the fact that he managed to organise a provincial government comprised mostly Jewish nobility, but also had some foreigners as part of it (Preuss, 1996:100; Throntveit, 2012:72-73). This enabled him to handle the social crisis the people experienced in Nehemiah 5, and put policies in place for the duration of this stint as governor to lighten the load on the public (Becking, 2011:75; Fitzpatrick-McKinley, 2015:194; Penhallegon, 2012:126; Preuss, 1996:157,161,201; Wright, 2004:171).

Lester Grabbe (2012:14) explains that the reconstruction of the city wall lacked a definitive rationale, however, it facilitated the implementation of measures to regulate the entry of individuals into the city, whether for commercial purposes or religious observance. This facilitated Nehemiah in garnering public consent for the implementation of the new legal framework within the city. Despite the fact that this probably was a manifestation of his own interpretation of Jewish legal principles. Nehemiah's lack of popularity among the Samaritan rulers was exacerbated by his unwavering commitment to his goal (Fitzpatrick-McKinley, 2015:246; Usue, 2006:63). From the perspective of Wright (2004:V) the construction of the walls leads to a redefinition of the identity of the Judeans. The rationale for his assertion lies in the formation of camaraderie and fraternity that arises from the process of rebuilding the walls.

The centrality of Jerusalem in Jewish religion is widely acknowledged, since it was created by King David as the administrative and religious hub for the Jewish people (Barton & Bowden, 2005:14; Throntveit, 2012). The reconstruction of the wall by Nehemiah served as a representation of the ethnic and religious identity of the Jewish community in and around Jerusalem, as stated by Mark Throntveit (2012:78). In addition to its physical restoration, the reconstruction of the wall played a crucial role in re-establishing the fundamental unity within

the Jewish community. The reconstruction of the wall in Jerusalem has implications that extend beyond the first observations. It signifies a logical progression towards the purity of the inhabitants in the vicinity of Jerusalem, namely, their adherence to Jewish legal requirements (Throntveit, 2012:78). The assertion made by Throntveit is coherent from a psychological point of view, particularly when considering the historical context of Jerusalem and the Jewish people. According to Barton and Bowden (2005:207), Jerusalem served as the primary hub for both governmental and religious activities, particularly during significant religious festivals, thus serving as crucial marker of what it means to be Jewish.

The construction of the wall caused dissatisfaction among many in positions of power in the region. Moreover, this construction symbolised the consolidation of the local inhabitants, as they united in response to the reproachful attitude of their neighbours. Mark Throntveit (2012:84-85) and Jacob Wright (2004:130) explains that the nature of the resistance to the building of the wall started out against all those who helped in the building of the wall, but changed towards Nehemiah the closer the wall came to completion. Nehemiah did handle it well as Jacob Wright (2004:129) said he could easily have been lead to commit a *faux pas*, but avoided it by answering Tobias in confidence that he is not trying to overthrow the King. On the psychological side Nehemiah knew that he had a much better relationship with the king than that of his counterparts, which could be the reason that he was so confident in his replies and stubborn in his refusal to meet them in person.

According to Fitzpatrick-McKinley (2015:253), the selection of Nehemiah as governor was seen as a strategic manoeuvre by the Persian administration to consolidate and reinforce its control within the Yehud province. It may be argued that Nehemiah's affiliation with the Persian court outweighed his connection to Judea due to his birth and upbringing occurring outside the geographical confines of Judean territory. It is then no surprise that the Judean nobility harboured grievances against Nehemiah's governorship, notwithstanding their initial cooperation in the reconstruction of the wall (Wright, 2004:165). Nehemiah found himself in a rather challenging situation as a leader; despite this he made diligent efforts to establish a connection with the local population and shown exceptional skill in his strategic approach to the reconstruction of the wall (Pawson, 2018:698-699).

The initial reform of Nehemiah included the implementation of measures aimed at mitigating the economic burden faced by the local population. This was achieved through the persuasion

of the Jewish aristocracy to emancipate Jewish slaves and the forgiveness of substantial debts. In addition, Nehemiah implemented a reduction in taxes imposed on the general populace. Despite the concerns raised by Clines (1990:82) about the ability of less wealthy governors to emulate Nehemiah's actions, this decision proved advantageous as it facilitated the implementation of subsequent changes advocated by Nehemiah. This once again exemplifies Nehemiah's practical and hands-on approach to management, which is a defining characteristic of his leadership style.

Lester Grabbe (2012:14) explains that it might be argued that Nehemiah had a deliberate intention to enforce the "law of Moses" in accordance with his own worldview. Grabbe (2012:14) supports his theoretical framework by including evidence that a significant portion of the written text of the Torah, as is now known, emerged during the latter period of Persian governance. This implies that Nehemiah or Ezra had the authority to interpret and apply the "law" according to their own discretion or their understanding of the oral tradition surrounding its implementation. Psychologically, it is important to recognise that Nehemiah had a high degree of training and held a position of power that enabled him to effectively implement the changes. In addition, Nehemiah spent a significant amount of time inside the Persian court during the reign of Artaxerxes, which likely facilitated the acquisition of governance-related expertise (Grabbe, 2012:14).

It is reasonable to assume that Jewish men, who were married to women from other nations, were reluctant to readily relinquish their spouses and children. In a modern society this is difficult to imagine, but society has become more in touch with what is right and what is wrong from a humanistic point of view. However, Jewish men were asked to abandon their current family relationships as described in Nehemiah 13. Here, Nehemiah exhibits behaviour driven by frustration, which may be uncharacteristic of him. Nehemiah, fuelled by exasperation, demonstrated his fury by violently grasping the hair of some individuals and commanding them to swear an oath to God. This pledge explicitly forbade them from allowing their sons and daughters to marry persons from other countries (cf. Nehemiah 13:25). This behaviour is a significant deviation from his prior attitude, as he openly exhibits his fury for the first time in the book. The outburst demonstrates his increased frustration and disillusionment towards the people for whom he had previously risked his life by requesting the King's assistance in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

It may be inferred from this passage that Nehemiah had a premonition that the children of Israel will regress into their previous patterns of transgression against God. Consequently, such an outcome would result in the subsequent devastation of both Jerusalem and the temple. To confirm this suspicion, Nehemiah used the figure of King Solomon, who had divine favour and ruled as King of Israel, to illustrate how his association with foreign women led him astray. They convinced him that participating in the worship of other deities for the purpose of cultural appreciation would not result in any negative consequences from the God of Israel.

#### **4.4 Applying James Marcia's ego-identity formation theory to analyse Nehemiah's character**

Marcia's theory of personal identity formation suggests that people form their sense of self by considering several aspects, including their cultural background, career choices, family connections, and societal positions (e.g., parent, grandparent, mentor, etc.). The person should be put in a moratorium condition, and only when all possible options are considered, a sense of identity will be achieved (Marcia & Josselson, 2013:620-621; Marcia, 1980:159-160). The aim of using James Marcia's theory is to ascertain the outcomes that might arise from applying this framework to the book of Nehemiah. This analysis would provide individuals with a clearer understanding of the feasibility of this approach, the potential opportunities it presents in this specific context, the obstacles that may occur, and the implications it may have for biblical studies.

##### **4.4.1 Nehemiah's psychosocial development through the lens of Marcia's theories**

As the narrative commences, it is said that the character Nehemiah had the prestigious position of cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I, during which period his brother hailing from the Judean territory paid a visit. Moreover, during the course of this discourse, Nehemiah gained an understanding of the degraded state of Jerusalem, which afterwards evoked a reaction inside Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 1:1-10). Taking Marcia's model into consideration, Nehemiah experiences a sense of crisis upon receiving news of the dire condition of Jerusalem from his brother. The author examines this problem by reflecting on it via prayer, as seen in Nehemiah 1:5-10, Nehemiah 2:4 and Nehemiah 2:8b.

Additionally, it seems that he deliberately delayed expressing his sadness in the presence of the king. Nehemiah's brother paid him a visit during the month of Kislev, while the opportunity to present his situation before the monarch only occurred in the month of Nissan, as seen in

Nehemiah 1: 1 and Nehemiah 2:1. Kislev is positioned as the third month within this calendar, while Nisan holds the seventh position. If one considers that each month for this calendar is between 28 to 30 days, this was a period of more or less 120 days that Nehemiah pondered about this devastating news (Bible, 2020:353; Vaux, 1961:185-188).

It should be noted that the role of a cupbearer in the Achaemenid court was one of significant trust and responsibility (Sallaberger, 2019:98). As a servant of the King of Persia, Nehemiah was required to maintain professional decorum when interacting with the King (Llewellyn Jones, 2021: 1040-1041). Being aware of the King's determination to maintain his authority might have heightened the worry during the situation that Nehemiah faced. In Nehemiah 2:1b - 2:2a, Nehemiah clearly declares that he had never shown sadness in front of the king when he presented him with the wine. This remark seeks to express the significant influence that the status of Jerusalem has had on Nehemiah, as well as the imminent crisis that motivates him to act. It also highlights how Nehemiah's character is shaped by his understanding of the potential repercussions of misbehaving in the presence of the king in his court.

In Nehemiah 2:2 Artaxerxes noticed that Nehemiah is sad, what is quite noticeable is to see that the king knows that he was not ill, but sad at heart and this kind of behaviour of the king is consistent with what historians wrote about him (Gottheil & Mayer, 2021:145; Rollinger & Degen, 2021:447). The first portion of the book of Nehemiah thus provides clear evidence of a positive connection between Nehemiah and the King, for otherwise the king would not have expressed empathy in response to a change in the demeanour of Nehemiah.

Taking the duration from when Nehemiah's brother broke the news to when he asked the king for leave for Jerusalem, one may also posit that Nehemiah perhaps underwent what would be called a phase of moratorium, in which he was afforded the opportunity to meticulously deliberate over many potential courses of action for his particular crisis. One has to consider that his identity is assumed to already have been one of an individual presented as insightful and complex by the time the crisis arose in his life (Flum, 1994:492-493; Marcia, 2009:15). Further to this, the process of the identity crisis Nehemiah had in his life might be caused by previous undeveloped aspects in a personality as well as the incorporation of novel elements into the character (Marcia, 2009:17).

The psychological maturity of the character of Nehemiah is implicit in his response to the king, as he candidly expresses: "... Why should my face not look sad when the city where my

ancestors are buried lies in ruin, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" (cf. Neh. 2:3). There are two key observations that can be made from this discourse. Firstly, it highlights the interpersonal dynamics between Artaxerxes and Nehemiah, highlighting the human dimension of their relationship. Secondly, it signifies the culmination of Nehemiah's predicament, as it is now openly acknowledged and brought to the forefront. In response to the aforementioned comment, the monarch proceeded to enquire about the specific requirements of Nehemiah, presumably with the intention of ascertaining if he might aid in restoring the cupbearer's favourable mental disposition. Nehemiah's answer to this inquiry suggests that he engaged in an extensive planning process, with a clear understanding of the necessary steps to accomplish the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Additionally, this endeavour might be seen as a means of restoring his personal identity on a psychological level (cf. Neh. 2:5-10; Bradley, 1997:281-282).

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, the character of Nehemiah's identity assumes the persistence of traits that comprise the same individual presented previously. Even so, or perhaps for this reason, he chose to maintain the confidentiality of his presence in the city. He deliberately limited the number of the cavalry accompanying him to just a few individuals, as they embarked on a nocturnal inspection of the walls. This strategic approach aimed to minimise any potential suspicion among the local population, as referenced in the Book of Nehemiah, verses 2:11-20. Subsequently, he mobilises the local populace and presents a well-crafted proposition to the residents, demonstrating considerable political acumen, likely acquired during his extensive tenure in the royal court. In addition, it can be seen that Nehemiah assumes the role of an organiser in the reconstruction of the wall, as shown in Nehemiah Chapter 3. Nehemiah therefore attains a new sense of self as the supervisor of the construction of the wall others (Collin, 2019:n.p.; Marcia & Josselson, 2013:620-621; Marcia, 1980:159-160).

However, as soon as the building of the wall commences, the character of Nehemiah experiences challenges to his new identity in the from the governors in the surrounding areas like Samaria (cf. Neh. 4; Wright, 2004:129). He reports that there was a sense of hostility towards the builders, and although Nehemiah did not see it as idle threats, one gets the idea that it was just that, seeing as no reports of attacks had been made. Despite this, Nehemiah posted guards day and night for the building of the wall to continue. This seems to assume a

psychological ploy on the part of Nehemiah to encourage the builders to work without being concerned about their safety. In addition, Nehemiah exhorted the builders every time by explaining that the God of Israel is on their side. The assumption here is that of an individual whose identity is having developed great leadership skills during his tenure in the Persian court (Rollinger & Degen, 2021:449; Shea, 2001:85; White, 2023:120-121).

In the fifth chapter of the book, Nehemiah's character asserts that he has been designated as the governor of Judah. It makes personal and political sense for Artaxerxes to appoint Nehemiah as governor from the outset, seeing as he would be able to convene the aristocrats and engage in discussions pertaining to taxation and overall government as seen in Chapter 4 (Myers, 1965:LIII; Penhallegon, 2012:190; Wright, 2004:172). The establishment of Nehemiah's professional identity as governor is evident at this juncture, and it is further solidified by his refutation of Sanballat's claims in Chapter 6, whereby he asserts that the notions propagated by Sanballat are only figments of his imagination (cf. Neh. 5:14 and Neh. 6:8).

The assumption is that Nehemiah has effectively navigated the shift from his previous role as cupbearer to his current one as governor of Judah. This, according to the theory of Marcia, is a step closer to the resolution of his crises and the establishment of his new identity as the restorer of the city of Jerusalem (Berzonsky & Adam, 1999:558; Collins, 2018; Marcia, 1980:161-162). In this the rebuilding of the walls would become the legacy of Nehemiah, so in this sense one could say that Nehemiah had the longing to leave a positive contribution to his people. This falls typically in the psychosocial crisis individuals experience as described by Erikson as *generativity vs. stagnation* (Marcia, 2009:17).

It is with this in mind that one needs to consider that in terms of identity development, the character of Nehemiah is assumed as having had the opportunity to choose between action and stagnation. He could have remained in his role as cupbearer, a decision that would not have been unfavourable for him. Instead, he decided to stand up and leave a legacy for the next generation, which is typical of people in middle adulthood (Ehlman & Ligon, 2012:332). Failure to address the challenges of being generative in this developmental phase can lead to profound psychological distress in the future, which at face value would not have been the case for Nehemiah, as he seems to have taken on the challenge rather than doing nothing

about it (Erikson, 1963:267; 1964:131; Gross, 2021:182; Louw, 2012:148; Meyer & Viljoen, 2013:204).

Although it is understandable to empathise with those who were forced to confront the difficult decision of leaving their established families, it is important to consider the perspective of Nehemiah (cf. Nehemiah 13). The character is presented as having voluntarily relinquished his prestigious role beside the then most powerful man on the planet in order to undertake the task of revitalising his community's cultural legacy. However, despite the implementation of reforms introduced by him and Ezra, the populace shown reluctance to adhere to these changes. It is important to note that for Nehemiah this was a huge sacrifice not only psychologically but also physically. Nehemiah saw the reforms as necessary to implement and ensure the future sustainability of the long-term survival of the newly rebuilt community in Jerusalem, and thus the guarantee of a legacy left by a remarkable leader, i.e., Nehemiah (Marcia, 2009:11-12).

Considering Marcia's perspective, one may argue that Nehemiah's endeavour to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem represents a quest to fulfil the desire to establish a lasting legacy (Marcia, 2009:11-12). This could be due to his presumed status in the royal court, which could have rendered him incapable of leaving a hereditary legacy of his own. This lack of leaving a remarkable legacy of his own could naturally lead to the common psychological crises encountered throughout middle age, known as the conflict between generativity and stagnation (Marcia, 2009:17). The actions shown by Nehemiah are indicative of this by his persistent efforts to assist the local population in their pursuit of a constructive trajectory and his desire to be also remembered by his God, as he expressed it in Nehemiah 5:19, 13:14, 13:21c, and 13:31b.

#### **4.4.2 Marcia's perspective and the theological issues in Nehemiah**

With the above comments in mind, when experimenting with a theoretical framework such as Marcia's identity theory in the context of the biblical text of Nehemiah, one needs to apply personal identity and theological perspectives on Nehemiah.

The significance of Nehemiah's name lies in his role as a divine emissary, tasked with providing solace to the Jewish community following their distressing exile at the hands of the Babylonians. Nehemiah is portrayed to the reader as a character who exudes positivity and emanates a sense of joy, as Nehemiah himself writes, 'Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is

your strength' (cf. Neh. 8:10b). Nehemiah exhibits several virtues that are worthy of observation, including a devout commitment to prayer, a pragmatic approach to problem solving, a compassionate disposition, and a sociable nature (Pawson, 2018:698).

Despite the theological loaded name given to Nehemiah, Jacob Wright (2004:9) explains that if one thinks about the Nehemiahic text one could argue that as a cupbearer Nehemiah would have a Persian education as background. He expands his argument and explain that it would thus be difficult to believe that he would be capable of the Masoretic theological utterances that he makes in his prayers to God. Sallaberger (2019:99-100) explains that the cupbearer would be present at religious gatherings and would definitely know how to formulate prayers to a deity. Even if this is true, it would be a bold statement to go as far as to say that he would not know how to compile Masoretic text, as we do not have allotted knowledge of Nehemiah's childhood upbringing. Jewish tradition dictates that a boy would be trained in the Jewish traditions before he would enter the world of work (Curtis, 1903:424-426; Schniedewind, 2023:n.p.; Schoeman, 1997:412-413).

This kind of thinking draws one into the Nehemiahic text, as Barbara Leung Lai (2015:158) explains that the memoir should not only be regarded as a historical artefact, but it should be lived through. The text assumes the role of a psychological encounter in which the reader is immersed in an emotional expedition alongside the protagonist, witnessing their growth and evolution of the Nehemiahic character. Leung Lai (2015:158) explains that the memoir effectively conveys intense emotional language directed towards the readers of the text.

Nehemiah appears to demonstrate a desire to rationalise the emotions he experiences and the actions he undertakes for the purpose of improving the community. The act of seeking validation from both God and one's peers gives rise to a psychological crisis, as highlighted by Leung Lai (2015:159). Nehemiah becomes aware of the dilapidated condition of Jerusalem and privately laments the devastation inflicted upon the city and its inhabitants, opting not to disclose his sorrow to the King. The initial point of crisis for the individual is where his loyal character becomes evident.

In the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah engages in a prayer for his God, wherein he refers to himself as the servant of God on three separate occasions. This prayer specifically pertains to the city of Jerusalem, as documented in Nehemiah 1:5-11. The concluding statement of Chapter 11 is the phrase "I was cupbearer to the king," which stands alone as the final thought.

Nehemiah appears to express the notion that after a sincere and emotionally charged prayer, he found himself in possession of a significant role that could potentially lead to difficulties if they were to extend assistance to their community. He exhibited a notable level of respect towards Artaxerxes I, as evidenced by his admission of being "much afraid" (cf. 2:1b) upon the king's inquiry about his melancholy state. In verse 2:5, Nehemiah proceeds to elucidate his stance and avow his allegiance to the monarch, positioning himself as a devoted servant. In this passage, the primary psychological dilemma faced by the individual is the conflict between his allegiance to his present occupation under the king and the opportunity to serve as the governor of Judah in the task of reconstructing the wall (Leung Lai, 2015:159).

Samuel Balentine (1993:29) explains that the use of prayer as a literary device may serve to characterise both the deity being addressed and the individual engaging in the act of prayer. In addition, it presents intellectual and theological points of view about the relationship between God and the prayerful individual. Prayer is a communicative act that constitutes a significant component within the literary composition of the book of Nehemiah. According to Boda (2012:274-275), there are seven potential applications for this concept. The advancement of the storyline is one notable function, followed by the expression of the narrator's ideological message and, moreover, the provision of an alternative perspective distinct from that of the narrator. Characterisation may be used to give incentive for further actions as well as to produce dramatic impact within a text. Additionally, it serves as a means to provide additional information on choices made or policies applied.

Nehemiah consists of larger penitential prayers in Neh. 1:5-11 and Neh. 9:6-37 and scattered throughout the book one finds the prayers of remembrance or the so-called *zkr*-prayers (Häusl, 2019:56). These types of prayers function as a recalling, remembrance by and acknowledging of the presence of God the individual reflects about their own identity (Daffern, 2014:i). In the book of Nehemiah one will find that prayer is preceded by a crisis and then it will be followed with a course of action (Boda, 2012:277). Maria Häusl (2019:77) is of the opinion that the prayers before Nehemiah's actions give the impression that it is ordained by God, which is confirmed by the prayers in Neh. 2:4 and 4:3 [4:9]. In addition, this the *zkr*-prayers presents the expectation of justice of God, and the remembrance of God is important for the well-being of the people. It is not the remembrance of only the retribution of God, but also his goodness, that is key in the prayers of Nehemiah.

Upon closer examination of the extended prayers said by Nehemiah, it becomes apparent that he employs this practise as a means of contemplating the potential causes for the current condition of the Jewish community (cf. Neh. 1:5-11; 9:5-37). Nehemiah demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of the historical narrative of Israel and proceeds to request atonement for the transgressions committed by his ancestors. In addition, he expresses admiration for the divine attributes of mercy and grace. In this passage, the concept of remembrance is emphasised, highlighting the need to recall not just negative aspects but also positive ones. Additionally, it underscores the significance of acknowledging the acts of individuals in the present circumstances (Häusl, 2019:76-77). According to Boda (2012:277), it is customary for prayers in Nehemiah to be accompanied by subsequent actions. This practise suggests that Nehemiah engages in a dialogue with God to address the situation at hand before making any decisions about the appropriate course of action. The portrayal of Nehemiah in this narrative highlights his piety and solidifies his role as a spiritual leader who had a steadfast faith in the capability of forgiveness of YHWH.

When examining Nehemiah's theological actions via Marcia's lens, it can be argued that Nehemiah uses prayer as a successful means to navigate the moratorium stage of the identity construction process (Marcia, 2009:17). One might even infer that Nehemiah was knowledgeable about the Jewish traditions, which shows that he must have a solid identity formed as a Jewish man before he started on the journey to build the wall. From Marcia's point of view, he achieved a solid identity before embarking on his journey and must have resolved the crisis of intimacy versus isolation in early adulthood. This allows Nehemiah to work on the challenges that middle adulthood would table. Nehemiah first identified as the cupbearer to the king (Neh. 1:11), then he asked the king to be the overseer of the rebuilding of the wall (Neh. 2), then he became governor (Neh. 5) and went back to be cupbearer (Neh. 12-13) and returns for another stint as governor before he returns for good to the king (Neh. 13). Nehemiah appears to embody a thoughtful disposition, one that refrains from hastily committing to a solution without first contemplating the various options and the potential consequences of his decisions. Perhaps with the exception of the choice to relieve the tax burden upon the governor (Neh. 5:18b), it seems he may not have fully contemplated the implications for the governors who would succeed him. (Berzonsky & Adam, 1999:558; Collin, 2019; Marcia, 1980:161-162).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Based on the information presented, it may be inferred that Nehemiah was likely in his middle age, since the crisis depicted in the passages seems to revolve on the conflict between generativity vs. stagnation. Moreover, the investigation aimed to understand how the character of Nehemiah undergoes psychological growth, as suggested by the identity theory of Marcia. Analysis of commentary literature on Nehemiah suggests that there is an implicit recognition of Nehemiah's strong leadership qualities. It is evident that Nehemiah was a resolute individual who consistently prioritised his faith in God when making choices. The prayers offered by Nehemiah serve as a demonstration of his use of dialogue with God as a means to contemplate and reflect upon the many matters that weighed heavily on his heart. It should be noted that our understanding expands to include the concept that God exhibits both mercy and justice. This implies that God, although being wronged by individuals, does not perpetually harbour anger toward those who transgress against Him. Instead, if individuals demonstrate humility and seek forgiveness via prayer, God's disposition towards them becomes one of mercy rather than wrath.

## **5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This dissertation examined the concept of personal identity with special attention to the characterisation of the biblical figure Nehemiah.

Chapter 1 introduced the more social and politically orientated foci in scholarly discussions of identity in OT scholarship in general and in research on the Book of Nehemiah in particular. As a result, thereof, a gap in related research was identified pertaining to the theme of the dissertation. In order to fill this gap, the main question of the study centred on how the literary character of Nehemiah and the complex concept of personal identity could be meaningfully compared. The main objective of the study was to experiment with and illustrate the involvement of a related psychological perspective not typically found in the associated literature on this particular biblical text. A mixture of interdisciplinary approaches was involved. On the one hand, conceptual history within philosophy and psychology, descriptive methodology featuring psychological models of personality and identity, with special attention to the work of James Marcia as an unutilised theoretical framework. On the other hand, elements of narrative criticism, psychological biblical criticism and meta-commentary were identified for the purpose of application and illustration.

Chapter 2 explored the origins and development of the associated conceptual history of personal identity in Western philosophy. It was discovered that the formation of the notion of personal identity, commonly referred to as the soul or the self, originated from the ideas of playwrights and was then adopted by early modern critical when Rene Descartes coined his famous phrase "cogito ergo sum", which led to the conceptualisation of the soul as ideas. Following the work done by Charles Darwin and Julian de le Mettrie, it was posited that the soul, in their view, perishes at the death of the physical body, leading to a more organic understanding of the soul. The discourse within the realm of philosophy concluded with an inquiry into whether the existence of the self is indeed essential for survival, ultimately determining that it is not.

Chapter 3, delved into the fascinating realm of personal identity, with a particular emphasis on its intricate development. While other branches of psychology can explore aspects of the self, the focus of this chapter was on influential theories and trends in one way, or another concerned with the concepts of identity and personality. Following a historical overview of influential psychological perspectives on personal identity, various models in the realm of

developmental psychology, such as stage models, trait models, cognitive models, and social identity theory. The stage models aim to explain the development of the self by outlining the various phases that individuals experience throughout their lives. As regards the unutilised perspective to be subsequently adopted, the chapter concluded with an overview of the theory of adult identity development proposed by James Marcia.

Chapter 4 began with a brief introduction to Psychological Biblical Criticism as the usual context for the novel applications of the type proposed in this study. After identifying some of the possibilities, problems, and prospects of the interpretative approach in general, the discussion turned to psychological perspectives on the character of Nehemiah. This was followed by additional considerations of the challenges of applying psychological theories to characters in texts, including genre constraints, structure, and meta-commentary as data collection. Finally, Marcia's theory of ego-identity formation was used to illustrate in a preliminary fashion what happens when associated aspects of Nehemiah's character are viewed from the vantage point provided thereby. Two points of interest chosen to this end were that of implicit psychosocial development and the influence of theological frameworks as identified in related research.

Based on these findings it can be concluded that, from the chosen perspective, one can commence with a recognition of the depiction of the character of Nehemiah as most likely at the stage of middle adulthood when he undertook his journey to Jerusalem. Within the given text, Nehemiah has a strong devotion to God and seldom engaged in any activity without first dedicating time to prayer. This suggests theological dimensions at play in the construction of conditions for identity development. The characters of Nehemiah's identity over time exemplify the property of being what the narrator presents as an outstanding leader who prioritises the current tasks and diligently performs his responsibilities until they are completed.

The personal identity of Nehemiah moreover appears to be relatively consistent in its construction over time. One enduring mark is his passion for the principles of which he is convinced and his empathy for people under his authority. What makes the character recognisable throughout also includes an adeptness in dealing with his opponents and a show of mastery in soothing tensions and instilling a sense of security among the team members as they worked towards completing the mission. Nehemiah's active involvement in the

construction of the wall elevated his status as a memorable figure among the people. In this way, consistency in identity nevertheless included difficult choices that prevented stagnation and resignation, both individually and within and for the collective. Despite Nehemiah's one outburst at the conclusion of the book, he seems to be emotionally relatively stable, at least within the cultural context supervening on the construction of this character. From the adapted perspective of Marcia, we may therefore conclude that Nehemiah's character is incidentally also assumed to have successfully navigated through elements associated with the kind of psycho-social crises that often occur during middle adulthood.

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