CHAPTER 3

THE ADJUSTMENT OF BLACK LEARNERS IN A TRADITIONALLY WHITE SUBURBAN SCHOOL

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to describe and highlight the difficulties black learners might encounter upon entering the senior school phase in a suburban, traditionally white school, due to the unique and particular cultural situation of such black learners.

Definitions of culture are varied and plentiful. For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is important to discern the components of culture in order to identify how these components affect cross-cultural contact.

According to Triandis (1972, quoted in Cushner *et al.*, 1992:23), culture consists of two types of components, namely objective cultural components and subjective cultural components. The first type refers to tangible, visible aspects of culture, which include the artefacts people make, the clothes they wear and the way they name things. Subjective components refer to less tangible cultural aspects, including attitudes, values, norms for behaviour and social roles. The latter are more complicated to study and can be likened to an iceberg, where a very large part of the whole is invisible. It is at the level of people's subjective cultural differences that most intercultural misunderstandings and communication problems occur. It is therefore imperative to take a closer look at the phenomenon of subjective cultural differences and its impact on cross-cultural interaction within the school situation.

Accordingly, this chapter focuses on this phenomenon in an attempt to understand the complexities (if any) surrounding black learners' adjustment to a now multicultural, but traditionally white suburban school. The interview schedule and questionnaire used to determine the educational and underlying emotional needs of black Grade Nine learners in a multicultural school setting were based on the assumptions formulated within this chapter and in Chapter 2.

3.2 CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION IN THE SCHOOL

Schools cannot exist independently from other institutions and organisations that constitute the communities in which schools operate. There is no impenetrable wall around a school that makes learners, teachers and administrators immune to political, social and economic factors outside the school's classrooms, offices, hostels, sporting facilities and cafeterias (Epstein, 1993:7; Gillborn, 1995: 109). Siraj-Blatchford (1995:9) says: "Schools play a major role in reproducing the form of our society, providing an important means of socialization." This implies that society, which is determined by the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times) sets the tone for a school's ethos and must therefore be recognised as a considerable influence (Klein, 1993:120).

3.2.1 Culture shock

Within suburban schools, cross-cultural interaction occurs when learners who have been socialised by groups with different subjective cultural patterns come into contact with learners from other groups. Learners enter classrooms that uphold values different from those according to which they have been socialised. Brislin *et al.* (1986:16) maintain that the large number of adjustments that have to be made when people move into unfamiliar cultures is one of the reasons for the phenomenon called "culture shock".

According to Brislin and Pedersen (1976:13-14), the term "culture shock" was first described in detail by Oberg (1958) as anxiety resulting from losing one's sense of "when to do what and how". Oberg identified several stages in the process of culture shock. According to Cushner *et al.* (1992:44), the term implies "a disorientation that occurs whenever someone moves from their known, comfortable surroundings to an environment which is significantly different and in which their needs are not easily met". Brislin and Pedersen (1976:13) describe culture shock in a similar way.

This matter is extremely complex, since the various cultural milieus in which learners participate are not congruent. This divergence creates "a situation in which an individual may internalize conflicting subjective cultural elements – all of which become part of her or his cognitive and emotional makeup" (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:24). These authors also say that cross-cultural interaction at school level compels learners to participate in multiple life-

worlds, both between individuals of different national or ethnic heritages and between individuals of the **same** nationality or ethnicity who have been socialised in different ways (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:24). Ellsworth (1994:43) points out that the focus on differences between cultures may distract attention from differences within cultures. Landrine and Klonoff (1996:22) also point out the diversity of cultures within a specific race.

Such diversity complicates matters endlessly, as is borne out by a study by Gillborn (1995:159), which explored how students from the Mary Seacole and Garret Morgan schools in Britain (representing a wide range of social class and ethnic backgrounds) made sense of their schools' anti-racist pronouncements and practice. These students were angered by actions that they interpreted as a lack of understanding on the teachers' part. This is especially true "where teachers seem to adopt what, to the students, is a simplistic view of minority communities as homogeneous groups, neither changing nor internally differentiated" (Gillborn, 1995:158). Gillborn's study illustrates this aspect as follows: in view of the custom of arranged marriages, teachers assumed that all Muslim students were against casual relationships with members of the opposite sex – this assumption revealed a well-meaning, but simplistic perspective on their South Asian students. Bennett, Sohal and Wale (1995:147) point out that it should not be assumed that the experiences and practices of **all** Islamic families and children are the same.

By the same token, students can feel embarrassed when they are expected to speak for an entire community, for example, when they discuss racism or cultural diversity. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:10) dispel the assumption that, for instance, Xhosa people, who share the same language, do in fact share the same culture, since, in certain circumstances, they may share essentially the same conceptual framework as speakers of the English language. The anti-racist programme used by the Mary Seacole school combats rousing resentment by emphasising the feelings of students as individuals rather than as representatives of a wider group.

It is necessary, therefore, "to question taken-for-granted assumptions about ethnic minority students and their communities; especially essentialist and reductionist perspectives that gloss over important internal differences" (Gillborn, 1995:159). For the purposes of this

study, black Grade Nine learners in a traditionally white school are discussed as minorities with diverse situations, problems and needs.

3.2.2 Cultural allegiance

Because most schools operate within a specific cultural framework or bias, this could create competition between learners' own original culture and the new "host" culture for their cultural allegiance. According to a paper on multiculturalism delivered in Toronto (Board of Education for the city of Toronto, 1975:3-4), learners could very easily:

(a)   be caught in an amorphous and marginal incapacitating existence between two worlds presented by the familiar base (the culture they were born into) and the new (the unfamiliar "alien" host culture of the new school);

(b)   align themselves with the culture of the school, a tiresome process of seeking acceptance in one culture and rejecting the other; and/or

(c)   maintain their alliance with their base culture and reject the school's culture.

By exercising Option (a), learners enter a "corridor" between two cultures. Brislin and Pedersen (1976:vii-preface) say that, in the process of destroying cultural differences, individuals are also destroyed. Van Heerden (1992:217-218) mentions a student who, as a learner, felt that he lived in two worlds, due to being caught in such a situation. Another student said: "School life and home life did not go hand in hand. The formal and the informal education did not strengthen each other."

Option (b) could imply alienation from learners' cultural foundation – even a loosening of family ties. As one Zimbabwean learner put it: "I was a white in a black skin, really" (Frederikse, 1992: 6). Another said: "At this new school there were better standards. I got to eat different types of foods. Before that all I would eat was sadza (mealie-meal porridge). When I got to the multiracial school, even when I came home I didn't want to eat sadza every day. But my mom would say, 'Remember where you came from.' So I just continued eating the same old sadza at home" (Frederikse, 1992:9). Different cultural messages at school, as is the case about food and diet, illustrate Bennett *et al.*'s (1995:146)

remark that cultural messages about food and diet could conflict with learners' home background (see also Section 2.3.1.1).

Such conflicting cultural messages could strengthen the dilemma of the double-bind situation and result in learners' feeling like one learner who, during one of the interviews done for this study, appeared sad when she said: "I don't fit in better with the, with the blacks, 'cause they call me a coconut, see ... It means like uhhm, I act white inside and black outside, I'm black outside..."

This alienation is unsatisfactory, as is pointed out by Landrine and Klonoff (1996:53-54) when they mention factors such as:

- age (as in nostalgic love for the "old" and one's roots);

- having children (and feeling obliged to educate them about their culture of origin); and

- racism and discrimination experienced in dominant-group local environments (which could encourage them to reject the dominant group culture and their original choice and to immerse themselves in their culture of origin).

These factors often prompt acculturated and bicultural people to become neo-traditionals. This trend indicates that they recognise that "something is missing" and that they long for stability in the form of an enduring set of traditions. For this reason, they return to their culture of origin.

Should learners choose Option (c), they lose the benefit of full involvement in the school system.

None of these possibilities is therefore educationally, socially, emotionally or culturally helpful to learners. It is important to minimise such complications and prevent cross-cultural misunderstandings, since cross-cultural misunderstandings and disputes are an underlying cause of many serious problems in schools. If they are not recognised, they may become the root cause of lingering disputes which eventually present themselves as crisis situations (Varney & Cushner, 1990:89).

3.2.3 Intercultural communication

Students from the Mary Seacole and Garret Morgan schools in Britain (Gillborn, 1995:157-8, already referred to in Section 3.2.1) are skilled in identifying actions that may have racist implications, although the intentions may be benign. They do, for example, recognise that certain issues, such as adhering to certain elements of a specific dress code, although overtly non-racial, potentially disadvantage people of specific backgrounds. An example would be the importance of shaving patterns in their hair to the black people in their community, since this practice is the only way they can really change their hair. To them, to be refused permission to exhibit these hairstyles is akin to discrimination.

Establishing effective intercultural communication is therefore a priority. This would require the parties concerned to suspend judgement, to seek comprehension of the reasons behind the other's actions and to explain others' behaviour according to intent. Also, if isomorphic attributions (that is, judgements of the causes of another's behaviour) are shared by the parties concerned, misunderstanding and miscommunication can be reduced (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:34).

3.3 THE U-CURVE HYPOTHESIS

Cushner *et al.* (1992:28-29) mention a hypothesis that distinguishes four marked phases when people adjust to an international or intercultural setting, the U-curve hypothesis. Brislin and Pedersen's (1976:13-14) reference to Oberg's (1958) detailed description of culture shock also explains the stages of the process. These four phases are the honeymoon phase, the hostility phase, the humour phase and the home phase.

During the initial **honeymoon phase**, one has certain expectations about what to expect and how one will adjust to this new culture. This is a highly exciting stage during which one is overcome by new stimuli, the unusual and the exotic, leaving one in a constant state of stress and anxiety.

The second stage is called the **hostility phase** – a natural reaction to stress. At this stage, three problems can be identified:

- No sense can be made of other people's behaviour.

- One's own behaviour does not bring about the expected result.

- There are so many new aspects in the environment that the individual cannot find ready-made answers to these.

This is a critical phase, as the subjective cultures of those involved appear and potential conflicts begin to crystallise. Frustrations can build up, leading to unpleasantness. Alternatively, one can confront the new cultural environment. Understanding the subjective culture allows one to comprehend why people behave as they do.

Completing the second phase enables one to proceed to the third phase, called the **humour phase.** Now one can laugh at some of the mistakes and assumptions made earlier.

The fourth and final phase is the **home phase.** It allows for interaction between members of various cultural groups and the interpretation of different perspectives.

To reach the fourth phase requires a considerable amount of time. Gillborn (1995:104-105) observes that there appears to be no magic formula in the field of multicultural education. That may be so, but from the aforementioned, the following becomes evident: firstly, within schools, the issue of cross-cultural interaction *per se* should be approached with the utmost care by knowledgeable and sensitive people in order to avoid evoking strong negative feelings between learners (and teachers). Secondly, it is particularly important to the South African educational system that learners as well as teachers facing unfamiliar environments and situations are allotted the time necessary to work through these phases.

3.4   A CULTURE-GENERAL FRAMEWORK: AN OUTLINE

Given the above, it is evident that cross-cultural interaction in schools, especially in respect of aspects of subjective culture (see Section 3. 1), presents many pitfalls. Also, according to the U-curve hypothesis, adjusting to another culture is a process that happens in phases and

that cannot be hurried. For these reasons it is imperative to take note of a discussion by Brislin *et al.* (1986:39-42) on a research-based framework developed to assist understanding a range of experiences people are certain to encounter in their intercultural interactions. (The framework is also discussed in depth by Cushner *et al.*, 1992:41-43.) This framework is based on the realisation that people have similar types of experiences and reactions to cross-cultural encounters, regardless of whom they are interacting with, where they are and their own role in a new setting. It follows then that this framework can be **applied locally**, to identify intercultural adjustment problems even if the specific situation in South Africa differs from that in America and Europe.

Although it is impossible to anticipate all the possible types of intercultural interactions that might be encountered, it is ideal that people can and should be prepared for similarities in experience. This approach allows one to identify, study and understand emotional and cognitive responses and the approach serves as the basis for this chapter.

In the discussion in this chapter, eighteen themes based on this culture-general framework are grouped into the following three broad categories:

- emotional experiences (experiences people are likely to have that could cause intense feeling and that engage their emotions);

- knowledge areas (these areas cover cross-cultural differences that those involved find hard to understand); and

- some bases of cultural differences (these concentrate on how people think about and evaluate information).

First, the eighteen themes are listed under these three headings, accompanied by short descriptive paragraphs of what is understood by each concept. Each of the eighteen concepts is given a number in brackets to simplify cross-referencing in the discussion and application. Then (in Section 3.5), the eighteen themes are discussed in more detail and applied to the adjustment problems that Grade Nine learners might experience within the school system due to their particular cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and historico-political situation. The same numbering system is used in Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

3.4.1 Emotional experiences and cross-cultural differences

This section aims to discern emotional experiences or reactions that may result from experiencing the status of an outsider, and feeling displaced and unfamiliar, due to encounters with other cultures.

3.4.1.1 Anxiety (1)

When people encounter unfamiliar demands, they tend to become anxious about whether or not their behaviour is appropriate.

3.4.1.2 Disconfirmed expectations (2)

People may become upset or uncomfortable, not because of the specific circumstances they encounter, but because the situation differs from what they expected.

3.4.1.3 Belonging (3)

People need to belong and feel at home, but often this need is frustrated because of their "outsider" status.

3.4.1.4 Ambiguity (4)

Living and working across cultures often leaves people with unclear messages on which decisions must be based and according to which action must be taken.

3.4.1.5 Confrontation with one's prejudices (5)

When interacting with another culture, people may discover that previously held beliefs about a certain group of people may not be accurate or useful when interacting with that culture.

3.4.2 Knowledge areas and cross-cultural differences

The following themes incorporate many cross-cultural differences in areas where, due to ignorance, misunderstandings can easily occur.

3.4.2.1 Work (6)

Various cultural differences are encountered in work-related settings. Difficulties can arise related to the appropriate relationship between on-task behaviour and social interaction, the onus of control, decision-making strategies and attitudes toward creative effort, for example.

3.4.2.2 Time and space (7)

Different attitudes exist regarding the importance of being "on time" for appointments, as well as the proper spatial orientation for people to adopt when they are interacting with each other.

3.4.2.3 Language (8)

Language differences are probably the most obvious problem to overcome when cultural boundaries must be crossed. This entails the difficulties of learning another language as it is actually spoken and written. It also includes culturally encoded language use.

3.4.2.4 Roles (9)

There is a generally accepted set of behaviours – people perform in relation to the roles they adopt. There are large differences in respect of the roles occupied, and how these roles are enacted in different social groups.

3.4.2.5 The importance of the group versus the importance of the individual (10)

All people sometimes act in their individual interest, at other times they act according to their group allegiance(s). The relative emphasis on group versus individual orientation varies from culture to culture and may have a significant impact on the daily lives of individuals as well as on the way they learn.

3.4.2.6 Rituals, superstition, veneration of the ancestors, witchcraft and traditional practitioners (11)

All cultures have rituals which help people meet their needs as they cope with life's everyday demands. People in all cultures engage in behaviour that "outsiders" may label as superstitious. One culture's rituals may be seen by others as based on superstitions. What

people believe in, as well as whom they consult when they are ill (be it physically, emotionally or mentally) could also be grouped under this heading.

3.4.2.7 *Social hierarchies – class and status (12)*

People often make distinctions based on various markers of high and low status. These distinctions differ from culture to culture and could have a significant impact on the education process.

3.4.2.8 *Values (13)*

People's experiences in broad areas such as religion, economics, politics, aesthetics and interpersonal relationships become internalised. Such internalised views affect attitudes, preferences and people's views of what is desirable and undesirable. Understanding these internalised views, called values, as well as the range of possible differences, is critical to cross-cultural adjustment.

3. 4. 3 The bases of cultural differences

These themes relate to the ways in which people in different cultures think about and evaluate information.

3.4.3.1 *Categorisation (14)*

People group similar bits of information into categories, because they cannot possibly process all the information they receive. Different cultures may put an identical piece of information in different categories, which creates confusion when people who use different sets of categories must interact.

3.4.3.2 *Differentiation (15)*

Information which people regard as important becomes more highly refined or differentiated. As a result, new categories may be formed. Confusion over seemingly small details could result when outsiders do not differentiate information in the same way as insiders.

3.4.3.3   In-group versus out-group distinctions (16)

The world over, people divide others into in-groups (those with whom they are comfortable and can discuss their concerns) and out-groups (those who are kept at a distance). When entering other cultures, people must realise that they will often be considered out-group members, and that there are some forms of behaviour associated with in-group membership in which they will most probably never participate.

3.4.3.4   Learning styles (17)

The style in which people learn best could differ between individuals and cultures. Teachers must be able to adapt their instruction to their students' preferred learning styles if they are to help these learners to achieve to their full potential.

3.4.3.5   Attribution (18)

When people observe the behaviour of others, they reflect upon their own behaviour. Judgements about the causes of behaviour are called attributions. Effective intercultural interaction is facilitated when people can make isomorphic (shared or agreed upon) attributions.

3.5   A CULTURE-GENERAL FRAMEWORK: AN APPLICATION

In this section, the eighteen themes (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:39; Cushner *et al.*, 1992:41-43) in the culture-general framework set out above are discussed in more detail. Using this framework as a point of departure, an attempt is made in this section to identify and describe the complexities surrounding the issue of intercultural interactions as they could become manifest in traditionally white South African schools as black learners enter secondary schools. The section is divided into:

- emotional experiences and cross-cultural differences;

- knowledge areas and cross-cultural differences;

- the bases of cultural differences.

3.5.1 Emotional experiences and cross-cultural differences

3.5.1.1 Anxiety (1)

Anxiety is non-specific, unlike fear, where the exact cause can be identified. It is normally accompanied by unpleasant psychological responses such as tension, worry, a fear of being hurt and even feelings of uselessness. Too much anxiety is counter-productive and impedes good scholastic performance, though a small amount of anxiety can be conducive to handling unknown situations well (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:244; Brislin & Pedersen, 1976:13).

Lemmer (1993:159) refers to Fradd, Barona and Barona (1989), who maintain that learners who are in the process of learning how to function successfully in a new language and culture could experience social trauma and emotional problems. This could, in turn, result in severe anxiety. This anxiety could be aggravated by an unfamiliar school environment which isolates learners from their support systems, leaving them to adopt ineffective coping mechanisms such as somatic symptoms (for example, nausea) or to avoid the situation altogether.

Brislin and Pedersen (1976:13) say that "when a person loses all the familiar cues to reality on which each of us depend[s]", this is tantamount to culture shock (see Section 3.2.1) and is accompanied by anxiety. Therefore, learners enrolling at traditionally white schools could suffer from severe anxiety due to the unfamiliarity of the situation, as well as the loss of their support system. Being supported by one's own cultural group gives one a chance to visualise and analyse the reasons for feeling as one does. This would lessen the unpleasant emotional reactions that accompany anxiety. Since anxiety affects classroom management as well as scholastic performance negatively, teachers should aim for the creation of optimum classroom conditions, as well as attending to ways of confirming identity, stimulation and security (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:49). This should diminish the learner's level of anxiety and consequently promote optimal teaching conditions.

3.5.1.2 Disconfirmed expectations (2)

When expectations are disconfirmed, people often display emotional reactions, which in turn lead to somatic changes (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:249-250). The higher the expectations are,

the more any deviation from them would be enlarged, with accompanying strong emotional reactions. Learners often have very high and sometimes unrealistic expectations with regard to the immediate as well as the eventual outcome of schooling. If these expectations are not met, frustration, which is a central component of people's reactions to disconfirmed expectations, sets in. Brislin *et al.* (1986:250) describe frustration as feelings of intense discomfort which stem from the obstruction of paths leading to people's goals. This can often lead to aggressive behaviour as learners vent their negative feelings. The consequences of such behaviour are obvious in the form of destroyed school buildings, and a lack of textbooks because these books have been destroyed by angry learners.

An effective way to cope with frustrations would be to create an intervention between the frustrating stimulus and the emotional response. It is important to provide people with information on cross-cultural encounters in order to "allow them to engage in thought processes that will help neutralise potentially negative emotional reactions" (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:250).

3.5.1.3   *Belonging (3)*

As social beings, humans have a great need to belong to a group. Anthropologists have found that the practice of exclusion was the ultimate punishment in some societies, indicating death, since the individual no longer existed in the minds of others (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:58). Belonging to social groups can be divided into voluntary membership (religious affiliation, political party membership, choice of neighbourhood), or involuntary membership (race, family, social class). These groups all have certain similarities and provide some benefits. Over time, the nature and number of groups one belongs to changes.

Cushner *et al.* (1992:58) quote Peplau and Perlman (1982) who propose that six needs are fulfilled by different social networks:

- social integration (a feeling of shared concerns and activities, usually provided by family and/or friends);

- attachment (a sense of security and commitment that is commonly derived from a romantic partner or family);

- sense of reliable alliance (assurance of continued assistance normally provided by the family or peer group);

- reassurance of worth (predominantly provided by co-workers, and to learners in school by teachers and other learners);

- guidance (which may be provided by mentors, teachers or older family members); and

- opportunity to nurture (which would be provided by offspring or other dependants).

The above demonstrate that the centre of all affiliative behaviour is the need for self-confirmation, emotional release, esteem and security. This provides structure, meaning and stability in people's lives. Overlap between the needs fulfilled by various groups may occur, depending on the situation and personalities involved. Within the school environment, anxiety-provoking situations could, for instance, encourage learners to seek out others who might help them interpret and validate reactions (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:58). Learners might find it difficult to locate peer support, since black learners who enrol at suburban schools often experience isolation, brought about by physical separation from their peers in their own cultural groups. Furthermore, in the cross-cultural context, isolation could be brought about by a lack of the language and social skills required to communicate effectively in another cultural context.

When they are isolated, people become negative, rejecting, self-deprecating, self-absorbed, less responsive and perhaps even hostile (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:59). Physical separation, for whatever reason, creates a void with regard to the provision of opportunities for validation and the interpretation of reactions.

3.5.1.4   *Ambiguity (4)*

When an important decision must be made and the relevant information is lacking, stress and frustration may result. Cushner *et al.* (1992:50) say that, although significant decisions have to be taken in intercultural settings, adequate information is generally unavailable. The gap in information may be "filled in" by incorrect and inappropriate guesses. This has an impact on the school situation, because confusion and frustration can result when cues from

peers or teachers are incorrectly interpreted, teachers misinterpret learners' behaviour, and learners, teachers and parents generally operate under different assumptions. These reactions can be combated by creating access to the relevant knowledge in order to make sensible and informed choices.

Should decisions have to be made in the absence of relevant information, it would help to:

- possess an open mind;

- possess the ability to withhold (pre)judgements;

- check one's attributions (see also Section 3.5.3.5 for more detail on attribution).

3.5.1.5   Confrontation with one's prejudices (5)

Cushner *et al.* (1992:55-56) say that prejudice implies a lack of thought and a certain carelessness when a judgement is made. Prejudiced responses are narrow in scope and not based on accurate information. Consequently, prejudice opposes reconciliation in that it tends to polarise people. For this reason, it could jeopardise learners' smooth adaptation to a new environment, and requires closer study.

Three components of prejudice are generally identified:

- The cognitive component encompasses the process of categorisation. It appears that the process of categorisation is "a cultural universal" (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:56) and that, except for broadening categories, not much can be done about changing the process.

- The affective component refers to feelings accompanying one's thoughts about a particular group of people.

- The behavioural component includes discriminatory behaviour directed towards others, especially when prejudiced individuals or groups hold powerful positions.

When, however, programmes advocating reductions in negative affect and behaviour are implemented, these components respond favourably.

Cushner *et al.* (1992: 55-56) refer to Katz (1968), who attributes four **functions** to prejudice, namely the adjustment function, the ego-defensive function, the value expression function and the knowledge function. These functions are discussed below.

(a)   The adjustment function

Prejudiced attitudes may help individuals to adjust to a complex life world. For example, the belief that members belonging to a certain group are incapable of achieving at high levels absolves a teacher of creating alternative methods of teaching that group, thereby reducing the work-related responsibilities of the teacher (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:55).

(b)   The ego-defensive function

Maintaining prejudicial attitudes could protect people's self-concept. Perhaps, individuals who would like to view themselves as academically talented may view another, more successful, group as cheaters. Their self-esteem as well as a positive view of their in-group is therefore protected and they do not have to examine the reasons for their own lack of success. Rejecting others therefore legitimises one's own viewpoint and nullifies the possibility that others might have a legitimate point of view or standards. In other words, a particular self-concept is protected through attitudes and behaviours that tend to put blame on others (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:55).

(c)   The value-expression function

This encompasses attitudes people use to project their own self-image on others. This implies that if one group has been successful through the use of new technology, it is presumed that those who do not have this technology must be "backward". A certain image is therefore projected onto the world (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:55).

(d)   The knowledge function

This pertains to the way information is organised. Some prejudicial attitudes provide knowledge as viewed by people's in-group. Certain out-group members might be considered undesirable as peers or romantic partners. These attitudes allow people to make instantaneous decisions when people are faced with daily decisions and choices. Should

individuals disregard the above, the consequences can be serious, such as being expelled from the in-group, which has a serious effect on the individual's sense of belonging (see Section 3.5.1.3 for a discussion of belonging).

Byrnes (1988) summarises prejudice formation in children (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:263-4):

- Children learn prejudice by observing others. The example that is set may be subtle or blatant, depending on the particular community the child grows up in.

- Children have a strong need to be part of a group. If excluding certain "others" or devaluing them is a prerequisite for group membership, children may learn prejudice as a survival technique.

- Exposure to the media and their reinforcement and introduction of new stereotypes is an important factor in teaching children prejudice. Physical beauty is often equated with goodness, while ugliness embodies evil. The symbolic association of physical disabilities with evil could cause children to equate hunchbacks, blindness, or crooked legs with the cause of personal ill fortune or disaster.

- The more orthodox or fundamental religious beliefs, the greater the prejudice: "Strict adherence to certain religious practices may actively encourage the belief that all other doctrines are at best 'wrong' and at worst dangerous – as are the individuals who believe in them".

It is evident that prejudice fulfils specific roles in the emotional functioning and well-being of individuals and groups. It can also lie at the root of many cultural misunderstandings and notions – leading in turn to a malfunctioning society, which in turn would have a negative impact on schools and therefore, finally, learners' situation within the school environment. Because prejudice is generally based on incorrect information, it follows that the cultural understanding approach, which is universalist in its orientation and involves all pupils in a process of reappraisal and change, can counteract ignorance effectively.

Troyna (1993:25, 47) refers to the third of Bullivant's (1981) propositions, the contact hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, learning about other cultures takes place naturally within multicultural schools. This implies that a learner's "school experiences are sufficient,

in themselves, to counteract the divisive racist influences which she or he may encounter outside the school gates" (Troyna, 1993:25). Bullivant's approach therefore singles out the school as sole reforming and stabilising agent in education. Troyna (1993:26) points out that society also plays an influential role in the perpetuation of racial prejudice. Bullivant's hypothesis nevertheless highlights the important role the school can fulfil in challenging racism and other societal ills with relevant and accurate informative strategies (Troyna 1993:47).

3.5.2   Knowledge areas and cross-cultural differences

3.5.2.1   Work (6)

In the workplace, a variety of interpersonal and intrapersonal differences can be found. In a cross-cultural setting, individuals bring with them particular ways of interacting and particular expectations of others that may be quite different from the behaviours and beliefs of others in the particular organisation. The school situation resembles the interpersonal relationships and interactions of a work setting to some degree. It can therefore be assumed that a variety of interpersonal and intrapersonal differences can complicate effective intercultural interaction in the school. It is vital to identify individual interactive style in order that the learners from various cultures can interact effectively.

Brislin *et al.* (1986:268) point out the fact that the skills exercised by Euro-Americans in their home culture (precision, perseverance, task completion and punctuality) – often the focus of peer-admiration and rewards through promotion – may be a hindrance in a more socially or group-oriented society. Since black learners tend to originate from a socially or group-oriented society that values different skills, this difference could indeed become a major stumbling block and frustration in learners' quests for achievement.

Handy (1976), according to Brislin *et al.* (1986:269), identified a variety of factors in organisational settings (for the purposes of this study, read school setting) that may vary between cultures. These include:

- differing beliefs about the way in which (school) work should be organised;

- beliefs about the way in which authority should be exercised;

- the amount of planning and time perspective applied to (school) work;

- the way in which rewards, reinforcement and control are implemented;

- the degree to which conformity and initiative are expected; and

- the physical setting of the work/school environment.

One could add to the above the differences in the ways in which skills are valued. Van Niekerk (1992:28,38,39) terms this a "pattern", namely that black people often appear not to feel bound by their own decisions. This means that they do not adhere to principles of consistency and reasonability – both recognised and important cornerstones of the (Western) industrialised work environment and the business world. Van Niekerk (1992:34) mentions the missionary Taylor's concept of the "scattered Self" as well as the psychologist Schoeman's "contextualised identity" in this regard. Van Niekerk (1992:34) explains that language is used as a means to outmanoeuvre and manipulate the opposition, and that it appears to be more important to gain and maintain power than to find the truth. Therefore the "I" that says one thing is not the "I" that says something else. As circumstances change, the person has to "renegotiate" his/her identity. This phenomenon coincides with the "magic" world view, where individuals do not regard themselves as personally responsible, but believe themselves to be controlled by forces outside reason, leaving them with the only "defence" left, namely to manoeuvre.

Also, traditional courtesy, an essential ingredient of good socialisation, often demands that negative and unacceptable things may not be said directly, but should be conveyed in a civil and positive indirect manner. This could mean that a courteous person may be mistrusted because he/she might be thought possibly to have a hidden agenda (Van Niekerk, 1992:35). Triandis (1994:293) points out that, because the maintenance of relationships is very important to collectivists (group-oriented people), they "prefer to suppress negative communications and tell others what they want to hear, rather than tell the truth and create bad feelings. Thus, collectivists are more likely to lie and less likely to say 'no' than are individualists. Individualists, by contrast, have no difficulties in 'telling it like it is'".

These factors indicate that there is a minefield of possible misunderstanding with regard to intercultural interaction within the (school) organisation.

3.5.2.2   Time and space (7)

Brislin *et al.* (1986:271) quote Hall (1959; 1966), who argues that the issues of time perspective and spatial orientation are outstanding examples of how culturally determined behavioural patterns can give rise to confusion and unsettling experiences. Brislin *et al.* (1986:271) say that, except for a few circadian rhythms of the body, concepts of time are not innate to the human species.

(a)   Time

Not all cultures place the same emphasis on time and punctuality as the Western world does, where life revolves almost entirely around the clock. (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:271). Kearney (1984:95,103) says that perceptions of time vary across the world, depending on people's concerns and their degree of focus on the past, present and/or future. Mokwena (1992:48) observes, for instance: "Given the ever-deteriorating conditions, black youth tend to live for the present." Morlan and Ramonda (1968, cited in Pacheco, 1996:100), state that children caught in a poverty spiral are very concerned with the here and now. Pacheco (1996:100) also mentions Getzels (1981), who points out that these children tend to develop a value-orientation based on the present rather than on the future.

According to Kearney (1984:95,103), industrialised societies are future-oriented ("watch-oriented"). They also value scheduling and punctuality. Non-industrial societies are more present- and task-oriented and less concerned with punctuality and with keeping appointments. Even linguistic practices are dictated by a difference in pace – Xhosa oral traditions require a steady, measured and dignified pace; by contrast, English mother tongue speakers usually aim to be concise and to the point and may become impatient and intolerant with Xhosa cultural tradition in this regard (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:20).

Brislin *et al.* (1986:272) make the following points about how the Western, the Arab and the Hopi Indians' cultures influence their time perspective:

- In Western culture, the working unit of time is the five-minute block. An individual is allowed to be two or three minutes late for an appointment without apologising; if five minutes have lapsed, a short apology is expected; a delay of fifteen minutes (constituting three units of time) requires a lengthy, sincere apology or an advance warning such as a phone call.

- The Arab culture has a 6000-year history and therefore employs a historical perspective. The working unit of time is a much longer block than that of the Westerner, about fifteen minutes.

- For the Hopi Indians, a series of events involving changes in the environment (for example, the maturation of corn or the growth of livestock) constitute time. Therefore no fixed time exists in the Hopi culture according to which something has to be completed.

- The time concept of the traditional African person is cyclical (Peltzer, 1993:15). The life cycle, consisting of birth, youth, adulthood, old age and death, is viewed as a process by which a person passes from the present to the past. Death is not regarded as final, in contrast to the linear concept of time in Western societies.

When one considers the above details, it is evident that the concept of time and adherence to time are culturally determined behaviour patterns. Some cultures display a particularly relaxed orientation toward time. These attitudes give rise to phrases such as "Hawaiian Time" in Hawaii, "Rubber Time" in Malaysia and "Stateside Time" in the Philippines (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:273). In this country, the term "African Time" is used. One can infer that time may be a cultural issue in South Africa, especially in education, where the planning of a general school programme and more specifically timetables, periods, and cultural and sport events hinge on a specifically Western time concept.

Pacheco (1996:64-65) identifies disregard for punctuality, irregular school attendance and truancy as factors that exert an inhibiting influence on the culture of learning in South Africa. She also found no reference to this problem in the American and European literature. Van Heerden (1992:216) refers to local research that reported on learners who could make no sense of the punishment meted out for (what were to them) unimportant

trespasses such as arriving late at school. At home, activities were performed in their own time and at their own tempo. To quote one university student: "We are not interested in the watch, but in completing the task" (Van Heerden, 1992:241).

According to Van Heerden (1992:242-243), there is a definite tendency amongst the black population not to make appointments, but just to turn up. It is also expected of the host to make the visitors feel welcome, since, in terms of the values and norms of the black community, it is the expected thing to do. The general feeling is that as long as somebody has said he/she will come, it is acceptable if he/she still arrives, even though he/she may be late, since to reach the destination often involves great cost and effort. One should be thankful that the person turns up at all. It is viewed as more important not to hurt anyone's feelings than to insist on punctuality.

According to Eisenhart and Cutts-Dougherty (1991, referred to in Lemmer, 1993:157), a cross-cultural analysis in the United States showed that children whose parents insisted on fixed routines of eating and sleeping, as well as precise communication at home, generally performed better at school. On entering schools, these children were well practised in learning skills and adjusted more easily to the strict spatial and time rules, the rigid classroom format, demands for precision and the emphasis on correct answers. This finding points to the important influence of congruency between the home and school environments in preparing learners for achievement at school.

On the positive side for school, Van Heerden (1992:244) claims that there appears to be a gradual shift toward accepting and incorporating an industrialised (Western) view of time in Africa, which should iron out some of the problems of intercultural interaction in schools.

(b)   Space

Brislin et al. (1986:273) argue that humans are territorial creatures who feel threatened when their personal space is violated. The distance with which people of a given culture are comfortable is a preference which is culturally determined and maintained. Brislin et al. (1986:273) illustrate this point by the way Euro-Americans shuffle around in a crowded elevator to redistribute the space between them in order to maximise the distance from each other. An uncomfortable silence also normally ensues in such circumstances.

Latin-Americans, by contrast, are people who maintain a close distance during interaction. Coutts (1992:85) claims that black learners "might ... have little concern for personal space, and will crowd in on their neighbours without embarrassment".

Space is closely related to noise levels in a given space. English speakers tend to speak softly compared to Xhosa speakers, since English speakers are more concerned with privacy (which indicates the extent of personal space needed) and prefer not to force irrelevant issues onto people who are not involved (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:20).

3.5.2.3   *Language (8)*

(a)   Language and culture

South Africa has been described as one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world (Lemmer, 1993:146). Eleven different official languages are recognised (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:14). According to some of the claims of the Whorfian hypothesis, individuals' language determines or conditions their view of their environment or the world in general (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:17, 87, 94). This implies that "if you perceive things within the framework provided by your language, then your language controls your world-view" (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:18). These authors maintain that culture-specific aspects and norms are encoded in language. These include kinship systems, perceptions of colour and the relevant terminology, the organisation of society, religious beliefs and notions about taboos (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:15,21).

Lanham (1980, quoted in Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:21) argues: "Language offers its elements and structures as moulds in which mental representations of the culture acquire shape and are labelled. Without the linguistic means of encoding the culture, it would be subject to progressive attrition in the process of transfer from generation to generation .... Language is the vehicle of culture, the essential medium by which culture is conveyed afresh to each new generation." Nieto (1992, quoted in Robb, 1995:16) describes language as "a primary means by which people express their cultural values and the lens through which they view the world". Epstein (1993:105) states that "children's construction of meaning is conducted through their use and development of language".

According to Pretorius (1993:11-13), communication occurs mainly through language and as such language is the primary tool of I-you relationships and the way in which people come to share a common world. This means that inadequate actualisation of communication can impede learners education.

"Speaking out" in class, for instance, is sometimes viewed as a procedural aberration by learners. Van Heerden (1992:26,27,193-194,222) mentions that raising questions was actively discouraged in black cultures. Some teachers do not question students and do not expect responses from them to rhetorical questions. She cites Heath (1982), whose American study of a black community showed that within some cultures questions are not really relevant to the teaching of tasks. It follows then that children are not really exposed to "why" and "how" questions. Heath's research done in a black community in the USA showed that learners were scared to speak in the class situation. Also, there was a difference between the type of question asked within the class situation and those used in the black community on an everyday basis. Within that community, Heath found that there often appeared to be no "right answer" to "questions about whole events or objects and their uses, causes and effects .... Community members accepted many answers and ways of answering, and their answers almost always involved telling a story, describing a situation, or making comparisons".

Lemmer (1993:157-158) maintains that learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds do not have the benefit of drawing on early patterns of literacy and exposure to printed and other media consistent with those used in school. Black learners might also lack the Anglo-centric childhood heritage of the proverbs, metaphors, legends, nursery rhymes, songs and games that constitute English-speaking learners' cultural world. Although black learners possess a rich cultural background of indigenous folklore and idiom of their own, this differs considerably from that used in Anglo-centric literature (Lemmer, 1993:157-158). Language skills also imply – in addition to knowledge of vocabulary and correct sentence construction – a familiarity with the socio-cultural reference system of the language concerned (Van Heerden, 1992:364).

Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:21) emphasise that culture and language are interrelated. Effective communication in multicultural schools therefore requires that both teachers and

learners should be knowledgeable about one another's cultures. Teachers are therefore presented with an additional challenge that can complicate the teaching procedure.

(b)   Language and the school

Considering the aforementioned, it is obvious that within a multilingual and multi-cultural society such as that in South Africa, misunderstandings between people will occur (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:14).

This holds true particularly for learners within the school system. A difference between the language medium of the school and the language spoken at home can have serious ramifications. Learners who speak a different language from that expected in the school are often made to feel inferior by both peers and teachers (Cushner *et al.*, 1992:151.)

At home, the situation could be just as complex. As learners try to establish themselves in the new culture to gain acceptance, "the parents discover that they understand neither the strange vocabulary the child imports into the family configuration nor the tenor of the culture it represents" (Board of Education for the city of Toronto, 1975:6). The basic pragmatic implication is that communication between these parents and their children become strained and sometimes virtually impossible. This Canadian finding is confirmed in the South African situation by Robb (1995:16). Under such circumstances, children assume the role of pedagogue – a role reversal that implies humiliation for the parents and embarrassment and guilt for the children when their parents become "children" and these learners have to function as two-way interpreters.

According to the Board of Education for the city of Toronto (1975:9), if the meaning of opportunity is measured in terms of an internal capacity to exploit opportunities, problematic communication constitutes hindrances that challenge the personal securities of children and parents alike, diminishing their ability to develop this internal capacity. In effect, this indicates "a depreciation of educational opportunity for the ethnic student quite apart from the direct, academic handicap s/he must automatically assume because the school, its language and program, and perhaps its method of operation are totally alien to h/er."

- Language preference

With regard to the preferred medium of education, Chick (1992:275,285) says that so far, the English language has escaped the antagonism often directed towards an ex-colonial language in Africa, while Afrikaans has been stigmatised as the language of the oppressor. Van Heerden (1992:223) mentions that research has confirmed that learning Afrikaans presented a problem for some black learners, because the language has become linked to occurrences outside the school. From a purely pedagogic perspective, the use of the (ethnic) mother-tongue as a medium of instruction is regarded with suspicion by many in the black community (Chick, 1992:283; Lemmer, 1993:150). This and the fact that fluency in English is regarded as empowering in South Africa (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:39,59) have caused the black population to opt for English as the *lingua franca* in politics, in the workplace and as a medium of instruction in schools. Therefore, at present, the preferred school system is an English medium system.

Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:28,31,38-39) indicate that there is little critical language awareness within schools. Such an awareness focuses on the ways in which language is used to manipulate, dominate or subjugate others. Language is therefore not normally analysed in its social context, which includes linguistic prejudice. This means that certain psychological characteristics, such as regarding people as stupid, clever, racist or rude, are ascribed to people according to their accents. Luckett (1995:74-75) agrees with Kaschula and Anthonissen who say that English is regarded as a prestigious language in South Africa. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:28) also state that learners will be encouraged to see English as superior and to regard the possession of an English accent which resembles the so-called standard English accent as used by mother-tongue English speakers as desirable. Such linguistic prejudice has serious implications for the learning process both for teachers and learners, in that prejudiced learners could "switch off" and absorb less than they would particularly from a teacher whose accent is Afrikaans. Other second language accents may also be problematised. This pervasive phenomenon can be counteracted by sensitising both teachers and learners to its presence and by encouraging a tolerant atmosphere within the classroom.

Apart from possible problems caused by the interrelatedness of culture and language, another problem is that quite often there is a disparity between the English proficiency level of learners and the proficiency level required of them in order to master all school subjects through English as a medium (Lemmer, 1993:149-150). It is a frustrating experience when learners know the answer, but do not possess adequate vocabulary to express it. Cushner *et al.* (1992:159-160) say that for learners who are not fully competent in the language of the school or have an English language deficiency, the experience of emotions such as anxiety, belonging and ambiguity are critical.

Lemmer (1993:150) and Cummins (1981:24) say that these learners might be sufficiently fluent in English to have passed an entrance test assessing language proficiency, but they still do not have the command of English needed for scholastic success. According to Cushner *et al.* (1992:159), language is a critical element for the understanding of culture, as well as for the development of a sense of belonging and acceptance in a specific (school) group. Therefore, the extent of the emotional and school-related problems resulting from an English language deficiency problem at school can be overwhelming.

3.5.2.4 *Roles (9)*

Brislin *et al.* (1986:278) define roles as "a set of behaviors one engages in that is specific to a certain position one holds, be it ascribed (as mother, wife, female) or achieved (as bank president, professor)". In daily interactions with other individuals, groups or organisations, different roles are assumed, depending on the nature of the task to be done. These roles are generally culture-bound, which means that they are determined by the community or culture. This means that within a cross-cultural context, role expectations differ.

According to Brislin *et al.* (1986:278-279), individuals are socialised into roles, which include acquiring ways of interaction with others according to their specific roles. Some values, behavioural patterns and expectations become internalised and as such are integrated into the players' personalities. When these values, expectations and behavioural patterns are exhibited by the community in general, one could say that these roles have become institutionalised, since people generally aim to conform with the expected and shared norms and values of their society.

Given that a variety of roles with accompanying expectations may arise in the cross-cultural context, it appears that these varying role expectations can lead to misunderstanding and friction if learners and teachers are not aware of role differences within cultures. Furthermore, a sense of worthlessness can develop when a suitable role cannot be found in the new culture. The detrimental effect this could have on learners' school careers is evident.

The specific roles that have become institutionalised within black cultures warrant a more detailed discussion.

(a)   Roles within the family

Within black cultures, the family is normally extended. This implies that the aged are honoured, and often have the final say, and that the adage "children should be seen, not heard" is adhered to. One can deduce from this that children's opinions are regarded as inferior or unimportant. Children are simply supposed to observe those around them. In Western culture (certainly in the United States) the opposite happens -- youth is idolised and the aged are frequently separated from the mainstream and placed in old age homes (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:280). The orientation of black learners generally, as well as within the school situation, could differ from that of many white learners with regard to facets such as the following:

- self-assurance;

- self-image;

- whether they are able to formulate and voice questions and ideas.

Because family-child orientations are culturally based, it follows that these orientations differ between cultures and could contribute to misunderstandings about the school's role in fulfilling specific needs (as the teaching staff and some ethnic communities might see them). The Board of Education for the city of Toronto (1975:21-26) discusses two orientations, namely the child-oriented family and the family-oriented child.

- The child-oriented family

The term "child-oriented family" refers to a situation where children are free to pursue their own interests, growth and involvement opportunities and are important decision-makers with regard to their own development.

Children learn through exposure to appropriate "models" rather than training (Board of Education for the city of Toronto, 1975:21). This prompts Western parents to enrol boys in hockey or other sport leagues when these children are still young, as well as to organise elaborate outings, birthday parties and social gatherings for their children. In schools, freedom of choice (multiple options and elective courses) is regarded as important. Children are "freed" to be children and their activities are separated from those of adults. A clear distinction is made between adult and children's activities.

- The family-oriented child

The Board of Education for the city of Toronto (1975:22-26) describes the term "family-oriented child" as denoting that such children are subjected to the will of the family, which generally focuses on the authority of the dominant male. Child constellations are relatively fixed and may remain effective long after children have reached adulthood. This is the family-child orientation that is commonly found in many black cultures. It is obvious then that this orientation can severely limit children's involvement in their own growth and development, and that such an orientation may prevent children from "growing up". Children in some communities are often much more integrated into the adult segment of the family in that there is not much of a tendency to create a child's world.

Given the above differences in orientation, it is not surprising that cultural problems can arise within the school. Black parents in particular communities could view school developmental programmes as unnecessarily indulgent and dangerous to their cultural heritage, as these programmes appear to encourage disrespect for adult authority and status. Such a view would depend on whether the school's programme is viewed as contra-cultural by the specific ethnic population(s) involved. Some parents, for instance, find the existence

of "option sheets" and "elective programmes" baffling, since, in their culture (and to their generation), it is incomprehensible that learners should tell the school what they will study. To quote the Board of Education for the city of Toronto (1975:25), "the more tendency a secondary school exhibits toward the traditional notions of student behaviour, the more acceptable it would be to certain specific ethnic populations". The secondary school in particular walks a tightrope in this regard. Tight regulation of the learner body satisfies ethnic parents, but may displease the learners with regard to learners' rights. Should the discord between learners and parents escalate, the school may be looked upon as the mediator between parents and learners. This issue is particularly delicate when the learner/student is a legal adult, but one who is still accountable and subordinate to the family as the children of ethnic parents are in terms of their cultural heritage.

- Familiasm

This term indicates very close association with one's family to the extent of excluding outsiders such as friends, neighbours and work associates (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:280-281). Landrine and Klonoff (1996:3-4) explain that very traditional minorities rely on family for social support, whereas highly acculturated minorities rely on friends and co-workers for social support. Although familiasm merely indicates an association preference specific to certain cultures, for the purposes of this study, it is important to note that sometimes familiasm is so strong that outsiders may internalise feelings of rejection and isolation upon not receiving an invitation to join a friendly gathering. The danger inherent in this type of misunderstanding is that those who cannot find suitable roles for themselves within a given society may develop a sense of worthlessness.

(b)   Gender roles

Most apparent with regard to the subject of gender roles is the issue of traditional versus modern roles of men and women in society with historical traditions of country and culture still influencing encounters with individuals and institutions. The issue most often at stake is that of the position of and regard for women. They are rarely found in positions of authority, high respect and responsibility (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:282). Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:35) refer to the Xhosa *hlonipha* traditions. This tradition involves a

custom of respect; married women are not permitted to use words or sounds that resemble the names of their fathers-in-law or their brothers-in-law. This can be regarded as a reflection of the norms and values of a particular society or as a way in which men dominate women and keep them subservient.

Van Heerden (1992:262) mentions a black woman principal of a primary school with a staff of five men. Her authority was constantly challenged on a subtle level. This the principal ascribed to the fact that black men are not normally subordinate to the authority of a woman within the indigenous traditional context. Van Heerden also, however, refers to research done within a Unisa student group, which indicated that the resistance amongst black men towards the emancipation of black women is not as strong as it was during the 1960's (Van Heerden, 1992:250).

(c)   Sex roles

Sex roles involve the rituals of intimate male and female interactions and relationships. The issue is particularly sensitive, complicated and varies between cultures. It has been likened to the dance of the honeybees (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:281). Misunderstandings can result when cues transmitted regarding intimacy and others' intentions are misinterpreted. This can happen within the same culture, but it is especially likely to happen across cultures. Brislin *et al.* (1986:284) refer to the common occurrence of a misreading of interpersonal cues (verbal and non-verbal – which includes animated conversation, personal talk and touch) during male/female (boy/girl) interaction. It is evident therefore that this area is open to much misunderstanding within the school situation. Brislin *et al.* (1986:281) say that role expectations become apparent in the traditional versus the modern roles of men and women in society. It is therefore not unusual to find individuals who are strongly influenced by the historical traditions of their culture.

3.5.2.5   The importance of the group versus the importance of the individual (10)

Humans are basically social creatures: Brislin *et al.* (1986:286) say: "Regardless of the extent to which the individual seeks autonomy, people cannot talk of individuality without reference to the group." People internalise communal customs to such an extent that it becomes their world. Epstein (1993:18) states that in establishing subjective identities,

individuals draw boundaries and other people are placed outside those boundaries. People make strong emotional commitments to these identities – from their earliest experiences, people are invited to identify themselves in relation to the opposite race and/or gender.

Epstein (1993:18) also explains that the various group categories are seen to be mutually exclusive and often hostile to each other. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:37) refer to the "them" and "us" syndrome, as placing people in different categories. Epstein (1993:19) emphasises, though, that the construction of "them" and "us" does not come about only by mechanisms such as socialisation. People are in fact "active agents in the making of their own meanings and forming identities, but, in doing so, they can only use the discourses and material conditions available to them, and these will vary across time and place". In other words, disadvantaged individuals, in the process of making meanings and identities, could be hampered by unfavourable material conditions and a limited repertoire of skills. In turn, this could possibly lead to the formation of inferior and superficial meanings and identity formation.

"It is ... important to realise that, because we have investments in our identities, we also have investments in the differences and inequalities by which we are produced and which we ourselves produce" (Epstein, 1993:19). This recognition implies that being part of a particular cultural group in South Africa carries with it specific privileges and benefits or conditions that one may or may not want to (or cannot) escape, thereby strengthening the group cohesion. In the school situation, the unwillingness to give up specific privileges could therefore make it more difficult for one group to "open up" to other cultural groups. This tendency can discourage multicultural harmony at school level.

How deeply entrenched the loyalty to the group is – beyond all reason at times – is particularly evident in Van Niekerk's (1992:29) example of an observation by a black university official of the University of the North who possessed special negotiating skills. This official maintained that every black student appears to be two people, namely the person at home – somebody with good manners, values and respect for older people – and the mass personality – somebody who abandons all values and resists all authority. With the first (the person at home), one can have a rational discussion, but this is impossible with the

second (the mass person). Strong group loyalty can interfere with loyalty to the school. Consequently, the group may make unreasonable demands of the school.

In black cultures, there are various organised activities where group membership guarantees support from the community in times of need and crisis, when there is a need for childcare, or funerals and weddings have to be arranged. Involvement is mostly willing and spontaneous, but an element of obligation is also evident (Van Heerden, 1992:261). The degree of tolerance in terms of conformity versus non-conformity also differs between groups. More group-oriented cultures tend to demand a higher degree of conformity. The specific extent to which co-operation with others is expected, as well as the degree to which individuals feel they should reciprocate a kind gesture, corresponds with the degree of conformity the group expects.

It must be mentioned that whites are generally viewed as oppressors who are anti-social, selfish and only want to further their own interests (Van Niekerk, 1992:94). Robb (1995:16) and Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:20) refer to the communal world view reflected in the response of the Xhosa speaker when greeted who says "we are fine", as opposed to an English speaker's more individualistic "I am fine". This speaker uses the plural form to provide detailed responses regarding the well-being of family members.

The traditional African person is socialised from birth to death into group dimensions, which are based on the concepts of the mother, father, elder siblings, elders, ancestors, gods and God (Peltzer, 1993:15). Within the more traditional black community, the group wields extreme power, and individualism is obliterated by the group. Van Niekerk (1992:29) mentions a student group which rejected the notion that more money should be allocated to needy students than to others, saying: "We reject such individualising. Our way of thinking is: we are one. An injury to one is an injury to all." In another context, the following chant could be heard: "Pass one, pass all. " (Van Niekerk, 1992:29), or "One for all and all for one ..." (Van Niekerk, 1992:36). Students have also refused to have their names mentioned in meetings since they wanted to be treated as a group: "It isn't I who speak, it is the group" (Van Niekerk, 1992:29).

Although a transitional person is no longer so potently ruled by group authority (Peltzer, 1993:15), the general result of the above kind of group orientation is that black individuals

may fear for their lives and the safety of their possessions, should they behave in a manner contradictory to group expectations by putting their own needs first. A few examples illustrate this problem:

- In order to maintain good relationships with the community, it is expected of everybody who lives within a particular neighbourhood to attend the funeral when somebody from the neighbourhood dies (Van Heerden, 1992:255). Attendance is obligatory at the funeral service, the interment and the meal at the home of the deceased's family.

- During a general rental boycott, one student needed light to study by. She paid for her electricity, but lived in fear of being discovered where she studied by electric light in a small back room (Van Heerden, 1992:268).

- By the same token, teachers who wanted to use the available free time during school boycotts to further their own studies were threatened with physical harm to themselves, their children and damage to their property. The rationale was that they were acting solely in their own interests and that "they were not fighting for the cause" (Van Heerden, 1992:267).

- An "economy of affection" also pits the resources of the individual against those of the group. Should somebody own a nice house, garden, car or shop, this may be damaged (Van Niekerk, 1992:46; Van Heerden, 1992:265). According to Van Heerden, the explanation for such destruction would be that the group regards such possessions as a sign that the possessor of such things has received these privileges in return for co-operating with the police.

3.5.2.6   *Rituals, superstition, veneration of the ancestors, witchcraft and traditional practitioners (11)*

(a)   Rituals

Brislin *et al.* (1986:289) explain rituals as "same standardized behaviour in which the relationship between the means and the end is not intrinsic". This implies that rituals are not based on facts, but rather on symbolic concepts, which are generally not justified by rational

interpretations and have not been investigated by scientific methods. Rituals bind people's feelings and behaviour into a social togetherness and relate to key areas of human life such as birth, death, illness, sexuality and a sense of community. Rituals can be regarded as "bodily action or participation in relation to symbols" (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:289). The action is essentially social in that it generally involves groups of people who share sets of expectations although the action may be performed in private, like prayer.

The term "rituals" is at times somewhat confusingly applied to the established rules and procedures of a religion (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:289). In Africa, religious leaders, claiming divine guidance, are regarded as prophets wielding power over large groups (Middleton, 1970:190). These leaders may have tremendous power and they can and have exercised significant political influence as anti-government leaders. In certain areas in South Africa, some Christian leaders have emerged as leaders of separatist Christian churches and sects (the Zionist Church, for example). Cushner *et al.* (1992:42) have concluded that all cultures have rituals which help people to meet their needs as they try to cope with life's everyday demands.

(b)   Superstition

Jahoda (1969, quoted in Brislin *et al.*, 1986:290) has found that, from a cross-cultural perspective, superstition is very hard to define, since there is no objective method to distinguish superstitions from other beliefs or actions. He argues that, at best, there can be consensus that a specific act or belief is regarded as superstitious by a particular society or culture at a particular time. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that it is impossible to categorise phenomena as rational or irrational since rituals vary across cultures and according to the evolution of knowledge within cultures.

(c)   Veneration of the ancestors

Middleton (1970:189) states that in all African religions there appears to be a belief in a Creator God or Spirit. This Being is perceived as remote from humans, omnipotent and timeless and ultimately responsible for all that befalls humankind. Acting as media between this Being and human powers, regulating affairs beyond human control, there are ancestors, ghosts, refractions of divinity, such as nature and water spirits, heroes and other entities. As

a rough generalisation, ancestors are venerated when living men consider themselves able to control their environment and their lives, whilst nature and water spirits are recognised when natural forces appear to take control of human affairs. Peltzer (1993:15) maintains that the ancestors are symbolically the source of power and fertility of their descendants.

Van Heerden (1992:273-275,277) found that veneration of the ancestors still occurs throughout South Africa, although the degree to which the ancestors are recognised and revered differs between individuals.

In order to communicate with ancestral spirits, animals are slaughtered or "talks" are held at the graves of the deceased. Van Heerden (1992:277-278,282) explains that during this communication with the deceased, help, advice or protection with regard to specific occurrences or problems are sought. It is believed that the ancestors can let good and bad things happen to a person – they cannot provide money directly, but they can manoeuvre events so that somebody loses some money and then guide another person there to pick it up. If, in the case of a car accident, only one occupant out of a total of three or four is hurt or killed, the death may be traced back to the dissatisfaction of the ancestral spirits with this particular individual.

Similar interpretations can be given for lost or stolen money, or a number of deaths or illnesses in short succession within one related group. Since the ancestors are not learned, they do not possess the power to assist anyone with their studies. They can, however, allow things to happen that can somehow boost or hinder a student's academic success. Therefore, even in this sphere, their influence is acknowledged and feared.

(d)   Witchcraft

Scotch (1970:248) cites Gluckman (1955), who maintains that the belief in witchcraft (magic/sorcery) not only persists in the face of continuing acculturation, but also expands and changes to adjust to the requirements of new life situations. According to Gluckman, the concepts of science and witchcraft fulfil different functions. Science explains **how** a given process occurs (the course of a disease, for example), whereas traditional healers and witchcraft explain **why** the process occurs at all, as well as why one man and not another contracts this disease. He says: "From the African point of view, modern medicine is

extremely limited in explaining total situations ... The difficulty of destroying beliefs in witchcraft is that they form a system which can absorb and explain many failures and apparently contradictory evidence" (Gluckman, 1955, quoted in Scotch, 1970:248). It would appear that witchcraft is omnipotent in its explanatory powers as perceived by many African people. Van Heerden (1992:91,92,280) also refers to and illustrates the way that members of traditional cultures can vary their behaviour according to what they perceive as the "operating culture" at any given moment.

Of particular interest for this study is Van Heerden's (1992:284) comment that Jahoda (1970) and Elliot (1984) could not prove beyond doubt that indigenous traditional belief in the supernatural has a negative influence on motivation and achievement. Van Heerden (1992:30-31) discusses the Western and African cognitive systems (the open scientific system as opposed to the closed system of traditional thought patterns) as well as traditional and modern value systems and concepts. She concludes that one should beware of stereotyping black people with regard to their life approach based on an unstructured or vaguely structured reality concept, especially in today's rapidly changing situation. One would do well to take note of a comment by Nigerian Anyanwu (1994, quoted in Van Niekerk, 1992:35): "Pure reason is always uncomfortable with contradictions, and nothing is as contradictory as the African beliefs and behaviour." Van Niekerk (1992:35) also quotes Nobel prize winning author Wole Soyinka (1976), who speaks of "a recognisable Western cast of mind, a compartmentalising habit of thought" which opposes "the assimilative wisdom of African metaphysics" that sees no basic difference between scientific and magic techniques, for instance, to utilise the energy of lightning.

(e)   The use of traditional healers

Traditional healers still have a very strong following amongst the general black population. Some people would not consult them for "natural" illnesses, which are treated at home or by Western-trained medical doctors, hospitals or clinics (Van Heerden, 1992:263,279). Should the illness not respond to treatment, however, a traditional healer may be consulted. Quite often, babies are taken to a traditional healer or an old woman for "treatment" of the fontanel. "Muthi" (derived from the Zulu term *umuthi*, which refers to medicine or a remedy or mixture prescribed or used by traditional healers) is rubbed onto the fontanel in

order to prevent evil from entering the child's body via this area (Van Heerden, 1992:53,279-280). Children can also be "strengthened" by rubbing a potion on cuts made on their wrists or other parts of their body (Van Heerden, 1992:210-211). There is also a belief that individuals can be protected against burglaries, the theft of possessions, lightning and evil sorcery by traditional "muthi".

African people have not rejected modern medicine, but they have sustained the basic structure of their traditional beliefs (Scotch, 1970:248). Peltzer (1993:14) explains this phenomenon as follows: the majority of African people in urban areas can be regarded as transitional, which means that these persons are moving from traditional to western culture. Although their minds are mostly western-orientated, they are still psycho-socially anchored in traditional culture. In this process, a person may, in times of crisis, temporarily turn back to traditional culture. Van Heerden (1992:29) cites Jahoda's (1970) use of Barbichon's term "a state of cognitive coexistence" which exists between modern ideas and values on the one hand, and certain traditional African beliefs on the other, and that can be found elsewhere in Africa. Van Heerden's (1992:210) finding that there were parents who were regular churchgoers and who did not have a strong belief in traditional healers, but who nevertheless sometimes consulted one, can be seen against this background.

3.5.2.7 Social hierarchies – class and status (12)

A very important feature of modern African society is the development of social stratification. Traditionally, African societies were characterised by relative equality in terms of standards of living, lack of specialisation and general homogeneity of status. Today, marked differences are to be found in wealth, power, social status and degrees of occupational specialisation. These differences are apparent due to the development of class systems and new elites (Middleton, 1970:255; Frederikse, 1992:66-67,102).

A newly appointed headmaster to a low-density school in Zimbabwe found that at this school the parents questioned many things, whereas at his previous high density (township) school, very few parents challenged the principal's decisions. He attributed this difference to the fact that the majority of the parents in the low-density area had been to school, and therefore wanted to know what was happening to their children at school (Frederikse, 1992:19). He also felt that black learners at low-density schools could be alienated from

their own cultural background by the "white school tradition" that they imitated (Frederikse, 1992:19). This left these black learners feeling superior to their counterparts in high density areas, indicating a distinct sense of class difference. Delpit (1992, referred to by Robb, 1995:16) states that parents are saying to teachers: "My kids know how to be Black – you all teach them how to be successful in the White man's world". Robb (1995:15) refers to a mother's request that her four year old daughter, who is fluent in Xhosa, speak only English at pre-school in order to improve her command of English as well as her "behaviour". The mother hopes that this will improve her daughter's chances of being accepted at a "decent" English-medium primary school. This example implies that parents believe that the way these parents have taught their children is not good enough – somehow indicating feelings of inferiority in status and class.

A social marker distinguished in Zimbabwe is known as the "Nose Brigade". These learners speak "through the nose", while others speak "through the mouth" (Frederikse, 1992:64-67). This trend goes hand in hand with a social background of well-heeled parents who can afford to send their children to low-density schools where they adopt a distinct pronunciation. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:4-5,28-29,37) maintain that language or class accents could reveal which socio-cultural group or class a person belongs to. Hairstyles and ways of dressing can differ, as does the food people eat. This behaviour can be likened to "cultural alienation" according to some people, or maybe a belief by these learners that their own (black) culture is somehow inferior. Such social class differences are not even regarded as a black-white issue any more. Instead it has to do with hailing from a high- or low-density suburb (Frederikse, 1992: 66-67).

Frederikse (1992:102;85) quotes a Zimbabwean parent who says that private schools are attended by the children of rich black and white parents, whilst the poor whites and blacks put their children into government schools. This societal structure "is integration by economics", that is, economic discrimination has replaced racial discrimination. Another parent said that learners from high-density suburbs are looked down on, not because they are black, but because of their class. Consequently, the issue has changed from a race issue to a class issue. Robb (1995:16) identifies the danger of replacing racism with classism and linguicism. Robb maintains that people have to unlearn the biased attitudes they have acquired. Consequently, a proactive approach is needed at school to tackle the complex

issues of racism and other forms of bias at a personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural level.

3.5.2.8   *Values (13)*

"Values are core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society. They serve as standards or criteria to guide not only action but also judgment, choice, attitude, evaluation, argument, exhortation, rationalization and one might add attribution of causality" (Rokeach, 1979:2). Therefore, in determining values, people dictate what is permissible and desirable in their particular society. Values as constructs reflect a culture's view of central issues such as religion, morality, economics, politics, interpersonal relationships, aesthetics and the environment.

Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:36-37) say that the values of a particular society are represented in that group's speech and social interaction. To illustrate: in South Africa, English mother tongue speakers can sometimes refer to their parents by their first names. However, this practice might be regarded as disrespectful and unacceptable in the more conservative rural areas and amongst Xhosa people in particular. Therefore, learners might become confused with regard to the values subscribed to by a particular school and might not understand what is expected of them within the school system and how or why conformity to these values is expected. Van Heerden (1992:216) found that respondents found church-run schools strange and unaccommodating places where they did not understand what was expected of them. Intercultural conflict can therefore result when people committed to different value systems come into contact.

In today's culturally diverse world, it is important to take note that values are dynamic and can change. Brislin *et al.* (1986:300) quote Bohm's (1980) suggestion that what "is needed is an intelligent perception, from moment to moment of what the right values are for the actual situation at the moment. That is to say, we have to be sufficiently free of attachment to past conclusions so that we are able to see each idea, each emotional response, each action, each relationship at its proper value without any persistent tendency toward bias and distortion". In order then to defuse potential cultural flashpoints, even at school level, people should not compartmentalise rigidly the set presuppositions on which they base their

value hierarchy. Brislin *et al.* (1986:300-301) identify flexibility as a keyword in the adaptation of fresh perceptions.

3.5.3 The bases of cultural differences

3.5.3.1   Categorisation (14)

The process of categorisation is universally employed to simplify people's world and organise stimuli and information into categories that make sense. For example, people divide activities into work, play, sports and leisure; food into vegetables, bread, pasta, meat, fruit, confectionery; people into grown-ups, the elderly, adolescents, babies, male/female, family and friends (Cushner *et al*, 1992:52). During the process of socialisation, the various elements constituting the world that confronts a child are organised into categories for the child (Brislin *et al.* 1986:305).

Landrine and Klonoff (1996:37) maintain that to be a member of a culture involves sharing, amongst other aspects, its categorisation schemes, which are culturally and historically relative and based on context. Brislin *et al.* (1986:305) cite Bruner, Goodnow and Austin (1956), who maintain that the set of categories used by adults tends to reflect the culture of which they are members. No rigid boundaries exist between these separate categories, indicating that they can be manipulated to serve one's needs and realise one's goals. For instance, a student with a slightly handicapping condition that he would normally play down, would bring this condition to the fore if he could benefit from it in any way, for example, if he could be granted extra time to complete a paper (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:305; Cushner *et al.*, 1992:52).

Brislin *et al.* (1992:306) quote Detweiler's (1980) statement that individuals who are socialised in the same culture interpret and categorise behaviours and situations in the same manner. Therefore, their expectations are the same. It follows then that at school level conflict could arise during intercultural interaction when there are big differences in the categorisation of the same set of behaviours by learners and teachers.

Cushner *et al.* (1992:52) say that prototype image is another very important concept in the analysis of categories. This refers to one set of attributes which best characterises the

members of a category and is viewed as a summary of the group. The practical implication is that similarities are emphasised and that there is little awareness and/or acknowledgement of the differences between members of the category.

Cushner *et al.* (1992:53) agree with Brislin *et al.* (1996:307) that stereotypes (while normally thought of only as negative) are also categories that refer to generalisations that obscure differences found within a group. Stereotyping enables someone to acquire a significant amount of information in a short period of time, but could easily lead to prejudiced, negative or even hostile behaviour. Also, people could use unfamiliar categories inappropriately, as well as impose categories inherent to their own culture on situations more suitable to their hosts' categories (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:308). For this reason, Cushner *et al.* (1992:53) and Gillborn (1995:159) emphasise the importance of always questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about ethnic minority students as well as their communities. This is especially important in the process of reduction, because in that process only essentials are retained and important internal differences are glossed over.

3.5.3.2   *Differentiation (15)*

Differentiation refers to the distinctions that can be made within a concept. Brislin *et al.* (1986:310-311) explain that the degree of differentiation is closely related to the level of knowledge on a given topic, for example, gardeners know about different types of fertiliser, stamp collectors know the differences in the values of different first-day covers from the 1920's, while school teachers are familiar with several methods of teaching children to read. In order to communicate well on these topics, the use of terms that indicate knowledge of the various distinctions would be required.

The application to cross-cultural experiences is that individuals have to learn how concepts are differentiated in cultures with which they will be interacting. Failure to do this will lead to a cycle of incorrect behaviour according to these assumptions and reinforcement thereof. The inherent danger to cross-cultural interaction is that if the parties concerned fail to make the same distinctions within a given concept, misunderstandings and ill-feeling could result. This, in turn, could lead to a cycle of inappropriate behaviour and a reinforcement of such misunderstandings and ill-feeling.

3.5.3.3   *In-group versus out-group distinctions (16)*

Cushner *et al.* (1992:56) define the in-group as that group of people who are psychologically close, comfortable and trusting of one another and who prefer to spend considerable time together. They support each other generally as well as in time of need, and provide close and warm relationships (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996:3-4; Triandis, 1994:293). Markus and Kitayama (1994a:120) cite Jarymolvich (1987) and Reykowski (1991), who say that when "the group is the primary basis of self-definition, in-group membership takes on particular importance, the interdependent members of the group will evoke positive evaluations and the out-group members, negative evaluations".

Brislin *et al.* (1986:314) state that out-groups consist of those people that are kept at a distance and are actively discouraged from becoming members of one's in-group. Sometimes they are actively discriminated against by being kept from jobs, citizenship and educational opportunities.

Van Heerden (1992:272) found that participants in a research project referred to "our people" and "our culture" when referring to black people (as opposed to white people). Some even placed themselves in certain ethnic categories (for example Venda or Pedi) within the broader South African society. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:4) mention that variations in Xhosa language (such as the term *amagents*) indicate in-group membership, in that the term shows that the persons referred to as such are knowledgeable about a social pattern followed by trendy youngsters.

Just how important acceptance within a group is, is shown by the fact that students often participate in certain religious rites, for example, venerating the ancestors, not because they necessarily believe in the practice, but because they want to maintain good interpersonal relationships within the group (Van Heerden, 1992:275). Research has also identified a general trend amongst black people not to translocate to suburbia, but to stay where they can be amongst their own people (Van Heerden, 1992:270).

It is easy to understand then that newcomers, having left their in-groups, generally find that they enter areas where new or hosting groups reign. It takes a good deal of time to find one's place or to establish new in-groups. In order to understand this situation, knowledge

about the requirements to be accepted as a member of the in-group is needed. Black learners could find it difficult to join in-groups in traditionally white schools.

3.5.3.4 *Learning styles (17)*

Although schools as institutions display similar characteristics from country to country, socialisation practices in the home and family differ markedly. This in turn may play an important part in the way individuals are taught and also in their eventual choice of learning style. A problem arises when teachers expect learners to employ learning styles different from those they already possess upon entering school. Brislin *et al.* (1986:317) quote Ogbu (1982), who maintains that the problems faced by minorities may be found at this "interface between the culture of the home and the culture of the school".

A chosen learning style can contribute to under-achievement, since, if adolescents do not learn because of the way they are taught, learning becomes difficult, boring, frustrating and tension-provoking. This in turn produces poor scholastic achievement. Therefore, it is all-important to determine and accommodate learners' preferred learning style, and not rely totally on one kind of instruction, for example, verbal instruction. If this accommodation does not occur, it could happen that learners do not fully grasp a concept or technique, but say that they do, because they respect the teacher concerned.

Three learning styles, namely a cognitive, an affective and a physiological style, can be distinguished, according to Cushner *et al.* (1992:108-114) and Kleinfeld and Irvine (quoted in Banks & Banks, 1995:493-494). Research on learning styles targets the following fields:

- Cognitive learning styles research

  This type of research aims to determine learners' preference in receiving and processing information and experience, how they create concepts and retain and retrieve information.

- Affective learning styles research

  The accent here is on variations in interpersonal skills and self-perception, curiosity, attention, motivation, arousal and persistence.

- Physiological learning styles research

This type of research evaluates how gender, circadian rhythms, nutrition and general health influence learning processes.

Another factor to consider would be that differences in learning styles are generally gender bound. Specific gender-bound learning style characteristics are the following (Dunn & Griggs, 1995:6):

(a) Boys

- tend to develop auditory memory later;

- tend to develop gross motor co-ordination earlier;

- require mobility;

- remain tactual and kinesthetic longer than girls;

- are more peer-oriented earlier than girls;

- can tolerate a noisy environment better when learning; and

- require informal design significantly more than girls do.

b) Girls, on the other hand

- tend to develop strong auditory memory earlier;

- tend to develop fine motor co-ordination earlier;

- can sit passively in conventional seats and desks for a longer period of time;

- are more authority-oriented;

- require quiet surroundings when learning; and

- can cope better with structured design than boys.

There is also a significant difference between high academic achievers and low academic achievers (Dunn & Griggs, 1995:7). The former are auditory or visual learners; self-, parent- or authority-motivated, conforming and not in need of mobility or food while learning. Underachievers tend to be tactual/kinesthetic learners, requiring sound, soft lighting and informal design, intake and mobility, a variety of resources, methods and approaches, displaying boredom with routines. Their motivation appears to be derived from their peer group(s). Alternatively, they appear to be motivated only when they are interested in what they are learning.

Dunn and Griggs (1995:9) and Van Heerden (1992:26) say that different cultures express different attitudes towards teachers, education and what comprises valuable learning. They mention factors such as being on time, looking directly at an adult (which could be considered rude in some cultures), active or passive participation in learning, studying theoretical versus practical matters as well as various other subtle behaviours that vary considerably from one group to another.

Brislin *et al.* (1986:317) note that Western-style schooling requires students to learn in out-of-context situations by first mastering language, acquiring symbol utility and abstract rules and concepts from books and spoken language with a view to possible future application. In many non-Western and less technological societies, especially those that do not have a long history of written language, learning tends to occur in-context. Van Heerden (1992:192-193) describes how in-context learning was accomplished by means of observation, imitation and direct participation. Brislin *et al.* (1986:317) explains that in a hunting and gathering economy, children would learn by active involvement and participation, and the reward was immediate when the required skills were mastered. There was no need to internalise a procedure and reproduce it symbolically, orally or in writing, upon command. Some cultures value learning within a group situation more. It could be especially the case in collective societies where group participation is expected and aimed for.

When youngsters' learning styles were assessed on the California Achievement Test of Basic Skills (CATs), it emerged that most of the children assessed were parent- or teacher-motivated and wanted to please the adults in their lives, but were incapable of achieving this goal while learning conventionally (Dunn & Griggs, 1995:1-3). This finding highlights the

importance of the parents'/teachers' role as motivators, but also indicates the need to accommodate a substantial repertoire of learning styles. In South Africa, moreover, as was mentioned in Section 2.3.1.2, many black parents are poorly educated or even illiterate. Add to this parental absence (see Section 2.3.2.1) or a mother who is "available", but burdened by excessive work loads (see Section 2.3.2) and there are handicapping factors concerning parental involvement and support for many black learners.

Dunn and Griggs (1995:6) maintain that differences in learning styles are not culture bound, since these vary as much within the different cultures as they do between individuals (Brislin *et al.*, 1986:318; Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:58-59). The latter authors advise teachers to refrain from generalisation or labelling, since the task, the school subject, as well as the available teaching materials, determine which learning styles are employed.

Dunn and Griggs (1995:9) say: "A culture's values, the opportunities it provides to individuals, and each student's interests, talents, and learning style contribute to the development, maturation, and expression of intelligence."

One can deduce the complexity and variety of learning styles amongst individuals and across cultures. It would appear that, although the choice of learning style is a highly individual matter, a learner's cultural framework determines certain behavioural patterns, which could influence the choice of learning style.

3.5.3.5   *Attribution (18)*

Another term for this process is ascription. The term refers to the reason for or cause which people attribute to a given incident or event, for example, if a pupil fails to respond to a question because of a hearing problem unknown to the teacher, the teacher may conclude that the learner is "retarded". Attributions are therefore judgements people make about others based on their behaviour.

Human judgement is unfortunately extremely fallible. The phrase "fundamental attribution error" describes people's tendency to approach judgements about themselves differently to the way they approach judgements about others. When people fail at a task, their own explanation would be most likely a situational attribution (the teacher was unfair, the

material was not well explained in class). When others fail, a trait label is put on that individual or group (they failed, because they are not committed, they are lazy or stupid).

These trait labels become stereotypes, which in turn are categories invented by people to simplify their world by describing others. Cushner *et al.* (1992:32-33) claim that an inherent danger in multiculturalism is that the processes of perception, categorisation, attribution and development of ethnocentric attitudes combine to create a potentially harmful situation. Non-verbal (body language), linguistic and verbal practices are open to misattributions within the school system.

Non-verbal communication is particularly sensitive to misattribution and misinterpretation. Maphai (1991, cited in Robb, 1995:16) claims that white teachers might think black learners are greedy for putting out both hands when accepting a gift, whilst the reverse situation could be that white children could appear rude to black adults because they accept a gift with one hand only. When they avoid eye contact, black learners act according to the way they have been socialised to show respect. A teacher in an intercultural setting could very easily judge the learners to be disrespectful or devious, a misunderstanding based on a misattribution (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:20,88; Cushner *et al.*, 1992:33,60,81; Dunn & Griggs, 1995:9).

Other examples of behaviour that is easily stereotyped concerns patterns of speech. Kaschula and Anthonissen (1995:20) mention that Xhosa people tend to speak loudly compared to home-language English speakers. The underlying rule of conversation operating here is that, when one speaks softly, black people may think that one may be gossiping. However, in a Western situation, loud talk (which these black people would consider polite), loud talk may be interpreted as misbehaving and being unruly at school. Xhosa speakers, in order to be diplomatic and to avoid being thought rude, may put requests subtly and indirectly, whilst the English culture requires one to be clear and to the point. A teacher unfamiliar with this cultural difference could become impatient and intolerant. Also, in order to avoid embarrassment and therefore to avoid the risk of potential loss of face, Xhosa speakers, for instance, will often avoid asking questions about issues unfamiliar to them or which they do not fully understand. This could leave learners confused with regard to pedagogic content and teachers frustrated.

An awareness of the pitfalls of attribution can encourage effective intercultural interaction. Triandis (1977, cited in Brislin *et al.*, 1986:321) sees the solution in the formation of isomorphic attributions. This indicates attributions about people and/or incidents that are the same and that take cultural differences into account. However, the development of isomorphic attributions presumes understanding of why and how attributions are made. The development of isomorphic attributions should be the ideal. This could indeed encourage the decrease of misunderstandings and conflict, since people from various cultures will understand each other's behaviour.

3. 6   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter has given rise to the following research questions:

- How important is the role of traditional values in the black family?

- Do learners feel that they belong to their school?

- To what extent does racism occur at school?

- What are the learners' feelings about language at school level?

- How do learners feel about the issue of punctuality?

- Can communication based on traditional courtesy cause cultural misunderstanding?

- The extent of personal space is a culturally determined and maintained phenomenon and therefore a matter of cultural preference – can this lead to misunderstandings between cultural groups?

- Do learners ask questions in the class situation?

3. 7   CONCLUSION

The background investigation in this chapter indicates that, in general, urban black learners have been exposed to and influenced by a complicated and integrated cultural, historico-political and socio-economic situatedness that differs to a large extent from that found in the Western industrialised community. Since schools cannot be severed from society, a holistic

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH STRATEGIES AND METHODS

4.1 AIM OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The birth of the new South Africa brought about several changes, especially regarding education. The new educational dispensation makes it possible for anyone to attend multicultural schools. However, the change did not come without some problems. The general impression is created that black learners' cultural, socio-economic and historico-political orientation, as well as a possible educational backlog, could hinder their adjustment to secondary school, especially if they attend traditionally white suburban schools. This study is aimed at researching the phenomenon of the accommodation of black learners in traditionally white schools.

Chapters 2 and 3 set out the literature review that forms a theoretical base for the empirical study. These chapters focused on the following aspects:

- In Chapter 2, the cultural and home situatedness of black learners are described.

- Chapter 3 sets out a culture-general framework and applies it to the South African situation, describing and highlighting the difficulties black learners might encounter upon entering a traditionally white school, due to their unique and particular cultural orientation(s).

The choice of method used in the empirical research was itself based on a relevant literature study. The aim of the empirical study is to:

Research and describe black learners' life-worlds (especially their experience of the multicultural school environment in a formerly traditionally white school).

The specific aims of the empirical research are to identify the educational and underlying emotional and other needs that could arise from these learners'

- socio-economic situation;

- historico-political background;

- cultural orientation;

- expectations of the self, school and society; and

- possible educational backlog.

4.2   RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHOD

According to Smith (1993:19), a research strategy indicates a broad methodological approach to a study. The nature of the research strategy employed in the empirical research is that of a **two-phase design,** as illustrated by Creswell (1994:185-186). The quantitative and qualitative research methods respectively were employed in the two phases of this research. Creswell (1994:186) explains the advantages of a two-phase design: "Both phases are of equal stature, and the study has all the advantages of an extensive use of each paradigm of research and the limitation of a clear convergence of the results from both phases of the design". Although Chapters 1 to 3 may suggest that a predominantly quantitative research approach is followed, in fact, the study uses both research approaches. Chapter 4 does not profess to be a detailed account of the research methods used, but reviews the essential components that feature in this research.

Creswell (1994:176) mentions the pragmatist argument that there is a false dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches. The use of a two-phase design means that social phenomena can be understood better, because the two methods are interrelated and support and complement each other to constitute a multifaceted and holistic picture of learners' experiences of and needs in a specific school. The first phase of this study used a quantitative research approach to look at statistical relationships between learners' general life-worlds, focusing on these learners' specific cultural situation and the level of accommodation and feeling of belonging that they experience at school. Following on from this macro-level analysis, the second phase used qualitative research methods to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics and relations between various factors that play a role in the learners' general life-worlds.

The **research results** are presented in two steps, corresponding to the two phases – firstly, the quantitative phase (Chapter 5), followed by the qualitative phase (Chapter 6). In Table 4.1, the application of both these methods in the empirical research done in this study is explained.

Table 4.1:   Comparison of the criteria of each research method

The quantitative method	The qualitative method
• Uses objective observation and other techniques that can easily be generalised – structured questionnaires were applied to the learners.	• Uses subjective, empathetic techniques to gather data, namely semi-structured interviews and observation – interviews were conducted with learners and teachers.
• Emphasises the extent and scope of the data collection – a large variety of factors were addressed in the questionnaire.	• Emphasises the depth of the data collection – the interviews aimed to find explanations for and gain better insight into some aspects that the questionnaire touched upon. Unique problems and contexts of particular schools were considered during the interviews with teachers and learners.
• Uses the literature deductively at the beginning of the study.	• Uses the literature inductively towards the end of the study.

Table 4.1 illustrates how the two methods, although different, complement and support each other and allow the researcher to obtain a more integrated, holistic picture of the learners' life-worlds and their experiences within a particular school system. Quantitative research uses theory deductively – theory is placed at the beginning of a study to form a framework for the entire study. Qualitative research, on the other hand, does not begin with the theory about to be verified. Instead, a new theory is developed using an inductive model of thinking or logic, so that the theory emerges toward the end of the study (Creswell,

1994:37,87; Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 1995:5). In this study, the theory is placed at the beginning of the study.

4.3   PERMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE RESEARCH

In order to implement the empirical research within the specific context under investigation, it was necessary for the researcher to obtain access to schools.

Permission to apply the questionnaires and conduct the interviews was granted by the Gauteng Department of Education as well as by the targeted schools. The procedure followed is set out below.

- Firstly, permission for the research had to be obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education, Directorate: Education Information: Research Unit.

- Secondly, permission had to be obtained to work in the various Districts from the District Directors concerned.

- Thirdly, the principals and the governing bodies of the targeted schools had to give their permission.

- Fourthly, written permission to apply the questionnaire was obtained from the parents of the proposed respondents by means of an explanatory letter with a tear-off slip (see Appendix F).

4.4   CHOICE OF SCHOOLS WHERE THE RESEARCH COULD BE DONE

4.4.1   Target population and random sample

Grade Nine black learners were chosen as the target population, because they could draw on their experiences during their year in Grade Eight. Also, their exposure to secondary school has not been so long as to impress certain ways of behaviour on them.

The target population was defined using the following criteria:

- Only black Grade Nine learners were considered.

- The schools selected had to be traditionally white, multicultural suburban schools.

All the schools run by the Gauteng Department of Education in Northern Districts One to Four that met the above requirements were grouped together. A "grid" was drawn over the population of this area. The aim was to select a sample of schools from the entire target population that would be representative regarding the region, districts and size of the group. Only eighteen schools met the above criterion. These eighteen schools were then stratified according to two further criteria (see Table 4.2), namely:

- location (in Districts One to Four in the Northern region, N1 to N4); and

- size of group (fewer than 20 black Grade Nine learners; between 20 and 40; more than 40).

It was decided (for logistic reasons) to discard the group of fewer than 20 learners. Two schools were then selected from each district – one from the small group (between 20 and 40) and one from the larger group (more than 40). There were some exceptions to these criteria:

- In District N1, two schools could be identified, one with between 20 and 40 learners, one with more than 40 learners.

- However, in District N2, not one school could meet the selection criteria to provide a group of between 20 and 40 black learners. This compelled the researcher to select a group of seven from a school in District N2 (see horizontal arrow in Table 4.2).

- N3 contributed two schools which met the criteria.

- N4 had only one school in the smaller group. Therefore, one more school had to be incorporated from the larger group in N3 (see vertical arrow in Table 4.2).

The sampling method can be described as a multi-stage stratified cluster sample, using judgmental criteria (Steyn, et al., 1996:16-54).

In N1, one of the selected schools decided not to participate in the research survey, because the school felt that the nature of the questionnaire was too sensitive. The school's place was taken by another school in N1 that met the set criteria. Four of the schools were English-medium, two schools were Afrikaans-medium, and two schools were dual-medium schools. N4 had no school in the forty plus group. Therefore another school was selected from District N3's forty plus list which had more than forty learners (see vertical arrow in Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 represents a summary of the final set of eight schools that were selected after consultation with the Gauteng Department of Education, Directorate: Education Information: Research Unit. Permission for the inclusion of a school in the N2 forty plus group could not be granted because the school was already involved in another research project. Therefore this school was excluded from the start. Schools (clusters) are identified by codes as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and cluster sizes are given in brackets for each school or cluster.

Table 4.2:   Number of black learners – final sample

Geographical category	Less than 20	20-40	40+
N1		A (39)	B (57)
N2	C (7) ⟶	C (7)	D (50)
N3		E (20)	F (120) G (75)
N4		H (33)	G (75)

The sample contained 332 learners, which provided fairly good coverage of the total population.

4.5 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Two research instruments were used, namely:

- a questionnaire; and

- interviews.

In addition, the researcher also informally used the observation method, by keeping a field journal (see Section 4.6.1.1(d) for more details).

Below, firstly the design of the questionnaire is explained. Then, the interviews are discussed.

4.5.1 The questionnaire

4.5.1.1   The aim of the questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire was to:

- get quantifiable, comparable data;

- obtain a representative sample of Grade Nine learners' opinions and experiences.

The questionnaire was applied to 332 learners, which was regarded as good coverage of the population.

4.5.1.2   Drafting the questionnaire

A suitable research instrument was not available, so it was necessary to design a structured questionnaire that could be considered efficient, culturally relevant and, more importantly, was designed for the appropriate reading level (the questionnaire is included as Appendix A). Various existing questionnaires and scales covering related topics were consulted and incorporated where applicable. An example of such an existing instrument is the modified version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale – considered a global measure of self-esteem which assesses a child's feelings about him/herself (Rosenberg, 1965:305-307; Belgrave, *et al.*, 1994:149).

During the drafting process, it was borne in mind that a good questionnaire, according to Best and Kahn (1986:175-176) and Krathwohl (1993:379-380), displays the following characteristics:

- consideration for the characteristics of the respondents;

- a neat and attractive appearance;

- clear instructions; and

- unambiguous and objective questions.

The procedure followed in compiling the questionnaire involved four stages, as set out below.

Stage 1: Theoretical research

Chapters 2 to 3 provide the theoretical base for the questionnaire. In Chapter 2, the home situation of black learners was discussed. In Chapter 3, a standardised culture-general framework identified 18 recurring themes for intercultural interaction, grouped into three broad categories. Possible difficulties that could arise from black learners' unique and particular cultural situation upon entering a multicultural, traditionally white suburban school were grouped under the relevant headings and described and discussed. Possible questions were then formulated. These were used to design a draft questionnaire.

Stage 2: Evaluation of the draft questionnaire

The draft questionnaire was evaluated by a panel from the Gauteng Department of Education: Directorate: Education Information: Research Unit.

The panel initially felt that the questionnaire was racially biased and did not respect the dignity of the respondents. The panel wanted the questionnaire to be revised to avoid stereotypical perceptions of these learners. It was necessary to convince the panel otherwise, since the aim was to gauge the learners' feelings about relevant issues. Also, the dignity of the respondents was never compromised. Another

concern raised by the researcher was that these restrictions would result in a measuring instrument that is not as robust and strong psychometrically as it needed to be. Nevertheless, the Gauteng Department of Education panel insisted that some of its requirements be met and a compromise was reached that was scientifically acceptable.

The questionnaire was reviewed and reworked and eventually met with the panel's approval.

Stage 3: Pilot study

In order to evaluate the draft questionnaire, it was applied to a number of learners at an identified school in N3. Learners were requested to indicate which questions were vague and which words they did not understand.

Stage 4: Design of the final questionnaire

The pilot study resulted in a number of changes to the draft questionnaire, which was then finalised. The title of the final questionnaire reads: "School and cultural survey" (the questionnaire is appended as Appendix A).

4.5.1.3 Composition of the questionnaire

The following dimensions are covered in the questionnaire: biographical information, the individual dimension, the family dimension and the school/cultural dimension. Indicators for operationalising the dimensions were identified and questions were based on these indicators. Throughout the questionnaire, questions that could possibly be regarded as sensitive, for example, Q6[1] (attendance frequency of religious or traditional services) and Q13 (nature of medical treatment) were incorporated along with questions "borrowed" from other dimensions (see Appendix A). This was done in order to "neutralise" any potentially disturbing questions by blending them with "ordinary" questions.

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[1] For the sake of uniformity and brevity, throughout the text and in the tables, whenever specific questions or variables are referred to, the symbol Q is used for questions and the symbol V is used for variables.

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(a)   Biographical information

In Q2, Q3, Q4 and Q7 learners were asked to provide information regarding the following: their age, their gender, whether it is their first year in Grade Nine and their home language.

(b)   The family dimension

The socio-economic status of the family, and therefore the life-worlds of the learners, is determined mostly by the occupations and the educational qualifications of the parents or primary caregivers (Scheffer, 1972:84-101). Accordingly, Q8 to Q11 investigated aspects of the socio-economic status of the family, namely:

- the father's occupation;

- the father's highest qualification;

- the mother's occupation; and

- the mother's highest qualification.

The results are set out in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

A lack of educational qualifications or joblessness could signify conditions of poverty such as overcrowded living quarters, inadequate diet and poor medical care. Such conditions could lead to disturbed sleeping patterns, susceptibility to illness and other developmental problems. These factors in turn influence the learners' concentration, motivation and self-concept – all very relevant where learners' adjustment to school is concerned.

The rest of the questions in this dimension (see Table 4.3, overleaf) also aimed to determine learners' perceptions of factors related to their home and family circumstances.

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Table 4.3: **Operationalising the family dimension**

DIMENSION	INDICATOR	QUESTION NUMBER	VARIABLE NUMBER
Facilities	• area – suburb/township	Q18, Q19	V40, V41
	• house size – number of bedrooms	Q16	V35
	• number of inhabitants	Q14	V33
	• availability of: – water – electricity – geyser – fridge	 Q17 Q17 Q17 Q17	 V36 V37 V38 V39
	• availability of informal educational material	Q15	V34
	• household duties	Q32	V69
Quality of care-giving	• circumstances conducive to studying	Q41	V78
	• breakfast before school	Q34	V71
Values	• frequency regarding attendance of religious/traditional services	Q6	V15
	• belief in spirits of forefathers	Q44	V81
	• nature of medical treatment	Q13	V31,V32
Parent-child relationship	• with whom does the learner reside?	Q12	V21-30
	• encouragement to do homework	Q40	V77
	• discuss personal problems (trust)	Q42	V79
	• unnecessary scolding (understanding)	Q39	V76
	• discipline: – manner in which it is applied – gender of disciplinarian	Q35 Q36	V72 V73
	• respect for parents	Q37, Q38, Q43, Q45	V74, V75, V80, V82

(c)   The individual dimension

The individual dimension deals with aspects which have to do with the learners themselves. These aspects were identified and described in Chapters 2 and 3. As with the other dimensions, indicators were established and questions were based on these indicators in order to operationalise this dimension (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4:   Operationalising the individual dimension

DIMENSION	INDICATOR	QUESTION NUMBER	VARIABLE NUMBER
Self-concept	• self-esteem	Q24	V46-55
	• sensitivity to criticism	Q25	V56
Belonging	• extra-mural activities	Q5	V5-14
	• choice of school	Q27	V58
	• happy/unhappy when at school	Q28	V59
	• specify reasons	Q29	V60-V66
	• close friends from another race group	Q26	V57
Aspirations	• highest level of education desired	Q20	V42
	• possibility of realising these ambitions	Q21	V43
	• desired occupation	Q23	V45

(d) The school/cultural dimension

This section deals with learners' perceptions of a number of aspects concerning the school. These aspects are grouped under the following headings:

• school atmosphere;

• the classroom; and

• assessment.

The operationalisation of these aspects is set out in Table 4.5 (overleaf).

Table 4.5: Operationalising the school/cultural dimension

DIMENSION	INDICATOR	QUESTION NUMBER	VARIABLE NUMBER
Scholastic coping ability	• first year in Grade Nine	Q4	V4
	• feeling about school marks	Q31	V68
Language	• preference	Q58	V102
	• comprehensive ability	Q59	V103
	• expressive ability	Q60, Q61	V104, V105
	• reading ability	Q61	V106
	• writing ability	Q61	V107
Culture	• punctuality	Q46	V83
	• loudness	Q47	V84
	• eye contact	Q48	V85
	• personal space	Q49	V86
	• group: – pressure – interest	 Q56 Q55, Q62	 V96-V100 V95. V108
	• conflict resolution	Q50, Q65, Q67	V87-90, V111, V113
	• questioning	Q54	V94
	• discipline: – gender roles – reintroduction of corporal punishment – manoeuvring/accepting responsibility for actions	 Q66 Q68 Q22, Q64	 V112 V114 V44, V110
	• entitlement	Q30, Q33, Q51, Q57, Q63	V67, V70, V91, V101, V109
Racism	• racial harmony	Q52	V92
	• occurrence of racist insults	Q53	V93

In the questionnaire, Q69 reads as follows: "If you could, what would you change about your school to make you like it more?" This **open-ended question** is aimed at obtaining a realistic picture of learners' **feelings** about being accommodated at their schools.

4.5.2 The interviews

The researcher also used a qualitative research approach which involved conducting interviews, because the research required exploratory, descriptive, in-depth and holistic descriptions (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 1995:5). Triangulation allows data obtained through interviews to be combined with data from the questionnaire, as well as with observations to validate the truth value of the eventual findings. It also provides the researcher with a holistic perspective of the unique way in which each respondent phrases particular problems (Merriam, 1988:86).

Individual interviews consisting of semi-structured questions were conducted with teaching staff and learners in each of the schools concerned.

4.5.2.1 The aim of the interviews

The interviews were conducted to achieve the following aims:

- to gain insight into the experiences, the perceptions and the life-worlds of black Grade Nine learners in multicultural, traditionally white schools; and

- to explore the situation of these learners as experienced, perceived and explained by the teaching staff at the same schools.

4.5.2.2 The interview structure

(a) Convenience sample

A convenience sample was taken from the population – the teaching staff at each selected school was requested to select respondents that would meet the criteria described in Section 4.5.2.2 ((b) below. The researcher assumed that the sample size was sufficient when a repetition in themes appeared in the description of the experience of a specific phenomenon by the respondents. This assumption is in line with recommendations by Parse, Coyne and Smith (1985:18). This repetition or recurrence of themes is also sometimes referred to as data saturation.

(b)   Criteria for the selection of the learners to be interviewed

The following criteria were applied in the selection of learners for the interviews:

- The learners had to be willing to be interviewed.

- They had to be able to communicate in English.

- They had to have completed the questionnaire.

- The gender of the respondents depended on the boy/girl ratio of the particular school involved (the aim was to interview the same number of boys and girls).

- The respondents had to be in touch with the general feelings of their peer groups.

- They had to be unafraid to air their opinions.

It was emphasised that the selected learners did not need to be academic achievers or even well-behaved at school.

(c)   Criteria for the selection of the teachers to be interviewed

Each school had to appoint a spokesperson who knew the Grade Nine learners well enough to be interviewed on issues relating to these learners.

The interviews were semi-structured. This means that neither the exact wording, nor the order of the questions or issues about to be explored, would be predetermined (Merriam, 1988:86).

Semi-structured interviews increase the credibility of the eventual findings by allowing the researcher the freedom to probe for clarification and to change or adjust the questions to suit the knowledge, status and involvement of the specific respondent (Krefting, 1991:218; Merriam, 1988:86). Furthermore, interviews allow the researcher continuous assessment and an evaluation of information, providing opportunities for redirection, probing and summarising (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, quoted in Merriam, 1988:86).

The interviews were conducted according to interview schedules and field notes were kept during the interviews.

4.5.2.3   Data gathering

Each of the individual interviews lasted for an average of one hour and consisted of semi-structured questions that were put to the learners and teaching staff. The interviews were recorded on audiotape, and a verbatim transcription, analysis and interpretation were done afterwards.

The questions put to the learners and teachers are set out below.

(a)   Learners:

•   *When you first came to this high school, what were your general expectations of this school?*

•   *How do you feel about your school now? Especially regarding:*
       – language;
       – discipline (uniform/ latecoming/ noise);
       – teachers.

•   *How do you feel about being with your fellow black learners compared to being with your fellow white learners?*

•   *Do you take part in cultural/sporting activities?*

•   *Do you feel that you belong in this school?*

•   *What would you change about your school and why, to make you like it more?*

(b)   Teachers:

•   *When black learners first came to this school, were there any initial adjustment problems?*

•   *How are they coping scholastically?*

•   *Can they speak to their parents about their personal problems – is there adequate communication between parent(s) and child?*

- *Do you find that the learners from the different cultural groups mix socially?*

- *Do black learners take part in sport and cultural activities at school?*

- *Are there any adjustment problems still evident?*

First, a pilot study was done in order to refine the methodology of the data gathering process. The pilot study also provided the researcher with experience in this method of data gathering (Krefting, 1991:220; Burns & Grove, 1987:57).

4.5.2.4   Data analysis

Although several relevant analytical approaches exist, this data was analysed according to eight steps identified by Tesch (1990) for the analysis of qualitative data (quoted in Creswell, 1994:154-155). This method of data analysis operates in the manner explained below.

First, the researcher read through the complete transcribed interview to obtain some sense of the whole. The transcription was then read again, and individual topics were identified – not by their "substance", but by their underlying meaning. This process was repeated for all the respondents. Similar topics were grouped or clustered together and then organised into major or common topics, unique topics and side issues (leftovers). This selection of topics was coded and then compared to the data to see if new categories and codes emerged.

The most descriptive wording for these topics was then found and they were turned into categories and sub-categories. The abbreviations for the categories were finalised and the codes alphabetised. The data material belonging to each category was assembled in one place, after which the researcher could proceed to a preliminary analysis of the data. The identified categories and sub-categories were then interpreted according to the theoretical framework with its accompanying dimensions as set out in Chapter 3 (see Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5).

In this phase of the research, credibility was ensured by using double coding. A psychiatric nursing specialist with a doctorate and training and experience in qualitative research was appointed to code the data independently. The external coder was given unmarked copies of

the transcripts, as well as the field notes and a work protocol explaining the stages of the analysis and the processing of the data (see Appendices C and G).

The researcher and the external coder had formal discussions in order to determine the results and to which degree there was consensus between the researcher and the independent coder's findings.

4.5.2.5 *Literature control*

A literature control was implemented by comparing the results obtained during the data analysis phase with literature on similar or other relevant research. New perspectives that came to the fore during the data analysis phase as well as aspects that appear in the literature but that were not found in the research, are discussed in Chapter 6.

4.6 THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

The trustworthiness of this research is based on Guba's model, as explained in Lincoln and Guba (1985:289-300) and Krefting (1991:215-222). This model identifies four aspects of trustworthiness, namely truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. These aspects are relevant to both qualitative and quantitative studies, but the philosophical differences between these two approaches determine different strategies for assessing the criteria in each type of research (Krefting, 1991:215; see also Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Different research approaches – comparison of criteria

CRITERION	QUALITATIVE APPROACH	QUANTITATIVE APPROACH
Truth value	Credibility	Internal validity
Applicability	Transferability	External validity
Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality	Confirmability	Objectivity

Source: Krefting (1991:217)

Four questions can be posed in order to ensure trustworthiness in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290):

- Truth value

  How can one establish whether the research findings reflect the truth about the respondents and the context in which the research was carried out?

- Applicability

  How does one determine the extent to which the particular findings will be applicable to other respondents or contexts?

- Consistency

  How can one determine the findings if an inquiry were to be repeated with the same respondents and in the same context?

- Neutrality

  Is it possible to establish the degree to which research findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry, as opposed to the biases, perspectives, motivations and interests of the researcher?

Within the quantitative research approach, the criteria employed in response to these questions are termed **internal validity**, **external validity**, **reliability** and **objectivity**. The qualitative research approach refers to **credibility**, **transferability, dependability** and **confirmability** (see Table 4.6, above).

Measures that are critical to the quality of the research and that were taken to establish the trustworthiness of this research are discussed in Section 4.6.1 below, because they feature in both the quantitative and the qualitative research approaches.

4.6.1 Internal validity (quantitative approach) versus credibility (qualitative approach)

Both approaches are concerned with the question whether the researcher trusts the research findings to reflect the truth.

In quantitative research, **internal validity** pertains to the degree to which the questionnaire measures what it is supposed to measure: "Do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring?" (Merriam, 1988:166). **Construct validity** refers to the relationship between test items and related behaviour or characteristics. Therefore it uses hypotheses (derived from theories) or questions, as in this research, about the nature of the variables about to be measured and the observations of these variables (De Wet *et al.*, 1981:149).

In qualitative research, **credibility** is normally obtained through the study of human experiences as perceived and experienced by respondents (Krefting, 1991:215). Sandelowski (1986, quoted by Krefting, 1991:215-216) suggests that qualitative research is credible when the descriptions or interpretation of human experience are so accurate "that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions".

4.6.1.1   Measures taken to heighten the study's credibility and internal validity

(a)   Prolonged engagement

There are no rules that regulate how much time is spent on data collection. However, Krefting (1991:218) argues that sufficient time has to be invested to learn the "culture", to test for misinformation introduced either by the self or by the respondents and to build trust. Krefting also refers to Kirk and Miller (1986) who maintain that it is especially useful to detect response sets that indicate which answers are based on what respondents view as socially desirable responses. Lincoln and Guba (1985:301-304) maintain that a variety of experiences in a given field over a considerable period of time can improve the validity of a study.

The occupational position of the researcher as Educational Advisor: Specialised Counselling in the Gauteng Department of Education for a period of eleven years has exposed her to the chosen field of research, since she had regular contact with principals, teaching staff and learners of primary and secondary schools. Due to this work experience and contact, she could to a large extent overcome the obstruction of what Lincoln and Guba (1985:302) term being "a stranger in a strange land". Because she is accepted as a member of the school system, she did not draw undue attention to her presence, thereby avoiding

accompanying overreaction. She therefore had the time needed to orient herself to the situation and to build trust (see also Section 4.6.4.2).

(b)   Persistent observation

This technique helps to identify which characteristics and aspects in a situation are most relevant to the particular issue or problem under investigation and to focus on those (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:304). Regular contact with schools constantly brought the predicament of black learners under the "new" educational dispensation to the attention of the researcher. Also, since 1996, the researcher entered into a number of informal discussions with principals, teachers and learners (black and white) regarding the general adjustment of black learners and intercultural interaction in the region's schools. These discussions played an important role in developing a clearer perception of what the most relevant aspects regarding the research were.

However, Lincoln and Guba (1985:305) warn of the danger of premature closure in persistent observation. They advise researchers that the intention to come to those terms called for by the situation should be surrounded by an aura of scepticism. Paradoxically, the closeness of a relationship between researcher and respondent can threaten credibility (Krefting, 1991:218). To overcome this risk, reflexivity, the keeping of a field journal and triangulation were used as credibility strategies. Their critical role is discussed below.

(c)   Reflexivity

Because qualitative research is value-laden, it is important for a researcher actively to report feelings and biases (Creswell, 1994:6). Familiarity with the school environment prompted the researcher (who is also trained as a teacher) to look for the specific and practical implications of what she observed. As a trained educational psychologist, the researcher wanted to observe the learners' life-worlds only from their own viewpoint, without being influenced by her training as a teacher.

Quantitative research emphasises objectivity, which refers to a "proper distance between researcher and subjects that minimizes bias and is achieved through such procedures as instrumentation and randomization" (Krefting, 1991:217). Krefting explains that to remain

objective, the researcher has to be scientifically distant and not to influence or be influenced by the study. Because qualitative research is dynamic, and the researcher is a participant (as opposed to being merely an observer and by decreasing the distance between researcher and respondents), it was important to be aware of and reflect on influences on the process of data gathering and analysis (Krefting, 1991:218).

(d)   Field notes

Keeping field notes in the form of methodological notes, as suggested by Krefting (1991:218) and Patton (1990:202), served the purpose of documenting the daily schedule and logistics. Observational notes were used to document activities relevant to the research, using observation and listening techniques.

More importantly, though, keeping personal field notes made the researcher aware of her personal experiences (feelings, thoughts, biases and ideas) regarding the research process. Also, although the researcher is familiar with the methodology of qualitative research and the conducting of semi-structured interviews, **the pilot study** emphasised the importance of being less active and listening more; of using appropriate communication techniques and not guiding too strongly or proceeding to therapeutic interventions. Consequently, the personal field notes served the purpose of continuously reminding the researcher to remain an objective observer and competent communicator.

The field notes were discussed with the external coder and decisions were taken as to whether the field notes should be included in the discussion of the results. It was decided to include some field notes where relevant (see Section 6.9).

(e)   Triangulation

The third technique – triangulation – is the combined usage of two or more theories, methods, data sources, researchers or analytical methods in the study of a phenomenon (Creswell, 1994:174; Krefting 1991:219). Creswell (1994:174) cites Jick's (1979) explanation that the concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that if any bias were present in particular data sources, researcher and/or method, these would be

neutralised when the findings are used in conjunction with other data sources and methods and by other researchers.

In this study, triangulation is largely ensured by the mutually supportive research methods of the quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies, namely a survey and in-depth interviews. The literature study also acted as a control.

A theoretical study of the life-worlds of black learners, both at home and at school, was done. Areas that appeared particularly troublesome were identified. These areas were grouped into three broad dimensions, namely the individual, family and school dimensions. By refining these areas, indicators were identified. The resulting theory was operationalised by the formulation of specific questions, which were then incorporated into the questionnaire and interviews. By following these steps, the standards of construct validity were also met, as well as those of theoretical validity, in that the theory was made "measurable".

To further ensure a sound scientific basis, the following was also done:

- Various experts in the field of intercultural research and colleagues of the researcher were consulted with regard to the questionnaire content. Statisticians and experts in question designing were involved in a supervisory capacity in the formulation of the questions.

- Numerous existing questionnaires on related subjects were consulted.

- Multiple methods of data gathering were used, namely a questionnaire, biographical information gathering and participant observation.

- A variety of data sources were used – a variety of persons (teaching staff and learners) were observed and interviewed. Also, by visiting various schools, variety in time and space was ensured.

- Referential adequacy was ensured by including a selection from the material recorded in the research. These measures ensure a criterion against which to judge

the accuracy of the analyses and interpretations of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:314).

- Member checking gave respondents an opportunity to react to the results of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:314).

4.6.2 External validity (quantitative approach) versus transferability (qualitative approach)

Applicability refers to the degree to which research findings can be applied to other groups, settings or contexts; the ability to generalise from the research findings to larger populations (Krefting, 1991:216; Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). In quantitative research this matter resorts under the criterion of external validity. Cook and Campbell (1979, quoted in Lincoln & Guba, 1985:291) define external validity as "the approximate validity with which we infer that the presumed causal relationships can be generalized to and across alternate measures of the cause and effect and across different types of persons, settings, and times".

In this study, external validity was aimed for by giving "every element of the population a known probability (not necessarily equal) [chance] of being included in the sample" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:291).

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that it refers to the **transferability** of research and not to the generalisation of research. This is the case because qualitative research views a phenomenon in its unique, natural context. For this reason, one cannot generalise research findings (Krefting, 1991:216).

Transferability can be achieved by providing the maximum information regarding the literature, information about the respondents and the general research context (Krefting, 1991:220). This study aims to provide the maximum information regarding the context of the research. A literature control was undertaken and a complete bibliography is provided.

4.6.3 Reliability (quantitative approach) versus dependability (qualitative approach)

Lincoln and Guba (1985:292) say that reliability is "not prized for its own sake but as a precondition for validity; an unreliable measure cannot be valid". Referring to **reliability** in the quantitative approach, Hannah and Oosthuizen (1984:88) maintain that if the same questionnaire is applied to the same group of learners on two different occasions, and the results correlate to a large degree, it can be said that the questionnaire displays a high degree of reliability. In this study, the researcher did not administer the questionnaire twice to the same group. However, the researcher was of the opinion that the reliability of the results was established by correlating the questionnaire findings with those of the semi-structured focus interviews (see Chapter 6).

The following guidelines were adhered to in order to heighten the reliability of the questionnaire:

- Specific attention was given to setting the questions in a clear and uncomplicated manner. With regard to this aspect, it was imperative to consider the level of the English language skills of the particular learners. When the test was administered, every question was read out loud and standardised explanations were given if there were any queries.

- Easier questions were given first, and the open-ended question came later.

- The length of a questionnaire can influence its reliability. For this reason an attempt was made to keep the questionnaire to a length that was considered neither too short, nor too long (Hannah & Oosthuizen, 1984:89; Lincoln & Guba, 1985:292).

The **dependability** criterion relates to the consistency of findings. According to Krefting (1991:221), Guba (1981) used the term "auditable", which refers to the fact that it is important for researchers to be able clearly to follow the "decision trail" used by the investigator(s) in another study. Techniques that enhanced this study's dependability were the following:

- A dense description of the research methodology:

  The research method was described in such a way that another researcher will be able to follow the research procedure.

- The use of triangulation:

  The principle of triangulation was applied, as discussed in Section 4.6.1.1 (e)).

- The procedure of coding/recoding (Krefting, 1991:221):

  After coding a segment of the data, the researcher waited for at least two weeks and then recoded the same data and compared the results.

4.6.4 Objectivity (quantitative approach) versus confirmability (qualitative approach)

According to Guba (Krefting, 1991:221), audit strategy is viewed as an essential technique to establish **confirmability** (qualitative approach). Accordingly, it requires the involvement of an external auditor to follow and consider the research process and the eventual findings, and to understand why decisions were made.

The confirmability of qualitative research lies in the question whether the characteristics of the data are or are not confirmable.

The trustworthiness of this research has already been discussed above. Consequently, the following can now be considered:

- the authority of the researcher;

- school visits;

- the physical environment; and

- ethical measures.

4.6.4.1   The authority of the researcher

The researcher is a registered educational psychologist who has been in the service of the Gauteng Department of Education for eleven years. She has already been involved in extensive postgraduate research.

4.6.4.2   School visits

The researcher paid a preliminary visit to every school during which the aim of the research, as well as the modus operandi was explained. It was emphasised that the aim of the research was diagnostic and therefore not a critical evaluation of the school, the staff or the learners. This initial contact proved to be invaluable in establishing goodwill in and co-operation by the schools. This in turn improved the validity of the data by creating a relationship of mutual trust between researcher and respondents, ensuring the full co-operation and openness of respondents (Schalekamp, 1995:52).

4.6.4.3   The physical setting

(a)   Questionnaires

The choice of venue depended on the number of respondents involved, but the questionnaires were all completed in familiar, comfortable and quiet surroundings (either a school hall or classroom). Seating arrangements were organised and order was established and maintained by a member/members of the teaching staff.

The objective of the questionnaire was explained. Respondents were informed of the fact that no respondent can be identified, since no names appear on the questionnaires.

A registered psychometrist assisted the researcher to administer the questionnaire.

(b)   Interviews

It was important to use a quiet, private, comfortable area that was relatively free of disturbances for this purpose. The interviews were conducted individually and no names were mentioned to ensure maximum confidentiality and to establish an atmosphere of openness and trust.

The respondents' own permission was sought to record the interview on audiotape. The respondents were also reassured that only the researcher and one independent fellow coder, who is not in any way connected to the school, would listen to the tapes to analyse and interpret the data. After coding, the recordings were erased.

4.6.4.4   *Ethical measures*

This research took care to address ethical aspects. The following four basic rights of respondents were respected (Wilson, 1989:82; Burns & Grove, 1987:94-101):

- the right not to be injured;

- the right to be informed about the research;

- the right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality; and

- the right to self-determination.

A letter was sent to the parents concerned, informing them of the purpose and method of the research, and requesting their permission to involve their children in the research. The teachers were also interviewed with their informed consent. The respondents also knew that their participation was voluntary and that they could leave at any stage, should they wish to do so. Also, a summary of the results will be made available to the respondents, should they be interested.

4.7   SYNTHESIS

In this chapter, the research design and implementation of the empirical research are described. In Chapters 5 and 6, the focus is on the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data collected.