

**RACIAL IDENTITY AS NARRATED BY YOUNG  
SOUTH AFRICAN ADULTS WITH PARENTS FROM  
DIFFERENT RACIAL AND NATIONAL HERITAGES**

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**Racial identity as narrated by young South African adults with  
parents from different racial and national heritages**

by

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## *Dedication*

*This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my mother Paula Pinto Carvalho,*

*a courageous woman who during apartheid fought against and  
remained resolute in the face of intolerance and racial segregation;*

*a brave woman who put her love first during a time when interracial  
relationships were met with social stigma and discrimination; and*

*a loving mother who taught my siblings and I to see the strength and  
pride within our diversity.*

*Mom, thank you for your support and unconditional love. Your  
unwavering encouragement and motivation fuelled me in my seemingly  
impossible journey.*

*I Love you, Mom*

*Te quiero mamá*

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## ABSTRACT AND KEY CONCEPTS

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Against a burgeoning worldwide discourse on how individuals from interracial parentage construct an identity in racialised societies, I conducted a study to explore and describe the way in which young biracial adults construct and negotiate their identities in post-apartheid South Africa. The study was informed by a qualitative and narrative research design within a postcolonial feminist paradigm. Theoretically, the study is informed by both Root's ecological framework of multiracial identity and Gaventa's power-cube theory.

I purposefully selected young biracial adults (n=10, 5 males, 5 females) adhering to specific age criteria (18 to 25) who are first-generation offspring from interracial relationships. For snowball sampling, I used social networks such as Facebook and twitter, as well as word of mouth, to locate participants. Written narratives and narrative interviews (audio recorded and transcribed verbatim) served as data sources and were supplemented by researcher field notes.

By means of inductive thematic analysis, the following four themes emerged: the influence of family on biracial identity construction; participants negotiating an identity within social milieus and relationships; expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity; and the stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity construction.

The identity construction of the young biracial South Africans in this study did not follow a clear linear progression, but changed and evolved in the participants' life course. This concurs with findings in existing literature. Racial identities included predominantly a white identity during the earlier years, followed by a progressively more black identity, and a biracial identity in later years. As also seen in other studies, the young biracial South African adults opted for non-racial qualifiers of identity, including cultural, religious and national identities. They said that their parents had been influential in their choice to identify with their biracial identity/heritage, which was in line with the findings of other studies. However, contradictory to what was found in other studies, the young biracial South African adults in this study did not experience rejection from both black and white peer groups and identified with peers from various racial groups.

The young biracial adults purposefully constructed identities that allowed them to experience power and privilege, as opposed to oppression. This also entailed the young adults' voicing their

preferred choice of identity in a post-apartheid South African society, thus moving away from the prescribed racial categories by choosing new racial identities, such as biracial and mixed-race identities. I posit that *constructive identity manipulation appropriation* explains how South African young biracial adults may construct their identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

## KEY CONCEPTS

- ❖ Biracial
- ❖ Bicultural identity
- ❖ Culture
- ❖ Gaventa's power cube theory
- ❖ Identity development
- ❖ Marginalised identities
- ❖ Multicultural identity
- ❖ Narrative research design
- ❖ Postcolonial feminism epistemology
- ❖ Power and privilege in identity construction
- ❖ Racial identity
- ❖ Root's ecological framework of racial identity development



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## **Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People**

*by Maria PP Root*

**(2003:32)**

### ***I HAVE THE RIGHT...***

- *Not to justify my existence in this world.*
- *Not to keep the races separate within me.*
- *Not to be responsible for people's discomfort with my physical ambiguity.*
- *Not to justify my ethnic legitimacy.*

### ***I HAVE THE RIGHT...***

- *To identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify.*
- *To identify myself differently than how my parents identify me.*
- *To identify myself differently than my brothers and sisters.*
- *To identify myself differently in different situations.*

### ***I HAVE THE RIGHT...***

- *To create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial.*
- *To change my identity over my lifetime -- and more than once.*
- *To have loyalties and identify with more than one group of people.*
- *To freely choose whom I befriend and love.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

---

*“Multiracial people blur the boundaries between races, the ‘us’ and ‘them’. They do not fit neatly into the observer’s schema of reality. The multiracial person’s existence challenges the rigidity of racial lines that are a prerequisite for maintaining the delusion that race is a scientific fact”*  
(Root, 1996:7).

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore how young adults in South Africa construct a biracial identity. In the American literature, the term biracial<sup>1</sup> is used to refer to individuals who have parents from two socially defined races (Francis, 2006:2). Similarly, in the South African literature, the word biracial is used to refer to children from interracial relationships (Blankenberg, 2000; Francis, 2006; Maré, 2005; Mojapelo-Batka, 2008; Morral, 1994). Internationally, most biracial studies have been conducted in Canada, the United States of America (USA) and Britain, with an emphasis on exploring the factors that influence biracial identity construction, understanding the experience of being an individual with a biracial heritage and examining the identity formation of biracial individuals (Aspinall, 2003; Brunnsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Song, 2010b; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007). In her exploratory study on interracial families in South Africa, Morrall (1994:67) states that *“not a single reference to studies on biracial children could be found in the context of South Africa”* (Morrall, 1994:67). Since then, Dennis Francis (2006), a leading South African scholar, has added to the existing literature of biracial identity development. For example, in one of his studies, Francis (2005) explored how nine young biracial adults, the children of Indian and white couples, constructed an identity within the South African context, specifically focusing on their experiences of constructing a racial identity and factors influencing identity formation. The lack of extensive research within a South African context may be attributed to the fact that interracial marriages have only recently been legalised in South Africa. Consequently, multiracial families most likely

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<sup>1</sup> The language used to talk about people with a mixed heritage is subject to much heated sociopolitical debate (Ali, 2003; Aspinall, 2003; Barn & Harman, 2006; Caballero, 2005; Ifekwunigwe, 1998). Numerous terms exist, from the more acceptable - although challenged - ‘biracial’, ‘interracial’, ‘mixed ethnicity’, ‘mixed heritage’, ‘mixed parentage’, ‘mixed race’, ‘multiracial’, and ‘multicultural’, to now condemned terms such as ‘half-caste’, ‘half-breed’ and ‘mulatto’ (Caballero, Edwards & Puthussery, 2008; Root, 1992; Laszloffy, 2005; Harris, 2009; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993).

consist of couples with fairly young children (Francis, 2006). Francis (2006) speculates that before interracial relationships were legalised, although such unions probably did exist, couples may have been reluctant to overtly discuss their interracial relationships and the experiences of their biracial children (Francis, 2006). Furthermore, prior to 1994 biracial children in South Africa were further marginalised because, as the offspring of relationships that were prohibited and unlawful under the apartheid<sup>2</sup> government, they were 'illegal'. Francis (2006) adds that it is likely that there has been an increase in interracial relationships since the abolishment of the Mixed Marriages Act in 1985. However, under apartheid, interracial families would not have been likely to draw attention to themselves, thus making research on interracial families and their biracial children problematic (Francis, 2006).

Since the end of apartheid, Jacobson, Amoateng and Heaton (2004) have reported that according to the 2001 South African Census, interracial marriages within South Africa are on the increase and currently account for approximately 3% of all marriages (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2008). Therefore, although monoracial relationships still dominate, South African statistics do imply a population of biracial individuals in the country (Barnes, Palmary, & Durrheim, 2001; Du Toit & Quayle, 2011). During the apartheid era, race emerged as the dominant form of identity in South Africa. These racialised identities, labels and roles were imposed with relative rigidity on South Africans, predetermining to an extent life paths and access to social, cultural and political resources (Puttick, 2011). Since the end of apartheid, issues pertaining to identity construction have attracted increased scholarly attention in South Africa, resulting in a growing body of literature that explores various aspects of identity (see for example Adhikari, 2006a; 2006b; Alexandar, 2006; Bekker & Leilde, 2004; Erasmus, 2002; Hassan, 2011; Zegeye, 2001). Durrheim and Mtose (2006:168) have claimed that *"the gains of liberation in South Africa have not been limited to the political, economic and cultural spheres, but are also apparent psychologically, at the level of identity"*. This suggests that post-apartheid represents a period during which South Africans are negotiating and renegotiating their identities (Steyn, 2001; Norris, Roeser, Richter, Lewin, Ginsburg, Fleetwood, Taole & Van der Wolf, 2008; Mtose, 2008). Accordingly, young biracial adults are ideally positioned to explore and negotiate their biracial identity construction in a multicultural, democratic South African context.

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<sup>2</sup> Apartheid is derived from the Dutch language and means to be 'apart or separate' (Hopkinson 1964). In South Africa, apartheid was a system of racial segregation that was enforced by the ruling government (National Party) from 1948 to 1994, leaving the majority of black South Africans (including the coloured and Asian populace) legally and economically powerless (Posel, 2001; Laster, 2007).

## 1.2 LOCATING MYSELF WITHIN THE STUDY

### Think box 1.1: The beginning ...

*My parents met at a University in Europe and I was born at the University's Medical Institute. I am a product of a white European mother and a black South African father. I am therefore a biracial woman, the eldest of four children. As a multiracial family we were not welcome in South Africa (as a result of the laws implemented by the apartheid government), so during my early years, my family and I lived in my mother's family home in Portugal (Lisbon), other European countries and Zambia. In our diverse world, outside of South Africa, my biracial heritage was celebrated. I felt that we were the 'modern family next door' with the cute kids, blending into Europe's liberal society. Those were the days when anti-apartheid organisations were mushrooming in Europe. In the 1980s, the anti-apartheid movement became the biggest human rights campaign of the twentieth century. Our family embodied this movement and our presence was cherished.*

My interest in this topic was ignited by my own biracial heritage. My mother is Spanish and was born and raised in Lisbon, Portugal, and my father is Tswana and a native of Pretoria, South Africa. I spent my younger years in Zambia, and my adolescent years and young adulthood in South Africa. I am therefore familiar with the South African culture. I identify myself as biracial and have had my own experiences of negotiating and constructing my biracial identity as a young adult in South Africa. Growing up as a young biracial woman in apartheid South Africa, I was constantly confronted with the challenge to adopt a monoracial identity by being continuously placed in the pre-existing racial categories<sup>3</sup> characteristic of South African society. Growing up, these ascribed racial identities made me feel that I was not allowed to celebrate my biracial heritage and that my own biracial identity was marginalised and ignored within my socio-cultural contexts.

During my adolescent and young adult years, I thus began to explore my own biracial identity. I reached out to the internet and books to find out more about people like me and how they went about constructing an identity within a racialised world. I soon realised that what I read was heavily influenced by North American and European scholars and that there was not sufficient knowledge about biracial identity in South Africa to help me to answer questions relating to my own identity construction as a biracial individual living within a South African society. This initially inspired my interest in the topic I set out to explore. It follows that my research focuses

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<sup>3</sup> Racial categories used in South Africa are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

on the unique experiences and perspectives of young biracial adults within the South African social context and the way in which they construct their biracial identities.

My own life experiences, both challenging and positive, have led me to embrace and value my biracial identity and multiple heritages. However, although my background connected me to the participants of the study, and even though I share racial and ethnic similarities with them, this does not necessarily mean that I completely share or understand both their experiences and their biracial identity constructions. In other words, my own experiences as a biracial individual (while potentially similar to those of many other biracial individuals) do not and cannot speak for a broader biracial population (Twine, 2000). Accordingly, I adopted a reflexive stance (Anderson, 2008) to acknowledge and report on the personal beliefs, values and biases that may have shaped my inquiry. To this end, I include think boxes throughout the thesis to allow the reader accountable insight into my continuous process of reflection.

***Think box 1.2: Continuous reflection throughout the thesis***

*As a postcolonial feminist, I chose to openly acknowledge my subjectivity, emotionality and influence on the research process (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010) by adding think boxes. Throughout the thesis the think boxes give the reader an emic perspective into my personal journey as a biracial woman. My story runs parallel to the narratives of the participants, as I share my experiences growing up as a biracial individual in the South African context and also share how I experienced my own identity construction. However, my personal experiences are not the main focus of this study and I chose to use personal reflection in the form of think boxes to add context and layers to the story being told about the participants in this study (Ellis, 2007; Ellis et al., 2010).*

I adopted a postcolonial feminist paradigm, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, to inform me during this study. This lens enabled me to opt for knowledge generation in a way that allowed the young adults in this study to claim and tell their stories of identity construction in their own ways and give testament to their collective biracial experiences and struggles (Battiste, 2000). By implementing this epistemology, I could value the young biracial adults' subjectivities and their day-to-day experiences as knowledge, and could encourage their voices and participation to support their emancipation and empowerment with regard to their biracial identity (Tillaart, Kurtz & Cash, 2009). The participants' identities were thus formed in their constant negotiation for meaning in a changing post-apartheid South African context. Participants subsequently voiced new identities in response to or as a consequence of other changes and identities (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005).

### 1.3 RATIONALE FOR A STUDY ON YOUNG ADULTS WITH A BIRACIAL HERITAGE IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Internationally, one rationale for continued research on multiracial issues is the rise in the number of interracial relationships over the past three decades, which has resulted in the creation of a multiracial<sup>4</sup> population in, for example, the USA<sup>5</sup> (Goldstein & Morning, 2000; Root, 1996; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2004). The amount of individuals with a biracial heritage has created an increased need for comprehending the unique perspectives and experiences related to an individual with a diverse racial background (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). Specifically, queries about how biracial individuals experience unique aspects of their identity formation have increased, as a result of their biracial heritage (Harris, 2009). Existing studies indicate that one of the unique issues confronting multiracial individuals is the process of identity development (Gillem, Cohn & Thorne, 2001; Miville, Baysden & So-Lloyd, 1999; Miville, Constantine, Baysden, & So-Lloyd, 2005; Pedrotti, Edwards & Lopez, 2008; Root, 1996). This may be a result of the fact that *“monoracial models of identity do not recognise the social complexity of adopting a biracial identity in a monoracially defined social world”* (Miville et al., 2005:303). Furthermore, individuals with a biracial heritage challenge society’s obsolete norms and assumptions regarding race because it is not possible to assign them, with ease, to any of the pre-existing racial categories within society (Spickard, 1992; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez & Peck, 2007).

As a result, while navigating their social world, it would appear that multiracial individuals face unique challenges that are seemingly not faced by monoracial individuals. Consequently, since they do not fit into pre-existing racial categories, there is a great deal of attention and controversy surrounding the way in which multiracial individuals define themselves (Shih *et al.*, 2007). In international literature that deals with the identity development of biracial individuals, several American authors (Doyle & Kao, 2007a; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Townsend, Markus & Bergsieker, 2009) reveal that individuals with biracial heritages have in the past often been assigned monoracial identities, characteristically those of minority or low-social-status groups in

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Multiracial’ is an inclusive term which refers to people of all racial mixes and, as such, also includes biracial people (individuals who identify with two races), mixed-race and mixed heritage (Root, 1996; Root & Kelley, 2003). When describing theories, models or studies relating to either biracial or multiracial individuals, I utilise the same terms as used by the original authors (Pedrotti *et al.*, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> At the global level, the United States of America 2000 Census (USA Bureau of the Census, 2000) created a landmark change in terms of the question of racial identity as individuals were allowed to identify with more than one racial group. Thus biracial individuals were given the opportunity to express their multiracial backgrounds and defied the notion of rigid racial categories (Doyle & Kao, 2007a). The ‘two or more races’ category in the United States of America’s 2000 Census accounted for nearly seven million of the total population of the United States of America (Coloma, 2008).

society (Root, 1996b; Townsend *et al.*, 2009). This was based on the so-called one-drop rule<sup>6</sup>, which stated that a person with one drop of non-white blood was considered non-white (Doyle & Kao, 2007). Hence, within the American context, biracial individuals with a black heritage were considered to be black, regardless of their self-identification. Although some biracial individuals were able to ‘pass’ and be considered as whites because of their fair skins, others were characterised and labelled as black because of socially ascribed physical characteristics, such as hair texture and a darker skin tone (Doyle & Kao, 2007a).

Currently mixed-race individuals assert a variety of racial identities, including biracial, multiracial and monoracial, or reject racial categories altogether, according to the social context (Brunsma, 2005; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Townsend *et al.*, 2009). Japanese scholars Oikawa and Yoshida (2007) and American scholars Brunsma and Rockquemore (2001) have found that the identity construction of biracial individuals does not follow a linear progression; rather, identities selected are fluid and multiple in nature (Hyman, 2010; Harris & Sim, 2002; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Accordingly, it would appear that no single identity label exists that may be applied to all biracial individuals (Hyman, 2010; Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Furthermore, studies have also focused on factors that may influence the identity construction of biracial individuals, which indicates that social networks and peers (Herman, 2004; Hubbard, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2001; Sheets, 2004), the role of family and parental socialisation (Crawford & Allagia, 2008; Rockquemore, 2005), language acquisition (Lee & Bean, 2004) and exposure to cultural knowledge (Hyman, 2010; Renn, 2000) can all influence and shape the identity development of a biracial individual.

However, since research on multiracial experiences and perspectives have been conducted primarily in countries other than South Africa, such as the United Kingdom and the USA, the understanding of both the biracial experience and the role and impact of the environment in respect of biracial identity is limited and narrow in focus (Jackson, 2010a). Despite increasing

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<sup>6</sup>In the American context, the historical term known as the ‘one-drop rule’, stated that any person with any African ancestry was automatically categorised as black (Wilton, Sanchez & Garcia, 2013). This ensured that biracial people would be classified in accordance with the rule of hypodescent, “*which refers to a social system that maintains the fiction of monoracial identification of individuals by assigning a racially mixed person to the racial group in their heritage that has the least social status*” (Root, 1996: x). The purpose of this rule was to downgrade biracial individuals to lower-status groups in society in order to preserve and maintain the economic and social power of the higher-status (often white) group by limiting the racial identity options of biracial individuals. Despite the fact that this rule is no longer enforced in America, it is notable that individuals with black and white racial backgrounds are still categorised as predominantly black, and thus as a minority in society (Wilton, Sanchez & Garcia, 2013; Kottak, 2010).

interest in multiracial individuals over the past few decades, there is still a remarkable dearth of research in this area as existing research remains limited and narrow in focus. Furthermore, recognition and acknowledgment of the existence of multiracial populations by the dominant groups of societies are lacking (Coloma, 2008), specifically within the South African context, where the biracial experience has a marginalised perspective and culture of silence within local and indigenous literature. Furthermore, post-apartheid South Africa provides an interesting platform as it affords young adults the opportunity to construct identities contradictory to racial categories imposed on South African people during apartheid. It is against this background that I undertook this study.

To this end, this research study aims to build upon existing, but primarily international, racial identity theory by exploring the way in which young adults narrate their biracial identity construction within a South African context. I agree with Jackson (2010a) that it is important that researchers critically examine and understand the complexity of identity as it applies to individuals who identify with more than one race. Such knowledge is important to the discipline of educational psychology as the study of individuals with a biracial heritage may provide valuable knowledge on how to plan and provide effective preventative interventions and treatment strategies in order to promote the development of culturally sensitive practice models with multiracial individuals and interracial families within the South African context (Beneditto & Olisky; 2001; Jackson, 2010a; Nishimura, 2004).

As such, I am interested in understanding the way in which young adults narrate their biracial identity construction and, consequently, how they racially identify themselves in a South African context. This research may add to the existing literature on racial identity scholarship from a South African perspective. I agree with Charmaine Wijeyesinghe (2001) that:

*“Multiracial identity is the newest chapter in the evolving field of racial identity development. The heightened interest in the experience of multiracial people is fuelled by changing social demographics, an increasing number of multiracial people who identify with their racial ancestries, and the emergence of groups advocating for the rights of multiracial people”* (Wijeyesinghe, 2001:129).



### Think box 1.3: Who am I?

*For many years while living abroad I was exposed to interracial families and biracial individuals. At the time, I did not label them 'interracial'; to me these were just the families next door. I cannot deny that it was great to spend 11 years of my life being colour blind. However, when my non-racial lenses were removed by the racially charged South African society, I felt very lost as a young adolescent. I wanted to belong somewhere, I did not want to be different, I wanted to fit in and be like everybody else. The tragedy is that 'everybody' was so divided around me, and they were using pigment, hair and language as the basis for their separation and division.*

*At night in my bedroom I used to try to rationalise my social situation: "I am sure there are 'others' like me ... (other biracial people like me) are they feeling as isolated as I do?" I wanted to know whether they had similar or different experiences being biracial individuals in South Africa. Did they publically choose a monoracial identity while claiming a biracial identity at home? Were they ascribed monoracial identities like I was? Did their interracial families experience racism and discrimination? How did they feel about their biracial heritage? All these questions led me to start reading up on biracial identity development. As a teenager I remember reading Root's (1993) *Bill of Rights for Mixed-race People* and having an 'aha moment' when it came to my identity construction. I finally felt that I belonged to a social group who celebrated their biracial diversity and this resource assisted me in navigating my cultural and racial identity. I began to understand my own narrative by asking my parents about theirs. I put the pieces of my 'identity puzzle' together ...*

*I realised that choosing to incorporate my parents' narratives into my own identity helped me to have pride in my biracial heritage. I thus chose a biracial identity to celebrate both my black and white heritages. Feeling whole meant an understanding of my dual heritage and a feeling of pride in who I am as a biracial individual. However, all my resources and support came from overseas, since in South Africa no one understood my biracial heritage – it was a foreign concept and one that had prejudice and a social stigma attached to it because of South Africa's racial past.*

## 1.4 SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF IDENTITY WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The South African socio-historical context is an important one to consider as *"identity is regarded as a cultural and historical product of constant negotiation processes influenced by specific social and cultural contexts"* (Jung & Lee, 2004:146). As identities are constructed over long periods of time and cannot be isolated from past experiences (Hassan, 2011), I will give a brief history of South Africa so that my research study gives meaning to the narratives of the young adults in my study and their identity construction process. This historical synopsis will contribute in the understanding of current transformations of identity in South Africa and also

assist in gaining a perspective of how identities are negotiated with others within personal, historical and situational contexts (Vandeyar, 2010).

Before the victory of the apartheid government (National party), interactions between people from different racial groups in South Africa were more tranquil during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries than they were in the last half of the twentieth century (Jaynes, 2007; Jacobson *et al.*, 2004). The early history of South Africa demonstrates that many prominent Afrikaner males and 'non-white'<sup>7</sup> women were involved in interracial relationships (Jacobson *et al.*, 2004). This period of Dutch settlement at the Cape in the seventeenth century resulted in white men commonly marrying black women (Jaynes, 2007). It appears that skin colour and race played a small part in shaping the attitudes of Europeans to non-Europeans. Thus many white Afrikaner families have mixed racial ancestry (Jacobson *et al.*, 2004).

The incidence of interracial marriages gradually declined in the mid-twentieth century, with the emergence of the National Party and the successive consolidation of white political power in South Africa in 1948. Between 1948 and 1960, the National Party conceded a sequence of legislative acts aimed at eradicating every trace of black African input in the dominant political system, and to fulfil Afrikaner ethnic and white racial goals, profoundly impacting on race relations in the country (Jacobson *et al.*, 2004). It was under apartheid, which was introduced by the Nationalist Party in 1948, that racial discrimination was systematically and often brutally enforced (Makhalemele & Molewa, 2005; Henrard, 2002; Seekings, 2008). However, segregationist policies and racial discrimination has a long history in South Africa, starting with the colonisation of the Cape, first by the Dutch and then the British. The violent subjugation of indigenous populations (such as the Khoi and San, Xhosa, Zulu, Pedi and others), as well as the importation of slaves from the East and other parts of Africa, all contributed to the development of a racial order in South Africa (Makhalemele & Molewa, 2005; Henrard, 2002). Among the multitude of laws that gave expression to apartheid, five acts were especially noteworthy in constructing, enforcing and maintaining racial categorisation, greatly impacting the lives of interracial families and their biracial children (Mojapelo-Batka, 2008).

Firstly, the *Population Registration Act* (Act 30 of 1950) created a nationwide register which categorised and recorded the 'race' of every individual living in South Africa. Consequently, identity formation was primarily determined by the official system of racial classification ascribed to an individual at birth, during the apartheid era (Horowitz, 1991). The Act defined four population groups, namely the Bantu (currently termed Africans or blacks, this referred to the

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<sup>7</sup> Non-white refers to South Africa's racial groups of black, coloured and Indian (people of colour).

indigenous people of the continent of Africa), whites (who were defined as descendants of immigrants from Europe with recognisably light skins), Indians (who were individuals of Indian ancestry) and coloureds<sup>8</sup> (who were people descended from the slaves brought to South Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) (Christopher, 2001; Du Pré, 1999; Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010).

The heterogeneous coloured<sup>9</sup> group, which included people of mixed ancestry (the Griquas, Cape Malays, and other indigenous peoples of the Western and Northern Cape who adopted Afrikaans as their medium of communication during the colonial era) presented the greatest problem for classification under apartheid (Christopher, 2001; Du Pré, 1999; Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). The Act classified groups in South Africa in such a way that created confusion among coloured people, as no physical homestead existed for this group and throughout the apartheid era, coloureds were forced to consolidate a definite group but the exact definition of their identity was unclear (Eades, 1999; Erasmus 2002:18; Mandaza, 1997; 2001). During apartheid, coloured identity was influenced politically by many identifying with the principles of '*Black Consciousness*'<sup>10</sup> and rejecting the term 'coloured' as a source of oppression, whilst other individuals accepted and embraced the coloured category. These identity tensions have continued into post-apartheid South Africa as a result of the changes in the country's socio-economic context and political discourses since democracy in 1994. Consequently, many individuals classified as coloured (during apartheid) continue to reject this identity, while others have (re)appropriated the term often, although not always, based on fear of exclusion from the privileges and benefits of the country's new democracy and black majority government (Adhikari

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discourse on coloured identity from a historical perspective see: (i) M. Adhikari (2002) '*Hope, Fear, Shame, Frustration: Continuity and Change in the Expression of Coloured Identity in White Supremacist South Africa, 1910-1994*' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town), (ii) M. Adhikari (2008) '*From Narratives of Miscegenation to Post-modernist Re-imagining: Toward a Historiography of Coloured Identity in South Africa*', *African Historical Review*, Vol 40 (1):77-100, (iii) Adhikari, M. (2005) '*Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community*'. Athens: Ohio University Press, (iv) and Z. Erasmus (ed.) (2001) '*Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town*'. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

<sup>9</sup> According to (Greene, 2010:8) coloured within the South African context is a controversial term that can be quite confusing, especially to non-South Africans. Adhikari (2006a:468) states that contrary to (now perhaps increasingly redundant) international usage, in South Africa the term coloured does not refer to black people in general. Coloured instead alludes to a phenotypically diverse group of people descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population and other people of African and Asian descent who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century.

<sup>10</sup> Steve Biko was the founder of the Black consciousness movement (BCM) in South Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Hook, 2003). BCM defined black people (Africans, Indians/Asians and coloureds) as all South Africans who by law or tradition were politically, economically and socially discriminated against (Ratele & Shefer, 2003). The aim of BCM was to reverse years of negative self-image and to replace it with an affirming and positive black identity. Thus, BCM was a psychological liberation movement during apartheid that emphasised positive images and messages of 'blackness' (Hook, 2003).

2005; Alexander 2007; Hammett 2008; Soudien 2001). Others have resorted to claiming authentic identities based on ethnicity and historical links to the indigenous Khoi-San (Erasmus, 2000). Whilst some remain locked in an articulation of their identity ‘as *lack*’, arguing that as individuals they were ‘*not white enough during apartheid*’ and are ‘*not black enough in the post-apartheid context*’ (Caliguire, 1996:12). Coloured identities in the post-apartheid period, therefore, remain contested and uncertain, fluid and unstable, with different expressions in various political, social and cultural situations such that they remain ‘elusive’ (Hammett 2007; Yon 2000a; Hammett, 2009). I choose to view identity from a social constructionism approach, thus I agree with Adhikari (2008:91) that coloured identity (like all other identities in South Africa) is not fixed or given but rather a “*product of human agency dependent on a complex interplay of historical, social, cultural, political, and other contingencies*”. I thus view coloured identity as a dynamic process that is ongoing in which individuals and groups construct and re-construct their perceived realities and thus also their personal and social identities (Adhikari, 2008; Greene, 2010).

The Population Registration Act (Act 30 of 1950) impacted on the socialisation and identity formation of the members of each group (Bosch, 2008; Seeking, 2008). Every South African citizen was compelled to register as a member of an officially designated race on the understanding that the classification would inform every aspect of each person's life (Posel, 2001). Posel (2001a) and Maré (2001) state that during apartheid the criterion of *appearance* and *general acceptance*<sup>11</sup> was used to decide an individual's ‘race’. These criteria played an influential role in the entrenchment of ‘race-thinking’, to the extent that thinking in terms of ‘race’ has become ‘common sense’ within the South African context (Dawson, 2007).

According to Morral (1994), children of interracial relationships were not dealt with, within the Act, and since their physical *appearance* would be different in relation to both parents, the *general acceptance rule* would have been applied in their case. Du Pré (1999) further states that children of interracial unions were classified according to the race of the father, in cases where the father was classified as black or coloured. However, if the father was white, then the

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<sup>11</sup> According to the above definitions, the central test for white classification was namely (i) *looks* (appearance) and (ii) *social association* (general acceptance). According to the ‘*looks*’ criterion, factors such as the individual's education, speech and behavior had to be taken into account in evaluating this ‘look’. According to the former criterion, an individual had to be ‘generally accepted’ as a white person in several contexts where he “*is ordinarily resident, is employed or carries on business; mixes socially or takes part in other activities with other members of the public, and his association with the members of his family and any other persons with whom he lives*” (Du Pré, 1999:89-90). Finally, although someone could look like a white person and be accepted as such, but admitted that their descendants had ‘mixed blood’, or that they were coloured, the individual could not be classified as white (Du Pré, 1999; Posel, 2001a; 2001b).

child's classification was the same as the mother's (non-white). The Act had no scientific or standardised guidelines in determining the race of a person. Thus, an individual was white by appearance and acceptance; black by biological descent; or coloured, because the individual was neither white nor black (Du Pré, 1999). Ratel and Duncan (2003) argue, and rightfully so, that apartheid does not have space for biracial individuals, as they were not allowed to identify as both black and white even if she/he had a white and a black parent during the era of apartheid (Mojapelo-Batka, 2008).

**Think box 1.4: Where will Shaun be born?**

*While living in Zambia, we visited South Africa for the first time in 1992. At the time, my mother was eight months pregnant with my brother. We wanted to come and have a look at the country we had heard so much about ... and to which we would eventually move. The first two weeks in Johannesburg were festive as we met friends and relatives. On 15 January 1992, my mother went into labour, my brother was ready to join us and we were so excited! Sadly South Africa was not ready to receive him. To our shock and dismay several hospitals in Johannesburg turned my mum away, the 'white hospitals' could not admit my mum because although she was white she was giving birth to a 'non-white child'. They gave excuses like: "sorry, we still have the old forms". The 'non-white hospitals' refused my mum admittance because they had never had a white woman in their wards. Finally, she was sent to Johannesburg Park Town Hospital. The hospital was known for being liberal and for accepting different races in its wards.*

*Shaun was born on 16 January 1992 at 6:00 am after 24 hours of labour and hard negotiations. His birth generated so much curiosity in the hospital that the whole medical staff descended on my mum's room as they were amazed and curious. I could not understand why everybody was staring at us ... I was a proud big sister holding Shaun in my lap. After Shaun's eventful birth, the South African police began harassing my parents. They had heard of our arrival and were unhappy with my mother's presence in a non-white area. One day at a shop the manager was called because they thought my mum had kidnapped a baby: my brother! We couldn't wait to return to our safe haven, Zambia. I remember being relieved to be back in our friendly Zambia walking in public and not having to worry about our safety. We were on borrowed time because we knew that eventually we would be heading to South Africa.*

Secondly and thirdly, the *Group Areas Act* (1950) and the *Reservation of Separate Amenities Act* (1953) imposed spatial separation of the race groups, with the former furthering segregation by dividing town regions into areas where members of only one race could live and work (Jacobson *et al.*, 2004 cited in Sherman & Steyn, 2009). This prevented people from different racial groups from living in the same residential area, using the same modes of transport, attending the same educational institutions and from having admission to the same natural resources (such as parks and beaches). These Acts greatly affected interracial relationships (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). Though not stated in the literature, it can be assumed that biracial individuals from interracial unions grew up in segregated households as a result of these acts. Finally, the main acts that impacted interracial families and biracial children were the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act* (1949) and the *Immorality Amendment Act* (1950), which prohibited marriage or any sexual relations across race lines. The Mixed Marriage Act was passed in 1949 to “*check blood mixture and promote racial purity*” (Hopkinson, 1964:90). A year later, the Immorality Act was implemented which imposed strict penalties for sexual relationships between non-whites and whites (Posel, 2001; Laster, 2007; Jacobson *et al.*, 2004). Anti-mixing laws were often strictly enforced, posing a serious threat to interracial couples. Many experienced lack of privacy, humiliation, and indignity by the country’s law enforcement (Sherman & Steyn, 2009; Jacobson *et al.*, 2004). Besides the strict penalties of callous jail terms, police intimidation and harassment for disobeying the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts, mixed couples could face negative responses and rejection by their families, friends and community (Sherman & Steyn, 2009; Du Toit & Quayle, 2011; Du Pré, 1994; Jacobson *et al.*, 2004). As a result many interracial couples went into exile in order to be able to enjoy a normal life, fleeing to Namibia or independent homelands. Many lived with the constant fear of persecution as interracial relationships were heavily restrained in South Africa for the three decades following implementation of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act (1949) and the Immorality Amendment Act (1950) (Sherman & Steyn, 2009). With the abolition of apartheid laws in the late 1980s and the emergence of a democratic political country in the early 1990s, the occurrence of interracial contact and cooperation has slowly increased (Jacobson *et al.*, 2004).

However, according to Hendricks (2005) race and racism still forms a central part of the identification and experiences of South Africans as years of colonisation and apartheid still influence South African society. As a result of South Africans still living in residential areas that are racially segregated, post-apartheid South Africa still remains deeply racialised and racially divided, thus few South Africans experience interracial contact (Gibson, 2004; Seekings, 2005).

Although The Population Registration Act (Act 30 of 1950) has been abolished, racial categorisation in South Africa seemingly continues to be affected by the country's apartheid past (Dawson, 2007). These labels still remain as the new democratic government that was elected in April 1994 kept the racial categories in order to execute policies of redress (such as affirmative action and employment equity) within the newly democratic country (Du Pré, 1999). According to Du Pré (1999) the prior census conducted in 1995 was sensitive to the issue of racial categories as the census forms asked South Africans what they considered themselves to be. Consequently, although the new democratic government needed to have race-based data for the Affirmative Action policies, the census at least allowed for self-classification. Furthermore, the census classified four groups that of Africans (regarded as people descended from the indigenous population of the continent of Africa), whites (defined as descendants of immigrants from Europe), Asians (people who could trace their ancestry back to immigrants from the continent of Asia) and coloured. However, as in apartheid the coloured heterogeneous group presented the greatest problem for classification, thus public objection against inclusion in the coloured category by members of various ethnic groups, particularly the Griqua people, resulted in the institution of a fifth group of '*Other*', for census purposes. Consequently the '*Unspecified/Other*' category was created for individuals whose group was not specified on the census forms. However, a majority of the population identified with previous racial labels thus suggesting an extraordinarily high level of adherence to the classification system during apartheid (South Africa, 1999; Christopher, 2001).

Racialised identities are deeply embedded in the South African social structure and remain part of the terminology of the post-apartheid system, as most South Africans describe their race in terms of the fixed racial categories which were legislatively assigned during the apartheid era, namely African (black), Indian, white and coloured (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010; Posel, 2001; Singh, 1997; Zegeye, 2001). However, contemporary identity conflicts in South Africa are to be understood within the milieu of competing identities seeking to assert or re-assert themselves in line with the new dispensation (power and privilege associated with racial identities in the post-apartheid South Africa). Although current identities are inherited from the apartheid era, there have been changes among some of these identities since the end of Apartheid, with Indian and colored identities emerging as separate and distinct identities from the previous broad 'black identity' used during the apartheid struggle. Other emerging identities include various indigenous ethnic groups (such as Xhosa, Swazi, Venda, and Zulu) found within the indigenous black community, Afrikaner and English identities within the white community and an ever growing African immigrant populace (Gounden, 2010).

The end of apartheid has resulted in a resurgence of research into racial identities, attitudes and behaviour in South Africa (Seekings, 2008). South Africa has only recently surfaced from its colonial and apartheid past where people's racial identities were officially (legally) prescribed based on recognition through social and physical signifiers (Posel, 2001). As South African society struggles to leave its racial past behind, individuals and communities respond in different ways, both trying to construct identities within themselves and in relation to other communities with which they share physical and discursive spaces (Distiller & Steyn, 2004). This is the context within which I explored the biracial identity construction of young adults in a South African context (Jawitz, 2010).

**Think box 1.5: Saying goodbye to Zambia**

*My blissful days in Zambia came to an abrupt end when my family moved to South Africa after the first democratic elections. In December 1994 we relocated, packed our belongings in a container, said good bye to our friends and embraced the new 'rainbow nation'. However, as an 11-year-old girl, I was petrified to return to S.A. as the media overseas had always portrayed South Africa as a violent society and the only images I had of South Africa were those of young black people rallying in the streets for their freedom. Just before the first elections the South African townships were ablaze with violent confrontations. As a young girl, I did not want to return to South Africa. I remembered too well, our last visit two years earlier, when we felt so unwelcome. My life ... and our lives, as a family, were about to be turned upside down. South African, I was soon to find out, was such a culture shock!*

## 1.5 PURPOSE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the way in which biracial individuals construct an identity within a multicultural, democratic South Africa. More specifically, the focus was on how they understand their unique experiences and perspectives as biracial individuals within a South African social context.

In the descriptive part of the study, I report on the characteristics of biracial identity construction (Babbie, 2010). Owing to the limited literature currently available on biracial individuals in South Africa, my exploratory research focused on gaining insight into and developing an understanding of the little-known phenomenon of biracial identity construction within the South African context (Babbie, 2010). My goal was not to generalise the findings of this study to other multiracial studies, but rather to contextualise the experiences of biracial identity construction among young South African adults within an ecological framework of multiracial identity (Root, 2003a; 2003b). To this end the objectives of the study were to:



- determine how young biracial adults racially identify in a multicultural democratic South Africa;
- explore how young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction;
- ascertain which individual, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of young biracial adults; and
- examine the strengths and challenges experienced by young biracial adults during the process of their identity construction.

The expected theoretical contribution of the study lies in building on the current knowledge base concerning racial identity theory. Research in this area may provide important insight into the understanding of young adults with biracial heritages and their experiences when constructing and expressing such identities in society. Moreover, I aimed to elaborate on the current racial identity theoretical and empirical knowledge base, as well as challenge current thinking on racial and related identity theories.

I aimed to accomplish the above by exploring how young adults narrate their biracial identity construction within a multicultural, democratic South African context. Jackson (2010a) emphasises the importance of international studies on multiracial identity as these may offer insight into how constructs of race and ethnicity, within specific social and political environments, hold different meanings in different countries throughout the world, and how these meanings may impact on the identity development of persons of mixed heritage, thus contributing to both the overall understanding of the complexity of context and the way in which social perceptions of multiracial identity significantly shape one's experience of being multiracial in one's community (Jackson, 2010a). Accordingly, I aimed to add to existing national and international research by identifying experiences shared by biracial people who reside in South Africa.

**Think box 1.6: Dealing with intolerance in South Africa**

*Once in South Africa, wherever we went, people from different races gave us uncomfortable stares, and asked us the most unconceivable ignorant questions. At the restaurant, people would stop eating or talking to each other and would just stare at us. It felt as if there was a constant spotlight on us as an interracial family. At the supermarket people would stop pushing their trolleys just to stare at us. The neighbours would look at us from behind their lace curtains. We were the object of everybody's 'curiosity'. In the beginning I was shocked by how much we affected people around us; I had thought all along that we were just a normal family.*

*South Africans' lack of tolerance for 'the different' and 'the foreign' helped our family to develop a good sense of humour and gather many funny stories. Of course I had to laugh, that was my coping mechanism to face racism and discrimination. One of the common questions people asked my mother was, "did you adopt them?", and people really hoped that we were adopted. But my mother's reply, "No, they are my biological kids", really disappointed them. It showed all over their faces. It seems people could have accepted transracial adoption, but not a mixed-race family concept.*

*Our South African racial journey had just begun, and for the past 19 years, although a lot has changed and there are some 'pockets of improvement' when it comes to racial tolerance, many people still struggle to recognise and accept my biracial heritage. As I went along on this journey I began to feel less pity for myself and more pity for those who struggled to accept my siblings and I. I recall a day at school when my sister and I were sitting with a group of girls discussing different issues. They brought up the topic of interracial relationships and how risky such marriages could be as the children usually grow up to be marginalised and uncertain of their status in society. I remember them being embarrassed when I spoke up and told them about my biracial heritage. I was not angry; I just felt pity for them. I found them ignorant and scared of the unknown. Fear is always the spark behind ignorant racist behaviour. I feel that my family's presence in this world has been to educate people around us. The road ahead is long, but every day is a new day.*

## 1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question that guided the study is: ***How can insight into the way young biracial adults narrate their identity construction in South Africa broaden knowledge on racial identity theory?***

In order to answer this primary research question, the following sub-questions have been addressed:

- How do young biracial adults identify racially in a multicultural democratic South Africa?
- How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?
- How do intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of young biracial adults?
- What are the strengths and challenges experienced by young biracial adults during the process of their identity construction?

## 1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I chose two theories for the theoretical framework of this study: Root's (1999; 2002; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework to understand the systemic embeddedness of identity development and Gaventa's (2003; 2006) power cube theory to theorise insights into the role of power and privilege related to racial identities within post-apartheid South Africa.

### 1.7.1 ROOT'S ECOLOGICAL MODEL OF MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

I chose an ecological approach of multiracial identity development (Root, 2003) as the theoretical framework as I aimed to study biracial participants *via* a fluid conceptualisation of the interrelated effect that individual (i.e. physical appearance, skin tone and self-esteem), interpersonal (peer and family relations) and environmental factors (School and community influences on identity) may have on the identity development of a biracial individual (Jackson, 2010a). The ecological framework for identity development not only explains the different ways in which people may identify themselves, but also allows for understanding the environment and experiences that could potentially shape multiracial identities (Root, 2003).

Informed by Bronfenbrenner's<sup>12</sup> (1979, 1993) ecological model, Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework for understanding multiracial identity provides a model for understanding the complexity of racial identity, which is inclusive of biracial identity development. Since I utilised Root's theory, my study may contribute to the existing literature on understanding biracial identity and experiences within a South African environment (Root, 1999; 2003a; 2003b), thereby acknowledging the unique aspects of South African biracial experiences of identity construction, including the environmental similarities and differences between South Africa and other countries (Jackson, 2010).

The reason I chose Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological theory of multiracial identity formation is because, unlike other multiracial stage models, Root (1996) does not view identity formation as dependent on an orderly linear progression, but rather as the ability of an individual to be comfortable with constructing an identity in, across, and/or in between categories (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Renn, 2003). Root's (1996; 2003a; 2003b) research on multiracial identity development was among the first theories on identity development to move away from stage models to analysing identity formation from an ecological perspective.

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<sup>12</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

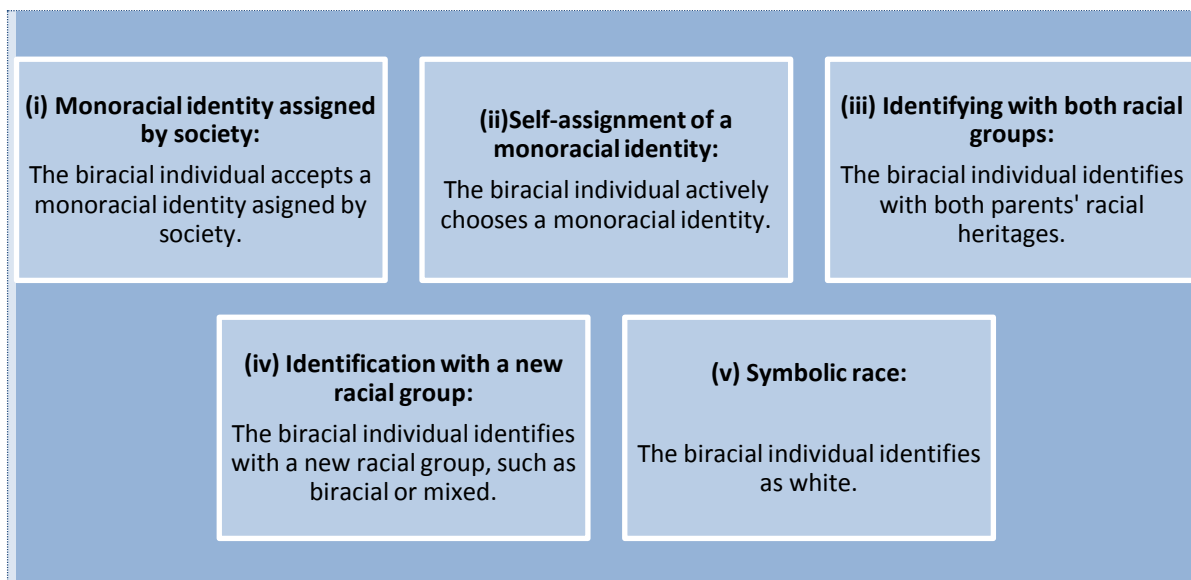
I furthermore selected the ecological model as its focus is on the context that surrounds identity development, rather than on one particular outcome of identity development (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). I support Root's (1999) statement that multiple and often intersecting factors may contribute to identity and that an individual's identity is part of a multifaceted network of overlapping identities that are both contextually relevant and fluid (Root, 2003a; 2003b). The model distinguishes between macro and middle lenses. The following are part of the *macro lenses* in the ecological model: (i) *an individual's gender* will influence the racial identity of the person as each gender faces unique issues usually associated with the patriarchal ideology of society. Within this study the young men and women could construct different identities according to how each participant was treated within society according to their gender (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005); (ii) *the regional history of race relations of a country* refers to identity that is influenced by and subsequently influences racial history, racial proportions, and economics of a country. Thus, within this study, I was aware of how South Africa's racial past may influence young biracial adults' identity construction (Root, 2003a; 2003b); and (iii) *class and generation* states that biracial experience is different in each generation, as each generation's identity options differ. Older generations could not publicly declare a mixed-race identity as a result of the one-drop rule. Within a post-apartheid setting, biracial participants may choose to identify as biracial as they have more power in choice of identity (Root, 2004). According to existing literature, class also plays a role in the construction of biracial identity with upper- and middle-class biracial individuals identifying as both black and white, and underprivileged biracial individuals identifying only as black (Korgen, 1998).

An individual's identity is also influenced by what Root (1996) terms *middle lenses*, which look at the following influences on identity: (i) *Inherited influences* characterise those situations into which an individual is born and which are experienced daily within the home. Such influences may be of biological or environmental origins, and may also include family socialisation, where external markers of identity such as language, nativity, given names, values, customs, parents' identity and family identity may influence identity construction (Root, 2003a; 2003b). (ii) *An individual's traits* refer to factors that are attributed to an individual's personality, such as their social skills, emotions and intellect, and which may influence identity construction. These factors may be either genetically or environmentally determined. Identity is likely to be shaped and influenced by an individual's characteristics such as temperament (a person's emotional tendencies and general approach to their social context), as well as core personality dispositions (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx & Zamboanga, 2012). (iii) *An individual's physical appearance* may influence the person's choice of racial identity. The participants' skin

colour, hair texture and facial type could potentially influence how others define and label the young biracial adults in this study (Hall, 1992; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Root, 2003a; 2003b). (iv) *Social interactions with the community* entail that the environments in which people interact may impact significantly on their identities as identity is derived from a transactional process that defines the elements that are significant for stratification within a society (Root, 2003a; 2003b).

### 1.7.1.1 ROOT'S BORDER CROSSINGS

According to Root (1996), multiracial identity development is negotiated using *border crossings*. Border crossings are strategies or identity resolutions that are used by biracial individuals in their daily interactions with others and within different contexts to cope with 'otherness' imposed upon them by a dichotomous black and white society (Loudd, 2011). Border crossings are the multiple ways in which biracial individuals can choose to identify during their lifetimes (Renn, 2003). Root (1996: xx) identifies five ways in which individuals of mixed race construct an identity. The border crossings (identities) identified by Root (1996) (see below) are subject to change in a person's lifetime and individuals' social environments impact the way they negotiate their border crossings (identities) (Root, 2003a; 2003b). While none is better than the other, all are influenced by the factors mentioned in the above section (personality, familial influences, generation, geographical location and other external influences) (Root, 2003a; 2003b). Figure 1.1 provides an overview of Root's (1996) border crossings.



**Figure 1.1: Root's (1996) border crossings**

The first of these identities relates to *accepting a monoracial identity that society assigns to the biracial individual* (Hubbard, 2010). If the biracial individual is content with the assigned racial identity, this identity choice can be adaptive and constructive (Hubbard, 2010; Root, 1996, 2004; Pedrotti *et al.*, 2008). However, accepting an allocated (assigned) identity without essential examination limits choice and may continue racial misconceptions. Furthermore, society often assigns an identity to biracial individuals based on the common belief that everyone is monoracial and/or on the 'one-drop rule' (McDowell *et al.*, 2005; Renn, 2008).

The second identity choice for multiracial individuals entails *a biracial person actively choosing a monoracial identity* (usually identifying with a single racial group other than white). This is different from the first identity as the biracial person actively chooses a racial identity, rather than passively accept a label from society. This may be a challenging resolution if the individual arrives at an identity that is different from how people perceive him/her, based upon physical appearance, parentage and defiance of hypodescent rules (Hubbard, 2010; Root, 2005; McDowell *et al.*, 2005; Renn, 2008).

The third identity choice is when an *individual identifies with both racial groups of both parents* (e.g. 'I am black and I am Asian'). The individual thus identifies as biracial and identifies with both racial groups. At times, one aspect of one's heritage may be more salient than the other, depending on the demands of the situation and the aspects of identity. The challenge of this strategy is that identification with both parents may be difficult to maintain in social contexts that do not accept the choice of a biracial individual to identify with more than one race (Hubbard, 2010; Root, 2004).

A fourth identity relates to an individual refusing to use racial labels, such as black and white, *thus identifying as a new racial group*. Rather, the individual might identify as multiracial with no separate racial signifiers or fractions attached to a descriptor or qualifier (Root, 2003a; 2003b). People who construct and choose this identity may be accused of being ashamed of their heritage. This identity choice may also be in support of a developing multiracial community (McDowell *et al.*, 2005). This identity is usually reinforced by some parents, particularly white parents, who approach such a label as a way of de-essentialising racial construction (Root, 2003a; 2003b).

The final identity is termed *symbolic race* and occurs when a biracial individual identifies as white, with simultaneous attachment to and detachment from one's heritage of colour. These individuals do not ignore their other heritages (i.e. African or Asian), they do not denigrate it and even feel pride in having it, yet they do not feel the affinity towards it than they have for the markers of whiteness. At the same time, they are detached from this aspect of their heritage for either having been raised away from family and community of ethnic origins or having experienced significant and repeated rejection from communities of colour, resulting in them not trying to join in group activities (Root, 1998; 2004; McDowell *et al.*, 2005).

This ecological framework for multiracial identity development not only explains the different ways in which people come to identify themselves, but also allows for understanding the environments and experiences that may shape conventional monoracial identities, racially simultaneous identities, or multiracial identities (Root & Kelley, 2003; Root, 2003a; 2003b). Root (1996) states that any of the above identity choices can be positive if individuals make their own identity choices and do not feel compromised or marginalised by them (Baxley, 2008). It is important to note that multiple factors can influence the choices mentioned above. Multiracial identity can constantly change due to socio-political change, as well as individual experiences and development. Multiracial individuals thus choose certain identities at different times in their lives to challenge the racial system in society, to reinforce racial group ties to one or more families and to explore their multiracial identity.

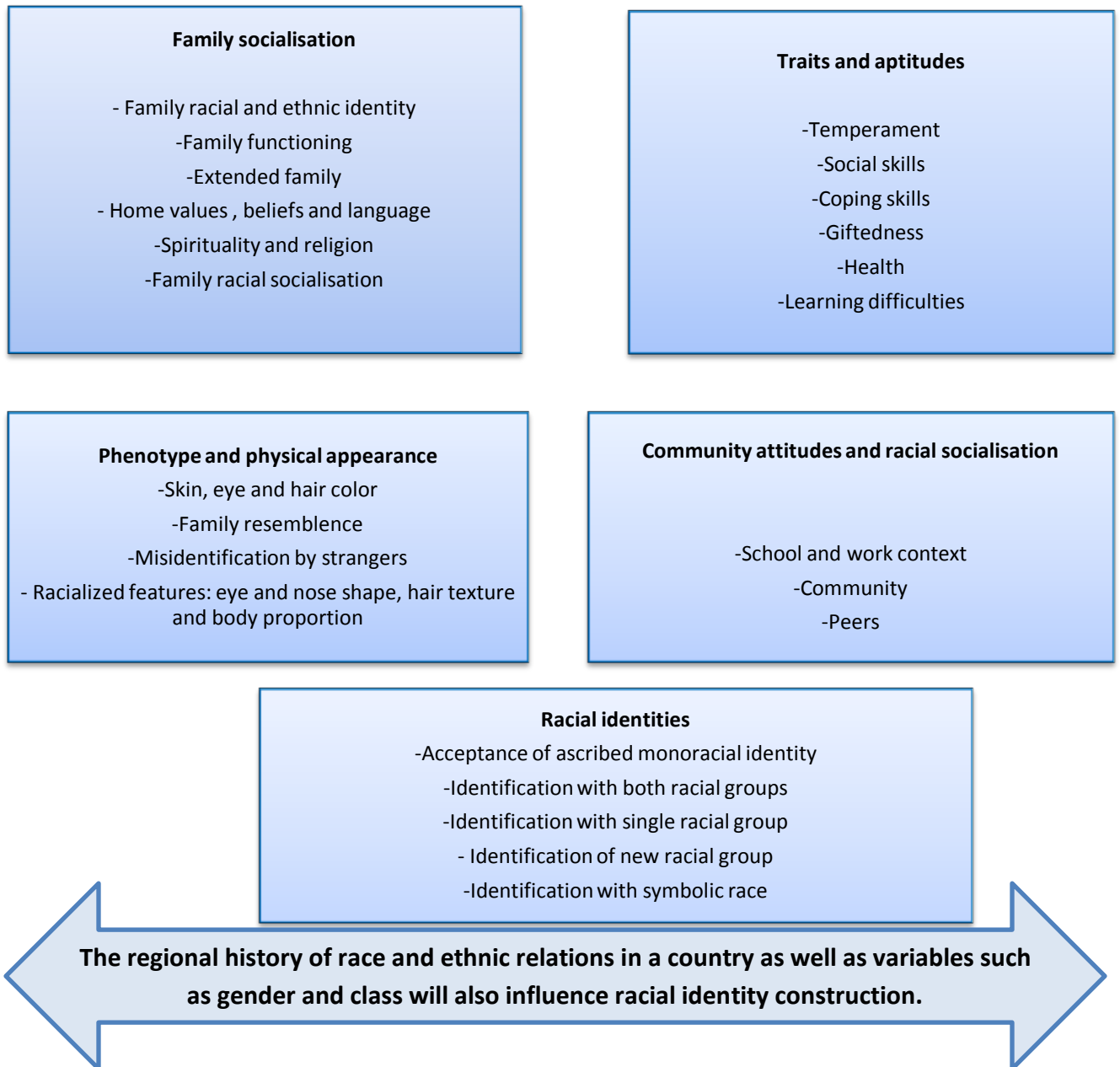
In addition, a multiracial individual's choice of identity may be influenced by who is asking, and why. Similarly, how a person racially identifies with others in any given context may differ from how one racially self-identifies, thus creating discord between public and private identities. Local environments are greatly influential as multiracial individuals may have at least some choice about which parts of their heritage to emphasise at any given time, and because ascribed racial identity may vary across milieus (McDowell *et al.*, 2005). I concur with McDowell *et al.* (2005) that biracial individuals should have the autonomy to make informed and active multiracial identity choices which steer away from internalised racial myths and cultural restrictions that preserve the domination of racial injustice.

According to Coleman, Norton, Miranda and McCubbin (2003) there are several limitations associated with Root's ecological model of multiracial identity development. According to the authors there is a lack of distinction between the terms *racial identity* and *racial role* in the theory. This distinction is important to consider in this study as participants may adopt different

racial roles across different social contexts as a strategy for coping with diverse situations. Additionally, the racial identification the participants choose to use in a specific context may not necessarily reflect their 'core' identity, rather, fluid, multiple racial identities may essentially characterise the participants' 'core' group identity. Thus, necessary distinction in this area is lacking in Root's multiracial identity development model. Additionally, I found the theory lacking in how racially marginalised people (such as the young biracial adults in this study) may construct positive racialised self-concepts and develop a positive appreciation for their racial heritages. This was important as I was mindful that participants may psychologically reject internalised oppression (rejecting a negative self-image) and instead choose to construct identities appropriated in power and privilege in a post-apartheid South Africa. Finally Root's theory also lacks detail regarding how internal and external factors interact to create the various resolutions of racial identity. However, I utilise this theoretical framework in this study as it identifies an extensive list of factors that play a role in racial identity development and allows for multiple racial and ethnic identity resolutions (Coleman *et al.*, 2003; Smith, 2007).

As a result of the limitations above as well as Root's ecological model being outdated. I also chose Gaventa's (2003) power cube theory as a theoretical framework as I sought to gain insight into the identity construction of the young biracial adult participants in this study by exploring issues of power and agency that relate to identity construction. Figure 1.2 provides a visual representation of Root's ecological model of multiracial identity development.





**Figure 1.2: Visual representation of Root’s ecological model of multiracial identity development (adapted from Root, 1999)**

## 1.7.2 GAVENTA'S POWER CUBE THEORY

According to Gaventa (2003; 2006), everyone possesses and is affected by power, and that power is complex and exists in a relational context at different *levels*, and in different *spaces* and *forms* of power. The *forms dimension* is the way in which power manifests itself in *visible, hidden and invisible forms* of power. The *spaces dimension* refers to potential areas for participation and action in *closed, invited and claimed spaces*. Finally, the *levels dimension* relates to the levels of engagement of power at a *local, national and global level* (Gaventa, 2006; Mbongwe, 2013). The spaces, levels and forms of power within Gaventa's (2006) theory are separate but interrelated dimensions, which each has three components. Furthermore, these dimensions are visually linked together into a 'power cube'. I utilised the power cube theory in this study as it is a useful tool for identifying the spaces, forms and levels of power and analysing how they interact with each other to influence the identity construction of young biracial South African adults. I hope that the theory may guide me to conduct a power analysis of the South African context and how this may affect the identity construction of the young biracial adults.

### 1.7.2.1 SPACES OF POWER

According to Gaventa (2003), the first dimension of the power cube concerns the '*space*' of power. The term *space* refers to the different arenas in which decision-making takes place and in which power operates, and how these spaces are created (Luttrell, Bird, Byrne, Carter & Chakravarti, 2007). Spaces are viewed as opportunities in which individuals can act to potentially affect decisions and relationships that may affect their lives and interests (Gaventa, 2006; Mbongwe, 2013). The three continuums of space are: (i) *closed spaces*, which refers to spaces in which decisions are controlled by an elite group behind closed doors. Typically elected representatives and experts make decisions on behalf of others without consultation or their involvement (Gaventa, 2004; Luttrell *et al.*, 2007); (ii) *invited spaces*, where outsiders may be invited to share their opinions as a result of external pressure, or in an attempt to increase legitimacy (Luttrell *et al.*, 2007). Invited spaces are open forums in which people with positional power and authority ask others to participate in the decision-making process (Gaventa, 2006), and (iii) *claimed spaces*, occurring when the power holders provide the less powerful a chance to develop their agendas and create solidarity without control from those who hold power (Luttrell *et al.*, 2007).

### 1.7.2.2 FORMS OF POWER

The second dimension of the power cube framework (Gaventa, 2006), entails the *'forms'* (the degree of visibility) of power, also referred to as the dynamics of power, that shape the inclusiveness of participation within each space. The forms of power include three attributes of power, namely (i) *visible power*, entailing the understanding that power is negotiated through formal rules and structures, institutions and procedures, so that the policy process is more democratic, accountable and serves the need of people (Gaventa, 2006; Luttrell *et al.*, 2007); (ii) *hidden power*, which focuses on the way in which certain powerful people control decision-making and institutions maintain their influence over the process, resulting in the exclusion of the agendas of less powerful groups (Gaventa, 2006; Luttrell *et al.*, 2007); and (iii) *invisible power*, which operates by influencing how people think about their place in society. This level of power shapes people's belief and sense of self so that they do not question existing power relations and accept the status quo (even their own superiority and inferiority) (Gaventa, 2006; Luttrell *et al.*, 2007).

### 1.7.2.3 LEVELS OF POWER

Finally, the power cube framework also emphasises the importance of understanding the interaction between *levels of power at the local, national and global levels* (the levels and places of engagement) (Gaventa, 2006). These levels focus on how power intersects and resides in influential places such as the social, political and economic levels (Mbongwe, 2013). According to Gaventa (2006), participatory practice starts at the local level, where people are able to resist power and construct their own voice. However, it is important to be cognisant of the fact that all levels are interrelated and that local levels and manifestations of power are constantly being shaped in relation to global actors and forces, and that in turn local levels affect and shape global power (Gaventa, 2006).

Gaventa (2006) states that each side of a cube's dimensions may be used as the first point of power analysis and that a positive change in power relations requires all the parts on each dimension of a cube to simultaneously align with each other (Gaventa, 2006; Mbongwe, 2013). I realise that the biracial individuals who participated in this study belong to a marginalised group, and that power has been used in dominant institutions, relationships and discourses to silence the experiences of biracial individuals in society; therefore Gaventa's (2003, 2006) power cube framework has the potential to assist me in gaining insight into how the young biracial South

African adults chose to construct their identities based on the power and privilege experienced in their social contexts and relationships.

## 1.8 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

I approached this study with the following assumptions:

- As with any identity construction, biracial identity construction of the young adults may also be influenced by interactions with family, peers and various social milieus.
- No single identity may be applied to all biracial individuals and a variety of identities may be asserted by young adults. The young adults may choose to identify with national, cultural, religious and/or ethnic and racial identities according to their social contexts.
- Biracial individuals may be pushed to choose a monoracial identity to mirror socio-political racial classifications within South African society.
- Identity dissonance may occur when society ascribes a racial identity with which the biracial individual does not identify, and when the young adult's preferred identity is challenged by society's rigid racial classifications.
- The young biracial adults may change their identity according to the context in which they find themselves and also at different times in their lives.
- In post-apartheid South Africa, the young adults may choose to identify with new racial labels, such as biracial and mixed race.
- Based on Gaventa's (2003; 2006) power cube theory, the young biracial adults may purposefully construct racial identities according to the privilege and power associated to that specific racial identity within the South African context.
- Based on Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological multiracial theory, the young South African biracial adults' identity construction may be influenced by various milieus and social relationships.

### Think box 1.7: Walking in someone else's shoes

*My assumptions were influenced by the saying (i) "you never truly know someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes", (ii) by my own experiences as a biracial individual, (iii) and by the experiences of my siblings and other biracial individuals with whom I came into contact throughout my life.*

*Furthermore, I challenged my lived assumptions by consulting theory on the phenomenon being studied and allowed for sufficient time to get to know and understand the young adults that participated in the study. I chose not to make assumptions regarding their narratives, but instead to take numerous moments during the study to dig deeper into their biracial experiences and to lead the interviews and our interactions with compassion. I also aimed to accept their diverse biracial experiences and the diverse ways in which they chose to identify themselves within the study. I thus chose to use my biracial heritage as an asset to create an empathetic connection with the participants during interviews and interactions (Cruz-Janzen, 1999).*

## 1.9 CONCEPTUALISATION

In this section I discuss key concepts to ensure a clear understanding of the concepts used in this research study.

### 1.9.1 IDENTITY AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The notion of identity centres on a paradoxical combination of *sameness* and *difference*. The term identity has its origin in Latin and is derived from the word *identita*. The root word is the Latin *idem*, meaning *same*, from which we also get the word 'identical' (Rummens, 2000; Lawler, 2008). One important meaning of the term is that it not only indicates that an individual is identical with him/herself but also that individuals can be identical with others (Lawler, 2008; Trimble & Dickson, 2005). Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2005) state that identity provides a way for people to understand themselves in relation to both others and the social environment, with their identities being constructed through a reflexive process involving interaction between them and others in the environment.

My definition of identity and identity construction is informed by that posited by authors Lestinen, Petrucijová and Spinthourakis (2004), Chan (2013) and Phinney (2008). I view identity as a process and a dynamic construct, rather than as a fixed consequence and outcome. The process of identity construction takes place over prolonged periods of time and is greatly influenced and shaped by socio-cultural contexts and institutions, and by personal relationships

with others. Furthermore, individuals strive to make sense of who they are in relation to the social groups they belong to within their immediate and larger social contexts.

Erikson emphasises the importance of a personal and social identity in shaping an established and healthy personality. During the process of identity construction, two main questions appear: 'Who am I?' and 'What is my place in this world?' (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2006; Marcia, 1993; Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006; Sokol, 2009). *Personal identity* (those characteristics that differentiate one individual from others) centres on the question "Who am I?" and refers to the goals, values, and beliefs that an individual adopts and holds (Brewer, 1991; Phinney, 2008; Schwartz *et al.*, 2006).

Social identity centres on the questions 'Who are we?' and 'Who are they?' This identity is built on other relationships in community and society (e.g. peers and colleagues) (Bowles, 1993; Sokol, 2009). *Social identity* refers to (i) the group with which one identifies, including its self-identified ideals, customs, labels and resolutions (Erikson, 1968), and (ii) the extent to which this identification leads one to favour the 'in-group' (the group to which one perceives oneself as belonging) and to distance oneself from 'out-groups' (groups other than the in-group) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986<sup>13</sup>; Schwartz *et al.*, 2006). Social identities may include categories such as race and gender (Ashforth 2001; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006).

For the purpose of this study I view identity construction as applying to young biracial adults whose identity is the product of self-construction and who have free choice when constructing and choosing their preferred identity and concede that the identity construction of young biracial adults may be influenced by their social contexts and social relationships. They may construct identities that either differentiate them from others, or identities that are commonly found in groups in society (Bornman, 2003).

### 1.9.2 RACE AND ETHNICITY

According to Omi and Winant (1994), the term race is socially constructed and has no basis in science. Nevertheless it remains an important social marker and structuring force of identity and

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<sup>13</sup> Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (SIT), developed in the 1970s, is based on the assumption that people belong to social groups and develop a social identity from these groups. According to theory, our self-esteem is influenced by our social identity and the derogation of out-groups serves to enhance or maintain self-esteem in our own groups (Myers, Abell, Kolstad & Sani, 2010; Tuffin, 2005). However, SIT also assumes that the individual has both a personal (unique) identity and social identity (concepts of oneself as a group member) (Tuffin, 2005; Potheroe, 2009).

is a constructed category that is influenced and accepted by society. The social construction of race refers to the *“socio-historical process, by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed”* (Omi & Winant 2004:55). Both race and identity are products of the socialisation process during which members of society typically take note of a person’s physical attributes and *“learn what attributes to value or to reject”* (Rothenberg, 2005:3). The constructionist view proposes that the meaning of one's race is created by and learnt from his/her society or social context (Laster, 2007). Even though the notion of race has no biological foundation it nonetheless exists as what sociologists call a ‘social fact’ and the term race has been utilised as a *“fundamental organizing principle of human affairs and is wielded as a ‘powerful tool, either for oppression or for group self-actualization”* (Spickard, 1992:12-19).

In society, race continues to be determined by an individual’s ancestry, lineage or family line of descent with characteristics such as complexion, physical features and hair colour/texture. It is undeniable that these traits are transmitted through genetics. Accordingly, in order to create consistency among the participants in this study, race was determined by genetics, specifically the race/s of their biological parents. The participants were thus chosen based on their biological parents, who had to be from two different, socially designated racial groups. The purpose of collecting race-based data in this research study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences and perspectives of biracial identity construction within the South African context so that helping professionals and researchers in South Africa may better serve multiracial individuals and their families (Benton, 2009).

In this study, race is viewed and utilised as a social construct and not *“as an indicator of absolute, ‘pure’ strains of genetic material or physical characteristics”* (Francis, 2008: 112). Thus, any racial category in this study appears in lower case, to convey that it is a description as defined by the beholder. I do not use racial categories as proper nouns because that would imply a singular definition, which is exactly the kind of essentialisation I want to avoid (Greene, 2010). Throughout, I use the racial terminology that is recognisable to South Africans (Soudien, 2001), as they appear in the census - black African, coloured, Indian and white. Again, I acknowledge that all these categories are socially constructed historical products (Hammett, 2009; Puttergill, 2008).

*Ethnicity* refers to a connectedness among a group of people based on cultural commonalities (such as language, customs, nationality, values, religion) where specific characteristics of cultural patterns are mutual and where transmission over time creates a common history and

ancestry (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum & Carr, 2012; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Robin-Wood, 2013). The terms *race* and *ethnicity* are often used interchangeably in text and language, but may essentially have different meanings (Benton, 2009; Crawford & Alaggia, 2008). Carter and Pieterse (2005) specify the distinction between *race* and *ethnicity* in terms of the description provided by the white racial identity development theorist Janet Helms (1990; 1995). They state that “*ethnicity has not been used to nor does it define a place in the social hierarchy, whereas race does locate a group in the social hierarchy. One’s ethnicity can change over time; one’s racial group membership does not. Race does not define a specific or singular culture; people who belong to the Asian racial group represent many cultures and countries of origin*” (Carter & Pieterse, 2005:42). For the purpose of this study, race does not include ethnicity. However, my research study includes studies and literature that may indeed use these terms interchangeably (Benton, 2009).

### 1.9.3 RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

The terms *race* and *ethnicity* are often coupled with the term *identity* (Benton, 2009). *Racial identity* refers mainly to the subjective understanding of oneself as a racialised person, and the acknowledgment that one is both similar to and dissimilar from other people (Omi & Winant, 1994; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Woodward, 1997). For the purpose of this study, I agree with Beverly Tatum (1997), who defines racial identity development as the “*process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning belonging to a particular racial group*” (Tatum, 1997:16).

I concur with Phinney (2003), who conceptualises ethnic identity as a multidimensional concept that refers to an individual’s sense of self or identity as a member of an ethnic group. An individual can claim an identity within the context of a subgroup that claims a shared ancestry and related cultural expressions such as religion, food, language, music, art, literature, kinship, or place of origin and other concrete manifestations (Helms, 1993; Phinney, 2003; Williams, 2013). Similar to the racial construct, ethnic identity is not a fixed categorisation, but rather a fluid and dynamic understanding of the individual’s identity and the ethnic background. The ethnic identities of individuals are constructed and adapted as they become mindful of their ethnicity within the large socio-cultural context (Phinney, 2003).



#### 1.9.4 MONORACIAL AND BIRACIAL<sup>14</sup>

For the purpose of this study, monoracial refers to an individual that has biological parents of the same racial or ethnic designation and claims a single racial heritage (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Root, 1996). However, within this study it is used with caution as it is scientifically fallacious (Christian, 2000).

The term biracial is used to refer to a person whose parents come from two different socially designated racial groups (Root, 2003), for example a white mother and a black father, but is not limited to this combination (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Christian, 2000). In this study participants had to have biological membership in a family where both parents belong to more than one racial group within South Africa's racial ecology context (the racial context in which individuals are embedded) (Rollins, 2009; Walker, 2011).

#### 1.9.5 INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

For the purpose of this study, I rely on Jaynes's (2010) description of intimate interracial relationships, which states that interracial relationships are "*relationships which are romantic in nature, involving love, sex and natural attraction between individuals classified as belonging to different races*<sup>15</sup>, *whether in formalised marriages or informal dating relationships*" (Jaynes, 2010:396). Thus in my study interracial relationships refer to relationships where couples are of different races within the South Africa context. The offspring of an interracial couple will, ordinarily, be classified as of mixed-origin heritage or biracial (Christian, 2000).

#### 1.9.6 YOUNG ADULTS

According to Mathoho and Ranchod (2006) the definition of young adults (or youth) varies from country to country. In the South African context, this definition varies between different organisations and government departments, which typically define the term to fit their own parameters. The South African National Youth Commission Act of 1996 defines youth as people between the ages of 14 and 35 years (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006). For the purpose of this study I chose Arnett's (2000) definition, which refers to young adults as individuals between the

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<sup>14</sup> Biracial is a category of race, just like coloured, African, Chinese and Indian. Given the myriad of possible combinations of different racial groups, the 'biracial' category is indeed diverse and can include Indian-African, White-African, Chinese-Indian, and so on (Wijeyesinghe 1992 cited in Francis, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> In the study, the terms coloured, black, white and Indian are used as per the apartheid classification system.

ages of 18 and 25<sup>16</sup>. In his theory relating to *emerging adulthood*<sup>17</sup>, Arnett (2002) states that although identity development has been primarily studied in adolescents, the identity formation process neither begins nor ends during the adolescent years (Fadjukoff, 2007; Kroger, 2007). Rather, he proposes that identity development is an on-going process that entails both a normative period of adolescence and an evolving aspect of adulthood (Berman, Kennerly & Kennerly, 2008; Sokol, 2009). According to Arnett (2000; 2002), young people will continue to grapple with identity issues as young adults when they continue to deal with the social tasks of adolescence that are described by Erikson's<sup>18</sup> (1950; 1968) theory of psychosocial development.

I chose young adults as participants due to their level of cognitive development, since adolescents moving from childhood towards adulthood have the intellectual capacity and ability to begin processing more abstract thoughts (Arnett, 2001; 2010; Barnett, 2005). The advent of formal operational thought and abstract thinking allows the capacity for self-reflection, which makes the consideration of identity issues possible (Arnett, 2010; Moshman, 2011; Schwartz *et al.*, 2012). The ability for abstract thinking that develops during this developmental period can assist the individual to ask questions about the self, such as: What kind of person am I? What characteristics make me who I am? How am I perceived and received by others? What am I good at? What kind of life do I want to have in future? (Arnett, 2001; Oyserman & James, 2011; Schwartz *et al.*, 2012). As a result of this enhanced cognitive capacity for self-reflection, young adults can change their self-conceptions when answering the question: 'What kind of person am I?' This journey towards self-reflection and self-identity is often difficult for adolescents as they may change their self-concept periodically. As adolescents broaden their self-understanding, they become more conscious and aware of their own emotions and how these emotions influence and shape their daily lives. By attaining an emotional understanding of themselves they may be able to transform their self-identity (Arnett, 2001; Barnett, 2005).

Since studies more often focus on early and late adolescence than on young adults and their identity development, most of my discussions of identity development will refer to adolescence (Arnett, 2010). For the purpose of this study, I agree that identity construction does not end with adolescence, but continues throughout an individual's life. Hence, the young biracial adults in

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<sup>16</sup> In this study, participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25.

<sup>17</sup> The developmental period referred to as "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2000) is further discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> Erikson's (1950; 1968) theory of psychosocial development is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

this study may continuously construct and reconstruct their identities throughout the different phases of their lives.

### **1.9.7 NARRATION**

The narrative approach regards language as the primary medium for the construction of identity (Kroger, 2007). This study explored the participants' stories in an attempt to gain insight into each participant as a whole person and to understand how identity is constructed in the wider society (Kroger, 2007). Against this backdrop, my study has relied heavily on narratives as its main methodology and method of inquiry (Miyahara, 2010). I chose a narrative research design in order to access the identities that participants constructed through their spoken and written narratives (Josselson, 1995; Reissman, 2002; 2003; Larsson & Sjöblim, 2009).

### **1.9.8 SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Since I acknowledge that identity construction is ecologically situated, I provide relevant information on the South African context in this thesis in order to situate the young adults and their narratives. South Africa provided an interesting context for studying young biracial adults as it is an increasingly multicultural society in which race and racial divides have been the topic of many academic and policy concerns (Song & Aspinall, 2012). Similarly, race has played a prominent role within identity construction, with many South African people still claiming a racial identity reminiscent of the colonial and official apartheid era racial classifications (Seekings, 2008; Booyesen & Nkomo, 2005; Cilliers & May, 2002). I was specifically interested in establishing how young biracial adults choose to identify within a democratic South Africa since little is known about the life experiences of biracial people in South Africa or about how this diverse population generally constructs an identity in society.

**Think box 1.8: Identity as a Lego structure under construction**






*The above concepts made me think of my own biracial experiences in that my own identity can be thought of as a 'Lego structure' under construction, with many blocks of different colours (identities) that I have been adding or removing from the time I was a toddler. My identity is fluid, as I have chosen different identities throughout my lifetime, emphasising the idea that the construction of identity does not stop at adolescence but continues throughout life. When I began building my Lego structure at a young age, I used more white blocks as I identified more with my own white mother, her family and white European surroundings. During adolescence I replaced the white blocks with black ones so that I could fit in with my black peers in the South African context. As an adult I choose blocks in many colours to represent my biracial heritage. Other people have added their own colours to my Lego construction as they tried to ascribe different identities to me according to, for example, my physical appearance.*


*I have no idea of what my Lego structure will eventually look like. It will continue to change with me as I remove and add different blocks as I evolve. My study also helped me to realise that different biracial individuals have different Lego structures and although some of our 'constructions' might appear to be identical, each one is unique.*

**1.10 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Table 1.1 provides a visual overview of the research process, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3. More specifically, this table illustrates the postcolonial feminist epistemology (Anderson, 2000; Anderson *et al.*, 2003; Burns & Walker, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Kirham & Anderson, 2002; Kralik & Van Loon, 2008; Racine, 2008), which I chose as my frame of reference and world view in the research process. I decided to follow a qualitative methodological approach (Creswell, 2007) and was guided by a narrative inquiry design (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). My data collection methods were related to narrative inquiry, thus I employed narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Kvale, 2007) and written narratives (Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Richardson, 2000). Data documentation consisted of audio tapes and transcriptions (Silverman, 2006), as well as field notes (Bogden & Bilken, 2003) and my researcher's journal, which I used to actively engage in reflexivity during the research process. Following data collection, I completed an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Horrocks & King, 2010; Johnson and Christensen, 2004) of the written stories, narrative interviews and field notes.

**Table 1.1: Paradigmatic lenses and research methodology utilised in this study**

 <p><b>PARADIGMATIC APPROACH</b></p>	<p>I employed a postcolonial feminist paradigm to ensure that the biracial experiences of the young South African adults were made visible and rendered important within the existing racial identity knowledge base (Taylor, 1998). I selected a qualitative approach to explore and understand the participants' experiences and perceptions of their identity construction within the South African context (Babbie &amp; Mouton, 2001).</p>
 <p><b>RESEARCH DESIGN</b></p>	<p>I selected a narrative inquiry design as it is particularly suited to the exploration of one's identity construction (Miyahara, 2010).</p>
 <p><b>SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS</b></p>	<p>I purposively selected 10 young biracial adults between the ages 18 and 25 years. I engaged in snowball sampling, using social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as word of mouth to locate suitable participants for this study.</p>
 <p><b>DATA COLLECTION METHODS</b></p>	<p>I collected both written and spoken narratives. The written narratives were completed before individual narrative interviews were conducted. Participants were provided with questions to guide their written narratives. Narrative interviews were loosely structured and composed of general topic areas such as the participants' experiences growing up with a biracial heritage during their early childhood and how they chose to identify in South Africa.</p>
 <p><b>DATA DOCUMENTATION</b></p>	<p>I used field notes, a researcher's journal, audio recordings and transcriptions for data-documentation purposes.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Coding= Axial coding= Identifying themes and subthemes</p> </div> <p><b>DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION</b></p>	<p>I undertook inductive thematic analysis (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006), which I began by immersing myself in the data so that I could become familiar with the contents of the written narratives and transcriptions. The next step was coding, during which I identified categories, patterns and themes in the data (Boyatzis, 1998).</p> <p>Axial coding enabled me to make connections between the categories and subcategories in order to understand the phenomenon being studied. Finally I organised the relevant coded data into themes and subthemes (Alhojailan, 2012; Berg,</p>

	<p>2000; Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006; Bold, 2012; Creswell, 2009).</p>
<p><b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND QUALITY CRITERIA</b></p>	<p>I consciously respected the following ethical considerations: (i) informed consent and voluntary participation; (ii) confidentiality and anonymity of the participants; and (iii) protection from harm and the establishment of a relationship built on mutual trust and respect. In an attempt to produce rigour and quality findings in this study, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985; 2005) five quality criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity.</p>

## 1.11 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 provides background information to the thesis in the form of a general overview of the study and includes a discussion on the research purpose, the rationale and possible contributions of the study, and the research questions. I discuss my theoretical framework and clarify key concepts, and briefly introduce the research design and methodological choices I made. I also refer to ethical considerations and quality criteria.

### **CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING EXISTING LITERATURE AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing theory that informed this study. I review recent literature focused on the construction of identity amongst young biracial adults. I base my discussion on constructs related to identity, identity development, racial identity, biracial identity, models and theories associated with biracial identity and identity development in young adulthood.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In Chapter 3 I explain and justify my selected epistemology, research design and methodological strategies. I explain the methods of data collection, data analysis and data interpretation used in the study. Finally, I discuss the ethical considerations and quality criteria I relied upon.

### **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL OF THE STUDY (THEMES 1 AND 2)**

In Chapter 4 I present the results of the study related to Theme 1 (The influence of family on biracial identity construction) and Theme 2 (Participants negotiating their identity within social locations and relationships). Themes are discussed in terms of the subthemes I identified. I include direct quotations from narrative interviews with the participants, excerpts from their

written narratives and the researcher's field notes in order to enrich the results. I highlight similarities and contradictions against existing literature.

#### **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL OF THE STUDY (THEMES 3 AND 4)**

In Chapter 5 I present the rest of the results related to Theme 3 (Expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity) and Theme 4 ('Othering': Stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity construction). As in Chapter 4, I substantiate the themes by using verbatim quotations and excerpts from the participants' interviews and written narratives, and my own field notes. I present the findings of the study by relating the results to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. I highlight correlations, contradictions and new insights between the results I obtained and the existing literature I consulted.

#### **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In Chapter 6 I conclude the thesis by revisiting the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. I reflect on the contributions and strengths of the study, as well as the challenges I encountered. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future training, practice and research with regard to biracial identity construction.

### **1.12 CONCLUSION**

In this introductory chapter of the study, I situated the purpose and rationale of my study within the broader field of biracial identity development research. I provided contextual background to my study, so that the identity construction of the young biracial adults who participated can be understood within the broader socio-historical South African context. I briefly outlined my choice of research design and research methodology, and included information on the aim of the study, research questions and potential contribution of the study. I clarified the key concepts used throughout the thesis and I also provided a summary of the findings. In the next chapter, I discuss the literature that guided me in the study. More specifically, the literature that will be discussed in Chapter 2 assisted me in designing and conducting the empirical study in Chapter 3, and in interpreting the results in Chapters 4 and 5.



## CHAPTER TWO

### EXPLORING EXISTING LITERATURE AS BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

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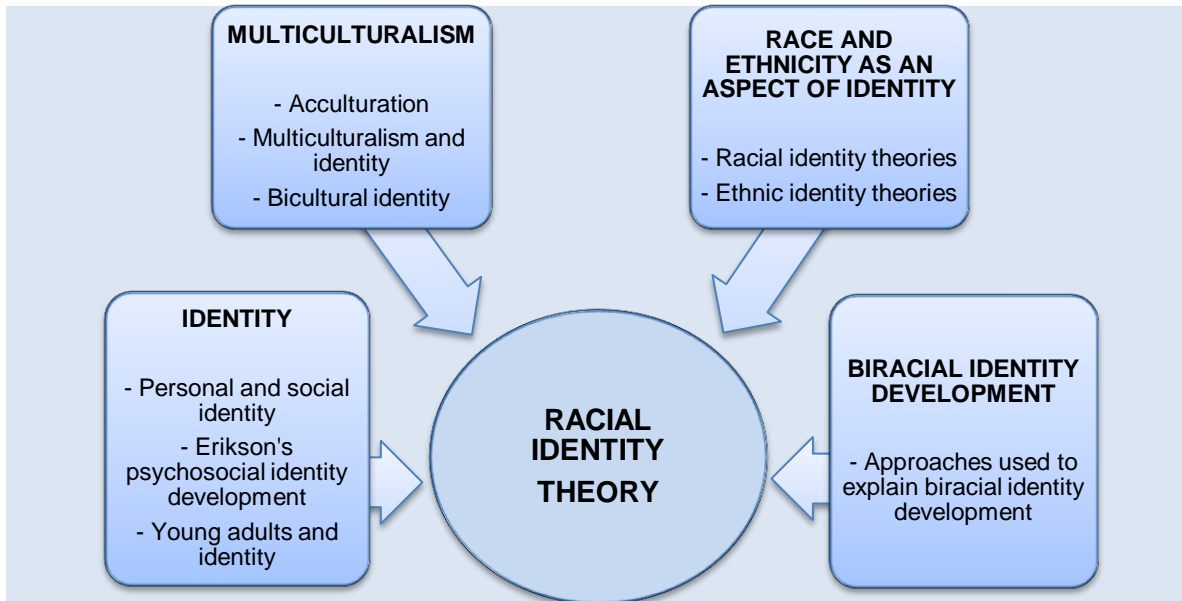
*“We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept, theoretically and as a contested fact of the contemporary world” (Gilroy, 1997:301).*

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

I chose the above quotation, which implies that identity is an important aspect of our lives, to continuously reflect on how the biracial individuals in this study constructed their identities. While this study focuses on research related to individuals with a biracial heritage, I also discuss complementary work that deals with this topic. I commence the chapter by reviewing existing literature on the process of identity development in young adults. This is followed by discussions on how individuals construct personal and social identities in order to understand how biracial individuals construct and maintain multiple identities in various contexts.

As race and ethnicity are important aspects of identity, and as I was guided by the focus of my study in terms of research questions and the purpose of the study, I explore prominent racial and ethnic identity models to understand how marginalised populations construct racial and ethnic identities. Furthermore, I explore the concepts of culture, multiculturalism and identity. I then provide an overview of existing literature on biracial identity within international and national contexts and discuss the main trends and focus areas within the existing literature. Finally, I discuss prominent models and theories used to explain biracial identity development so that the reader can understand the process I undertook choosing an ecological approach as my theoretical framework, which was discussed in Chapter 1. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.





**Figure 2.1: Literature reviewed in Chapter 2**

## 2.2 DEFINING IDENTITY

Howard (2000) notes that in earlier historical moments, identity was not a prominent issue since societies were more stable than in modern times, which resulted in identities that were assigned rather than selected or adopted. However, within the contemporary world with all its paradoxes, struggles for identity have arisen as one of the most prominent features of the socio-cultural and political scene (Bornman, 2003). The prominent British scholar, Stuart Hall (1996), remarks that *“there has been a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of identity”* (Hall, 1996:1).

Bauman (2001) and Bornman (2003) emphasise that in recent decades the individual has been liberated from an identity that has been ascribed and inherited and that identity is no longer regarded as a given. I concur with the authors that identity has become a product of self-construction and open to free choice (Bornman, 2003; Taylor 1991). Francis and Le Roux (2011) state that the discourse on identity has also included talks of change, specifically the *“emergence of new identities, the resurgence of old ones, and the transformation of existing ones”* (Jenkins, 1996:7). I am of the opinion that this applies specifically to the South African context, which has seen a resurgence of issues of identity as a result of the abolition of apartheid (Francis & le Roux, 2011).

I concur with Singh (1997), who argues that in their newly democratic country South Africans have a significant opportunity to transcend and create new identities and a new understanding of who they are. I propose that extensive research is needed, specifically to understand how individuals with a biracial heritage construct an identity in post-apartheid South Africa to contribute to current knowledge and literature on racial identity theory.

Although there has been an identity explosion since the beginning of the twentieth century as academics have focused on studying how individuals and groups define themselves in relation to others (Cohen, 2010), the term itself is not easy to define. Whilst reading through existing literature, I realised that the term identity is too broad to be defined simply and in a single definition, and that there is no unified definition that covers all aspects of identity. Furthermore, as a result of the different types of identities (such as personal, social, cultural, racial and ethnic), a single definition cannot include all aspects of this term (Trenčić, 2012). For the purpose of this study and in attempting to understand the identity construction process of the biracial individuals who participated, I began by exploring prominent scholars that influenced the literature on identity in an attempt to gain an understanding of the meaning of the term as viewed from different perspectives and disciplines. The section that follows looks at pioneers who have influenced literature on identity.

### **2.2.1 MULTIDISCIPLINE PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY**

The substantive field of identity has been influenced by various disciplines (Chan, 2013), such as social psychology (Stets & Burke, 2000; Howard, 2000), education (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard, 2004; Jansen, 2001) and anthropology (Brodwin, 2002; Leve, 2011; Adams & Marshall, 1996; Burke & Stets, 2003; Lewellen, 2002). Whilst reading the literature I realised that the terms 'self' and 'identity' are frequently used interchangeably. However, according to Owens (2006:206), identity and self are complementary concepts that have much in common, but are nonetheless different. Within this study I differentiate between the self and identity even though James (1980) warned a century ago that the selfhood (including identity) is "*the most puzzling puzzle with which psychology has to deal*" (James, 1980:330). For the purpose of this study, I define the self as the totality of an individual, which encompasses an individual's body, sense of identity, and how others know the person. The self is made up of both the physical self and the self that is constructed out of meaning (Baumeister, 1998). Owens (2006:206) reiterates that the self is a "*process and organisation born of self-reflection*", whereas I view identity as a tool that individuals and groups use to categorise themselves and present themselves to the world. Furthermore within the study, self-concept is defined as "*the sum total of an individual's*

*thoughts, feelings and imaginations of who they are*” (Stets & Burke, 2003:5). An important part of the self-concept is self-esteem, which refers to *“the extent to which people base their feelings of self-worth on the ability to achieve specific outcomes or match specific standards”* (Swann & Bosson, 2010: 597). Although some authors may choose to use the terms interchangeably, I support – within the context of my study – the idea that the self-concept can exist only in a person’s mind, while identity is essentially social (Swann & Bosson, 2010).

Against the background of the research purpose and questions, I decided to review available literature on socialisation, personal and social identity, and the role of oppression and power in identity formation, which helped me understand the concept of identity. However, the concept of identity has a long history and some of the pioneers in this field are discussed below (Newman, 2006).

### **2.2.1.1 Psychological perspectives on identity and symbolic interactionism**

The term “identity” first gained prominence through the effort of the psychologist Erikson (1968)<sup>19</sup>. Erikson, who associated *“identity as a definition of personhood with sameness or continuity of the self across time and space”*, therefore viewed identity as that which differentiates individuals from one another, as well as what individuals have in common with social groups in society (Bornman, 2003; Trimble & Dickson, 2005; Walker, 2005). Although Erikson (1959) wrote at length about identity, focusing mainly on the period of adolescence, he also offered insights into identity development during childhood and adulthood (Sokol, 2009). As the study focuses on the identity construction of young adults, I support Erikson’s view that identity formation does not end during adolescence, but rather that identity formation is an on-going process that continues and evolves throughout adulthood (Hoare, 2002). Bornman (2003) and Hoare (2002) highlight the fact that Erikson was one of the first scholars to emphasise the role of the environment, particularly the social environment, in the development of identity. For the purpose of this study, I kept in mind that the participants could not be understood apart from their social contexts, as individuals and society are intricately interwoven and dynamically related in continual change (Erikson, 1959; Sokol, 2009).

One of the earliest symbolic interactionists, Cooley (1902), agreed that society may play an important role in the formation of identity. According to Cooley’s looking-glass theory (also known as theory of reflected appraisals), individuals will construct their identities based on their

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<sup>19</sup> Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial theory of identity development is discussed later in this chapter.

interactions with family and society and through the perceptions of others (Hall, 2001). I concur with Hud-Aleem and Countryman (2008) who support this statement by saying that how individuals think of themselves and their identities is strongly linked to how they believe others see them and the feelings associated with such beliefs. According to Newman (2006), the process of developing an identity based on Cooley's looking-glass theory, includes three main components. First, individuals imagine how they present themselves to others; second, individuals imagine how others evaluate them; and finally individuals develop an identity and feelings about themselves through the impressions of others (Cooley, 1902; Newman, 2006; Schaefer, 2001, Yeung & Martine, 2003). Newman (2006) argues that people who believe that others perceive them favourably, will most likely develop positive self-concepts. Conversely, those who detect unfavourable reactions may develop negative self-concepts. During this study I realised that the participants' feelings of pride or shame in how they identify themselves may be the product of the reflected appraisals of others (Newman, 2006). During my interpretation of the data, I considered the possible impact and influence of reflected appraisals on the identity construction of the participants.

A similar analysis is proposed by Mead (1934), who contends that individuals will construct an identity in relation to their social interactions with others and the social milieu in which they reside (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Hall, 2001). Mead supports Cooley's view that individuals will define themselves according to how they perceive others' responses to them. He states that responses from others are communicated through words and gestures (Kroger, 2007). Hence Mead emphasises the language process as essential for the development of the self as individuals typically use language to give meaning to everything in their lives and in the world around them (Rohall, Milkie & Lucas, 2011). In a country like South Africa, with its 11 official languages<sup>20</sup>, I support, and was mindful of the idea that language may potentially play an important role in the participants' identity construction, as they could feel excluded or included based on their ability to communicate with certain social groups in their environments.

Mead (1934) also mentions that individuals may construct multiple identities for different contexts (Adler, 2002; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007), and states that "*we divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances*" (Mead, 1956:207). Therefore an individual will not be the same person at school as at home (Adler, 2002). Multiple identities were further explored by Goffman (1963), who proposes that each individual has a number of 'selves', and that individuals change their behaviour according to the situations in which they

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<sup>20</sup> English, Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

find themselves (Castañeda, 2011). William James (1890; 1950) supports the notion of multiple identities and posits that the overall self is organised into multiple identities as one will hold different positions in society and thus experience different groups responding to the one's identity (Stets & Burke, 2003). Furthermore, I agree that individuals have multiple identities; therefore, during data collection, I was cognisant of the fact that the participants may choose to identify with multiple identities in different environments and perhaps also with different individuals.

Although identity is influenced by the reflected appraisals of others and an individual's social context, I support Goffman's (1959; 1963) argument that individuals also engage in a process known as *impression management*, where they themselves attempt to direct social interactions with others in such a way that their chosen identities are supported, maintained and viewed favourably by others (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). I am of the opinion that although the young adults in this study may have been influenced by their social contexts and the reflected appraisal by others, they also took agency in the construction of their own identity. Within my study, I chose to believe that the participants individually chose their identities.

Bauman (1988) agrees that identity is forged in the social sphere, but further argues that the temporality of identity should not be overlooked as individuals are located within temporal relations, and thus that a sense of an individual's past or present will haunt identity work and practices. The on-going work of developing an identity is therefore influenced by the inter-relationship between past, present and future, and influences who we are, what we do and what we become. This can change in the course of a lifetime (Kehily, 2009). During this study, I was cognisant of the potential influence of temporality on identity, and of the fact that the participants' identities may be constructed differently during various life stages. In conclusion, I concur with Bauman (2000) that identity settlement is unachievable as one's identity is continuously in the process of being created and recreated, and is continuously negotiated within various relationships and social contexts (Hayes & Maré, 1992; Bauman, 2000).

### **2.2.1.2 My understanding of the term identity as defined in the above literature**

A summary of the literature discussed above guided my understanding of the concept of identity as a ***fluid and an on-going process*** that continues throughout an individual's lifetime. I concur with Huntemann and Morgan (2012), who advocate this statement by not viewing identity construction as passive, fixed and an internal phenomenon, but rather as a dynamic, shifting, continuous and socio-cultural process. Identity is fluid, partly situational, and is constantly under

construction, negotiation and modification (Francis & Le Roux, 2011; Giddens, 1991; Huntemann & Morgan, 2012). Identity is sustained in the reflexive activities of an individual and actively constructed as it is expressed, and *vice versa* (Giddens, 1991; Huntemann & Morgan, 2012). Furthermore I agree that identity construction (development) takes place over prolonged periods of time, from childhood through adulthood, and is considerably influenced by the social cultural contexts in which individuals live (Phinney, 2008).

***The role that relational interactions and socio-cultural contexts*** may play in shaping an individual's identity is highlighted in existing literature (Sokol, 2009). I support the idea that identity is viewed as multidimensional and shaped and transformed by various factors; such as socio-historical and political processes (Nash, 2008; Puttick, 2011), an individual's sociocultural environment (Sevig, Higlen & Adams, 2000; Türken & Rudmin, 2013), physical, emotional, racial, ethnic, familial, sexual and religious factors (Huntemann & Morgan, 2012), and socio-demographic characteristics (some of which are straightforward, stable or changeable, such as gender, age, class, race and nationality) (Huntemann & Morgan, 2012). I also support the literature stating that relationships with others will influence identity construction. Specifically, during the data collection process, I remained aware of any reflected appraisals from others that may have affected the way in which the participants constructed their identities. Furthermore, I was mindful that emotions could also play a role in the identity construction process as reflected appraisals and positive feedback to an individual regarding the chosen identity may result in the individual's commitment to that specific identity. However, when an individual receives negative feedback about the chosen identity, the individual may experience negative emotions such as distress, anxiety and lowered self-esteem, and even reduced commitment to that particular rejected identity (Burke, 2004; Rohall, Milkie & Lucas, 2011; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Concerning ***multiple identities***, Puttick (2011) posits that individuals will constitute and invent themselves through interactions with others and that an individual will hold any number of identities at a time, ranging from an individual identity to a social identity (Nash, 2008; Puttick, 2011). I concur with Francis and Le Roux (2011), who support the existence of multiple identities within an individual by stating that people often make choices between various identities as they move from one circumstance to another. Driedger (2003) confirms that an individual will usually occupy more than one identity at any given moment and that these identities can shift according to the subjective position of the individual. Identities are thus continuously subject to formation, re-formation and contextual negotiation (Green, Sonn &

Matsebula, 2007; Rattansi, 2007; Puttick, 2011). My understanding of identity is that an individual may construct multiple identities, and that these constructed identities are shared with others who have similar attributes. In other words, thinking of oneself as a group member and as a unique individual are both parts of the self (Francis & le Roux, 2011). Furthermore, I believe that aspects of individuals' identities may become more salient over time and in different places (Block, 2007; Omoniyi, 2007; Miyahara, 2010).

**Agency** is another important determinant of identity. According to Francis and Le Roux (2011), an individual plays an active role in the process of identity construction (Francis & Le Roux, 2011). Agency implies that individuals have responsibility for their own life course and the ability to act and think independently from the constraints imposed by their social conditions (Côté & Schwartz, 2002; Musolf, 2003; Rohall, Milkie & Lucas, 2011). In this study, identity was therefore viewed not as something that is gained simply as a result of the continuities of the individual's environment, but rather as something that is routinely created and sustained as a result of an individual's reflexive activities (Francis & Le Roux, 2011; Rohall *et al.*, 2011). I remained cognisant that although the participants in this study have agency in the construction of their identity, agency is exercised within constraints imposed by contextual forces and that the participants in this study could explore and commit to a given set of identity alternatives even though all of these alternatives can and will not necessarily be implemented (Schwartz *et al.*, 2012).

To me, the numerous potential sources on identity construction indicated that while I conducted the interviews with the participants, I had to constantly be aware that identity construction may not be constant, but rather that their identity could change throughout our meetings and interviews. Furthermore, I took cognisance of the fact that participants may simultaneously have multiple identities and that identity construction could be influenced by their social contexts and relationships. I also took note that narratives could be a trustworthy tool during data collection since participants use language to communicate who they are to the world.

### **2.2.2 SOCIALISATION AND IDENTITY**

As one of the research questions relates to the influence of interpersonal and contextual factors on identity formation, I reviewed literature on socialisation and its influence on identity construction. I concur with Huntemann and Morgan (2012) that identity is actively formed and reformed during social interactions with family, friends, peers and others, as well as on the basis of media images and societal values. Bernstein (1970:26, cited in Sterling, 2010) elaborates by

explaining the concept of socialisation, in which he states that socialisation is “*the process whereby a child acquires a specific cultural identity and their response to such an identity*” (Bernstein, 1970:26). I agree with Bernstein (1970), who argues that identity will emerge from a child’s transactions within the sociocultural and historical context, which is made up of a person’s experiences with family, culture(s), community, peers and the media. Socialisation may teach a child how to initiate and maintain organised social interactions within institutions and how to gain acceptance, identity and social status within a social group (Lanehart, 1996; Sterling, 2010).

Within the context of this study, I considered the family as the first or primary agent of socialisation (Lucas, Milkie & Rohall, 2007). Santrock (2014) and Cooper (2011) confirm this statement by stating that parents are important figures in an adolescent’s development of identity. Santrock (2014) identifies two characteristics that are important to adolescent identity development within the family context. The first of these, *individuality*, has two components, namely *self-assertion*, which refers to the individual’s ability to have and communicate a point of view, and *separateness*, which refers to the individual’s use of communication patterns to express how these are different from others. The second, *connectedness*, also consists of two dimensions, namely *mutuality*, which involves being sensitive to and showing respect for the views of others, and *permeability*, which is being open to the views of others (Cooper & Grotevant, 1986; 1998; Santrock, 2014). Identity formation is enhanced when family relationships are both *individuated* (where adolescents are encouraged to develop their own points of view), and *connected* (where adolescents feel secure in exploring the widening social worlds of adolescence). Adolescents in an *individuated* relationship with their parents may therefore have a clear sense of themselves as distinctive from other people, yet may generally feel emotionally connected to them. Youth who achieve high levels of *individuation* may therefore remain close to their parents without a loss of their own uniqueness and identity (Cooper 2011; Kroger, 2007; Mullis, Brailsford & Mullis, 2003; Santrock, 2014).

The role that attachment may play in identity development has also been researched (Santrock, 2014). The basic premise of Bowlby’s (1969) attachment theory is that an individual’s past experiences and interactions with primary caregivers may influence psychological, emotional and social development and functioning. Thus, the early relationship that develops between an infant and its caregiver will provide the foundation for later development. This theory attempts to explain how early relationships may contribute to either an individual’s well-being, or his/her psychopathology (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1978; Egeland, 2004). Bowlby (1969) theorises that



if a child creates a safe and secure attachment with a caregiver and is given appropriate attention and affection, the child will develop future positive relationships with others and positive interactions. Alternately, a child who does not receive attention and affection, and does not feel safe and secure, is more likely to develop a negative emotional and psychological base and have a distorted or inaccurate view of others in future relationships and interactions (Teater, 2010). Past interactions with caregivers may also influence how individuals form relationships with others in the future (Teater, 2010).

I remained mindful of the fact that the quality of interaction between a family and individual may influence the development of identity (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Para, 2008). Para (2008) elaborates by stating that high-quality parenting can contribute to a positive sense of self and provide a secure base for identity exploration (Marcia, 1966; Smits, Soenens, Luyckx, Duriez, Berzonsky & Goossens, 2008). Secure attachments, characteristic of parents who display love, acceptance, support and encouragement, are associated with many aspects of healthy and adaptive functioning (Arnett, 2006; Berk, 2008). Some aspects that individuals may develop include favourable self-esteem, identity progress, higher academic achievement, healthy friendships and romantic ties, successful transition to college life and reduced mental illness (Aquilino, 2006; Berk, 2008). Secure attachments are also related to increased levels of competence, preparing individuals to explore options and make commitments about their values and beliefs (Para, 2008). Whilst collecting data, I remained cognisant of trying to understand how familial interactions may influence the initial formation of identity development as relationships within a family will provide a foundation for identity formation (Mullis *et al.*, 2003; Para, 2008).

In my attempt to understand how the participants' identity construction was influenced by their families, I reflected (during the data collection process) on whether the parents had potentially facilitated their children's identity development in various social contexts by accepting their children and having positive interactions with them (Arnett, 2001; Mullis *et al.*, 2003). I also tried to determine whether the participants' identity development had perhaps been undermined as a result of their exposure to multiple negative life events (such as family conflict and divorce) and parents who may have judged and devalued their children (Berk, 2008). During the research process, I remained aware of the fact that close and supportive relationships with family members could act as valuable resources for individuals in their process of identity formation (Para, 2008).

Socialisation furthermore includes how peers and romantic relationships may influence the individual's identity development. I support Galliher and Kerpelman (2012), who relate the capacity to explore one's identity during adolescence to the quality of friendship and romantic relationships experienced (McLean & Jeannings, 2012). I continuously kept in mind that during identity formation, peer relations are a fertile testing ground for youth, and that their emerging identities may be a quest for autonomy and identity. I considered the thought that peers may typically assist adolescents to separate from their families and develop independent sources of identity (Brym & Lie, 2013; McCarter, 2008). McCarter (2008) agrees that positive, quality friendships may provide adolescents with safe contexts for the active exploration of their identities (McLean & Jeannings, 2012; Santrock, 2014). In a romantic relationship, both individuals will be constructing their own identities, with each person providing the other with a context for identity exploration (Pittman, Kerpelman, Soto, & Adler-Baeder, 2012; Santrock, 2014). Another potential socialising agent that I considered relates to the media, since media may affect an individual's identity through observation and adaptation. Hence, individuals will watch other people do things and may, over time, adopt such behaviours as part of their identity (Brym & Lie, 2013; Lucas, Milkie & Rohall, 2007).

Furthermore, I remained cognisant of the importance of racial socialisation in families and how this may affect the racial identity construction of the young adults in this study. Hughes (2003) defines racial socialisation as *"the transmission of parents' world views about race and ethnicity to children by way of subtle, overt, deliberate and unintended mechanisms"* (Hughes 2003: 15). During the data collection process, I kept in mind that the participants may express multiple ways in which their parents shared implicit and explicit messages that fostered an understanding and awareness of race, racism and interracial relationships within social relationships and contexts (Hughes, Johnson, Smith, Rodriguez, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Rollins, 2009). I was aware that parents may engage in racial socialisation by: (i) promoting a positive racial identity amongst the participants, (ii) equipping them to deal with possible negative race-related experiences, and (iii) helping them to develop adaptive strategies to cope with and combat racism (Snyder, 2012). Within this study, I agree with Hughes et al. (2006) that families play an important role in how individuals make sense of the significance and meaning of race in their lives (Hughes et al., 2006).

According to Hughes and Johnson (2001) parents' racial socialisation messages can be classified into five major themes. During the narrative interviews and written interviews, I was cognisant that participants may express multiple ways in which their parents chose to racially

socialise them. Firstly, the participants' parents may have promoted cultural knowledge and traditions and endorsed cultural pride, thus engaging in *cultural socialisation*. Secondly, parents may have chosen to engage in *preparation for bias* in which they employed racism awareness training and communicated discrimination and coping strategies with the participants as children. Thirdly, parents could have promoted in the participants a *mistrust* and wariness of interracial interactions and relations. Fourthly, participants could express that their parents had engaged in the *promotion of mainstream or egalitarian characteristics* in which they may have communicated messages about hard work, individual self-worth and adapting and fitting into the dominant culture. Thus, parents may have encouraged the young adults to value individual qualities over racial group membership and may have avoided discussions on race-related issues. Parents may also have espoused messages encouraging the young adults to look beyond skin colour and to treat all human beings equally. Finally *silence* includes parents' unwillingness to discuss race and race-related issues. Silence used by parents may have been an attempt to limit the harsh reality of racism and discrimination in society for their children (the young adults) (Hughes et al., 2006; Lalonde, Jones & Stroink, 2008; Snyder, 2012; Rollins, 2009).

According to Hughes et al. (2006) the messages most commonly employed by parents during racial socialisation include cultural socialisation, egalitarianism and preparation for bias. A study on biracial individuals and racial socialisation by Rollins (2009) found that black mothers to biracial children were most likely to use mainstream socialisation messages, whilst white and other minority mothers provided no direct racial socialisation. Thus black mothers provided more socialisation than their white and other minority counterparts. Furthermore, young biracial adults whose mothers emphasised egalitarian and mainstream messages reported that race was not a significant part of their lives and identity formation. Specifically, biracial young adults with white mothers, who employed egalitarian and mainstream messages, reported lower racial identity exploration and identification with black culture (Snyder, 2012).

Orbe (1999) cited in Rollins (2009) discusses four approaches to racial socialisation that interracial families with biracial children use. The first approach entails parents adopting the values and beliefs of the minority group (e.g. black racial group). Parents within this approach affirm society's minority appraisal of their children and believe that group membership and affirmation will help their children negotiate unavoidable experiences of racism and discrimination. Participants in this study being racially socialised within this approach may identify with a minority group in South African society. In the second approach, parents address

issues of belonging and identity according to the child's current context and phenotype. Thus participants influenced by this approach may change their identity according to their social milieus and may be influenced by their outward appearance (specifically their skin complexion) when choosing an identity. A colour-blind approach is advocated in the third approach, in which parents believe that racial differences are irrelevant and prefer to view their child as human rather than to refer to their child racially. Participants being socialised with such a message may totally reject racial identities instead choosing to identify as human in this study. In the final approach, parents endorse a *'best of both worlds approach'* (Orbe, 1999: 175) thus affirming both racial and cultural heritages equally. Parents in this approach also support their child's individual choices with respect to their racial identity formation. Within this approach, participants may proudly identify with both of their parents' racial and cultural heritages and may receive support from their parents to freely choose an identity that they are comfortable with. I regard racial socialisation as important as it is associated with psychological well-being and a strong ethnic identity (Huges 2003; Milkie & Rohall, 2007; Yip, 2005). During data collection and interpretation, I was mindful as to how parents' racial socialisation messages may have influenced the racial identity construction of the young biracial adults in this study.

**Think box 2.1: Individuals who influenced my identity construction**

*Although my mother played an important role in encouraging my sister and I to be proud of our biracial heritage, when I was an adolescent I longed to meet someone who was biracial like me. That individual came in the form of Angela. When I was in Grade 9 Angela joined my high school. Her family had recently moved to South Africa. Angela was half Ethiopian and half British; she had grown up in London and spoke with a heavy British accent. Angela was so confident and proud of her biracial heritage. She spoke about how there were many interracial families in Britain, and how we didn't have to accept ascribed identities but instead could construct a biracial identity. According to Angela, we were lucky to have such a colourful background.*

*I remember my sister and I coming out of our shells and 'awakening'; from our clandestine racial identity. Her assertive attitude helped us in our emancipation. She inspired us, as she walked proudly with her afro at school and loved answering questions about her biracial heritage. In no time her reputation for being assertive about her biracial identity preceded her and we loved the fact that she spoke up against racial discrimination at our school. Eventually even the feisty Angela got enough of our old-fashioned school and when I was in Grade 12, she left to continue her studies in the United States of America, but by then my sister and I had figured out a lot about our own identity.*

*I believe Angela was brought into our lives for a reason and that she had served her ‘awakening’ purpose in our lives. As an adolescent, I became more aware of my biracial identity, as more ‘messages kept pouring from the Universe’. For example, I would switch on the TV and Oprah would be interviewing Mariah Carey and her white mum about their experiences as an interracial family and her growing up as a biracial woman. I would come across articles on the internet, and find websites on biracial families and their offspring and about other biracial individuals and how they chose to self-identify (many times choosing to embrace their biracial heritage). Through the influence of peers, my mom, and especially the American media, I gradually became more confident and took pride in my biracial heritage. I realised that I was never confused about who I was because of my biracial heritage. Rather, everyone around me was confused, as I did not fit into any of the fixed racial categories in society.*

### 2.2.3 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

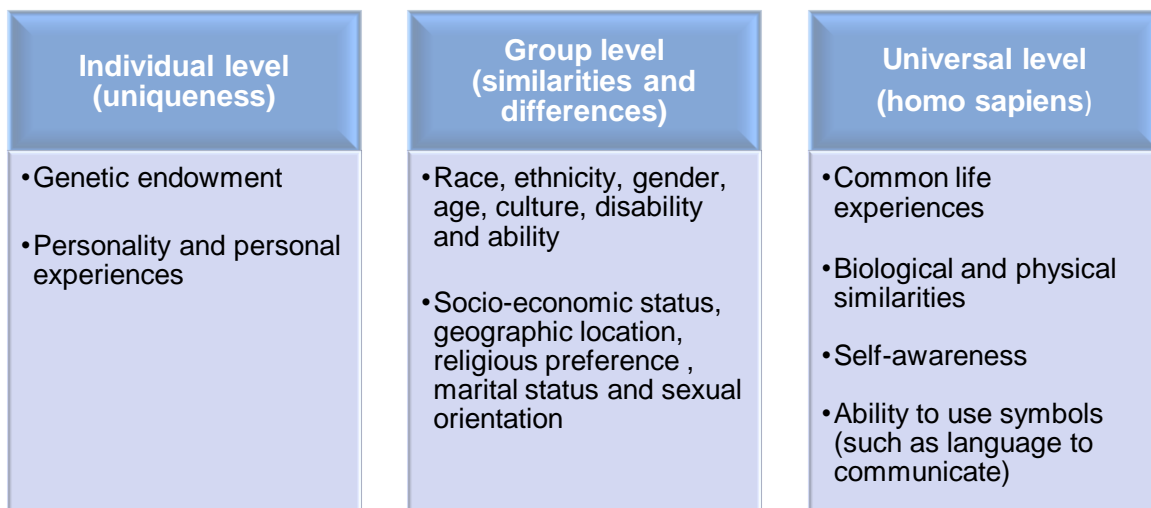
Huntemann and Morgan (2012) describe identity as a curious tension between the personal and social aspects of identity, since it is informed by both elements. In this study I perceived identity construction to constitute that which makes an individual unique (every identity is viewed as different from every other identity and is seen as something deep, indefinable and personal), and how this is associated with membership of some group in society (racial, ethnic, religious or national). In exploring the literature captured in the section below, I aimed to understand how the participants construct their individual and social identities.

#### 2.2.3.1 Personal identity

In this study, I followed a holistic approach to understanding the participants’ personal identity, acknowledging that personal identity has multiple levels. Hence I acknowledged the individual (uniqueness), group (common cultural values and beliefs with social groups), and universal (common characteristics of being human) levels (Sue & Sue, 2001) of personal identity. I applied the tripartite framework shown in Figure 2.2 as it was useful in exploring and understanding the formation of personal identity. The three columns in Figure 2.2 denote individual, group and universal levels of personal identity (Sue & Sue, 2008). Each level of identity must be viewed as ever-changing and permeable with regard to its salience (Sue & Sue, 2001).

According to the tripartite framework of personal identity, the premise on the *individual level* is that “*all individuals are, in some respects, like no other individuals*” (Sue & Sue, 2008:38). I believe that an individual’s unique genetic endowment, personality and personal experiences

will guarantee that no two individuals are identical. The participants' individual differences therefore set them apart from other human beings and are integral to their identity (Sue & Sue, 2001; 2008). The premise at the *group level* is that “*all individuals are, in some respects, like some other individuals*” (Sue & Sue, 2008:39). According to Sue (2001), this level focuses on the basic similarities and differences between individuals and how society divides people into groups based on characteristics such as race, culture, gender, ethnicity, disability and ability, and religious preference. I support the view that people's identities are based in part on their membership in such groups. Despite these various characteristics, membership of groups may result in shared experiences and characteristics among individuals. During this study, I constantly kept in mind that groups may function as powerful reference groups in the construction of worldviews, and that people may belong to more than one social group at a time (i.e. race, gender and disability). I also kept in mind that some group identities may be more salient than others, and that the salience of group identity may shift from one to the other depending on the situation (Sue & Sue, 2001; 2008). The final level is the *universal level*, based on the premise that “*all individuals are, in some respects, like all other individuals*” (Sue & Sue, 2003:12). The universal level is based on characteristics that individuals share with all other human beings, such as (i) biological needs (food and water) and physical (anatomical) similarities, (ii) common life experiences (birth, death, love, sadness and others), (iii) self-awareness, and (iv) common practices or behaviours (such as the use of language for communication) (Sue, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003; Pomerantz, 2008).



**Figure 2.2: Tripartite framework of personal identity** (adapted from Sue & Sue, 2008)

The tripartite framework of personal identity in this section guided my understanding of how the individual participants in this study were similar, yet also different. During the data collection process I was aware of the fact that participants may construct unique and personal identities as well as identities that reflect some characteristics of groups in society.

### 2.2.3.2 Social identity

According to Laster (2007), social identity theory examines the effects of society on individual identity. Tajfel (1981) defines social identity as “*the part of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of the membership*” (Tajfel, 1981:225). I agree with Stets and Burke (2000) that a social group involves a group of people who embrace a shared social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category. Buckingham (2008) elaborates that social identity should not be seen as a fixed possession, but rather as a social process in which the individual and the social are inextricably related. In the light of this, I continually considered the possibility that the participants might have multiple social identities that are dependent on race, ethnicity, religious or sexual choices, physical appearance, nationalities, sex, and so forth (Erasmus 2002; Kaufman 2003; Laster, 2007; Tajfel 1982).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) propose that individuals will identify with groups for several reasons and that these reasons make up the elements of the social identity theory. First, *categorisation* describes individuals as having a natural tendency to categorise themselves into in-groups and out-groups (Cokley & Vandiver, 2012). I believe that individuals who are similar to the self are categorised with the self and are labelled the in-group, while those who are different from the self are categorised as the out-group (Stets & Burke, 2003). These socially constructed categories will typically inform individuals about who they are (self-definition) and who others are. Individuals tend to compare the in-groups with the out-groups, with the outcome often being a more positive evaluation or a favourable bias towards their in-groups. I also support the view that the apparent differences between the self and out-group members and the perceived similarities between the self and in-group members are emphasised (Cokley & Vandiver, 2012; McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson & Turner, 1994; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tuffin, 2005).

*Identification* entails seeing oneself as both a unique individual and as part of a group. At times individuals see themselves as being part of a group (social identity), whilst at other times they view themselves as distinctive, unique individuals (personal identity), depending on the situation and context in which they find themselves (Tuffin, 2005). Finally, *comparison* relates primarily to

those dimensions that may result in self-enhancing outcomes for the self. Specifically, as one's self-esteem is typically linked to the groups' self-esteem, self-esteem may be enhanced by evaluating the in-group and the out-group on dimensions that will result in the in-group being judged positively and the out-group being judged negatively. I believe that in order to feel good about oneself, it is important to feel good about one's social or group identity (Lewkowicz, 2011; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1981; Tuffin, 2005).

As a result of various social identities (such as race and gender) being influenced by power, oppression, prestige and status in society, an individual's identification with respective social groups may be further influenced by the way in which the individual experiences and internalises multiple forms and layers of social oppression. Therefore, if individuals experience oppression, they may shift their membership or identification with respective social groups so as to avoid internalising negative reactions and attitudes connected with that specific social group. However, if membership of a social group serves as a buffer from prejudice and discrimination, the individual may select to identify only with the social group that provides the least negativity. In conclusion, the socio-political factors within a society may have an impact on the development and acceptance of one's social identities and in turn influence the way in which an individual integrates these identities (Ferguson, 2006; Stets & Burke, 2000).

In undertaking my fieldwork, I continually considered the link between personal and social identities and the possibility of the participants constructing personal unique identities as well as various social identities. Furthermore, I acknowledged that within their various social identities, the participants may experience feelings of inclusion and exclusion, thus choosing to identify with certain in-groups or distancing themselves from out-groups because they feel that they do not belong in a particular social group.



## 2.2.4 THE MARGINALITY OF IDENTITY<sup>21</sup>

As stated in the previous section, individuals belong to different social groups in society as a result of their multiple identities. Working from a postcolonial feminist worldview, I sought to understand marginalised identities as at times biracial individuals may feel oppressed as they struggle to find their place in society and fight for the right to voice and choose their own identity in a racially segregated world. Within this study, I concur with the definition of authors Meleis and Im (2002), who state that “*marginalisation is the extent to which people or groups are stereotyped, rendered voiceless, silenced, not taken seriously, peripheralised, homogenised, ignored, dehumanised and ordered around*” (Meleis & Im, 2002:96; Van Den Tillaart, Kurtz & Cash, 2009). Mol (cited in Gilliat-Ray, 1998) expands the definition by stating that marginality refers to people or groups who stand on the periphery of larger groups or societies, neither completely belonging nor suffering outright rejection. In order to further understand marginalised identities, I thought it imperative to understand the concepts of power and oppression as defined by Freire (1970) and Prilleltensky (2003), as both concepts are closely linked and significant with regard to identity (Mullaly, 2002; Thompson 2006; Parekh, 2008). Freire (1970) defines oppression as any attempt by any individual or group of individuals to exploit or hinder an individual or group of people’s pursuit of self-determination (Ponterotto, 2006), and Prilleltensky (2003:4) defines power as the “*ability and opportunity to influence a course of events*”. Furthermore, I understand oppression as the abuse of power to maintain social inequity whereby the dominant group holds an attitude or belief that is reinforced by society and maintained by a power imbalance (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003; Rose, 1996; Watts & Abdul-Adil, 1997).

Schmitz (2010) posits that identity formation incorporates a sense of power and privilege, depending on the socio-cultural and temporal context in which it occurs (Carolissen & Swartz, 2009; Collins, 1990). Oppression is complex, since individuals’ multiple identities are dynamically intertwined and reflect different levels of privilege and access to power. Hence individuals may experience differing levels of oppression and privilege through their identities

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<sup>21</sup> According to Buckingham (2008) ‘identity politics’ refers primarily to social movements that challenge and resist oppressive accounts of identities (such as race, gender, ethnicity, disability, age and sexuality) that are constructed by others who hold power over them. These social movements claim the right to self-determination and call for the acknowledgment of aspects of identity that have formerly been denied, marginalised, or stigmatised. Hence identity politics is about transformation at the level of the group, rather than merely the individual, it is about identification and solidarity (Buckingham, 2008).

and therefore experience exploitation and privilege simultaneously (Collins, 1990; Hays & Chang, 2003). For example, an educated black woman may experience privilege and power in the workforce (as a result of affirmative action and employment equity policies in South Africa), but may also experience marginalisation and oppression as a gay woman in South Africa. This power/privilege dynamic overtly recognises that different identities such as race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, ability/disability and class give a wide array of both advantages and disadvantages for group membership and access to resources and power (Carolissen & Swartz, 2009; Prilleltensky; Schmitz, 2010).

Although biracial individuals are marginalised within South African literature, I continuously kept in mind that because the participants have a biracial heritage, they may choose identities according to the privilege associated with that specific identity in the socio-political context. Thus, during the data collection process, participants could potentially identify as biracial individuals privately, but could choose to identify publically as black because of the benefits associated with the black economic empowerment (BEE)<sup>22</sup> and employment equity (EE) given to historically disadvantaged social groups (black people, women and people with disabilities) in South Africa.

Within the context of my study, I had to be on the lookout for feelings of oppression that could negatively impact group and individual identity, where oppressed individuals run the risk of internalising oppression which could influence their sense of self (Jost, 1995; Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003; Sonn & Fisher, 2003). W.E.B. Du Bois (1989:3) discusses the term *double consciousness* which I kept in mind during data collection and interpretation. He states that “*it is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity*” (1989:3). I was cognisant that the participants may have inculcated the racist stereotypes, values, images and ideologies perpetuated by the dominant (white) mainstream culture about their racial heritages and groups, leading to feelings of self-doubt, repulsion, and contempt for one’s race and/or oneself (Pyke, 2010). Thus I remained cognisant that in the participants’ narratives, they could potentially communicate and experience what Jost (1995:401) terms *false consciousness*, which occurs when marginalised individuals hold false or

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<sup>22</sup> To deal with the legacy of apartheid, black economic empowerment (BEE) was launched by the South African government to redress the inequalities of apartheid. The purpose of BEE is to advance the economic transformation and improve the economic contribution of previously disadvantaged groups (particularly black people, women, youth and people living with disabilities) in the South African economy [http://www.dti.gov.za/economic\\_empowerment/bee.jsp](http://www.dti.gov.za/economic_empowerment/bee.jsp).

inaccurate beliefs that are contrary to their own social interest and may contribute to the maintenance of a disadvantaged position of the self or group (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). False consciousness (internalisation of inferiority) may also be the result of what Young (1990:59) terms *cultural imperialism*, in which a dominant group's experiences and culture are universalised and established as the norm within society, resulting in the 'other' group (in this study the marginalised biracial young adults) feeling insignificant and invisible as the dominant group fails to understand or cannot identify with the perspective of the 'other' group (Bruskas, 2008). Throughout the research process, I continuously reflected on how feelings of oppression could impact the participant's identity. I was also cognisant of how the participants may have their own inculcated racial stereotypes and prejudices that may result in them shunning certain racial identities in favour of others.

Since several ethnic and racial groups have faced and continue to face pervasive oppression over long periods, participants in this study could internalise the oppression from dominant groups resulting in marginalised groups (the biracial young adults) favouring and showing preference for the cultural markers of the dominant group whilst developing bias and prejudice towards their own in-group in which members of oppressed groups stigmatise themselves and their group, resulting in a negative self-image and identity (Jost, 1995; Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003).

I specifically sought to understand the impact of oppression and marginalisation on identity because, within the South African context, Jenkins (1994) notes that the apartheid system influenced the country's people as there was a tendency among racially labelled groups and others in South African society to internalise the labels. Consequently, what started out as an etic group in which identities were imposed externally on people by the apartheid regime, ended up being emic groups that had an internal self-definition of the imposed or ascribed category (Jost, 1994; Kamwangamalu, 2004; Makoni, 1996). I kept in mind that children from interracial relationships may have been viewed as having marginalised identities as they did not fit comfortably within the apartheid framework and were marginalised as 'others', re-labelled or excluded from dominant narratives (Rocha, 2011).

Although the young adults were to be interviewed in post-apartheid South Africa, I realised that the socio-political context may still have an effect on how the young adults may choose to identify. I therefore remained aware of the possibility that the participants may experience their biracial identity as marginalised and 'othered'. Furthermore, a form of marginalisation occurs

when people's voices are not heard – a possibility in the case of the young biracial adults participating in the study, as limited literature exists on biracial individuals within the South African context. I hoped that by undertaking this study, the voices of individuals with a biracial heritage would be heard within South African scholarship and that the study will contribute to racial identity theory.

**Think box 2.2: Passport to privilege due to a lighter skin tone among people of colour**

*After leaving Europe, my family and I lived for eight years in Lusaka, at the university compound, together with expatriates from all over the world. My world at the university compound was 'rich and diverse' as we had been exposed to people from all over the world. We made many friends and lived a carefree life. The race issue was never topical; at the university compound as we, 'the children of the world,' played carefree from morning to night, and despite our parents' different cultural and racial backgrounds, we had a common denominator: childhood.*

*I think around second grade I began to realise that people around me had different skin colours and that my mother was white and my father was black, but that was not an issue as nobody discriminated against us because we were a mixed family. Looking back now I realise that my sister and I received preferential treatment from the other Zambian children in the neighbourhood because of our light phenotype. My mother was upset by the fact that, because of our lighter skin, the kids would treat us better than other kids with darker complexions. There were benefits to having a light skin tone; the Zambian black children admired the way we looked, our clothes and especially our toys from Europe. In the street games, we were given preference, we could choose our teams before other children did, we had a bit of a 'royal status'. I remember all my little sister had to do was to open her mouth and the boys in our street would be running around making sure that she got what she wanted. Whenever my mother saw her taking advantage of her 'privileged' status, she would scold her; she did not want us growing up using the colour of our skin as a 'passport to privilege'.*

*She instead wanted us to be aware of issues of race, discrimination and prejudice. Thus, my mother socialised us to be aware of racial issues in society and she worked to instill principles of social justice for all social groups within our everyday lives.*

## 2.3 IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

According to Ferguson (2006), identity development can be conceptualised as individuals' understanding of themselves as being separate and distinct from other people. In this study I chose not to view identity development as linear and confined to the developmental stage of adolescence since I agree with Matto (2008) that identity development is a process that occurs in all stages of life. In this section I discuss Erikson's (1950) seminal work regarding psychosocial development, which focuses on adolescence. I also discuss identity construction during young adulthood. Since I believe that identity is a process influenced by the individual's place in both society and in history, as well as by what Bronfenbrenner (cited in Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers & Notaro, 2002) termed the "ecological niche" such as race, gender, social class, family, community, ethnicity and culture (Caldwell *et al.*, 2002), I also discuss the bio-ecological approach to identity development (Norris *et al.*, 2008).

### 2.3.1 ERIKSON'S PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORY OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Most theorists refer to Erik Erikson's (1968) psychosocial identity development theory when employing the term identity as it is generally understood today (Phinney, 2004). According to this theory, adolescence is a critical period of identity formation and a time of heightened awareness of both identities and belonging (Buckingham, 2008; Herman, 2004). Psychosocial identity is formed through interactions with the social world, and aspects of the social world are selected and assimilated into one's developing sense of self (Sneed, Schwartz & Cross, 2006). In his eight-stage model of development, Erikson (1968) highlights the construction or development of identity as the primary psychosocial task of adolescence (Phinney, 2004). This psychosocial crisis of the fifth stage, known as *identity vs. role confusion*, centres on establishing a coherent identity and is characterised by a search for the integration of the self-images that are necessary to attain social adulthood (Steinberg, 1996; Walker, 2009). According to Erikson (1963), several tasks are important in establishing an independent identity during adolescence. The most important tasks include (i) establishing a personal identity, (ii) committing to a career choice, (iii) achieving autonomy and independence, and (iv) relating to members of the same and opposite sex (Poston, 1990).

Erikson proposed that adolescents will typically experience an *identity crisis* as they endeavour to negotiate this task. This crisis is characterised by "*a period of distress as young people explore their souls and experiment with options before they determine their beliefs and values*"

(Para, 2008:97). The outcome, according to Erikson (1950), can be positive (whereby the individual constructs a personal identity) or negative (where the individual experiences confusion regarding adult roles). It is dependent on resolutions in prior psychosocial stages and those who have effectively negotiated previous life trials (develop trust in the world, in themselves self and others, for example) may have an easier time constructing their identity (Para, 2008). As the adolescent moves towards the resolution of this stage, he or she increasingly becomes a member of society and also an autonomous person in his/her own right (Erikson, 1963, 1980; Hook, 2009). Thus, according to Erikson (1963), when individuals are able to evaluate their individual attributes and match these with outlets for expression available in the environment, identity has been formed. However, when an individual is unable to complete this age-related task, role confusion may occur (Sokol, 2009). Role confusion will cause individuals to seriously question their own essential personality characteristics, their view of themselves and the perceived views of others (Bosma *et al.*, 1994; DeBois & Winters, 2003; Erikson, 1968). Due to fluctuating cognitive, physical and social factors, nearly all adolescents will experience some form of role confusion (Kroger, 2004). However, most adolescents will successfully resolve these issues and progress and advance towards later developmental stages (Sokol, 2009).

Building upon Erikson's (1950) work, Marcia (1966) proposed a different model of identity, suggesting four different identity statuses: identity achievement, identity moratorium, identity diffusion and identity foreclosure. *Identity moratorium* occurs when an individual is in the midst of exploration without exploring being committed to any ideology. *Identity foreclosure* happens when individuals express commitment to beliefs, but have not actively explored alternatives. *Identity diffusion* is characterised by an absence of exploration and commitment, and *identity achievement* in Marcia's model is similar to the positive outcome in Erikson's theory. Individuals who progress and develop identity achievement have explored alternatives to their values and have chosen and committed to their present-day belief system, thereby establishing a coherent sense of identity (Arnett, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Marcia, 1973, 1980; Walker, 2011; Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Para, 2008). Marcia (1983) believes that since identity is a psychosocial issue that develops in relation to others, social relationships are important to the identity formation process. Therefore, the resolution of the *identity vs. identity confusion* crisis lies within adolescents' interactions and relations with others. Interactions and responses gained from significant people act as a mirror for adolescents to acquire information about themselves. Thus, these social interactions may influence and shape their identity because

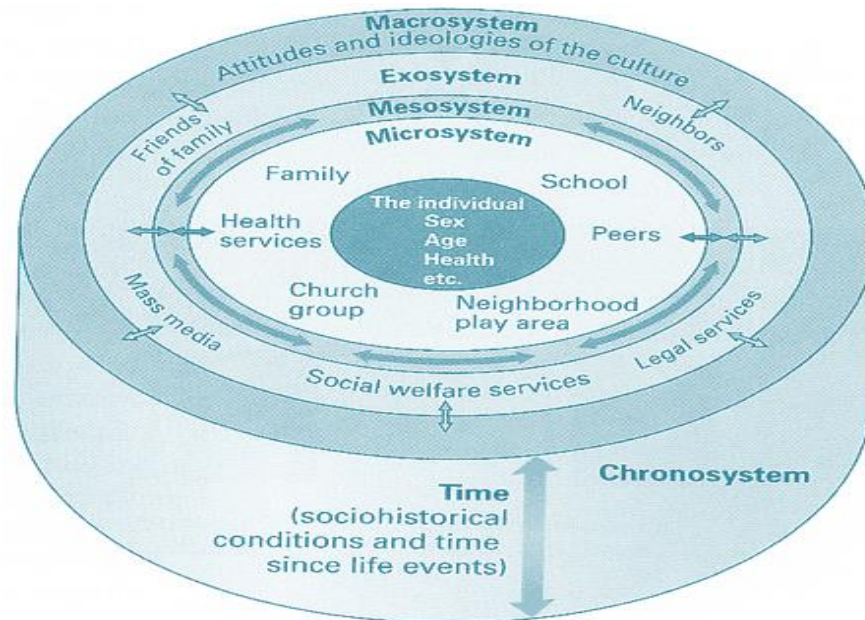
adolescents reflect back on who they are and who they ought to be (Steinberg, 1996; Walker, 2011).

According to Marcia (1966, 1976, 1980), the balance between identity and identity confusion lies in making a commitment to an identity. Individuals who have made a strong commitment to an identity tend to be happy and healthy individuals, whereas those with identity diffusion tend to experience feelings of alienation and may not pursue a sense of identity. In my study I did not accept that biracial individuals tend to resolve their identity during a single developmental period. Rather, I accepted that individuals will change their identity throughout life in response to their immediate social and familial environments, as well as within the historical context of how biracial people are typically perceived. Thus, identity formation for biracial people is an on-going process and is not linear, as described by Erikson (DeBose & Winters, 2003; Ferguson, 2006; Literte, 2010). I disagree with Erikson's tenet that a lack of resolution would lead to problems in an individual's life since I believe that he did not consider the issues of biracial people in his development of the life-span psychosocial development theory (DeBose & Winters, 2003). As the search for self-identity for biracial individuals can be an on-going struggle filled with questions and obstacles, it may be more difficult for biracial individuals to move through the developmental life cycles and develop healthy self-identities when they do not fit into one specific group. Furthermore, the feeling of sameness and consistency that Erikson (1950, 1968) describes may not always apply as the racial identity of biracial individuals is a dynamic, changing phenomenon shaped not only by the parents' racial identities and their own attitudes, but also by the child's interactions with a variety of people, including peers, extended family and community members. Through these interactions, experiences of recognition, acceptance and belonging can facilitate a healthy, biracial self-acceptance and identity (DuBois & Winters, 2003; Literte, 2010). Despite the different components stated in Erikson (1963) and Marcia's (1983) theory of identity development, they do not mention race as being a significant aspect in identity formation. Both authors provide a traditional view of identity and do not adequately explain the development of an individual's group or social identity (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, class). Consequently, in this study I constantly emphasise the sociocultural and contextual forces that may affect identity (Ferguson, 2006). The role that race and ethnicity can play in the formation of identity is discussed later in this chapter (Sections 2.5 and 2.6).

### **2.3.2 BIO-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Individuals are products of environmental and social influences (Rice & Dolgin, 2005), therefore I concur with Erikson's (1968) statement that an individual's identity needs to be examined in

the light of socio-cultural contexts. This view is similar to that held by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who proposed that individual development should be studied within the context of proximal influences such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Thomas, Speight, Turner-Essel & Barrie, 2013). In this study I applied Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) ecological model in attempting to better understand person-environment influences on the participants' racial identity development (Hook, 2009). This model conceptualises individual experience in the context of the environment through five interacting systems, which are captured in Figure 2.3 and discussed below (Hubbard, 2010).



**Figure 2.3: Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development** (Source: Santrock, 2007)

*The microsystem* is the system in which individuals live, and/or their immediate environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2004). I believe that these contexts, which include relations and interactions between individuals and important social agents such as family, peers, teachers and the immediate environment (such as the school and neighbourhood) will influence the identity-construction process (Hook, 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Newman & Newman, 2010). Furthermore, the individual is not a passive recipient of experiences, but someone who assists in constructing settings (Santrock, 2007). An example may be a biracial individual being socialised within the home environment to choose a monoracial identity. *The mesosystem* involves the interactions between two or more microsystems or settings, in which the individual actively participates. A setting, according to Bronfenbrenner, is a place where people readily



engage in face-to-face interactions (Hook, 2009; Newman & Newman, 2010; Renn, 1999). For example, interactions in the home (in the context of the family) can influence the interactions of the individual in the school environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hook, 2009; Santrock, 2004). An example of this is when a biracial individual is encouraged to adopt a biracial identity within the home context and as a result publically identifies as a biracial individual at school.

*The exosystem* refers to the social setting or environment beyond the individual's immediate experience that nevertheless affects him or her (e.g. formal settings like a parent's workplace, the community and informal settings such as the parents' network of friends) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hook, 2009). A black father's promotion at work as a result of BEE policy may influence his biracial child to adopt a black identity within a work environment for possible BEE benefits as well. *The Macrosystem* refers to the overarching culture in which an individual lives (Santrock, 2004). The laws, values, traditions and customs of a particular society are to be found at this level (Hook, 2009; Newman & Newman, 2010). As a result of the prevalent social attitudes about race within society, a biracial individual may experience marginalisation as a result of biracial heritage. *The Chronosystem* refers to historical influences and socio-historical circumstances of the time that may influence the culture and the individual. Time is important as both the individual and the systems in which a person is embedded may change over time, as well as relationships among relationships (Newman & Newman, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Santrock, 2004; Hook, 2009). A biracial individual may decide to construct an identity based on previous racial categorisations used in the apartheid and colonial era within the South African context.

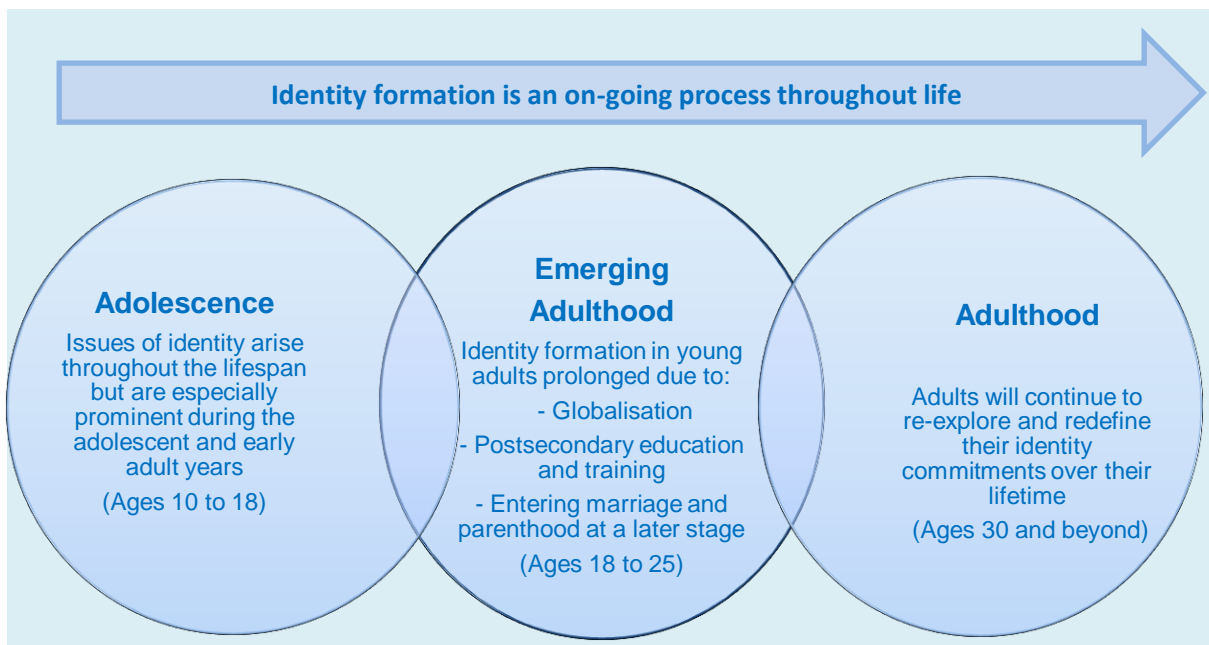
Throughout my research, I realised that the various environmental systems may play an important role in the development of the identities of the young adults participating in the study. In addition, I viewed the systems mentioned above not only as interacting, but as constantly changing (Hubbard, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development is in accordance with this viewpoint that an individual cannot be understood in isolation. By using this theory, I attempted to study the various contexts and relationships that could influence the participants' identity construction process.

### **2.3.3 YOUNG ADULTS AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

During the time of Erikson's (1950; 1968) writings, 'identity work' was traditionally set aside for adolescents as this was seen as a time when young persons were given opportunities to reflect on the values and belief systems they would hold, the career they would choose and the kind of

social and romantic relationships they would enter into (Côté, 2000; Schwartz, Kurtines & Montgomery, 2005; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Meca & Ritchie, 2012). However, during the latter half of the twentieth century, due to globalisation, the removal of traditional, socially sanctioned roles of adulthood (such as marriage, full-time work and parenthood) and prolonged university attendance in many countries the majority of identity work is believed to no longer occur in adolescence, but rather during young adulthood (Montgomery & Côté, 2003; Shwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005; Schwartz *et al.*, 2012).

Consequently, this inclination toward later identity commitments has led to the identification of a novel developmental period often referred to as “*emerging adulthood*” (Arnett, 2000; Berman, Kennerley & Kennerley, 2008; Schwartz *et al.*, 2012). Arnett (2000; 2002) regards emerging adulthood (18 to 25 years of age) as a phase during an individual’s life span in which the individual is in between the life stages of adolescence and fully fledged adulthood (Arnett, 2004; 2007; Fadjukoff, 2007; Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer & Erikson, 2005; Montgomery & Côté, 2003; Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx & Zamboanga, 2012). Figure 2.4 illustrates Arnett’s (2000) conceptualisation of emerging adulthood.



**Figure 2.4: Arnett’s (2000) conceptualisation of emerging adulthood** (Adapted from Hendry & Kloep, 2007; Arnett, 2003; 2007; Berman, Kennerley & Kennerley, 2008; Stephen, Fraser & Marcia, 1992)

During this study I applied Arnett's (2010) view that emerging adulthood will vary across cultures and individuals (Arnett, 2004; 2006; Fadjukoff, 2007). Emerging adulthood could be adapted to this study as Mathoho and Ranchod (2006) state that many young adults (ages 14 to 35) in South Africa have also postponed their transition to adulthood as a result of the impact of apartheid on their lives. These authors suggest that high levels of unrest during the eighties and nineties, together with high levels of unemployment, have made it difficult for young people to become financially independent, to get married or to establish their own households, thus extending the process of identity commitment among South African youth (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006). I sought to understand whether the young adults in this study may have prolonged their identity construction process as previous young South Africans, or if post-apartheid South Africa has afforded them different opportunities in the process of their identity construction. For the purpose of this study, I assumed that the young adults were afforded good opportunities that could have resulted in the construction of individually chosen identities at the time of this study. Furthermore, insight into the way young biracial adults construct identities implies the possibility that this study may make a contribution to research in this area.

## **2.4 CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM**

Since the young biracial adults in the study may have multiple cultures as a result of their biracial heritage, I sought to understand from the literature how a cultural identity is formed, and specifically how individuals with multiple cultures will construct a multicultural or bicultural identity. Culture and ethnicity are used interchangeably in the literature and both are used to refer to a sense of belonging to, and having values from an ethnic group outside the dominant culture in society. In this thesis, the term cultural identity is used to reflect the individual's identity as it relates to both the individual's ancestral culture and the dominant culture in society. An individual's cultural identity reflects in particular how ethnic (with regard to African cultures or minority cultures in South Africa) and how western (with regard to the dominant culture in society) the individual feels, and how the individual sees these cultural aspects of self-interacting to produce identity (Kankesan, 2010).

In this study, I chose to apply Jensen's (2003) definition of a cultural identity. Jensen (2003) states that in order to form a cultural identity, individuals have to decide which cultural communities they belong to. I concur with Jensen (2003), who posits that the cultural identity formation process has become more complex over time as individuals have been exposed to multiple cultural communities. Consequently, individuals who belong to more than one cultural group must navigate the diverse norms and values from each of their cultural affiliations

(Yampolsky, Amiot & De al Sablonnière, 2013). Faced with such diversity, I am aware that multicultural individuals such as the participants in this study may need to manage and organise their different and possibly clashing cultural identities within their general sense of self (Yampolsky, Amiot & de al Sablonnière, 2013). This may entail having to form identities in the face of cultural traditions that may have different end goals. Some western cultures may, for example, emphasise assertion of autonomy by parents, while Eastern and African cultures may emphasise the fulfilment of responsibilities to parents, and different pathways to these end goals (Jensen, 2003). This statement suggests that in a world of globalisation, one cannot assume a universal developmental pathway to cultural identity formation. It is thus important to understand how multicultural individuals reconcile and organise their different cultural identities within themselves (Haritatos and Benet-Martínez, 2002; Jensen, 2003; Yampolsky, Amiot & De al Sablonnière, 2013).

In the following sections I discuss the concepts of multiculturalism and multicultural identity from both individual and societal perspectives, as well as the relationships between acculturation theory from which current cultural identity research takes its roots. Finally, I explain bicultural identity and appraise the benefits and challenges associated with a multicultural identity for the individual and society at large (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010)

#### **2.4.1 MULTICULTURALISM AND IDENTITY**

Multicultural identity is one component of the more complex and multidimensional notion of multiculturalism (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2010) emphasise that psychologically no commonly agreed definition of multiculturalism exists. For the purpose of this study, I have relied on Moore and Barker's (2012) description of multiculturalism. According to the authors, the concept multiculturalism is based on the belief that people can successfully hold two or more cultural identities (Baker, 2001; Moore & Barker, 2012). However, other authors use the concept multiculturalism empirically, merely referring to the existence of various cultures, values and traditions within the same society. In this study, I did not view multiculturalism as synonymous with cultural diversity. Rather, I viewed it as a specific approach to dealing with the challenges of cultural diversity, and one that brings about the advancement of marginalised or disadvantaged groups such as the biracial individuals that participated in this study (Heywood, 2003). I focused on multicultural individuals<sup>23</sup> with a biracial

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<sup>23</sup>Multicultural individuals encompass the following individuals: first-generation immigrants, descendants of first-generation immigrants, individuals who live in more than one country (such as immigrants, expatriates and refugees), those raised with at

heritage, hence individuals with a ‘mixed’ cultural heritage who live in more than one cultural group, which requires them to negotiate and integrate differing expectations, norms, values and practices associated with their multiple cultural identities (Yampolsky *et al.*, 2013).

#### 2.4.1.1 Multicultural identity and bicultural identity

Multicultural individuals are those individuals whose self-label (e.g. ‘I am multicultural’) or group self-categorisation (e.g. ‘I am Zulu and Dutch’) reflects their multicultural pluralism. More specifically, within this study, an individual is said to have a multicultural identity when they have been exposed to and learned more than one culture. Furthermore, when an individual expresses an attachment with and loyalty to these cultures, the individual can be described as having a multicultural identity (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010). Multiculturalism<sup>24</sup> is thus a broad term that refers to more than one culture (i.e., two cultures, three cultures, four cultures, and so on), whereas biculturalism (which is discussed below) is a specific term referring to two cultures (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010). Specifically, within this study, bicultural individuals were viewed as having two cultures that are internalised, with these cultures taking turns in guiding their perceptions and behaviour (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; Mok & Morris, 2009).

In undertaking this research, I applied Moore and Barker’s (2012) prerequisites for multiculturalism. These authors state that an individual will have a multicultural identity when he or she has *intercultural communication competence* and is able to communicate competently between different cultural identities while operating in both cultures as an insider (Chen & Starosta, 2004; Moore & Barker, 2012). A second prerequisite is *bicultural competence*, where an individual holds knowledge of the beliefs and values of two cultures and has a positive attitude towards both cultures. A bicultural individual does not fall between two cultures, but is part of both cultures (Lafromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Moore and Barker, 2012). These prerequisites guided me in the research process, especially during data interpretation, when I was able to understand that participants in this study who are able to fit into both cultures as a result of their biracial heritage and view themselves as insiders of their two cultures, could be viewed as individuals with a multicultural identity. As multicultural identity and acculturation are

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least one other culture together with the dominant mainstream culture (such as children of immigrants or colonised people) and individuals in intercultural relationships (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010; Padilla, 2006; Yampolsky *et al.*, 2013).

<sup>24</sup>Although the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘bicultural’ are characteristically used to describe individuals, they can also be used to describe countries, organisations and policies (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010).

tightly intertwined concepts, I will review the advancement of acculturation theory and the definition of biculturalism from an acculturation stance in the following section (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010).

## 2.4.2 ACCULTURATION

The number of approaches to understanding the experience of multicultural individuals is constantly increasing, specifically in terms of acculturation literature, which investigates how bicultural individuals may reconcile their belonging to different cultural groups (Sam & Berry, 2006; Yampolsky, Amiot & De al Sablonnière, 2013). Long-established traditional views of acculturation (which is the process of learning or adapting to a new culture) assert that acculturation means that an individual has to assimilate and reject his/her original culture and adopt the dominant culture (Berry, 2003; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010; Trimble, 2003). However, I support Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee and Morris (2002), who assert that existing work on acculturation provides strong support for the idea that individuals can effectively develop experience and competency within more than one culture (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009).

### 2.4.2.1 The bi-dimensional model of acculturation

*The bi-dimensional model of acculturation* (Berry, 1990; 2003; LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993) is based on the principle that acculturating persons have to deal with two fundamental issues that comprise the two cultural orientations of acculturation, namely (i) the degree to which they are encouraged or allowed to retain identification and participation with the culture of origin (usually the non-majority, ethnic culture in society) and (ii) the extent to which they are motivated or allowed to identify with and partake in the mainstream, dominant culture.

According to Berry (2003), the negotiation of these two central issues results in four distinct acculturation positions that individuals may use to manage their cultural identities. After data collection I was cognisant that participants may choose an *assimilated position* in which they will identify with the dominant culture at the expense of their minority ethnic culture. I also kept in mind that some participants could select a *separated* position and identify with their ethnic culture only. Thus participants in the study could potentially only identify with the culture of one of their parents. I furthermore remained aware of the possibility that the young biracial adults could feel *marginalised* and could therefore choose to identify with neither culture, or could take

on an *integrated* biculturalism<sup>25</sup> position in which they would value and identify with both cultures (Berry, 2003; Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010; Yampolsky *et al.*, 2013). The bi-dimensional model of acculturation subsequently assisted me in understanding the possible ways in which the biracial participants in this study could potentially choose to construct a cultural identity.

Furthermore, I was aware of the possibility of the participants establishing what LaFromboise *et al.* (1993) term *alternation* and *fusion*, which are two modes of biculturalism. *Alternating bicultural pattern of biculturalism* suggests that the participants in the study may move between two cultures that do not overlap and may adopt the identity and behaviours of each culture according to context. Alternatively, the participants could also choose a *fused or blended identity pattern*, where they would adopt a novel identity (a combination of both cultures), thereby merging together two cultures that are still seen to be dissimilar, though possibly overlapping (Birman, 1994; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009).

Finally, the bicultural competence model (LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993) proposes several factors that are important for an individual to be able to maintain psychological adjustment while negotiating two cultural identities. I support the bicultural competence model as it emphasises the bicultural experience as one of distress, and suggests that the basis of bicultural competence is a well-developed and integrated sense of both personal and cultural identity (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). LaFromboise *et al.* (1993) present six factors that I considered necessary for the development of bicultural competence amongst the participants: (i) having knowledge of both cultural beliefs and values, (ii) having a positive outlook toward both groups, (iii) believing that one is capable of functioning successfully within both cultures, (iv) being able to communicate effectively within both cultures, (v) exhibiting appropriate behaviours within both cultures, and (iv) securing a communal network within each culture (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009).

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<sup>25</sup>Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002) recently conducted a review of the narrow (and mostly qualitative) literature on bicultural identity and formed the construct of bicultural identity integration (BII) as a framework to organise the diverse meanings and experiences linked with being bicultural (Benet-Martínez *et al.*, 2002). Bicultural Identity Integration measures the extent to which the two cultural identities are experienced as blended and compatible (Mok & Morris, 2009). According to Benet-Martínez *et al.* (2002), individuals high on BII will categorise their cultural identities as generally compatible and tend to view themselves as part of a mutual, or 'third' emerging culture, finding it fairly easy to integrate both cultures into their daily lives, whereas bicultural individuals low on BII report difficulty in integrating both cultures into a unified sense of identity and tend to identify the two cultures as highly divergent and oppositional (Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002).

In summary, research on biculturalism and multiculturalism is relatively new, with little consent among researchers about how bicultural identities are cognitively and interpersonally negotiated and what impact this process will have on individuals' lives (Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002). In my attempt to understand how the young biracial adults in the study construct a bicultural identity, I hope to contribute to the dearth in research and knowledge on multiculturalism, specifically within the South African context. Furthermore, although some scholars indicate that a bicultural identity can be filled with contradiction, tension and social strain (Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002), I support Baker (2001) and Berry (2008), who believe that it is possible to effectively hold several cultural identities and actually feel at home in more than one culture. I further believe that the biracial individuals who participated in this study may have experienced some advantages in having a multicultural or bicultural identity, such as intercultural communication competence, open-mindedness, tolerance of diversity, and intercultural sensitivity and adaptability (Christmas & Barker, 2011; Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012).

**Think box 2.3: Belonging to the human race**

*When we arrived in South Africa, my sister and I joined the local primary school in January 1995. I must say our primary school was kind to us; the school had children of many ethnic and racial backgrounds and we had good times there as the educators were very accommodating and caring towards us. The transition from primary school to high school is always traumatic, especially when you join such a big school. Although it was a multicultural school, my high school teachers were very ill prepared to deal with children from different ethnic backgrounds. When it came to my sister and I, they just could not process our biracial heritage and identity.*

*Every year when the Department of Education requested the school's racial quotas, my sister and I knew that we were in for a humiliating experience as the teachers would want us to identify as black or coloured, and not as biracial on the official forms. On my mother's advice we began filling in our official school forms, choosing 'human' instead of the racial categories (white, black, Indian or coloured) given on the forms. The teachers would be upset and the school would call my mum complaining that her daughters were messing up the school forms, but my mother would tell them that we were human and that they should not force us to choose a racial label. I disliked being boxed into a racial category that denounced and did not celebrate my biracial heritage. I felt 'othered' and did not understand why I could not choose to identify publically as a biracial person. I wanted to celebrate both my cultures and choosing one race did not allow me to do so.*



## 2.5 RACIAL IDENTITY AND THE INFLUENCE ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Within South African society, race has permeated every level of social discourse, therefore I cannot remove race from the discussion of identity as I cannot examine identity in South Africa without considering race (Alexander, 2006). My view of race as a social construct implies that the categorisation of races is created by society, according to economic, social, political, historical and national frameworks, rather than biological or genetic differences between racial groups (Gillem, Cohn & Throne, 2001; Literte, 2010; Smedley & Smedley 2005). Race is a significant factor within this study as race and racial categories have long played a significant role in the everyday lives of South Africans (Rocha, 2011). Wang (2011) argues that as minority adolescents' exposure to the world increases, race will become salient during the identity formation process. Burke and Kao (2010) reiterate that for racial minorities, this period is also one where racial identity has to be incorporated into one's identity (Burke & Kao, 2010). Subsequently, in this study, racial identity was also described as a social construct (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). Thus I agree with Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) that racial identity varies over time and is heavily influenced by the political and social context of a society. According to Helms (1993:3), "*racial identity refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group*". Adhikari (2006) pronounced that prior to 1994, South Africa's racialised identities were the result of the colonial era and apartheid policies, which institutionalised and prescribed certain identities according to race (Francis & Le Roux, 2011; Zegeye, 2001). Puttick (2012) and Lobban (2013) further posit that although young adults have the autonomy to construct their own racial identities and choose various identity markers in post-apartheid South Africa, race exerts such a great force over the lives of South Africans living in a country that continues to be relatively divided and defined by race, that South Africans still choose race as a part of their social identities.

I agree with Erikson (1968), who notes that racial identity is a significant aspect of a healthy overall identity for minority persons (Renn, 2004). Gibbs (1998) recognised dual racial/ethnic identity development as one of five central psychological tasks experienced by biracial adolescents, with the other four tasks being social recognition and acceptance, sexuality and the choice of sexual partners, detachment from parents and educational or career ambitions. Although racial identity may give a person a sense of self, as well as a sense of belonging to a group, this sense of self may be particularly complex for individuals who come from multiple racial backgrounds (Khanna, 2004; Phinney, 1990; Lou, LaLonde & Wilson, 2011). I especially

note that racial identity issues will come to the fore when a biracial child reaches adolescence, as biracial individuals may experience challenges related to their identity that are unique because of their dual heritage (Nuttgens, 2010; Root, 1994).

Before explaining approaches and theories related to biracial identity development, I discuss Cross's (1971) model of black racial identity as his theory recognises the importance of the racial factor of identity development for minority individuals, paving the way for biracial scholars to begin understanding how biracial individuals may integrate race into their identity. I acknowledge that his theory is not fully adequate for understanding the identity development of biracial individuals as it does not take into consideration the integration of two different races into the overall identity of biracial individuals (Stone, 2009). However, I am of the opinion that it is important to understand racial identity models, and specifically Cross's model of black racial identity, as this model was one of the first to explain how people of colour may construct identity. I realise that this and many other racial identity models influenced current biracial and multicultural identity models. As such this model had been used as a prototype of many current multiracial identity models.

Furthermore, I engaged with racial identity theories during my literature review as I sought to develop a greater comprehension of the influence of race on an individual's thoughts, experiences, and behaviours toward those of similar and dissimilar racial groupings (Nuttgens, 2010). Since the young biracial adults could possibly choose to identify with a racial identity, I sought to comprehend the progression of racial identity development for people of colour. I hope to offer new insights as to how biracial individuals racially identify in a South African context.

**Think box 2.4: Assumptions of whiteness**

*Two months into our new life in South Africa, my sister and I received our first birthday invitation. My mum drove us to our friend's home. My friend's mother was at the gate welcoming the kids into the party, but when she saw us getting out of the car, I noticed that her smile froze and her facial expression changed. I think that when she saw the names Wendy and Natasha on the invitation list, she assumed that we were white girls. My mother, noticing the same change in her facial expression, sent us back to the car and spoke to my friend's mother. Recently I asked my mother what she had said to her. My mother told me that she had asked the woman whether she had known that we were of colour and had told her that if she had a problem with us, she would take us back home. My friend's mother had apparently not been informed that we were not white, but said that we were more than welcome at the party. I realised from a young age that my racial identity (and my outward physical appearance) would influence my life interactions and experiences. Looking back, I now realise that sometimes people needed a couple of minutes to process our interracial family.*

*My mother became an expert at facilitating the process of helping people to internalise and process our biracial heritage. Eventually we got out of the car and were invited back into the house. My friend's mother made Natasha and I feel most welcome. From that day onwards every time we were invited to a birthday party my mother would, as part of the RSVP protocol, phone the children's mothers in advance and would 'help' them to accept us. I guess this way we wouldn't have to face more shocked faces at birthday parties as they knew upfront that we were not blonde with blue eyes. One party at a time we were able to put 'our foot into the door', and by 1996 things got better and my mum did not have to 'prepare' our hosts for our visit. Birthday parties and sleepovers became more effortless.*

### 2.5.1 CROSS' (1971) THEORY OF BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

According to Cross's (1971, 1978, 1991) model of black racial identity development (also known as the Nigrescence theory<sup>26</sup>), there are five stages in the process, namely pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion internalisation and internalisation-commitment (Cross, 1971, 1991; Wang, 2011). Although Cross's (1971) theory has been presented in a linear form below, an individual may move from one stage to the next only to revisit an earlier stage. Cross (1991) suggests that black individuals in the *pre-encounter stage* will identify more with the beliefs and values of the dominant white culture and will devalue their own blackness, thus internalising society's attitude about white superiority (an example is valuing Eurocentric views of beauty) (Mio, Barker, Tumambing, 2013; Tatum, 1997; Wang, 2011; Wood, 2013). The *encounter stage* is the result of a racially prejudiced event that will result in a person re-evaluating previous ideas of race (French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006; Mio *et al.*, 2012; Parham, 1989; Wang, 2011). For example, social rejection by white friends or colleagues may lead a black individual to conclude that many whites do not view black people as equal (Tatum, 1993). The *immersion-emersion stage* is characterised by individuals who become confident and proud of their racial identity as black people. The individual will become immersed in the black culture to the exclusion of others, particularly whites (French *et al.*, 2006; Parham, 1989; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). *Internalisation* occurs when individuals are secure in their own sense of racial identity and exhibit increased comfort with and acceptance of other cultures (Mio *et al.*, 2013; Parham, 1989; Tatum, 1993). Cross's final stage *internalisation-commitment* is characterised by the individual having a secure internalised positive sense of racial identity and developing a

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<sup>26</sup> As defined by Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001:243), *Nigrescence* is a French term that refers to "the process of becoming black". The five stage theory discusses the acquisition of a black identity (Cross, 1971)

commitment to eliminating racism in society and achieving social justice (Cross, 1991; French *et al.*, 2006; Parham, 1989; Tatum, 1993; Wang, 2011; Wood, 2013).

Although several racial identity models have influenced current biracial identity development models, I concur with Poston (1990) that monoracial identity models may be problematic when merely applied to biracial individuals and identity development processes (Roque, 2013; Harris, 2009). Firstly I am concerned about the fact that monoracial identity models assume that biracial individuals will choose one racial or cultural heritage over another at various stages of their lives (Poston, 1990). While not all multiracial individuals identify in the same way, it is important to recognise that the development of a multiracial identity is not as simple as choosing one culture over another (Harris, 2009; Renn, 2003; Roque, 2013). Secondly, I am apprehensive about monoracial models suggesting that at some point in the identity development stage an individual will reject the minority culture and then reject the dominant culture before accepting both cultures as part of the identity. This seems problematic for a biracial individual who may be a descendent of both a dominant and a minority racial group. Thirdly, I do not agree with monoracial models not allowing for the amalgamation of several group identities and claiming that biracial individuals can reach self-fulfilment by combining only one racial and/or ethnic group. Finally, I support Poston (1990:153), who explains that these models are flawed by placing identity problems solely within the individual and ignoring the influence of relational and contextual factors in the identity development process (Harris, 2009; Roque, 2013).

Although racial identity models have contributed in understanding humans and how people of colour may construct a racial identity, I believe that they have limitations, such as that most models present a linear progression through the stages, whereas in my opinion identity is fluid and individuals may be at different stages of development during their lifetime and do not necessarily follow the stages linearly. Furthermore, my main aim was to study the participants within their contexts, whereas many of these models do not take the context into consideration and also assume that individuals are only mentally healthy if they reach the final stage of the theory. As I employed a postcolonial framework, I believe that individuals may choose whatever stage in the model they identify with at any given time. I remained wary of the assumption that one identity outcome will be healthy for all members in a particular group.

## 2.6 ETHNIC IDENTITY AND THE INFLUENCE ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Robinson and Howard-Hamilton (2000) describe ethnicity as connectedness between a group of people based on commonalities such as religion, language, customs, values and nationality. These particular aspects of cultural pattern are shared and transmitted over time to create a common history and ancestry (Brym & Lie, 2013). In this study, I attempted to understand the process of constructing an ethnic identity as the participants could potentially have dual ethnicities as a result of their biracial heritage.

### 2.6.1 PHINNEY'S ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THEORY

In this thesis, ethnic identity is considered as a social construct and as part of an individual's self-concept and social identity derived from his/her own awareness of membership of an ethnic group and the emotional significance attached to that group (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Phinney, 1992). Phinney (1996:922) supports ethnicity as *"a fundamental aspect of the self that is associated with an individual's sense of belonging and commitment to an ethnic group and includes an individual's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and behaviours associated with ethnic group membership"* (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano & Oxford, 2000:365). I support Chávez and Guido-DiBrito (1999), who state that ethnic identity development is a frame of mind in which individuals consciously or unconsciously identify with those with whom they feel a mutual bond because of similar cultural traditions, behaviours, values, and beliefs. These relationship connections permit individuals to understand the world around them and to construct an identity they are proud of. I am aware that currently South Africans take pride in and identify strongly with their national, cultural, religious and linguistic identities (Bekker & Leildé, 2003; Lobban, 2013).

One of the most well-known and widely researched models of ethnic identity is Phinney's (1996) stage model (French *et al.*, 2006; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). Phinney (1996) presented his model of ethnic identity over three stages, namely unexamined ethnic identity, exploration phase and achieved ethnic identity (Mullin, 2006). Umaña-Taylor (2009) emphasises that placement in each mentioned stage will be determined by the individuals' enquiry of their ethnicity and the extent to which they are clear about their ethnicity and what it means to them (Phinney, 1993; Umaña-Taylor, 2009). In this theory, Wakefield and Hudley (2007:148) define *"exploration as the extent to which adolescents will seek out the content (language, cultural practices and beliefs) of their ethnic heritage, as well as the significance of that ethnic*

*information for their personal identity, and commitment as how strongly adolescents will embrace and value ethnicity as a part of their personal identity*". Phinney's (1996) first phase, *unexamined ethnic identity*, refers to preadolescent children who have not yet consciously questioned their own ethnic identity or explored ethnic issues (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Phinney, 1992, 1990). Consequently, the unexamined preadolescent's feelings about his or her ethnic group are determined by the views of others, usually parents, family, or the community at large (; French *et al.*, 2006; Mullin, 2006; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). The second phase, *exploration*, involves a period of conscious examination of one's ethnic background and its personal meaning. The exploratory process typically occurs during adolescence when the adolescent seeks to understand the meaning of ethnicity through exploration (e.g. discussions with adults, reading about the group's history), or even through immersion (e.g. joining peer groups with members of only one ethnic group) (French *et al.*, 2006; Mullin, 2006; Phinney, 1992, 1990; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). The final phase occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood when an individual attains an *ethnic identity* by consciously developing an own view of ethnicity. Such ethnic identity achievement requires a secure sense of group membership and a realistic appraisal of one's group. This status is characterised by a sense of ethnic pride, belonging and confidence (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Mullin, 2006; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997; Phinney, 1992, 1990). Shelton, Yip, Eccles, Chatman, Fuligni and Wong (2005) support an achieved ethnic identity as it can act as a barrier against the impact of discrimination and prejudice. Furthermore, this final stage of ethnic identity development calls for individuals to come to terms with two conflicts for ethnic minorities. Firstly, minority or non-dominant group members are required to resolve the stereotyping and prejudicial behaviour and treatment of the dominant white population towards individuals belonging to non-dominant groups, thus threatening their identity and self-concept. Secondly, ethnic minorities must resolve the conflict of value systems between non-dominant and dominant groups and the approach in which minority members negotiate a bicultural value system. Once a person has reached the achieved ethnic identity stage, s/he is likely develop positive views regarding other ethnic groups as well (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Mullin, 2006; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997; Phinney, 1992, 1990;).

Phinney's (1990) work highlights three components of ethnic identity that can be applied to any ethnic group while acknowledging each group's individual experiences, namely *self-identification, sense of belonging and behavioural practices*. *Self-identification* can be viewed as the cognitive domain of Phinney's theoretical framework. Phinney (1990) explained that in many

research studies of ethnic identity development, researchers assign racial or ethnic group labels to their participants, which may not match a person's own evaluation of his or her racial/ethnic identity. Labels are commonly imposed on ethnic minorities by the dominant culture based on an assessment of superficial traits such as skin colour or a person's name. Thus Phinney (1990) emphasises the importance of allowing individuals to choose their labels. *Sense of belonging* is the emotional component of Phinney's conceptualisation of ethnic identity. He states that minority children may internalise negative characterisations made by the dominant culture regarding their ethnic group, which may cause them to experience anger or resentment towards that group. These children may therefore feel detached from their ethnic group and experience a weak sense of belonging. In contrast, some individuals may experience positive feelings and ethnic pride about their ethnic group due to the strong support system provided by the group, which will promote a deep sense of belonging. Finally, the behavioural component of ethnic identity, *behavioural practices*, will take into account the degree to which a person engages in social activities and practices that are specific to his/her ethnic group. This also entails getting involved in cultural traditions (Mullin, 2006; Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano & Oxford, 2000).

According to Trimble and Dickson (2005) individuals from mixed ethnic backgrounds may experience ethnic identity development as challenging, as they have at least two ethnic groups from which to negotiate and construct an ethnic identity. Root (1994) identifies four reasons for multi-ethnic people choosing to identify with a particular group regardless of how others may view them. Root (1994) maintains that: (i) knowledge and understanding of a distinct part of their ethnic heritage gives people a sense of security; (ii) an identity may be promoted and stimulated by parental influences, as well as by encouragement received from extended family members (such as grandparents), thereby granting permission to offspring to make a choice; (iii) discussion of racism and prejudice experienced from certain groups will lead to the sharing of mutual experiences with family and will help the individual to increase his or her psychological skills and defences so as to be better equipped to shield the identity and the self; and (iv) gender alliance between parents and children may influence ethnic and racial socialisation, mainly if they have high-quality relationships and a high regard for each other (Trimble & Dickson, 2005). Phinney's (1990) ethnic identity development theory helped me to understanding how the young biracial adults in this study may have constructed an ethnic identity.

## 2.7 BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPEMNT

Within the context of the studies on biracial identity development reviewed above, I identified certain focus areas and trends in current literature. These focus areas include the racial identity development of biracial individuals, the influence of appearance on biracial identity development and the factors that may shape the identity construction of biracial individuals, for example family, peers, environments and social networks, socio-economic factors, culture and gender.

### 2.7.1 RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONGST BIRACIAL INDIVIDUALS

My study of the existing literature on biracial identity made me aware of the fact that a young biracial adult may choose to identify with the following identities: (i) *monoracial identities*, identifying with one race (identities such as black and white); (ii) *multiracial identities*, thus developing a biracial or multiracial identity and identifying with both components of the individual's particular background, taking equal pride in all the heritages, and finally (iii) *no race at all*, where individuals choose to denounce the concept of race and prefer to be acknowledged as human, or however else the individual chooses to be identified (Harris & Sim, 2002:615). Furthermore, I remained cognisant, throughout this study, that an individual's physical appearance may also influence his/her choice of racial identity. According to Van Buren (2008), an individual's physical appearance provides initial face-to-face information that will allow others to define and place people in a social space. Hence skin colour, hair texture and facial features may influence how others construct an identity for the biracial individual (Van Buren, 2008). In the existing literature on biracial identity I noticed a mixed response regarding the possible correlation between physical appearance and its influence on identity. Some scholars (Renn, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008, Root, 2003; Wallace, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001) have indicated that physical appearance will strongly influence the identity of biracial individuals (Renn, 2008) while others (Hall 1980, 1992; Williams 1992) indicate no correlation between appearance and identity (Khana, 2004). Physical traits (such as skin tone, hair texture and colour, and eye and nose shape) are commonly perceived as representative of certain racial and ethnic groups (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Walker, 2009). In biracial studies, skin colour has been most commonly attributed to the development of a singular black racial identity (Tizard & Phoenix, 1995; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). Researchers have found that biracial individuals with a darker complexion are more likely than those with a lighter complexion to take on a singular black identity (Rockquemore 2002; Edison, 2007; Walker, 2009).



Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) found no association between skin tone and the way biracial individuals racially classify or understand themselves; however, their study indicates a strong relationship between appearance and identity. Based on the findings of their research, the authors maintain that “*socially-mediated appearance, or the way you believe others perceive you*” will influence the construction of a racial identity among biracial individuals (Francis, 2006:12). I support Davis’ (2007) notion that because biracial individuals exist in a social system (i.e. South African context) that enforces a distinctively dichotomous white/non-white scheme of racial identification, their identity choices may be constrained by appearances. Biracial individuals with ambiguous physical features who participated in this study could potentially find it difficult to fit themselves into a racial category, thus causing feelings of vulnerability and of being outsiders in some situations (Davis, 2007). In addition, a problem may occur when there is a disparity between a person’s appearance and identity. It would be exceptionally complex for a biracial person to construct and develop a singular identity if the physical appearance (particularly a socially perceived appearance) does not match the chosen racial identity (Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Root, 1999;).

## **2.7.2 FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE BIRACIAL IDENTITY FORMATION**

Various scholars (Brunnsma, 2002; Crawford & Allagia, 2008; Herman, 2004; Mouzong; 2008; Herman, 2004; Phinney, 1997; Renn, 2000; Root, 1998; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005) have identified factors that may influence the racial identity development of biracial individuals. I will now address the most commonly discussed factors.

### **(i) Family**

According to Garran and Miller (2008), family is an important factor for anyone’s racial and ethnic identity development, but is especially crucial for biracial people (Garran & Miller, 2008). Rockquemore (2005) elaborates that parental racial socialisation is one way in which the family can influence the racial identification and racial identity development process of a biracial individual (Benton, 2009). In their study, Crawford and Allagia (2008) explored the factors influencing identity development in those who identify themselves to be part African (black) and European (white) origin. The role of the family emerged as a key influence on the formation of racial identity for each of the participants (Crawford & Allagia, 2008; Benton, 2009; Patel, 2012). In another study, Harris and Sim (2002) found that the racial identification of 12% of multiracial adolescents’ who were interviewed at home differed from their self-identification when they were interviewed at school within the same year. Adolescents were more likely to refrain from

identifying themselves as 'multiracial' if their parents were present during the interview. These researchers found that patterns of racial/ethnic classification may vary because multiracial/multi-ethnic groups comprise of socially distinct monoracial groups (Patel, 2012).

Similarly, Herman (2004) found that multiracial youth are more likely to claim a singular black identity if they only have contact with the black parent. Furthermore, Mouzong (2008) states that parental communication about race, especially negative communication, will influence children's attitudes, and can have a lasting authority on a child's racial self-understanding. For example, in Rockquemore's (2002) study, youth tended to internalise the views of their cohabiting parents, predominantly behaviours by one parent that ascribed negative characteristics to the other parent's race. He found that this trend worked both ways: multiracial youths residing with a white mother who expressed negative views about the father's race were more likely to identify as biracial and express their preference for white culture, whereas participants who resided with their black mothers who expressed negative views about the racial characteristics of their white fathers chose to claim a singular black identity (Rockquemore, 1998).

## **(ii) Peers**

Peers play an important role in the identity development of biracial children (Kenney, 2002; McClurg, 2004). Hall (1992) found that an affiliation with a certain racial group will influence the identity of a biracial individual, and that a biracial person who has mainly black friends will claim a black identity. Furthermore, biracial children will feel more pressured to choose membership of one racial group if two groups that they are part of are informally segregated in the school (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993). Sheets' (2004) study of the impact of friendships on the identification of mixed-race students indicates that biracial students expressed seeking friendships where they felt accepted, and that they felt more accepted by non-white peers than by white peers. In the school context, peers will often recognise visible differences in biracial individuals, which results in questions related to skin colour, hair texture, family composition and cultural practices. This inquisitiveness of peers may result in biracial individuals feeling sensitive and embarrassed about their ethnicity, and increase an awareness of being unique or different in the context of societal norms (Kenney, 2002; McClurg, 2004; Basu, 2007; Van Buren, 2008).

## **(iii) Environment and social networks**

According to Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002), racially similar neighbourhoods, whether predominately white or black, may provide different limitations and appraisals of the racial identity options available to biracial individuals. Literature indicates that biracial Americans who

live in predominantly black neighbourhoods and attend minority schools are prone to identify themselves as black than biracial individuals who live in white areas (Korgen, 2009). This is usually as the result of the hypodescent rule (also known as the one drop rule), which is deeply internalised in black communities, thus making it common for these communities to classify biracial individuals as black. Biracial individuals in black communities may choose a black identity as a method of feeling complete and also to have feelings of belonging to the community (Rockquemore, 1998).

On the contrary, biracial individuals raised in predominately white social networks or integrated social networks tend to develop a 'border identity' (exclusively biracial). This trend can be related to white communities typically having resources available to biracial individuals, such as cultural translators, mediators and role models to help them manage their 'border' identity (exclusively biracial identity) (Rockquemore, 1998; Walker, 2009). Similarly, the neighbourhood may influence the way parents racially identify their biracial children. Parents of multiracial children who live in minority neighbourhoods are more likely to identify their children as a racial minority, usually choosing a monoracial black identity (Korgen, 2009; Qian, 2004; Rockquemore and Brunnsma, 2002; Roth, 2005). In the same vein Herman (2004) found that wealthier and whiter neighbourhoods increased the likelihood that biracial Hispanics would be identified as white (Hubbard, 2008; Mouzong, 2008).

In further support of the above, Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) found that the manner in which biracial people choose identities will be impacted by variations in the racial composition of social networks and the quality of the interactions that occur within the networks (Benton, 2009). The racial composition of an individual's social network may influence self-conceptualisation. Within different milieus, biracial individuals may experience '*push and pull factors*' that may affect their choice of racial identity. According to Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002), a 'pull factor' may be experiencing acceptance and belonging in a predominantly black community, whereas experiencing rejection and negative treatment within a black community may be a 'push factor'. Within this study, the authors found that biracial children who grow up in predominately black neighbourhoods are more likely to choose a black identity (a monoracial identity), while biracial children who grow up in predominately white or multicultural neighbourhoods are more likely to claim biracial or border identities (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Mouzong, 2008).

#### **(iv) Socio-economic factors (social class)**

Socioeconomic factors and social class (one's education, income and professional status) may influence the racial identification of biracial individuals (Korgen 1998, Rockquemore & Brunsma 2001; Rockquemore & Arend 2003; Kosut 2006; Khana, 2004; Korgen, 2009). Khana (2004) indicates two opposite perspectives on this topic: the *ethnic-competition perspective*, which states that individuals are more likely to identify with the minority group as their socioeconomic status increases, as conflict with the white majority will escalate as they move up the socioeconomic ladder, and the *assimilationist perspective*, which predicts that people will be more likely to identify with the majority group (white) as their socioeconomic status increases, because they will be more fully integrated into mainstream society.

Similarly, Korgen's (1998) study indicates that biracial participants who come from middle-and upper-class social status will tend to identify themselves as both black and white, with a small percentage identifying as non-racial and those who are poor tending to identify only as black (Twine, 1996). Rockquemore and Arend (2003) agree with the above. The higher the social class of their parents was, the more likely it was that the biracial Americans who participated in their study would self-identify as both white and black, or monoracially white. A higher social class will also result in the biracial individual befriending mainly white peers and accepting the dominant racial ideology of colour-blindness<sup>27</sup>, thus seeing themselves, and those around them, in non-racial terms (Korgen, 2009).

#### **(v) Culture**

A biracial individual's exposure to culture (e.g. language, music, religion and social habits and traditions) is another influential factor that may impact on identity development (Khana, 2004). Khana (2004) states that an increase in cultural exposure may impact how a biracial individual selects a racial group with which to identify. Being exposed to the family's culture may thus impact on racial identity formation because it will influence feelings of belonging (Walker, 2009). Increased exposure to one parent's culture may influence a biracial individual to choose that particular ethnic or racial identity (Khana, 2004). Renn's (2004, 2008) study indicates that cultural knowledge of various heritage groups may influence the identities of mixed-race students attending college, where questions of authenticity, legitimacy and fitting in arise in relation to their cultural knowledge (Renn, 2000, 2004; Wallace, 2003). Biracial individuals, who

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<sup>27</sup> A color-blindness approach proposes that racial categories do not matter and that social categories should be dismantled and disregarded, and everyone should be treated as individuals (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).

speak the language associated with their culture (i.e. Spanish), listen to certain kinds of music or participate in other ethnically marked elements of youth culture, can be considered as having a passport into a community of students of colour. Biracial individuals equipped with their cultural heritage will typically feel more confident to identify themselves with previously unexplored aspects of their identity (Renn, 2008; Renn, 2004; Wallace, 2003; Walker, 2011).

#### **(vi) Gender**

According to Van Buren (2008), gender may shape the process of racial identity development among biracial people. Unlike boys, girls often tend to experience gender-specific stressors that influence their racial identity development, specifically in terms of unique issues that are associated with their physical appearance when constructing their female identity (Edison, 2007; Rockquemore & Laszoffy, 2005). In society, men and women are typically valued for different roles (i.e. men are valued for their intelligence and political influence, and women are valued for their beauty) (Edison, 2007). Similarly, a white standard of beauty has been adopted in society in which women with light skin, straight hair and European features are regarded as more beautiful than women with darker skin and ethnic features. These standards of beauty create many challenges for biracial women, for example: (i) biracial women may have to prove to other black people in their communities that they are black, but may have difficulties when they are validated only as black by white people; (ii) because black men are attracted to the light skin and European features that biracial women may possess, biracial women may find it difficult to establish relationships with other black women; and (iii) several myths exist regarding biracial women, for instance that they are 'exotic' and 'passionate', which may encourage the perception that biracial women are desirable to white men for sex and not for long-term relationships, and to black men as light-skinned trophies and status symbols (Edison, 2007; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2002; Korgen, 1998; Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992; Walker, 2011).

According to Rockquemore and Laszoffy (2005), the way biracial women are treated by both men and women in the African-American community will determine the racial identity of a biracial woman. Thus biracial women with darker skin and ethnic appearance are likely to be reluctant to choose a white identity and may also be reluctant to choose a black identity because of the problems they experience with African-American women. However, the attention biracial women receive from African-American men pull them back into identifying with the African-American community (Rockquemore & Laszoffy, 2005; Edison, 2007). With regard to biracial men, Korgen (1998) states that biracial men are also the victims of racial stereotypes

and myths. Biracial men who appear and are perceived to be black are, for example, also subject to the stereotypical belief that black men possess exceptional sexual skills and talents, while light-skinned biracial men are ridiculed by their friends, who allege that women will only date them because of their light-coloured skins and the status that accompanies being 'almost white' (Korgen, 1998). Furthermore, in the African-American community, light-skinned men are believed to be weak; therefore light-skinned biracial men may embellish their maleness by acting stereotypically black (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992). Korgen's (1998) study indicates that in youth, many light-skinned African American boys thought that their colour placed them at a disadvantage; however, in adulthood they admitted that their light skins enabled them to obtain better jobs as they were perceived as less threatening to whites, and made it possible for them to easily gain the attention of women (Korgen, 1998; Walker, 2011).

International studies highlight the challenges associated with biracial identity development. Salahuddin (2008) states that biracial individuals may experience racial identity development as complex due to societal, family and peer pressures to identify, or not to identify with particular racial identities and groups (Khanna, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2003; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). Hence biracial individuals at times experience family and societal messages indicating that identification with both their racial heritages is not a possibility (Buckley & Carter, 2004). As a result biracial individuals may feel alienated, unsure about their self-identification, and frustrated with the tendency of others to ascribe identities to them (Root, 1996b). According to Campbell and Eggerling-Boek (2003; 2006), biracial individuals may experience having an unvalidated racial identity in which their chosen racial identities are not recognised by others, leaving them with feelings of uncertainty about who they are (Nuttgens, 2010).

Although biracial individuals may experience challenges in constructing their identities, positive aspects associated with a biracial heritage have also been explored and studied. According to Edwards and Pedrotti (2004), as a result of a biracial heritage, biracial individuals are said to develop cross-cultural competence where they exhibit openness to and tolerance of people from different cultures and racial groups (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Biracial individuals are also able to fit in with various groups, interact within multiple racial and cultural social contexts (Collins, 2000; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Miville *et al.*, 2005) and have been reported to be proud of their biracial heritage (Roberts-Clarke *et al.*, 2004).

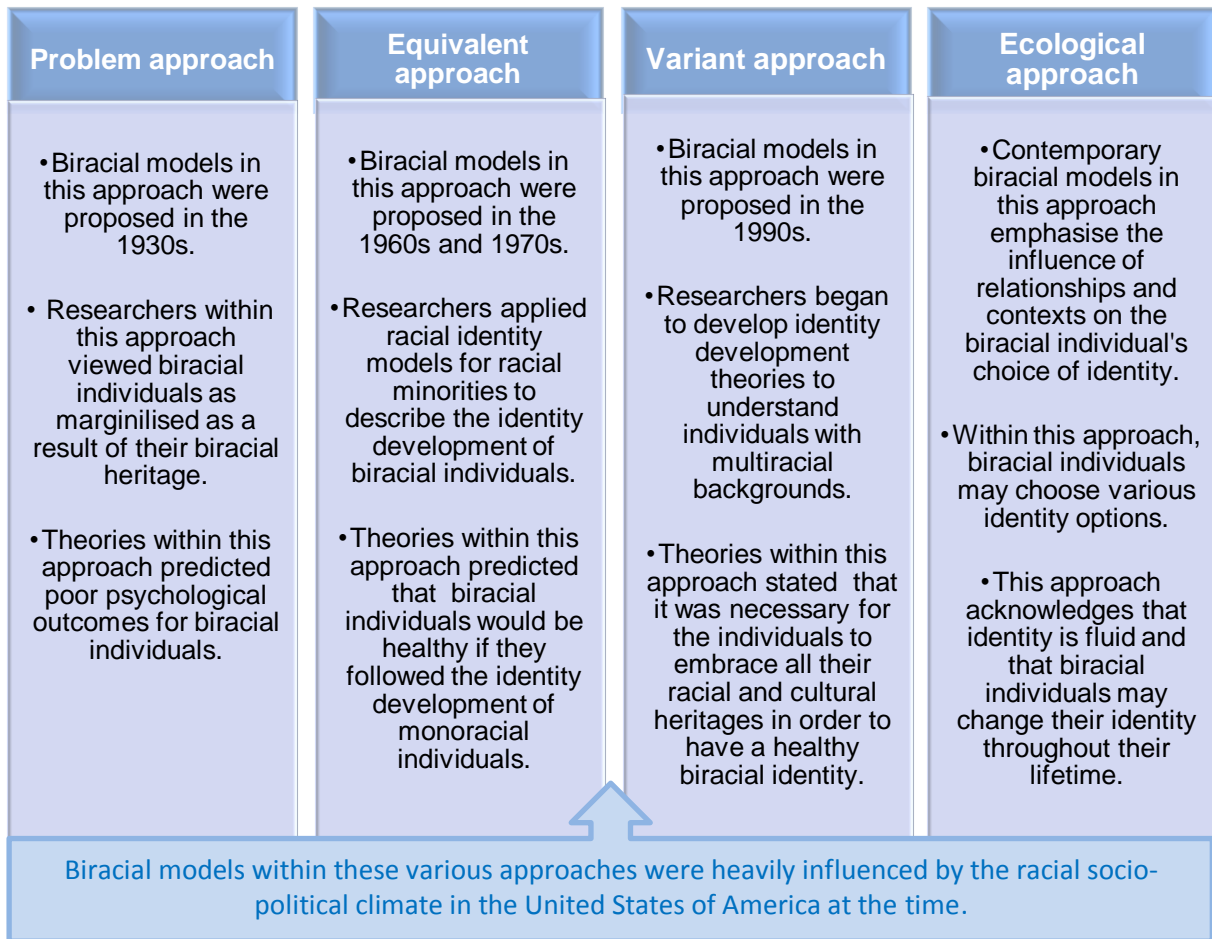
While studying the existing literature, I was mindful of the fact that the abovementioned factors may influence the identity construction of the participants. As most existing research was

conducted in North American and European contexts, I hope to add to current international literature by specifically focusing on factors influencing the construction of biracial identity development within the South African context and on challenges and positive factors that are linked to young South African biracial adults. Thus this study may potentially add to the current understanding of both the biracial experience and also the role and impact of the milieu on biracial identity formation.

## 2.8 EXPLORING EXISTING BIRACIAL IDENTITY MODELS

Even though I am studying the biracial identity of young adults within a South African context, I rely on American authors Thornton and Wason's (1995) framework to review the historical trajectory of racial identity theories for biracial individuals as biracial identity models are scarce within the South African literature. The approaches discussed in this section are: (i) *the problem approach*; (ii) *the equivalent approach*; (iii) *the variant approach* and (iv) *the ecological approach*, with the latter being an approach that only emerged in the past decade (Rockquemore, Brunsma & Delgado, 2009).

The various biracial identity theories and models assisted me in choosing a theoretical framework that could guide me in studying how the relevant contexts and relationships may influence the identity construction and choice of self-identification of the young biracial adults who participated in this study. Figure 2.5 illustrates the various approaches to understanding biracial identity development.



**Figure 2.5: Summary of Thornton and Wason’s (1995) framework on the historical trajectory of biracial identity development models**

### 2.8.1 THE PROBLEM APPROACH TO BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

I did not rely on this model for my study as it focuses on understanding and identifying deficits and problems associated with a biracial background (Collins, 2000; Herman, 2008; Root, 1992; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Park (1928, 1931) and Stonequist (1937) define individuals from two different racial or cultural groups (in a society that is defined by very separate racial and cultural groupings) as “*marginal man*” (Benton, 2009), a view that I did not support in my study. The marginal man model postulates that individuals with a biracial heritage do not establish firm identities, but have marginal identities (Poston, 1990; Herman, 2008). According to Pedrotti, Edwards and Lopez (2008), the model assumes that individuals born from interracial parentage experience problems with identity development as they are associated with two racial and cultural worlds but belong fully to neither, which causes biracial individuals to experience



adjustment and identity problems. As a result biracial individuals experience a state of internal conflict as they try to hold both identities simultaneously, while at the same time being unable to commit to either (Awai, 2004). Although I do not support it, I acknowledge that this approach reflects the socio-political climate of the United States of America in the 1930s and the research that I have read (Chong, 2012; Johnson, 1992; Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

### **2.8.2 EQUIVALENT APPROACH TO BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

A shift reflecting changes in the climate of racial politics in the United States of America during the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the banning of anti-miscegenation laws and a spread in racial pride as a result of the civil rights movement (Root, 1996; 2006; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Researchers began to develop comprehensive racial identity models for racial minorities (such as Cross's [1971] black racial identity theory) and used these racial identity models to describe the development of biracial individuals, thus assuming that monoracial and multiracial individuals are equivalent and undergo the same process during racial identity development (Thornton, 1996; Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

I support the argument of Gillem, Cohn and Throne (2001), as well as that of Shih and Sanchez's (2005), who maintain that the theories within this approach did not take into account the multiple racial backgrounds of a biracial individual and the experiences of multiracial individuals that may affect racial identity development. I further concur that although some multiracial individuals do self-identify with only one of their racial groups, the theories in this approach did not take into consideration the issues multiracial people may have to deal with before reaching the decision to identify with only one component of their racial heritage (Poston, 1990). According to Thornton (1996), theories within this approach viewed biracial individuals as healthy if they followed identity paths similar to those followed by monoracial individuals (Chong, 2012).

### **2.8.3 VARIANT APPROACH TO BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

In this approach, researchers (Jacob, 1992; Jacobs, 1992; Kich, 1992; Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Poston, 1990)<sup>28</sup> proposed identity development theories and models to understand individuals with biracial backgrounds. The models indicate that multiracial individuals will pass through a series of stages in their identity development with the aim of establishing an integrated biracial identity, which the individual values and appreciates. These individuals would

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<sup>28</sup> See Appendix L for descriptions of these models

thus develop a racialised identity in which they would value their biracial ancestry and proclaim their membership to both racial groups. One of the limitations that I found in some of the above biracial and multiracial identity development models is the assumption that a fully integrated biracial or multiracial identity is the desired end state (Root, 1998, 1999; Miville *et al.*, 2005; McDowell *et al.*, 2005; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Burke & Kao, 2010).

The most cited identity theory in the variant approach is Carlos Poston's (1990:153) biracial identity development model (BIDM). Poston (1990) recognised a five-stage model of biracial identity development, proposing that all biracial individuals will experience some conflict and subsequent periods of confusion during the identity development process. *Personal identity* refers to the first stage in the model and occurs in childhood. During this stage, children's identities are based on their personal characteristics, developed within the family context and independent from their racial group (Mio, Barker & Tumaming, 2012; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). During the second stage, *choice of group categorisation*, which occurs in late childhood and late adolescence, the pressure to choose a racial or ethnic identity is influenced by societal, communal and parental factors (Mio *et al.*, 2012). The third stage of the model, *enmeshment/denial*, is when an individual experiences feelings of guilt and disloyalty about choosing one racial group over the other (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Miville, Constantine, Baysden & So-Lloyd, 2005). In the fourth stage, *appreciation*, biracial individuals show appreciation for their biracial heritage. During this stage, they may commit to one racial group, but continue to explore the previously ignored racial group, which is the result of an increased awareness and knowledge of the ignored group. During *integration*, which is the fifth and final stage of Poston's model, individuals may identify with one racial group, while at the same time valuing and appreciating the integration of their multiple racial identities, which results in a confident and secure racial identity (Chong; 2012; Burke & Kao, 2010; Miville, Constantine, Baysden & So-Lloyd, 2005).

In undertaking this study, I remained aware that a limitation of multiracial identity development models developed in the variant approach is the assumption that a fully integrated biracial or multiracial identity is the desired end state. Furthermore, these theories do not discuss in depth how multiracial individuals identify beyond integrating both racial identities (Root, 1998, 1999; Roque, 2013; Miville, Constantine, Baysden & So-Lloyd, 2005). I therefore also relied on the ecological approach to biracial identity development in interpreting my results, which I discuss in the next section.

#### 2.8.4 ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

An ecological approach to biracial identity development focuses on the context surrounding identity development, rather than on any one particular racial identity outcome (Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003). Contemporary theories within this approach encourage the acknowledgment of various multiracial identity choices (McDowell *et al.*, 2005). Ecological theorists such as Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002), Root (2003) and Renn (1999), noted that linear models of racial identity did not capture the complexity of the experiences and identity development of biracial individuals and also failed to provide an accurate portrayal of the identity development process of biracial people. Their ecological models thus offer an alternative view of biracial identity development with the focus on the biracial individual as part of a context, culture and environment, and depict identity development in a multifaceted way (Rockquemore, Brunsma & Delgado, 2009).

Rockquemore, Brunsma and Delgado (2009) present several characteristics of recent biracial identity models. I relied on these characteristics when I applied an ecological theoretical framework in an attempt to understand how the participants in this study have constructed an identity. My reasons for applying an ecological approach relate, firstly, to the influence of the environment being acknowledged as biracial people construct different racial identities based on various contexts. Secondly, identity development in current models has no predictable stages as the process is not viewed as linear and no single optimal endpoint in identity development is identified. Thirdly, current models offer more than one result of successful biracial identity development, as opposed to a fully integrated biracial/multiracial identity as the only healthy outcome. In addition, theories within this approach also allow for the possibility that a biracial individual may deny having any racial identity and instead identify as 'human' (Rockquemore, Brunsma & Delgado, 2009). Fourthly, current models emphasise the influence of others in the environment and the influence this may have on their choice of identity (e.g. parents may influence identity development). Finally, each current model moves away from a deficit-based, marginalised description of the multiracial identity development process (Pedrotti, Edwards & Lopez, 2008; Root, 2003; Henrikson, 2000; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002).

## 2.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed existing literature on the identity formation of biracial individuals. I commenced the chapter by exploring identity construction in terms of personal and social identity, prominent features in the identity construction process and the identity development process as such. Thereafter I discussed racial and ethnic identity theories, as well as cultural and multiculturalism and how these aspects relate to identity construction. I reviewed existing literature on biracial identity and discussed the main focus areas and trends in the currently available literature. I provided various biracial identity models that may be used to describe biracial identity development and explained my choice of theoretical framework used to guide this study (Root's [1994] ecological model of racial identity development is discussed in chapter one).

In the next chapter, I will describe the methodological choices and strategies that I applied within the context of this study. Throughout, I will justify my methodological choices against the background of the research questions and the purpose and aim of the study.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

*“The overall significance of any study is never realised fully until one understands the research methods and procedures used in the research investigation. This fact is particularly important when conducting qualitative research where the research methods and processes for data gathering and data coding are often unique to the participant group or phenomenon being studied” (Watson, 2002:25).*

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I situated the current study within existing literature by reviewing studies relevant to the focus of the study. In Chapter 3, I explained and elaborated on the research methodology and strategies that informed the study and justified my decision to use a postcolonial feminist epistemology and qualitative research as a methodological paradigm. I also discussed the selected research design (narrative inquiry), data collection and documentation strategies (narrative interviews, written narratives and field notes), as well as the process of data analysis and interpretation (inductive thematic analysis). I concluded the chapter with discussions of the quality criteria and ethical guidelines I adhered to in the study. Table 3.1 gives an outline of the research methodology and process I followed.

**Table 3.1: Outline of research methodology**

<b>Research question</b>	<b>How can insight into the way young biracial adults narrate their identity construction in South Africa broaden knowledge on racial identity theory?</b>
<b>Sub questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do young biracial adults racially identify in a multicultural democratic South Africa?</li> <li>- How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?</li> <li>- How do intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of young biracial adults?</li> <li>- What are the strengths and challenges experienced by young biracial adults during the process of identity construction?</li> </ul>
<b>Epistemological paradigm</b>	Postcolonial feminist epistemology
<b>Methodological paradigm</b>	Qualitative research approach
<b>Research design</b>	Narrative inquiry

<b>Selection of participants</b>	Purposive sampling and snowball sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Snowballing techniques utilising social networks (Facebook and Twitter) and word of mouth</li> <li>- Ten young biracial adults between the ages 18 and 25</li> <li>- Young adults from an interracial relationship in a South African context</li> </ul>
<b>Data collection and documentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Narrative interviews</li> <li>- Written narratives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Field notes</li> <li>- Verbatim transcriptions of audio recordings</li> <li>- Written narratives captured electronically in Microsoft Word</li> </ul>
<b>Data analysis</b>	Inductive thematic analysis	
<b>Ethical considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informed and voluntary consent</li> <li>- Confidentiality and anonymity</li> <li>- Protecting participants from harm</li> <li>- Role of the researcher</li> <li>- Reflexivity</li> <li>- Trust</li> </ul>	
<b>Quality criteria of the study</b>	<p><b>Credibility:</b> Prolonged engagement in the field; researcher reflexivity; peer review and debriefing; member checking and crystallisation</p> <p><b>Transferability:</b> Thick descriptions and purposive sampling</p> <p><b>Dependability:</b> Audit trail and crystallisation</p> <p><b>Confirmability:</b> Crystallisation and reflexivity</p> <p><b>Authenticity:</b> Member checking and audit trail</p>	

### 3.2 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

As a researcher, I described the phenomenon of biracial identity from the participants' points of view through the methods of narrative interviews, field notes and written narratives. Accordingly, my intention in this study was to listen to both the voices and experiences of biracial young adults and to observe these young adults in their natural contexts and in their social worlds. My interpretation of their experiences may be described as an *emic perspective*. I thus recognise that the research participants are autonomous people who were prepared to share information willingly (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). Research based solely on an *etic* perspective, where research is shaped by the definitions and priorities of the researcher, is likely to yield a distorted picture of the research participants who are being investigated. The

risk of distortion increases if the researcher's definitions are embedded in the dominant culture<sup>29</sup> while those of the participants are embedded in marginalised cultures, as this may imply the possibility of a researcher's questions and assumptions being based on dominant stereotypes of the research participants (Paradis, 2000).

During the course of this study I engaged in role taking, during which I imagined the world from the perspectives of others, namely the perspectives of biracial young adults. When an individual takes on the role of another and attempts to view the world from the other's perspective, the individual will begin to grasp the meaning of the other's world. Such comprehension is paramount if interactions and empowerment are to occur. When individuals fail to take the role of others, or resist role-taking opportunities, they are often rendered inept to view the world from the perspectives of either other individuals or other groups; therefore they are often unable to relate to others, or else relate to others based on misconstructions or stereotypes (Canales, 2000). My decision to adopt a postcolonial feminist research paradigm influenced the research process since it is impossible to avoid the fact that, as a researcher, I come from a specific social and cultural location. Accordingly, I employed reflexivity to understand my personal biases, equalise power differentials and negotiate meanings with the participants (Racine, 2003). This is evident in the following extract from my research journal (Appendix J):

*My research journal has helped me illuminate my thinking processes, values and beliefs during the research process. It helps me to be upfront and honest about my biases and prejudices during my research journey. I am aware that I cannot get rid of my biases, but being reflexive helps me to be aware of and own my biases and prejudices. I am constantly aware of having to respect the participants and to ensure that their voices are heard. This entails that I make them feel comfortable by showing them respect in our interactions with each other, so that they feel empowered to tell their narratives in my presence (RJ: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013)<sup>30</sup>.*

The researcher is the primary 'instrument' of qualitative data collection and analysis, thus reflexivity is deemed to be essential (Watt, 2007). Reflexivity entails the process during which researchers reflect on the way in which their own actions, values and perceptions impact upon the research setting and may affect the data collection and analysis (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006; Lambert, Jomeen & McSherry, 2010). In addition, Morrow (2006) suggests that reflexivity should be used as a strategy, both for the purpose of understanding a phenomenon under

<sup>29</sup> Dominant groups hold power and authority in comparison to subordinate groups. Dominant groups thus determine how power may be acceptably used in relation to subordinate groups and have the greatest influence in determining the structure of society (Tatum, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Data source key used in Chapter 3: N1-Narrative interview 1; N2-Narrative interview 2; W1-Written narrative; RJ-Researcher's journal.

exploration and for accurately portraying the meaning ascribed by participants. In addition, reflexivity is recommended as a strategy in situations where self-examination allows assumptions and biases that may affect the understanding of a study. As such, reflexivity involves reflecting on one's own views, beliefs and experiences while considering how these may affect the research being conducted as a result of any political and social identities that one may hold (Parker, 1999; Lambert, *et al.*, 2010).

### **Think Box 3.1: Reflexivity**

*I employed reflexivity, thus deconstructing who I am and also the ways in which my beliefs, experiences and identity intersect with those of the participants. This reflection occurred both in individual thought and through dialogue with others (specifically my supervisors), who acknowledged my own experience and perspectives. Thus, instead of hiding behind a false sense of objectivity, I made my own socio-cultural position explicit. As such reflexivity was not a point in time, but a process that occurred throughout my research study (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).*

I continuously reflected on my role as an insider researcher. Insider research occurs when research involves a population of which the researcher is also a member. In this study, specifically as a biracial woman, I thus shared an identity (biracial heritage), language (English) and experiential base with the participants (Asselin, 2003; Kanuha, 2001; Dwyer & Buckel, 2009). I support the opinions of Breen (2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) that feminist research is appropriate for conducting insider research as this epistemology views the research process and product as a co-construction between the researcher and the participants, recognises the participants as active 'informants' to the research, and attempts to give 'voice' to participants within the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). As such, these perspectives allowed me to conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' the participants, which contrasts starkly with outsider-research perspectives (Breen, 2007). Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) state that an insider role status allows researchers the following benefits: (i) greater understanding of the culture being studied; (ii) the ability to interact naturally with the group and its members; and (iii) a previously established, and therefore greater, relational intimacy with the group, thus making the participants more open towards researchers and allowing for a greater depth of data (Breen, 2007; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Dwyer & Buckel, 2009; Unluer, 2012). Another benefit I noticed during the data collection process was that the participants were accepting of me, automatically providing me with a level of trust and openness during the narrative interviews. Being a biracial woman gave me a starting point (the commonality) to access groups (the biracial young adults) that could be closed to 'outsiders'. The young South



African biracial adults within this study seemed willing to share their experiences with me based on the assumptions of understanding and shared distinctiveness between us (Dwyer & Buckel, 2009:58).

However, insider researchers also face potential limitations, namely: (i) insider-researchers may be faced with role duality and may struggle to find a balance between their researcher and insider roles (DeLyser, 2001; Unluer, 2012); (ii) assumptions of similarity may be made by the participants, which may result in them failing to explain their own individual experiences in detail; (iii) the researcher's perceptions may be affected by personal experience, and as an insider within the group being studied, she may struggle to separate this from the experiences of the participants, which could result in interviews that are influenced and directed by the central aspects of the researcher's experience and not by the participants' experiences; and (iv) the analysis could also be influenced by the researcher's subjective experience, which could lead to a lack of objectivity and a de-emphasis on contradictory factors (Dwyer & Buckel, 2009).

I overcame these challenges by gathering data with what Asselin (2003) describes as 'my eyes open' and assuming that I did not know anything about the phenomenon being studied. Although I may be part of the biracial culture being studied, I was fully aware of the possibility that I may not understand the subculture of the participants or share knowledge of the specific and situated experiences of all biracial individuals in the group, or that generalisations could or should be made based on my knowledge of my own culture (Kanuha, 2001).

**Think Box 3.2: Negotiating several roles in research**

*After most interviews, participants stated how comfortable they felt sharing their stories with me as it was easier opening up about their experiences to me because of my biracial heritage. They were also interested to know my viewpoints on similar experiences we had shared. As a postcolonial feminist researcher, I was able to share my own experiences with the participants. However, I had to debrief with my supervisors because at times I felt that I played up my biracial identity during data collection, as I realised that I acted differently when I was with the participants because of our shared identity. Thus, through debriefing, I had to learn how to find a balance between my researcher role identity and my biracial identity so as to remain aware of the possibility that my behaviour and self-narratives could influence the participants. Thus, there has been an on-going negotiation of these two roles during the research process.*

During the interviews I began to actively explore any coded narrative responses from participants. Each time a participant alluded to the fact that I understood what he/she was speaking about, I would ask him/her to illuminate or elaborate on the statement (Kanuha, 2001).

An example of this is my conversation with Hugo (Kanuha, 2001), who talked continuously about his parents' involvement in the struggle. Although I am aware of the term 'the struggle' used by people who were involved in the fight against apartheid, I clarified what he said as follows:

*Hugo: There's a lot of people from the struggle that were there, who sent their children there.*

*Researcher: By the struggle, you mean fighting against apartheid?*

*Hugo: Yeah apartheid (N1-Hugo: 126).*

In the next example, Tyler specifically talked about 'black dad syndrome'. Although I am aware of the concept, I asked Tyler to tell me about it:

*Tyler: I have a couple of friends; like a lot of my friends are also black and we call it 'black dad syndrome'.*

*Researcher: What is 'black dad syndrome'? (N1-Tyler: 146).*

I used this type of illuminating probe to uncover data that is richer and more complex than the data elicited through plausible, coded communication (Kanuha, 2001). I thus made a conscious decision (see my researcher journal) to engage in a disciplined bracketing of my assumptions and, together with my supervisors, engrossed myself in reflection on the subjective research process, being mindful of my own personal biases and perspectives, thus hopefully reducing the potential trepidations linked with insider membership (Dwyer & Buckel, 2009; Asselin, 2003). Furthermore, I concur with Dwyer and Buckel (2009) that the '*core ingredient is not insider or outsider status, but rather the ability as a researcher to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of the research participants and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience*' (Dwyer & Buckel, 2009:59).

### **Think Box 3.3: A better understanding of my identity**

*My research on biracial identity has been a poignant period in my life. The knowledge I have gained in this research journey went beyond the information I gathered listening to the participants' narratives, as my research also led to my own personal journey during which I discovered answers to my own questions surrounding my biracial heritage and how I identify. Conversations with my mother and siblings provided me with self-knowledge and influenced my own identity construction process. I had many conversations with my mother and her narratives helped me to better understand my own heritage. I learnt about my family's role in the anti-apartheid movement, my mom's own struggle navigating the world as a white woman with children of colour, and learnt that my experiences of how I faced discrimination are parallel to the experiences of discrimination that she endured upon entering an interracial relationship. With my siblings I had discussions about how we chose to identify within a South African context. I learnt that even in my own family, as siblings, we have different racial and cultural identities. My younger siblings identified as South Africans and placed less importance on race as part of their identities, while my younger sister and I (who were born during apartheid and lived in exile) chose to identify as biracial at home and black in public. However, when we are together we have our own family 'multicultural' identity. Although I have experienced biracialism (a term I adopted from Fhagen-Smith (2003) which describes acts of discrimination and racism that are unique to the biracial experience), this journey has been a process that has answered many questions surrounding my own identity. I feel empowered and at peace, I can see my road ahead so much clearer.*

### **3.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES**

Following a qualitative approach, I engaged in the research process from a postcolonial feminist epistemology (Racine, 2011) frame of reference as my own belief system or worldview. These paradigmatic choices guided my philosophy concerning the nature of reality and being (ontology), ways of researching and enquiring into the nature of reality (epistemology), data collection methods used in the study (methodology), language used to present the results of research (rhetoric) and, finally, the values and beliefs that I held while conducting the study (axiology) (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005).

#### **3.3.1 META-THEORETICAL PARADIGM: POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM**

My research epistemology is positioned in what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) call the eighth historical moment of qualitative research, in which research focuses on critical and moral discourses on race, gender, class, ethnicity and social justice (Hawkins, 2008; Racine, 2011). Accordingly, research becomes a means of social change and represents a call to use reflexivity in decolonising the production of knowledge and contending that race, gender and class construct and reproduce differences in the research process. Consequently, among the

dilemmas of research decolonisation, issues of race, gender and class deserve careful examination (Diversi & Finley, 2010; Racine, 2011). In my study, I employed a postcolonial feminist paradigm to position myself within the eighth moment of qualitative research, with the following research goals: to make visible the biracial experiences of South African young adults; to portray their experiences as important; and to use their experiences to correct any misrepresentations arising from previous empirical research and theoretical assumptions that fail to identify the significance of racial identity in social life (Taylor, 1998).

As a category of feminism, postcolonial feminism developed in the 1980s as a way to challenge western<sup>31</sup> science as a unique source of knowledge production and to uncover the exclusionary effects of dominant ideologies in ‘othering’<sup>32</sup> other forms of knowledge (Fisher, 2013; Racine, 2003). Post colonialism represents a process that serves to (i) deconstruct the domination of western science to decolonize non-western knowledge; (ii) address the experiences of postcolonial societies and cultural legacies of colonialism; (iii) examine the after effects of imperialism, domination and repression, value<sup>33</sup> systems and their effects on the daily lives of participants; (iv) discuss the valorisation of multiple voices and heterogeneity in postcolonial societies, and the resistance to marginalisation of groups within them; and finally (v) construct identities in a postcolonial world (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:45; Ghandi, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Racine, 2011). In addition, western feminism has also been critiqued for misrepresenting marginalised groups by assuming that globally all groups share a common identity based on a shared experience of oppression and activism (Fisher, 2013; McEwan, 2001; Shital & Ugdir, 2012; Weedon, 2000), and for overlooking constructs such as race, ethnicity, class and geopolitical history, not celebrating difference, and failing to recognise ‘otherness’ (Gardner, 2004).

By selecting postcolonial feminism as epistemology, I took on what Kimberlé Crenshaw (1993) terms an ‘intersectional’ approach in which identity or the notion of subjectivity is studied among the interlocking effects of sexuality, class, race, gender and so on, all with a focus on the socio-historical viewpoint of the individuals’ relevant societies and cultures (Fisher, 2013; Nash, 2008; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Warhol, 2012). Accordingly, postcolonial feminism provided me with a

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<sup>31</sup> Within the study the term ‘western’ refers to viewpoints and cultures which are founded upon Eurocentric principles which are typically adopted within North America and Europe (Fisher, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Othering (Petersen & Osman, 2013) refers to the process of asserting a positive identity by stigmatising what is different or ‘other’. This is usually as a result of the process in which societies and groups exclude certain social groups according to those who belong (referred to as ‘us’) and those who are different (referred to as ‘them’).

<sup>33</sup> It examines the domination of western values and the delegitimation of non-western values (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

theoretical background against which I could study biracial young adults' "*intersections of race, gender, class and other social relations that are seen as necessary axes of analyses to explicate the complex nexus of everyday meaning and realities*" (Anderson *et al.*, 2003:200). I took cognisance of Collin's (1990) view that identity cannot be studied in isolation since it is constructed within the broader context of intersecting social hierarchies. It is only through collectively examining these intersecting factors (at the individual and institutional levels) that a given individual's life experience can be truly understood (Burns & Walker, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Kirham & Anderson, 2002; Kralik & van Loon, 2008; Racine, 2008; Racine, 2011). Hence, postcolonial feminism enabled me to answer my secondary research questions by ensuring that I studied the various interacting factors within the participants' lives that may have shaped their processes of identity construction. The use of this paradigm meant that no aspect in the participants' lives was studied in isolation. It follows that I took cognisance of how factors such as race, ethnicity, socio-cultural contexts and gender may have influenced the identity development and the choice of self-identification amongst the participants.

Acknowledging the interrelatedness of race, class, gender and sexuality provides important insights for postcolonial inquiry and guarded me against incomplete and simplistic analyses of the biracial identity construction of young adults (Kirham & Anderson, 2002). My study of postcolonial feminism led me to concur with Mohanty (1991) that the participants in the study cannot be viewed as a homogenous group. I thus paid attention to the unique experiences of the biracial individuals (specifically the unique and different ways in which they constructed their single and multiple identities) by taking cognisance of any sense of difference pertaining to race, class and circumstance (Gandhi, 2005; Mishra, 2013). As a postcolonial feminist my aim was to celebrate and respect differences, instead of overlooking them in the study (Fisher, 2013; Mohanty, 1991).

Ahmad (1993) cited in Anderson (2004) argues that, "*the construct "race" has been used to support the colonisation of a socially constructed "other"*<sup>34</sup>, *a supposedly inferior people or nation.....*" "*Race" has legitimated exploitation on the basis of the "scientific" and "natural" superiority of some over others*" (Ahmad, 1993:12). Postcolonial feminism in this study brought to the forefront issues of race, showing that this category is a social construction that was used in the colonising process and affects the biracial participants' lives and life opportunities, as well as their identity construction (Anderson, 2004; Kirham & Anderson, 2002). With regard to

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<sup>34</sup> Postcolonial feminism helps us to see how the 'non-western other' has been constructed through contrasting images to the west (Said, 1978; Anderson, 2002).

identity, biracial individuals as a marginalised group in traditional research have not typically been given an opportunity to voice how they construct their own identities within a racialised world. According to Racine (2008), the consequence of misrepresentation or the non-recognition of one's identity is negative as it is perceived as a form of oppression and can lead to racialised and marginalised groups internalising untrue or depreciating formations of their identity and their inferior status in society. Thus as a postcolonial feminist, my aim was to give recognition to the multiple ways in which the biracial participants have constructed their identities, "*as the recognition of one's identity is acknowledged as a fundamental human need to escape the shadows of marginality and to grasp opportunities of growth individually, collectively, and socially*" (Racine, 2008:18). In the section that follows I will explain how I applied postcolonial feminism in the study.

### **3.3.1.1 Application of postcolonial feminism in this study**

*Ontologically* (Ponterotto, 2005), as a postcolonial feminist researcher, I did not search for one 'truth', but rather for the multiple 'truths' that exist in the experiences of the participants (Ardevini-Brooker, 2002). As a feminist researcher, I believe in the existence of multiple constructed realities (Ponterotto, 2005), rather than in a single true reality (Henning, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005). Reality is subjective and is influenced by the context of a situation (Ponterotto, 2005). I therefore believe that nothing is separate from social life and experiences and that reality does not exist outside of the social milieu. Accordingly, during the research process, I situated the social actors (biracial young adults) within their everyday world (South African context). To overlook the importance of the social environment in this research, or to treat it as insignificant, would be to deny the reality of South African biracial young adults (Ardevini-Brooker, 2002). As a postcolonial feminist I thus recognised that the identities of the biracial participants must be explored within the social, economic, cultural and political contexts of their lives (Anderson, 2000). Accordingly I remained cognisant of the biracial participants' experiences, perceptions and social environments (Ponterotto, 2005) by including a section on the South African context before and after apartheid in Chapter 1. I specifically discussed how the social, cultural and political South African context has influenced the identity construction of South African people, including biracial individuals. I also made notes in my field notes and researcher journal of the influence and power that the various contexts had on the participants' choices in identity construction. During the narrative interviews, I furthermore encouraged the participants to describe and locate their narratives in their surrounding contexts.

*Methodologically* (Ponterotto, 2005), I adopted qualitative data collection practices as I believed that qualitative methods would minimise possible harm to the participants and also transfer the balance of power and control to the research participants (Speer, 2002). As such I favoured the more 'respondent centred', qualitative social scientific methods such as the narrative interview and written narratives (Speer, 2002; Hussain & Asad, 2012). Elliot (2005) states that narratives will empower participants as they are encouraged to discuss and provide tangible and precise information about the topics discussed and use their own terminology and conceptual frameworks to describe life experiences (Elliot, 2005). Mishler (1986) adds that the relationship in narrative interviews will encourage participants to find and speak in their own voices. As narrative situations shift the balance of power to the participants, they are typically empowered to tell their stories and produce narrative accounts. Thus, by utilising narratives, I hoped that participants would be encouraged to tell their own storylines, assisting them in retrieving their preferred identities independent of what Franck (1997, cited in Peters *et al.*, 2007) refers to as a *hailed* identity, which is the identity bestowed upon them by an institution. In addition, narrative interviews were followed by narrative probing, which entailed semi-structured interviews.

Westmarland (2001) states that semi-structured interviews are widely used in feminist research, as interviews actively involve participants in the research process and create an emotional closeness to the people under study. I also conducted second interviews in the study which, according to Hollway and Jefferson (2000), facilitates in building trusting relationships between the researcher and participants. A second interview also expresses to the participants that the researcher is interested in hearing about their personal narratives and experiences (Elliot, 2005). In a further attempt to balance power relations, I encouraged the participants to invent their own pseudonyms (Westmarland, 2001).

A significant *epistemological* (Ponterotto, 2005) contrast between traditional research and feminist methodologies lies in the fact that feminist researchers generally strive towards more reciprocal relationships between the researcher and the participants whose lives are the focus of research (Burns & Walker, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2012). Critical of the way in which traditional research often exploits and objectifies participants, I focused on developing interpersonal relationships with the research participants. I believe that both reciprocity and interpersonal relationships assisted in creating circumstances in which the research participants could enter into the research process as active agents, thereby decreasing the risk of them being treated as objects of inquiry (Pini, 2003). In addition, feminist researchers endorse conversational interviews during which researchers, for example, reveal narratives about their own experiences

and life and thus come to know a participant in their multiple and lived everyday contexts. The outcome of such an approach is that the many aspects of the participant's life may be more fully discovered (Pini, 2003). Thus I sought to engage in a non-hierarchical and authentic relationship with the participants in order to best reveal the true realities of young biracial adults' lives by self-disclosing to the participants, spending time in the field to build rapport, and engaging in mutual dialogues in order to contribute to a milieu of equality (Bryton, 1997; Hussain & Asad, 2012; Hammersley, 1992; Peters, Jackson & Rudget, 2008).

*Rhetorically* (Ponterotto, 2005), the notion of both the participants' voices and their silences (what they say by their silences) is central to postcolonial feminist methodology (Burns & Walker, 2005; Chege & Sakurai, 2011). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe "*giving voice as empowering people to be heard who might otherwise remain silent or who have been silenced by others*" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998:204). As a feminist researcher I was committed to ensure that the participants in the study could have a 'voice' as voice is a form and expression of knowledge and power (Tuhiwai Smith, Smith, Boler, Kempton, Ormond, Chueh & Waetford, 2002). Rather than 'give voice', my aim was to 'facilitate' the expression of voice and agency so as to further create an equal relationship between myself and the participants. This was done by engaging with the participants in all phases of the research process and by conducting research *with* the participants rather than *on* them (Ashby, 2011). Consequently, I consciously attempted to ensure that the participants' voices (whether spoken or written) were heard. As a rigour strategy, I used member checking (refer to Appendix M) in which the participants reviewed what they had said in both their narrative interviews (by reading the individual interview transcriptions) and the written interviews. This was done to ensure that their views and stories had been accurately captured. Since 'giving voice is not enough', I conducted secondary narrative interviews to provide the participants with opportunities that allowed them to reflect on their earlier thoughts and narratives and ensure that I had not distorted their voices. Findings based on the data analysis were also sent to the participants in order for them to confirm or challenge the accuracy of the interpretations and to ensure that I had accurately described the personal experiences of the participating biracial individuals (Allen, 2011; Bryton, 1997; Pini, 2003; Thomas, 2006). Furthermore, participants could check that the language used in the research was theirs, in other words, that that I had accurately described and represented the truth of their experiences in their own words (Burns & Walker, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Hussain & Asad, 2012; Kralik & van Loon, 2008).



Furthermore, the prepublication text was shared with the participants for feedback. I wrote 'multivocal' texts in which participants' voices were included by adding quotations from their narratives. The intent was to avoid misrepresentation and to extend the reciprocal research alliance between myself and the participants (England, 1994). However, in view of the fact that a researcher's voice is important in the research process, I wrote the final research report in the first person. I detailed my own experiences, expectations, biases and values comprehensively in my reflective journal as well as think boxes used throughout the thesis. Furthermore, I reflected on the impact of the research process on my emotional and intellectual life (Ponterotto, 2005). As a feminist researcher, I attempted to both create and initiate social change (Ardevini-Brooker, 2002). I made the results of my work available to the participants and to helping professionals who specialise in child and family therapy and who may make changes to their interventions in order to benefit biracial individuals and interracial families.

Finally, in postcolonial feminist research, *axiology* (Ponterotto, 2005) aims to not only make significant the experiences of the participants, but also to give importance and value to the experiences of the researcher. Accordingly, I used reflexivity to critique and analyse my positionality in relation to the field being studied. Feminist researchers thus encourage conscious researcher reflexivity and urge researchers to be cognisant of and disclose their own values and assumptions that they bring into the research study in order to concurrently decrease the sense that they are neutral and objective observers. Researcher reflexivity also entails increasing the consciousness of the way in which knowledge is produced within the relationship and within specific dynamics of power and positionality (Pini 2003; 2004). Accordingly, I kept a research journal (Appendix J) and field notes (Appendix J), in which I acknowledged, described and 'bracketed' both my values and my personal experiences (Ardevini-Brooker, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). I engaged in reflexivity as is evidenced by the following extract from my journal:

*The research journal is assisting me in writing my feelings and thoughts about my experiences during my research journey. I am constantly aware of the different roles (educational psychologist, sharing a biracial identity and researcher) that I play during the research process. As an educational psychologist, self-reflection has always been something that I have engaged in and it has assisted me to be aware of my own subjectivity and biases during the research process and specifically during data collection. Talking to my supervisors of issues that have arisen and writing in the researcher journal has also helped me to bracket certain prejudices that I bring into the research process and assisted me to maintain objectivity. Sharing a biracial identity has made the participants more open to sharing their biracial experiences, however during data collection I also have to be cognisant of undertaking my researcher role. Keeping a researcher diary is helping me to be cognisant of the different roles I play and helping me to constantly juggle those roles and also adapt according to the situation during the research process (RJ: 20 January 2013)*

### 3.3.1.2 Limitations of a postcolonial feminism epistemology

Postcolonial studies examine the continued effects of colonisation in decolonised countries and move beyond colonialism by providing space for colonised and marginalised people to share their own unique perspectives and understanding (Mahuika, 2008). However, a critique of postcolonial studies is that they often assume that the common usage of the prefix 'post' implies completion or following on from, and infers the idea of chronological progression (Pihamma, 1997; Mahuika, 2008). Accordingly, I took cognisance of Smith's (1998) warnings against naming colonisation 'finished business' when undertaking this study. I rather view post-colonialism as a form of critical engagement with colonialism, thus not claiming that colonialism has been overturned (Spooney, 1995). I maintain that postcolonial feminism assisted me in understanding many issues relating to race and identity that are faced by young biracial adults in constructing their identities within the South African society (a former colonised country). In this manner I have undertaken a study that may critique and replace some institutions and practices of colonialism by illuminating the historical and socio-political locations of racialised identities (Mahuika, 2008; Smith, 2000; Spooney, 1995).

Postcolonial feminism is furthermore often critiqued for the absence of the production of rational and unbiased knowledge as researchers bring their own biases into the research process (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Feminism enabled me to acknowledge that social science research is never value free, objective or disinterested, as it is always produced from a particular perspective and within a particular context. During the research process I could therefore remain aware of my assumptions and values and engage in self-reflexivity (Burns & Walker, 2005; McDowell, 1992; Tayler, 1998). As a postcolonial feminist researcher, I engaged in reflexivity by being critically conscious of how my self-location (such as class, gender, race, nationality, sexuality and ethnicity), position and interests influenced all stages of the research process.

In this regard, I aimed to produce research that questions my own interpretations and is reflexive about the knowledge production in the study. As such, reflexivity involved an on-going self-awareness during the research process, in which my goal was to produce authentic research accounts and make visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce accurate analyses. In addition, reflexivity under feminism is not only about investigating the power embedded in one's research, but also about doing research differently.

As a result of ethical dilemmas associated with traditional methods, feminists emphasise the importance of ethical procedures in research studies. I discuss the ethical considerations I practised and implemented in the study in Section 3.6 (Oakley, 1981; Pillow, 2003).

Another potential limitation entailed the possibility of a subjective approach to knowledge that could privilege the experiences of knowers as the sources and experts of knowledge without questioning the credibility of any particular knowledge claims (Mbongwe, 2013; Olesen, 1998). I specifically employed a postcolonial feminist approach as it allowed me to challenge dominant forms of knowledge (traditional social science research in the South African context) that have previously excluded or ignored the views and experiences of marginalised groups, such as biracial individuals, in research. Consequently, by employing multiple data collection methods and engaging in member checking with the participants, I was able to listen to the experiences of ‘the other/s’ as legitimate knowledge and attempted to ensure that the participants’ voices were heard in the study (Burns & Walker, 2005; McDowell, 1992; Tayler, 1998).

### **3.3.2 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM: QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

In my search for collaborative, non-exploitative methods that were suited to the postcolonial feminist epistemology, I favoured a qualitative methodological approach (Lawson, 1995). Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (2003) as *“an inductive process of building from the data to broad themes to a generalised model or theory”* (Creswell, 2003:12). Qualitative research thus provides a means for *“exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The qualitative research process entails emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, inductive data analysis building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Following a qualitative approach, I supported research that honours an inductive style, focusing on individual meaning and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation in a study”* (Creswell, 2007:37).

I thus selected a qualitative approach, which is a holistic and inductive approach that enabled me to explore a specific phenomenon. I endeavoured to understand and interpret the identity construction of biracial individuals within the South African context, thereby seeking to make sense of the participants’ experiences and perceptions. In this manner I aimed to understand a phenomenon from an insider’s perspective (emic perspective) while exploring a social phenomenon in an environment in which it occurs naturally (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Mayan, 2001; Patton, 2002; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003). By

pursuing an emic perspective, I expressed a commitment to viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the participants and aimed to interpret the social world from their perspectives. I utilised multiple qualitative data collection methods (in the form of narrative interviews, written narratives and field notes), which allowed me to obtain a realistic view of the world of the young biracial adults and enabled me to capture direct quotations of their personal perspectives and experiences relating to biracial identity. Thus, qualitative data collection methods permitted me to interact with the biracial individuals in their own language and on their own terms, and to draw closer to the situation and phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2009; Meetveev, 2002; Patton, 2002).

I agree with Merriam (2002) and Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their life worlds and that knowledge is constructed through communication and interaction. As such, knowledge is not 'out there', but within the perceptions and interpretations of the individual. Knowledge is constructed or created by people. A qualitative standpoint assisted me in understanding that it is not possible to analyse and understand an entity through the analysis of its parts but, rather, that one needs to examine the larger social context in which both people and knowledge function. This process is known as the *social construction of reality* (Merriam, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Realising that all understanding and reality are constructed, I continuously acknowledged that my research participants would have different interpretations and different ways in which they would construct their biracial identity. Consequently, qualitative research provided me with an opportunity to explore the various interactions that relationships and different contexts/settings would have on the constructions of identity (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky, 2001; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

Since I worked with Root's (1999) ecological model of multiracial identity development (refer to Chapter 1), the implication was that my research would have to study the construction of biracial identities against the background of South Africa's social, historical and temporal contexts. Thus qualitative research provided me with a holistic view of the phenomenon within a specific context (Creswell, 2009; Matveev, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1992). A qualitative approach enabled me to provide detailed and descriptive accounts of the participants' contexts and thick descriptions of their social settings, so that I was able to understand their social behaviour and identity (Bryman, 2004; Matveev, 2002). In addition, I developed a complex picture of the problem under study by reporting multiple perspectives and identifying factors involved in constructing and influencing biracial identity (Creswell, 2009). This

approach allowed me to understand my study as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts, and to focus on complex interdependencies and system dynamics that cannot meaningfully be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear cause and effect relationships (Patton, 2002; Matveev, 2002).

I was influenced by Vanderstoep and Johnston's (2009) view that qualitative research should give *voice* to people who are at the margins of a culture. The notion of giving voice complemented my postcolonial feminist paradigm, of which the purpose was to validate and give voice to the biracial individuals participating in the study. As limited literature exists on biracial identity within South Africa, a qualitative approach enabled me to share the biracial participants' voices within the research study. Throughout I was cautious and aware that I could not give voice, and rather aimed to hear the participants' voices that I recorded and interpreted (Riessman, 2002). Through qualitative research I could highlight the unique biracial cases in the study and describe the meaning of participants' biracial experiences even if these experiences were not typical of the majority of experiences (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Furthermore, in this study qualitative research facilitated an intimate and close relationship between me and the participants, thus allowing me to take up an empathic stance during the narrative interviews. I was able to show openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness and responsiveness towards the research participants and to make them feel sufficiently comfortable with me to share their stories (Bryman, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 2002).

As qualitative researchers are the key data collection instruments, my personal experiences and insights constituted an essential part of the research inquiry and were central to comprehending the phenomenon under investigation. Accordingly, in view of the fact that complete objectivity is impossible, qualitative research enabled me to be reflective about my own voice and perspective during the research process. However, as pure subjectivity may undermine the credibility of a study, I endeavoured to be self-aware and reflexive in consciousness (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky, 2001; Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Matveev, 2002). Moreover, as a researcher I was cautious, even though it was inevitable that I would possibly impose my own cultural, social and personal identity on some interpretations I made of the research participants' experiences. For these reasons, the aim of this qualitative research is not to generalise the findings, but rather to provide in-depth ('thick') descriptions and understanding of the identity construction of participating biracial individuals (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009; Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky, 2001).

### 3.3.2.1 Strengths and limitations of qualitative research methodology

One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex, textual descriptions of how people experience a phenomenon and the ability to reveal knowledge about the ‘human’ side of an issue (such as contradictory belief systems, behaviours, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals). Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying factors such as race, gender, religion, and ethnicity and socio-political and cultural contexts that are intangible but may affect the research process. Although research results from qualitative data may often be extended to people with similar characteristics to those in a study population, the main aim of this study was to gain a rich and elaborate comprehension of a specific social context or phenomenon. Accordingly, this aim took priority over producing data that may be generalised to other milieus or populations (Babbie *et al.*, 2001; Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005).

Another strength described by Root (1999) and Jackson (2010b) is that qualitative methods can be viewed as imperative in multiracial studies as these methods are hailed for the possibility of explicating the understanding of diverse experiences of biracial individuals. From this perspective the world is not seen as a static, solitary, agreed upon, or a quantifiable phenomenon. Rather, numerous constructions and interpretations of reality exist, are in fluctuation and can change over time (Merriam, 2002).

Despite the advantages inherent in qualitative research, this approach also implies certain limitations. Researchers adopting a qualitative approach run the risk of discarding scientific procedures of verification in terms of reliability, validity and generalisability. To overcome this potential limitation, I employed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985; 2005) quality criteria (see Section 3.7) in my attempt to ensure that I produce quality work and rigour within the study. Furthermore, the aim of this study was not to generalise the findings, but rather to represent the construction of identity among the biracial individuals under investigation and to gain in-depth ‘thick’ descriptions and understandings of biracial identity construction. Another potential limitation relates to the subjective meaning a researcher may attach to the phenomenon being interpreted and defined. This was addressed by being cognisant of imposing my own definitions and subjective interpretations during the process of data collection and interpretation. I thus documented my personal biases in the form of field notes and discussed these with my supervisors in an attempt to maintain some level of objectivity and not to allow my own

perceptions and worldviews to cloud the research process (Babbie *et al.*, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Matveev, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### 3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A prominent option in feminist and qualitative research involves the explorations of narratives (Gergen, 2008). Narratives complement a postcolonial feminist paradigm because of the value they assign to the authors and because they may empower individuals by validating their experiences (Peters *et al.*, 2007). Accordingly, I chose narrative inquiry as a research design as its methods assisted me in gaining access to the identity constructions of the participants (Larsson & Sjöblim, 2010).

#### 3.4.1 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Historically, narrative inquiry<sup>35</sup> has over the years been influenced by scholars such as Bateson, Coles, Czarniawska, Dewey, Geertz, Johnson and Polkinghorne (Clandinin & Connolly 2000; Hunter, 2010). “*Individuals shape their daily lives by stories of who they are and who others are, and interpret their past in terms of these stories*” (Clandinin & Connolly, 2006:375). Stories can be viewed as a portal through which a person enters the world and by which the experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry is utilised to capture personal dimensions of experience over time and takes into consideration the connection between an individual’s experience and the cultural context (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Etherington, 2002).

Narrative inquiry is thus based on the premise that as human beings we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through stories (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008; Trahar, 2009). A narrative may be oral or written and may be elicited or heard during fieldwork, an interview, or a naturally occurring conversation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Chase, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In this study I obtained narratives through narrative interviews and written narratives (Wertz, Charmaz, McMullen, Josselson, Anderson & McSpadden, 2011). According to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998:72) the goals of narrative inquiry are (i) to assist researchers in understanding the individual’s subjective world and how individuals think about their own experiences, situations, problems and life in general; (ii) to provide insight into the individual so as to clarify what has previously been meaningless or incomprehensible with the intention of suggesting previously unseen connections; (iii) to express to the reader the feeling

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<sup>35</sup> I use the terms narrative research and narrative inquiry interchangeably.

of what it must be like to meet the person (participants) concerned in a study; (iv) to efficiently depict the social and historical world in which the person is living; and (v) to illuminate the causes and meanings of events, experiences and conditions of a person's life (Lubbe-De Beer, 2011).

Narratives are often described as good strategies to provide access to individuals' different identities and how they experience their inner selves (Josselson, 1995; Larsson & Sjöblim, 2009; Reissman, 2002; 2003). According to Yuval-Davies (2006), individuals and groups construct identities through storytelling. Yuval-Davis (2006) develops this idea further: "*Identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not).*" However, these identities are never fixed; they are dynamic and fluid, '*always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong. This duality is often reflected in narratives of identity*' (Yuval-Davis, 2006:202).

Since language typically plays a constructive role in the formation and transformation of identity, the act of narrating can be seen as an act of constructing identity (Crossley, 2000; Larsson & Sjöblim, 2009; Taniguchi, 2012). However, people's identities are not represented solely in narratives, but rather imagined and constructed through narratives. This is because people construct stories that "*support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim*" (Bell, 2002: 209). Social discourse also shapes what can be said and what not (Reissman, 1993). Consequently, narratives do not show people just as they had been in the past, but rather what people believe they have been and are (Brady, 1990). A narrative can thus be seen as a 'mediating artefact' (Lantolf, 2000:23) which people use to make sense of themselves and the world, and also to transform selves (Taniguchi, 2012). In this study I used narratives as a vehicle through which the research participants could express how they see themselves, whilst shaping the image that the research participants had of themselves (Clouston, 2003). I believe that utilising narrative interviews and written narratives assisted the participants in this study to reflect on past experiences and events and, by telling their stories to me, they may have gained additional knowledge about themselves and, specifically, about how they have constructed their sense of self and their biracial identity (Smith, 2000).

I specifically pursued narratives from young adults, as Thorne (2000) and McLean (2005) state that self-telling occurs more often in adolescence and early adulthood than at other times in the life cycle (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). The social and cognitive changes that occur during



adolescence herald an opportunity for adolescents to begin narrating the stories of their lives. Although by the end of childhood individuals have learned how to tell stories, it is not until adolescence that they learn how to organise memories and other self-relevant information into a coherent life story (Habermans & Bluck, 2000). It is through the creation of life stories that adolescents begin to tackle what Erikson (1968) considers to be the major psychosocial task of this life stage, namely the exploration and formation of a mature identity (Habermans & Bluck, 2000). When established in adolescence, this narrative identity will evolve over the course of adulthood, reflecting an individual's changing concerns, roles, priorities and self-conceptions (Singer, 2004).

As individuals constantly change, narrative inquiry in this regard assisted me in exploring the aspect of temporality<sup>36</sup>. To this end narrative research acknowledges that experience is temporal, in other words, that it is not merely concerned with life as it is experienced in the here and now, but also with life as it is experienced on a continuum (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; White & Epston, 1990). Thus, the events under study are in 'temporal transition' (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006:479), that is, events and people always have a past, a present and a future. As multiracial literature (Harris & Sim, 2002; Hitlin, Brown, & Elder, 2006; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Sanchez & Garcia, 2009; Wilson, Sanchez & Garcia, 2013) indicates that biracial people are likely to change both their racial identity across milieus and their racial self-categorisation across time, narrative inquiry enabled me to attend to the temporality of biracial young adults' lives, as well as to the temporality of places, things and events in the larger cultural South African context (Clandinin, & Huber, 2010; Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007).

Using Root's (1999, 2003) ecological model of multiracial identity development as my theoretical framework, I focused on several contexts to study the participants' construction of a biracial identity. I agree with Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who believe that understanding the context is necessary for making sense of a person's narrative. Narratives do not simply express some independent, individual reality; they rather help to construct the reality with relevant relationships between the narrator (the participant) and the external world (the South African context). According to Dewey (cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), experience is both personal and social and thus individuals need to be understood in relation to their social contexts

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<sup>36</sup> According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000:50) experience can be understood narratively through the use of a 'three-dimension narrative inquiry space', which focuses on *temporality* along one dimension, the *personal and social* along the second dimension and *place* along a third dimension. Further information on the second and third dimensions can be found in Clandinin, D. J. and Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Accordingly narrative inquiry assisted me in collecting stories in which individuals were neither isolated nor independent of their contexts. The narrative approach complemented both my post-colonial feminist paradigm and the theoretical framework (ecological model of racial identity development) as I remained cognisant of the fact that biracial individuals are irreducibly connected to both their cultural and institutional settings. Narratives, therefore, could capture both the individual and social contexts (Bold, 2012; Moen, 2006; Reissman, 1993).

Feminists have long been trying to dismantle power relations between researchers and participants by engaging in collaborative work (Etherington, 2002). Collaboration is one of the main characteristics of narrative research as emphasis is placed on attending and listening to the participants' points of view (Lubbe-De Beer, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Moen, 2006; Ollenrenshaw & Creswell, 2002). I worked towards a mutual and sincere collaboration and a caring relationship with the participants that was established over time and facilitated full participation in the storytelling and the retelling and reliving of personal experiences. This, in turn, demanded that I engage in active listening to the narrator's full voice during the interviews. Since narrative research implies collaboration, it also permitted both voices (my voice and the voices of the participants) to be heard (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The use of narrative research in this study meant that the biracial young adults in the study were regarded as collaborators in the research process, rather than as informants guided by the agenda of the researcher (Altork, cited in Moen, 2006). Coming from a postcolonial perspective, I was constantly mindful of the power relations in the study, as narrative methods should place the narrator (participant) in a position of relative power as the narrator knows more about a specific topic than the researcher. As a narrative researcher, I viewed the biracial individuals in my study as experts, as they had been acknowledged and identified as having some knowledge or experience regarding the topic of study. The fact that in narrative research a researcher generally finds a participant's experience interesting, important or relevant, suggests that the experience being investigated may have some worth or merit (Stuhlmiller, 2001).

In summary, I engaged in a narrative inquiry as I view this as the best way to understand and make meaning of experience. I aimed to understand 'what it is like' to experience being biracial in South Africa, as well as the process of identity construction as a biracial being (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2005; 2007). As a research design, narrative inquiry assisted me in studying *"how individuals seek to make meaning of their lives and how they understand themselves as unique individuals and as social beings who are defined by life stage, race,*

*gender, ethnicity, class and culture*” (Singer, 2004:438). Thus, to me, understanding the biracial identity construction process implied an understanding of the participants creating narratives from their experiences as biracial individuals, telling these stories within and to others and, eventually, relating them to knowledge of the self, others and the world (Singer, 2004).

**Think Box 3.4: Narratives as a form of power**

*I think the participants felt empowered by sharing their stories about their biracial heritages. Within this study, individuals with a biracial heritage voiced through narratives the way in which they assert and justify their preferred identities in a South African context. Through individual stories I myself have been able to share my story and my preferred identity with others. I feel empowered by telling my story, because at times I feel frustrated when an identity is ascribed to me or I am pushed by others to identify in a certain way because of my physical appearance. I have realised that by telling my story, my preferred identity is heard and acknowledged, taking away the feeling of having a marginalised identity or the feeling of being ‘othered’ or ‘different’ in society.*

### **3.4.1.1 Limitations of a narrative inquiry research design**

Recurring criticism directed at the narrative inquirer relates to the ‘crisis of validity’ and ‘rights of representation in narratives’ (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Hendry, 2007; Hunter, 2010; Moen, 2006; Polkinghorne, 2007). Clandinin and Connolly (2001) state that the application of a narrative inquiry approach inevitably leads to challenges related to the validity of the narratives told by participants, particularly whether or not the participants’ narratives represent memory reconstruction or ‘facts’ (Hunter, 2010). Within postcolonial feminism, narrative inquiry is not focused on certainty, fact, or finding an objective truth (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This study focused on understanding how humans experience their social circumstances and the contexts that shape them (Bakhtin, 1986; Larsson & Sjöblin, 2009; Riessman, 2002). Consequently, I adopted Moen’s (2006) view that no static and everlasting truth exists, but that there are different subjective positions from which individuals experience and interpret the world. In this regard, Polkinghorne (2007) maintains that narrative researchers do not gather narratives to determine if events actually happened or not, but rather focus on the meaning experienced by the participants and whether or not the events are accurately described. Thus narrative inquirers analyse narratives for the meaning they express and allow for the meaning that life events have for people.

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) state that the main aim of narratives is to understand how individuals experience their social settings, and that the aim of narratives is not to present 'the facts' or to provide descriptions or 'the truth' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Lubbe, 2005). Reissman (2002) further elaborates on this by referring to the following quotation from the Personal Narratives Group: *"When talking about their lives, people sometimes forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences ... Unlike the truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and the world views that inform them"* (Reissman, 2002:235). Therefore, even though the participants' stories are personal constructs, I treated them as personal accounts of how past experiences and events relating to the participants' identity constructions have been perceived and experienced by the narrators (participants). I did not focus on facts, but rather on the meaning the facts had for the participants involved, and on a way to deepen, enlarge, enrich and illuminate my understanding of the biracial participants' human existence (Geert, 1999; Lubbe-De Beer, 2011; Machawira, 2008).

Josselson (1995) states that when using narratives in a study of identity, a challenge for the researcher is to get the whole story by describing different parts of the self. As a researcher, although I focused on the construction of a biracial identity ('a part of identity'), I encouraged participants to express fluid and multifaceted identities within their written and interview narratives. To this end, I allowed them to take agency of their personal stories about how various social relations (such as family, peers and intimate partners) and historical and socio-political contexts (such as the apartheid South African context, home context, school context and present post-apartheid context) have influenced their multiple and ever-changing identities as biracial individuals, thus focusing on their 'total identity' (Larsson & Sjöblim, 2009; Mishler, 1986).

Furthermore, as a narrative inquiry researcher, I tried to remain aware of the tensions between my own narrative as a biracial individual and the narratives of the biracial participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). This entailed that I remained conscious of my insider status in the research study (see 3.2, where I discuss my role as a researcher) and aware of my own narrative and unique experiences of being biracial. Throughout the study, I did not claim objectivity and since narrative research emphasises the importance of researchers exploring their own personal narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, Lyons & Labosky, 2002), I kept a researcher journal, as

recommended by Etherington (2009). Gergen and Gergen (2003) further alert researchers to the risk that their accounts and discourses, when disseminated, could lead to further suppression (Foucault, 1987). I took heed of Daiute and Fine's (2003) caution in writing about those who have been 'othered' by guarding against romanticising<sup>37</sup> the narratives of the participants through reflexivity. As I did not want to dominate the narrative of the study I employed member checking, crystallisation and peer debriefing to ensure that my own narrative voice would not detract from the storied lives of the participants (Glesne, 2011; Hunter, 2010; Trahar, 2009).

Finally, narrative inquiry has been critiqued for not being transferable and generalisable to other studies (Clandinin, & Huber, 2010; Smythe & Murray, 2000). However, the aim of narrative inquiry is not to establish a generalisable truth, but rather to '*sing up many truths and narratives of the participants*' (Byrne-Armstrong, 2001:112; Hunter, 2010). In this study, I was guided by this purpose.

### **3.4.2 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

I combined purposive and snowball sampling in this study. I first used *purposive sampling* (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Silverman, 2000) to select young biracial adults in the South African context. Once a few young biracial adults were identified, they assisted with locating other potential biracial participants through *snowball sampling* (Babbie, 2008; Baltar & Brunet, 2012). I first identified *appropriate* participants who could best inform the research study. I thus selected individuals who seemed to have knowledge of the research topic. All the research participants were of biracial heritage. I engaged in data collection until data saturation occurred. I thus involved new research participants until, as indicated by data replication or redundancy, the data set seemed saturated (Bowen, 2008; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). However, during the coding process the size of the sample was increased in order to collect additional data until redundancy of information occurred (Charmaz, 2003; Bowen, 2008).

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<sup>37</sup> Romanticism refers to the recording of experiences of marginalised groups by the researcher. Research may become one-sided if it is not contextualised with cultural sensitivity that exposes how such experiences can be moulded by given forms of representation (Daiute & Fine, 2003; Lubbe, 2005).

### 3.4.2.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling takes place when a researcher purposefully selects certain groups or individuals based on their relevance to the phenomenon being studied (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007). I purposefully selected relatively small samples to ensure the inclusion of information-rich cases based on certain selection criteria (Patton, 2002): First, participants had to be biracial, i.e. they had to have parents of two different *socially* designated racial groups, for example, a black mother and white father, as reported by the participant (Kerwin & Ponterotto, cited in Christian, 2000). Next, the ages of the biracial individuals had to be eighteen and twenty-five and they had to feel comfortable about sharing narratives of their biracial identity construction and discussing their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings about being biracial in the South African context. In view of the fact that I am fluent in English, yet not in any of the other South African languages, participants had to be English-speaking. Finally, participants had to include both male and female individuals in order to obtain data from both genders.

As can be seen in table 3.2, five participants were female and five male. The average age of the participants was 20 years, with a range of 18 to 24 years of age. All but two of the participants (one was employed and the other was finalising a high school diploma) were enrolled as full-time students at South African universities. Most participants spoke or understood more than one language. The participants were from the Gauteng region in South Africa. Based on these selection criteria, I purposefully selected ten self-identified biracial individuals from a variety of mixed racial backgrounds, including black Zimbabwean/Asian Filipino and black South African/white Italian backgrounds. According to the demographic information, only two of the participants have parents who are both South African. Eight participants have a parent from a foreign country. Furthermore, parents seemed to represent one white and one non-white minority parent (except in the case of Mila, whose parents both represented non-white minority parents) in the study.

**Table 3.2: Participants in the study**

Name <sup>38</sup>	Age	Gender	Mother's racial and ethnic identity	Father's racial and ethnic identity	Highest level of education	Language (s) spoken by participants
Hugo	24	M	White (Dutch)	Black (South African)	University degree	-Dutch -English -Afrikaans -French
Christopher	20	M	White (South African)	Black (South African)	High school diploma	-English
Mpho	18	M	Black (South African)	White (South African)	High school diploma	-English -Afrikaans
Vuyani	22	M	White (American)	Black (South African)	University degree	-Xhosa -English
Tyler	18	M	White (American)	Black (South African)	Finalising high school diploma	-English
Mila	20	F	Asian (Filipino)	Black (Zimbabwean)	University degree	-English -Afrikaans
Lucia	20	F	White (Italian-South African)	Black (Swati)	High school diploma	-English -Afrikaans
Maria	20	F	Black (Swazi)	White (Portuguese)	University degree	-English -SiSwati
Adrianna	18	F	Black (Nigerian)	White (Italian)	University degree	-English -Yoruba
Serena	19	F	Black (South African)	White (Welsh)	High school diploma	-English

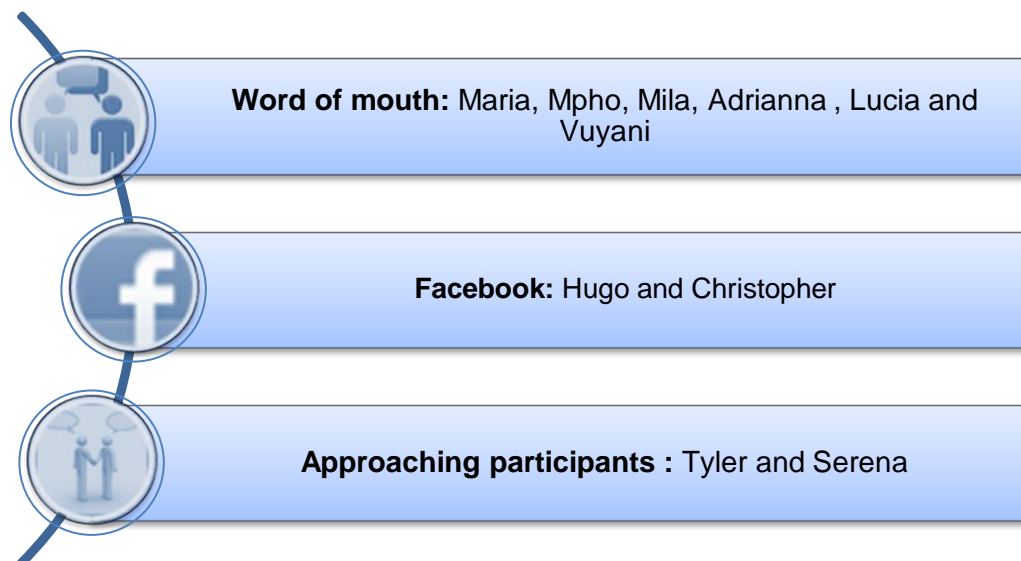
Purposive sampling implied potential limitations, such as difficulties in respect of generalising findings to other subjects, researcher bias and subjectivity, and participants not being representative of the identified population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). However, as I worked from a qualitative approach following a postcolonial feminist epistemology, the goal was to look at the *'process'* or the *'meanings'* individuals attribute to their given social situation, and not to make generalisations (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Seale, 2000).

### 3.4.2.2 Snowball sampling

Snowballing is considered to be a type of purposive sampling. Snowball sampling is valuable in exploratory, qualitative and descriptive research, and is considered appropriate when the members of a distinct population are difficult to trace (Babbie, 2008; Baltar & Brunet, 2012). In

<sup>38</sup> Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants.

snowballing, the researcher collects data together with a few members of the target population and then asks those participants to provide information to find other members of the populace whom they happen to know (Babbie, 2008). Consequently the main advantage of snowball sampling is the ability to grow a network of participants by taking advantage of the relationship with current participants (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). I utilised this method when initial participants used their social networks to refer me to other biracial people who could potentially participate in the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). One of the potential challenges of snowball sampling relates to the belief that this form of sampling cannot ensure a broadly representative sample as reliable referrals tend to follow the patterns of established networks, acquaintances and friendships with like-minded individuals who may not reflect true diversity. Nevertheless, snowball sampling was a valuable strategy to access hard-to-reach groups such as those who are marginalised in society, and helped to gain access to informed and experienced people who could provide in-depth information which is not available anywhere else (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007; Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). As stated, my aim was however not to reach generalisable findings, based on the paradigmatic and methodological choices I made and in line with the purpose of my study. I used both social networks and word of mouth to recruit biracial individuals for this study. In addition, I also approached biracial individuals that I assumed to be biracial (i.e. I approached interracial couples and their children or approached individuals that I assumed to be of a biracial heritage) that could potentially be participants in the study. Figure 3.1 summarises how I used various snowball techniques in the research study.



**Figure 3.1 Using snowball sampling in the study**



**(i) Word of mouth**

I notified family and friends about the study and asked them to provide me with contact details of potential biracial participants. In this manner I could access biracial individuals interested in participating in the study. In addition, my siblings ages 19 and 21, who use Facebook as a social network, communicated my message (described in the next section) to various biracial acquaintances on their social networks in an attempt to sample participants for the study. Participants in turn provided names of possible future participants, who in turn provided the names of more potential participants, and so forth (Vogt, 1999).

**(ii) Using social networks**

As social interactions between young people typically occur *via* the Internet, social networking sites are increasingly being used to recruit participants for research purposes (Fenner, Garland, Moore, Jayasinghe, Fletcher, Tabrizi, Gunasekaran & Wark, 2012). Websites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace and Twitter) can be viewed as an important tool to recruit participants as these online communities provide individuals with the ability to create a profile and become linked to friends, establish relationships and communicate (Ramo, Hall & Prochaska, 2010; Watson, 2009).

Watson (2009) states that if a study focuses on young people between the ages of 15 and 40 years, social networks are useful ways to reach people and offer a rich source of demographic and contextual data about them. Some advantages of using the internet for recruitment include capturing the hard to reach population and that the cost in respect of postage, printing and data entry is minimal. Facebook and Twitter are instantaneous and the turnaround time can be limited from weeks to days. These options have made it easier to reach inaccessible and alienated subpopulations (Baltar & Brunet, 2012).

Limitations experienced when using the internet for recruitment include internet access that may not be readily available to individuals without the financial means to buy a computer, resulting in people in lower income brackets potentially being underrepresented (Keller & Lee, 2003), and difficulties experienced with trying to reach people who have serious concerns about internet privacy and who lack the requisite computer skills and equipment (Bhutta, 2012). Another potential limitation is that individuals contacted through virtual networks may disappear and affect the sample size and representativeness. In response to these potential challenges, I maintained other means of contact with the participants, such as telephone and email contact. Furthermore, I believe that for the study of hard to reach populations and for descriptive and exploratory objectives, this sample method is effective despite its limitations (Baltar & Brunet,

2012). For the purpose of this study, I relied on Facebook as a social network, as well as on Twitter, putting up the same message I used on Facebook and sharing it with individuals who had stated in their biographies that they were biracial or of mixed race and lived in South Africa. I did not get any responses via Twitter.

### (iii) Facebook

Facebook is a valuable snowball sampling frame as its users communicate information quickly and easily with each other both directly and indirectly (Bhutta, 2012). Another Facebook feature that is relevant to constructing snowball samples is the Facebook group (Bhutta, 2012). I created a Facebook group titled '*Proudly Biracial in S.A.*'. Several family members, friends and biracial individuals were tagged in the group and received a Facebook email message (refer to Appendix E for message) with information about the study. Figure 3.2 provides a screen shot of the Facebook group titled 'Proudly Biracial in S.A.', which was used to recruit biracial individuals to participate in the study. The individuals who belonged to the Facebook group were able to view the advertisement without their identities being known. I sent a private Facebook email to all group members who fitted the criteria of the study and welcomed them to contact me if they were interested in being a part of the study. Ethically, I ensured that the participants' anonymity and privacy were protected by ensuring that I communicated with the participants only *via* their private Facebook emails and personal email addresses and telephone numbers.



**Figure 3.2: Screen shot of the Facebook group titled 'Proudly Biracial in S.A.', which was used to recruit biracial individuals to participate in the study**

### **3.4.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Janesick (2003) states that research methods need to evolve beyond the aim of triangulation. To achieve this, he proposes the use of crystallisation instead of triangulation. Crystallisation refers to the practice of ‘validating’ results by employing multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Since the purpose of the study was to reflect the unique reality and identity of the participants in order to provide a complex and deeper understanding of the phenomenon, crystallisation and multiple data collection methods were employed (Creswell, 2002; Nieuwenhuis, 2010) to allow for an in-depth exploration and description of young adults and their construction of a biracial identity within the South African context (Creswell, 2002). Since narrative inquiry can be applied to any spoken or written account, my aim was to explore and record the participants’ stories using the following multiple data collection methods: narrative interviews, written narratives, researcher journal and field notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

#### **3.4.3.1 Overview of the data collection process**

In Appendix K, I provide a research schedule containing details of the time spent with participants on data collection activities. The data collection and documentation process involved three broad steps.

Firstly, once potential participants contacted me through Facebook or word of mouth, I assessed their eligibility over the telephone or via email and provided information about the purpose of the study and the participants’ role in the research. I also obtained the necessary consent – verbal consent initially, and written consent from the participants at the onset of the narrative interviews (Appendix A). Once written consent had been obtained, participants completed a brief demographic form (Appendix D) to provide me with information on their personal lives. The information required included their full names, contact details, languages spoken, racial identities of both parents and highest level of education.

As a second step, I discussed the idea of written narratives with the participants. I provided each of them with a sheet of paper that contained questions to help them compile written narratives based on their biracial identity narratives (see Appendix F for the guiding questions). Written narratives had to be completed before the individual narrative interviews took place and

provided an opportunity for participants to think about their biracial identity construction before participating in the individual narrative interviews.

The last stage in the data collection process entailed narrative interviews. The interviews were loosely structured (see Appendix F) and composed of general topic areas such as the participants' early childhood experiences while growing up as biracial individuals, their self-perceptions and their relationships with family and peers. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and was audiotaped. All the interviews were subsequently transcribed.

According to Jackson (2010b) and Root (1992), it is crucial in multiracial research to involve multiracial persons during the research process, especially during the interview phase, in order to increase the comfort level of the multiracial participants and help them to feel comfortable in sharing intimate and relevant information during the interview process (Root, 2002). This may, in turn, assist in minimising power imbalances and miscommunication between an interviewer and participants from ethnic minority groups in society (Singh & Johnson, 1998). I am of the opinion that my own biracial heritage may have been an advantage in creating an empathetic connection with the participants and may therefore have supported the data collection process (Cruz-Janzen, 1999), as captured in my researcher journal:

*After interviews, participants expressed how comfortable they felt talking about their life experiences with me as a result of our shared biracial heritage. They expressed their appreciation for being asked about their unique experiences as biracial individuals and hoped that their narratives would be read by other individuals in the South African context as they felt that society was still unaware of the existence of biracial individuals and also about respecting their choice to identify with both heritages (RJ: 6 September 2012).*

#### **3.4.3.2 Written narratives**

Written narratives are viewed as a suitable method in feminist scholarship (Elizabeth, 2008; Richardson, 2000; Vickers, 2002). Before the narrative interviews were employed, I requested the participants to write down their narratives. They were therefore engaged in the reflexive reconstruction of the self and immersed themselves in the construction of their biracial identity from the start of the study (Elizabeth, 2007; Keats, 2009). Richardson (2000:923) states that as a method of enquiry, writing can guide participants to '*find out about themselves and their world*' (Park, 2013). Similarly, Ivanič (1998) reports that writing is important in the construction of

identity and will lead an author to 'voice' his/her position, opinions, beliefs and experiences of a phenomenon (Ivanič, 1994; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Richardson, 2000; Park, 2013).

Writing can reveal fluid, shifting and contradictory identities (multiple identities) that are influenced by a network of the social relations, socio-cultural and socio-political contexts in which participants experience their everyday lives (Hyland, 2002; Liming, 2012; Park, 2013; Richardson, 2000). I chose written narratives, which represent a consciousness raising technique that may lead to an increased understanding of the sense of self. In addition, participants who engaged in the written texts could increase their understanding of their identities, life stories and identity formation (Ličen & Ciuha, 2012; Nygren & Blom, 2001; Sikes & Gale, 2006). The following verbatim extract shows that the written narrative method seemingly assisted the participants in gaining an awareness of the self:

*Tyler: I actually enjoyed writing my essay. I thought about a lot of things that I haven't really thought about before. It was nice, it was like going over my whole life and it is like you can learn from that. I never really even thought about the fact that I used to cut my hair because I wanted to be white. It was never a conscious thought for me and because now being eighteen years old, more mature being able to look back at it, I feel like even just that taught me a lot about myself (N1-Tyler: 700-704).*

I assisted the participants in writing about their biracial experiences by asking questions or offering focal points as narrative guidelines for writing (refer to Appendix F) (Keats, 2009; Park, 2013). I verbally requested participants to write about their life experiences while growing up as biracial individuals (Appendix F) and to reflect on how relationships and contexts have influenced their construction of their biracial identities and their views and understanding of those identities. The questions that guided the participants in writing their stories were decided on theoretically by consulting existing (international and national) literature on biracial identity construction. Reading through the literature made me aware of the gap that written interviews could fill in achieving a convincing formulation of the initial central topic designed to trigger a self-sustainable narration (Flick, 2006; Frost, 2011; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Mouton & Prozesky, 2001). Accordingly, the written narratives represented the research participants' own interpretations of their lives (Mouton & Prozesky, 2001). Written narratives were captured in the following ways: Serena, Maria and Mpho gave handwritten narratives; Lucia, Tyler and Vuyani provided typed narratives; and the rest of the participants sent their written narratives electronically *via* email. The form, length, and content of the written narratives varied greatly. However, regardless of their form, length and content, all the written narratives provided rich

insights into the experiences relating to the identity construction (multiple identities) of biracial individuals in the South African context (Grinyer, 2004).

Written documents provided a first-person account of the participants' lives, environments, subjective perceptions and interpretations of their own lives and events in the surrounding world, as well as an account of their reflections on their biracial identity constructions (Strydom & Delport, 2005). These written narratives enabled me to familiarise myself with the language and terms used by the participants in describing their biracial identity. Written narratives were thoughtful since the participants were allowed enough time to consider all aspects carefully while compiling them, thus providing me with a holistic view of them in the context of their lives. As a researcher, I found that written evidence saved me considerable time and also the expense of having transcriptions typed, and added to the sensitising of concepts, theory development and verification (Creswell, 2009).

Potential limitations associated with written documents include authors not wanting to share specific personal information with the researcher; difficulty in understanding the content as the words, abbreviations or references may either be difficult to decipher or difficult to read; a lack of linguistic skills that may negatively influence a personal document because the writer is unable to write clearly and meaningfully; written documents that contain incomplete data; and documents that may not be authentic or accurate (Flick, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Strydom & Delport, 2005). The only limitation I experienced while I was collecting the written documents was that some of the participants wrote brief narratives that were not always complete. This limitation was overcome by utilising narrative interviews to fill gaps in the participants' stories and to gain an understanding of their personal stories, thus eliminating the risk of incomplete material. I found that written narratives provided an avenue for participants to share personal information that was not necessarily shared during narrative interviews (Creswell, 2009; Strydom & Delport, 2005).

### **3.4.3.3 Narrative interviews**

In qualitative research, individual interviews can be used to access people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005). I utilised the interview method proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), according to whom this technique can be used to create field texts in narrative inquiry. These field texts may then be converted into written field texts through the transcription of tape-recorded interviews. Narrative interviews gave me access to the lived worlds of the participants who, in their own words, described their

activities, experiences and opinions in relation to their biracial identity construction (Flick 2006; Kvale, 2007; Riesman, 1993).

The narrative interview is a natural communication process which encourages participants to tell their stories, and the researcher to listen without interrupting or distracting them (Allen, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Jupp, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005). I agree with Guenette and Marshall (2009) that the narrative interview was an excellent method to use in this study as it provided an opportunity for the participants to describe their experiences of the construction of their biracial identity in the form of stories. Lewis (2010) asserts that stories are central to human understanding and that without a story there can be no construction of an identity, self or other. Consequently, narrative interviewing placed the participant (the narrator) in the centre of the story, making sense of the world (in this study, the biracial world) (Downs, 2009).

I chose narrative interviews as this technique resonated strongly with the postcolonial feminist epistemology that I relied on (Allen, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Jupp, 2006; Mishler, 1986; Sarantakos, 2005). Thus, in view of my commitment to a collaborative and inductive methodology, narrative interviews allowed the young biracial adults' voices to be heard with as little filtering as possible (Allen, 2011). Narrative interviews were thus utilised due to the possibility of detailed and authentic accounts of the young biracial adults' experiences. Through the telling of stories, psychosocial identities could be claimed, confirmed and validated, with narrative interviews enabling an exploration of these identities (Holt, 2010). The technique of narrative interviewing thus stimulated storytelling and encouraged the research participants to describe the construction of their biracial identity, as they experienced it, in their own words and using their own terms of reference (Bates, 2004; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Murray, 2003).

All narrative interviews began with a 'generative narrative question' (refer to Appendix F) (Bates, 2004; Flicks, 2009), which referred to the topic of the study and was intended to stimulate the participants' main narratives (Bates, 2004; Flicks, 2009). In order to elicit a narrative relevant to my research questions, I formulated the generative narrative question broadly but, at the same time, specifically for the interesting, experiential domain to be taken up as a central theme (Flick, 2009; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). During narrative interviews, I invited participants to 'tell me about themselves' and allowed them to speak uninterrupted until the story had ended, as is evidenced by the following verbatim excerpts:

*Researcher: Hi Mila, is it alright to begin the interview? So why don't we start with you just telling me about yourself (N1-Mila: 4-5).*

*Researcher: Alright, thank you so much for doing this interview. Why don't we start off by you telling me about yourself (N1-Hugo: 3-4).*

The ensuing story, or main narrative, was not interrupted by further questions (asked by me, the researcher) but was instead encouraged by means of nonverbal and paralinguistic expressions of interest and attention. The idea of the approach was to prevent uncontrollable effects on the participant's process of remembering and self-presentation. In this way, participants were given the necessary space to emphasise what was important to them and to structure their stories and narrations in their own terms (Flick, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rosenthal, 2004; Zinn, 2004).

As narrations came to a natural end, I used semi-structured interviews (driven by a series of questions set out in advance (Appendix F) and prompts to facilitate the flow of the stories. The generative narration question was thus followed by *narrative probing* (Greenhalgh, Russell & Swinglehurst, 2005). Narrative probing entails a questioning period during which narrative fragments that have either not been detailed exhaustively before or are unclear, are completed (Bates, 2004; Flick, 2009; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). According to Bold (2012), semi-structured interviews are often used to elicit narrative data as they can lead to narrative-like responses, depending on the nature and purpose of the research. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews provided me with the flexibility to detour from the planned course of action and follow a line of interest (that of the construction of biracial identity), while at the same time keeping the original focus and purpose of the research in mind. It therefore allowed for new insights to emerge during the data collection process (Bold, 2012).

The semi-structured questions that were used contained a mix of more or less structured questions, as specific information was desired from the participants after their main narrations (Bryman, 2004; Merriam, 2002). I used the principles of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) to develop questions that would enable the participants to structure their own narrative accounts. The questions were open ended so as to elicit stories/narratives, rather than one-word responses. 'Why' questions were avoided as these could detract from the interviewee's own meaning-making frame, and questions were followed up using participants' 'ordering and phrasing', thus aiming to retain the focus on their lives and their telling (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). I concur with Riessman (2002) and Frost (2011) that further narrative probing and questioning assisted the participants to recall the details, turning points and other shifts in cognition, emotion and action, and encouraged them to unpack the layers of their stories. As the



semi-structured interviews progressed, I kept the research questions in mind and occasionally checked the question guide. Nevertheless, my main focus was on listening and understanding what was being said and giving participants time to think. Pauses were therefore not filled with further questioning during the narrations and I was careful not to impose any form of language not used by the participants during the interviews (Bryman, 2004; Horrocks & King, 2010; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

The initial interviews were followed by a second round of narrative interviews<sup>39</sup> (Flick, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005). Second interviews gave the participants “*an opportunity to assess the emerging narratives at a higher level of abstraction and to clarify recurring themes and interconnections*” (Morse *et al.*, 2002:16) which I had elicited during thematic analysis. In an attempt to maximise the participants’ voices and representation in the study, I used these to facilitate the collaborative methodology emphasised in my postcolonial feminist epistemology and qualitative approach. In support of the credibility of the study, I utilised member checking by requesting the participants to confirm or rectify my interpretation of their first narrative interview accounts during the second interviews (Allen, 2011; Back, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Finlay, 2006; Morse *et al.*, 2002:16; Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Narrative interviews were also conducted until concepts and themes started recurring, signifying that saturation had been reached and that understanding had been completed (Morse, 1994). As a researcher, I thus continued to advertise for and recruit biracial individuals until I noticed that no novel information or concepts were emerging from the data analysis. This point was reached after I had conducted narrative interviews with ten participants (Allen, 2011; Gaskell, 2000).

Interviews may namely be experienced as intruding into participants’ personal lives (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Myers & Newman, 2007). Since I created sound rapport with the participants and applied the principles of feminism, where I aimed to treat them respectfully and as equals, I did not find this challenging. In addition, I obtained (informed consent) permission from participants who had agreed to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. Another potential limitation is that interviews may sometimes lack objectivity. Upon undertaking this study, I remained aware that qualitative research is not concerned with objectivity. Since I believe that many truths exist, I therefore engaged in reflexivity and remained critically conscious of my personal location and positionality as a researcher during the entire research process (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Nevertheless, I used additional data generation methods to corroborate the data I obtained during the interviews. Although narrative interviews were time consuming and laborious,

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<sup>39</sup> Narrative interviews were conducted from August 2012 to July 2013.

interviews served as a strategy for rigour by allowing for prolonged engagement in the field (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Padgett, 1998; Pillow, 2003).

The use of interviews also implied other potential limitations such as interviewees distorting information through inaccuracies due to poor or incomplete memory recall, selective perceptions and/or a desire to please the interviewer (Goyal, 2013; Patton, 2015). I adopted reflexivity as a way to deal with the challenge of response bias from the participants in the study. I was mindful to ensure that the questions I used during data collection were open-ended instead of leading questions. This was done so that participants were not manipulated during the interviews and could narrate their stories of identity construction freely. Throughout the narrative interviews I was attentive and ensured that I did not lead the participants into any particular and individual direction influenced by my own biases, values and preferences. I also continually asked for the participants' explanation of their ideas, experiences and perspectives relating to their identity formation as young biracial adults. I espoused prolonged engagement and member checking to overcome the challenges of inaccuracies and poor recall. Prolonged engagement was used to build trust and rapport in the field with the participants so as to learn the 'culture' of the young biracial adults and to investigate possible misinformation/distortions introduced by myself and the participants during data collection. Whilst I am aware that the participants may not have privileged access to the truth, I was mindful that they do have privileged access to their opinions and meanings and an adequate representation of these meanings was the goal during member checking (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). I further engaged in member checking to check interpretations and to ensure that I did not misinterpret the participants' narratives in any way, thus respecting their 'truth' and meanings associated to the phenomenon under study. Finally a post-colonial feminist approach, allowed me to work from the perspective that the participants realities were multiple and flexible. Thus I did not aim to distinguish between 'causes', 'effects' and 'truth' within the social world and the narrative interviews (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

#### **3.4.4 DATA DOCUMENTATION**

I relied on field notes, audio recordings and transcriptions for data documentation purposes.

##### **3.4.4.1 Field notes**

I used field notes (Appendix J) to document what I observed and heard, and what emerged during the research process (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). In this manner, I relied on field

notes to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Strydom, 2005). According to Saldana (2009) field notes are the researcher's written documentation in which rich analysis may occur. Bogden and Bilken (2003) posit that the content of field notes entails both descriptive and reflective aspects. As such, my descriptive notes contained written accounts of the things I heard (conversations with participants), saw (physical contexts/settings), and experienced during the course of the study (Glesne, 2006; Schwandt, 2007). My field notes also include records of the narrative interviews conducted as well as the written narratives of the research participants. More specifically, my field notes include an account of events, the way in which the participants conducted themselves, what was said in conversation during the narrative interviews, where the participants were positioned in relationship to one another, physical gestures, my subjective responses and reactions to what I observed, and other essential details and observations that emerged during the research process (Mack *et al.*, 2005).

One of the challenges associated with the compilation of field notes relates to the fact that researchers are not always able to write their notes immediately after data collection, which means that important details may be lost. Furthermore, researchers may not be accurate when recording their notes, thus compromising the quality of the field notes. The summary and analysis of the field notes may also be time consuming (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). In attempting to overcome these potential challenges, I wrote notes as soon as possible after data collection. I ensured that the level of detail was high by including detailed descriptions of the physical contexts, the individuals involved in the study, and as much of their behaviours and non-verbal communication as possible. I also wrote my field notes using words that were as close as possible to the words used by the participants during the interviews and personal conversations. In other words, my aim was to use verbatim quotations as well as the specific words, special language, terms and vocabulary used by the biracial individuals. I relied on introspection to anticipate the impact of my personal characteristics and theoretical approaches on the research process. Thus I reflected on how my own world view may have impacted the research process. To this end, I considered my personal biases when compiling field notes (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

#### **3.4.4.2 Audio recordings and transcriptions**

I documented the research process by means of audio-recordings of the narrative interviews and electronically captured the written narratives. The audio recordings enabled me to preserve the talk sequences (Silverman, 2006) and to have verbatim recordings of the participants' narratives (Opdenakker, 2006). Owing to the time-consuming nature of typing out interview

transcriptions, I made use of the services of a trained transcriber. The external transcriber was made aware of the confidentiality procedures inherent in the study and was required to sign a form (Appendix C) to guarantee that the interview content would be kept confidential (MacLean *et al.*, 2004). In order to ensure that the interviews had been transcribed accurately, I listened to the recordings of the interviews several times to check the quality and accuracy of the transcriptions and to familiarise myself with the verbatim text.

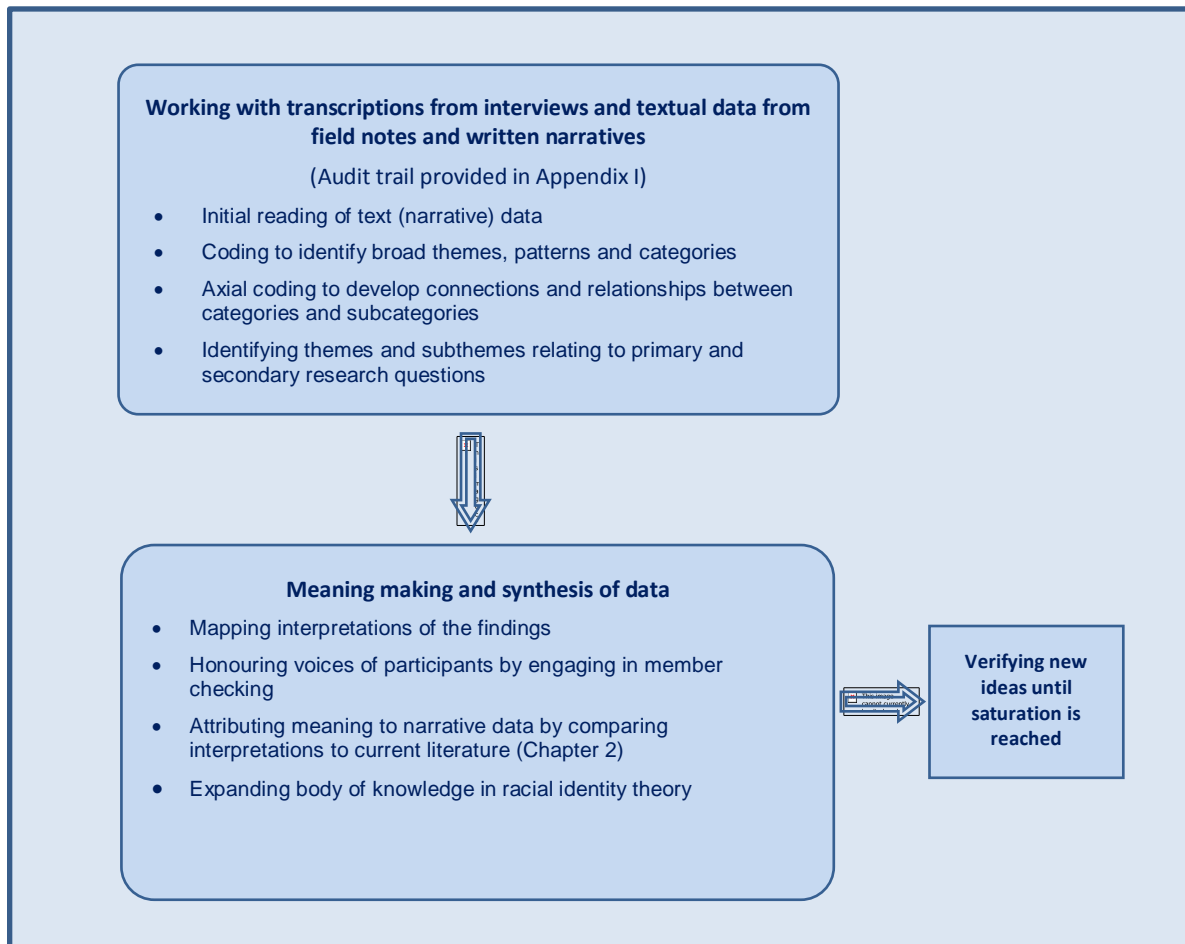
I also employed what Elliot (2005) calls a clean script, where I eliminated the pauses, intonations, false starts and utterances that are common in everyday speech. A clean transcript focuses on the content of what participants say and makes the material easier to read (for myself and the readers). In the interest of credibility, the participants were given an opportunity to revise the transcriptions. This was done to ensure that the transcriptions represented the participants' voices (Forbat & Henderson, 2005). For the purpose of data analysis, transcriptions of the participants' stories allowed me to review my notes and reflect on the narrative interviews, which assisted me in identifying gaps in the interviews which I was then able to further explore during follow-up interviews (Bryman, 2004; Nieuwenhuis, 2007a; Rice & Ezzy, 2002). The transcriptions and written narratives can be found in Appendix G and H. Verbatim interviews and written narratives provide an audit trail of the research process (Creswell, 2002).

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

In keeping with the nature of qualitative research, the data analysis and interpretation of the raw data from the field notes, written narratives and narrative interviews proceeded inductively (Ashby, 2011). Riessman (2008:54) states that thematic analysis focuses on the content of narratives (*'what is said rather than how the story unfolds'*) and can be applied to narratives produced in interviews and written documents. Hence, by focusing on the content of the participants' narratives, language in this study was viewed as a resource and not a topic of investigation. I searched for and identified themes within the narratives in an attempt to gain an understanding of the different ways in which young biracial adults constructed their identities within relationships with people and unique contexts (Bold, 2012; Elliot, 2005; Jupp, 2006).

I specifically chose inductive thematic analysis based on its strength in facilitating condensation of extensive and varied data into summaries, establishing links between research objectives and making connections to develop models or theories (Thomas, 2003). According to Johnson and Christensen (2004) inductive thematic analysis involves *"immersion in the details and*

specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships; it begins by exploring, then confirming, guided by analytical principles” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004:362). I used this approach to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the research data (see Appendix I to view examples of the processes of inductive thematic analysis in this study). This assisted me in organising and describing the data in detail and in interpreting various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Yeh & Inman, 2007). Figure 3.3 presents the process I followed during thematic data analysis and interpretation.



**Figure 3.3: The process of thematic analysis and interpretation followed in this study**

During the data analysis and interpretation process, I immersed myself in the data in order to become familiar with the content. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that *immersion* usually involves repetitive reading of the data (field notes, transcriptions of the narrative interviews and the written narratives), and reading the data in an *active* way, thus searching for patterns, meanings and so forth. During this first stage of data analysis, I familiarised myself with the transcriptions,

field notes and written narratives of the participants without making any attempt to code the data. Horrocks and King (2010) state that this is important because when a researcher analyses any particular section of the transcriptions, he/she needs to do so in the context of the interview as a whole. To make sense of what the participant says at one point often requires a researcher to refer back to something said earlier, or forward to something said later (or both) (Horrocks & King, 2010). I highlighted any such indications in the transcriptions, field notes and written narratives that could help me understand the participants' views, experiences and perceptions as they relate to the topic under investigation, and wrote brief comments indicating what is of interest in the highlighted text (Horrocks & King, 2010). Reading and reflecting on the data a few times before and after identifying the themes and codes proved to be beneficial as it allowed me to arrive at and appreciate a holistic picture and to make connections between the participants' thoughts, ideas and the data collected through observations (my field notes), and to identify and have more time to evaluate the data so as to prevent precipitous conclusions and avoid imposing preconceived ideas of categories to the data (Alhojailan, 2012; Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

Subsequently I used *coding* to identify broad categories, patterns and themes that occurred in the data. *Coding the data* entailed recognising (seeing) important moments and encoding these (seeing it as something) prior to the process of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). Against the background of the theoretical framework I selected, analysed and organised meaningful parts of the data by way of coding (Appendix I), thereby analysing initial lists of items from the data that had a reoccurring pattern. This involved taking text data and segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) into categories and labelling those categories with suitable terms, which were often based on the exact wording (narratives) of the participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Coding therefore allowed me to make connections between different parts of the data. I also strived to achieve what Boyatzis (1998) calls 'a good code', in which I aimed to capture the qualitative richness of the phenomenon under study (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

The coding process was not a linear, but rather a cyclical process during which codes were identified from the research process. This cyclical process entailed moving back and forth during the various phases of data analysis as new insights and understandings emerged from the narrative data sources. Subsequently, I engaged in *axial coding*, where I made connections between the categories and subcategories of the data sources. This process also required explaining and providing relationships between categories (variables and factors) in an attempt to understand the phenomenon to which they relate and to create a reasonable and logical

chain of evidence (Alhojailan, 2012; Atkinson & Paul, 1996; Berg, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bold, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2007c; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

Once the data had been coded and collated, I began to sort the different codes into *potential themes* (Appendix I) and collated the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. I remained cognisant of the relationships between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes (e.g. main overarching themes and subthemes within them) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I generated themes that displayed the participants' multiple perspectives and could be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence in the study. As validating themes in the early and final stages of analysis was essential, I involved my supervisors during the early stages of data analysis to evaluate and identify themes. The aim was to ensure that the themes I had identified were compatible with the whole of the text, and that the excerpts made by the participants supported each theme. This enabled me to compare sets of feedback and to enhance trustworthiness.

Consultations with my supervisors enabled me to identify conflicting results with regard to any of the themes (Alhojailan, 2012; Hosmer 2008; Miles & Huberman 1994; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). I then *reviewed and refined the themes concerned*, considering each one separately and in relation to the others. I also identified subthemes, which was particularly useful for giving structure to large and complex themes, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data. I ensured that I included essential themes from the participants' experiences and narratives and that the themes were relevant to the primary and secondary questions posed at the beginning of the research journey. In addition, I used the participants' individual narratives to support each theme (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Finalay, 2006; Thomas, 2003).

During the data analysis and interpretation phase, I formulated inclusion and exclusion indicators (displayed in Chapters 4 and 5). In this manner I formulated working definitions of the meaning of concepts used in the study and specified indicators for each concept. These anticipated meanings of concepts were further refined and defined during the process of data analysis and interpretation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The process of data interpretation entailed attributing meaning to the data by comparing the interpreted data with current literature in the field (refer to the literature review in Chapter 2). I constructed interpretations by exploring the identity construction of biracial young adults in the South African context. Thus I could

contribute to and expand upon the existing body of knowledge in racial identity theory (Bogden & Biklen, 2003).

Finally, I used *member checking* with the participants to promote credibility. This entailed taking the data (interview transcriptions) and interpretations (research results) back to the participants so that they could confirm my interpretations of the data, which gave them an opportunity to elaborate on their narratives, if necessary, in order to ensure that my interpretations reflected their lived experiences (Ashworth, 2003; Barbour, 2001; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Finalay, 2006; Thomas, 2003). As my worldview was guided by a postcolonial feminist epistemology, it was essential for me to honour and include the participants' perceptions as truthfully as possible and to ensure that their voices are reflected in this thesis (Hole, 2007; Mbongwe, 2013; Sultana, 2007).

Although one of the limitations of using thematic analysis and interpretation is that it can be time consuming, this method provided me with a record of the research process and therefore also provides the reader with a detailed audit trail (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Another potential limitation is that, as an interpretative process, thematic data analysis could yield a less accurate representation of the content of the text as categories may potentially reflect the researcher's agenda and imposition of meaning more than the text may sustain or the producers of the text (participants) may have intended (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). My research journal, debriefing sessions with my supervisors and member checking ensured that I remained aware of the personal preconceptions, interests, biases, preferences, background and agenda that I might have brought to the data, causing me to be selective in my focus on various aspects of the investigation (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). As I realise that the process of research and interpretation is subjective in nature and that coding and meaning may differ from one researcher to the next, I have attached examples of my thematic analysis (see Appendix I) to show the reader where the themes were derived from. I also enlisted the assistance of my supervisors, who also thematically analysed the narrative data and derived similar themes and subthemes. I sustained rigour by adhering to relevant quality criteria as discussed in Section 3.7 (Anderson, 2002; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In conclusion, inductive thematic analysis allowed me to listen to the words of the text (narratives) and enhanced my understanding of the perspectives of the participants who had produced the narratives in this study (Berg, 2000).



### 3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a feminist researcher, I consciously reflected on the ethical considerations that I employed in the study and chose to include tenets of both qualitative research and postcolonial feminism, such as reflexivity, mutual respect, sensitivity and empathy, to protect the participants (Chege & Sakurai, 2011). Ethical considerations in research focus on safeguarding the interests of participants throughout the research process (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000).

#### 3.6.1 INFORMED CONSENT AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Informed consent ensures that participants understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a mindful and conscious way whether or not they want to participate. Informed consent is one of the most essential tools for ensuring *respect for people* during research (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). Respect in informed consent entails non-coercion of participants into participating in a study, as well as the right to withdraw at any time without consequence (Halai, 2006; Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). I obtained both verbal and written consent. The informed consent form (Appendix A) explains key aspects of the research, including the purpose of the research, the participants' roles in the study, procedures to be undertaken (such as interviews with the participants), time periods, and risks and benefits that could result from participation. The informed consent form used also stipulated that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time<sup>40</sup> (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; De Vos *et al.*, 2005; Halai, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Babbie, 2005; Melville, 2005).

#### 3.6.2 CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION SHARED AND ANONYMITY OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This principle entails respecting and protecting research participants through the assurance of the *confidentiality* of information shared and *anonymity* in terms of not revealing the identities of the individuals involved in a study (Halai, 2006). As Bouma (2000) notes, "*people have feelings, orientations, cultures, rights to privacy, rights to control their lives and information about themselves and the rights of people are greater than the researcher's need to know*" (Bouma, 2000:194). I ensured anonymity by using pseudonyms for the young biracial adults who participated (Halai, 2006) and ensuring that no identifying information was included in the transcriptions that form part of this thesis.

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<sup>40</sup> One participant withdrew from the study due to time constraints and work commitments. She was unable to complete the written narrative and participate in the second interview.

Since maintaining confidentiality means that individuals are not to be linked to the data they provide, I did not document identifying information such as the names, surnames and addresses of the participants. The names and locations of participants were recorded in my field notes and shared with my supervisors, but this information was coded and removed upon entry of the field notes into my computer, with the code list being kept in a protected and secure computer file with limited access (Mack *et al.*, 2005). I further did not disclose any personal descriptions and characteristics that could lead to others guessing the identities of participants in the research. This implies that I had to take great care, not only when writing up participant information in my field notes, but also when talking to other people, whether for research purposes or otherwise. Confidentiality also has to be respected during presentation of the data in public dissemination events and in printed publications (Mack *et al.*, 2005). I further safeguarded participants from undue exposure by securing all personal data (audio material, transcriptions and other data) in a locked office at the University of Pretoria (Tracy, 2010).

I aimed to enhance confidentiality by means of member checking. Typically, member checking is used to increase the rigour of a study. In this study, member checking was also however, used as a tool for ensuring that little personal detail was revealed in the narrative interview transcriptions by asking participants to read their individual interview transcriptions. The participants received copies of their transcriptions and were invited to discuss any queries or concerns with me. Those who responded were satisfied with the accuracy and the content of their interview transcriptions and agreed that they should remain unchanged (Houghton *et al.*, 2010).

### **3.6.3 PROTECTING PARTICIPANTS FROM HARM**

To ensure that participants are protected, the researcher has to, within reasonable limits, protect them from any form of physical or psychological discomfort that may result from a research project (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). I adhered to the principles of honesty, sympathy and respect, as cited by Holloway and Jefferson (2000). Beneficence also requires a commitment to minimising the risks associated with research, including psychological and social risks, and maximising the benefits that may accrue to research participants (Mack *et al.*, 2005). As a researcher (and educational psychologist) I remained cognisant of potential psychological risks that could arise and was mindful of the possible impact of the research on the participants. When the research process awakened painful emotions for one of the participants, I took the

appropriate steps to minimise associated risks by referring the participant to a professional for emotional and psychological support<sup>41</sup> (Houghton *et al.*, 2010).

### 3.6.4 RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST BETWEEN RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANT

As a result of undertaking qualitative research embedded in a postcolonial feminist epistemology, I was cognisant of the issues of relationships and power between researchers and participants embedded in qualitative research (Orb *et al.*, 2001). These issues include the manner in which relationships are formed and managed, the nature of any power imbalance between the two parties, and the way the relationship may affect the participants psychologically, emotionally and personally (Orb *et al.*, 2001; Houghton *et al.*, 2010). The boundaries of the relationship can become blurred as the research progresses and role confusion may lead to ethical concerns during an investigation. I remained aware of the principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice, which helped to alleviate potential ethical issues that arose during the study. As such, I was mindful of ethical implications while managing the relationships that developed through the research (Houghton *et al.*, 2010).

Firstly, as stated above, I respected the participants' right to *autonomy* by informing them of the study, the right to freely decide whether or not to participate in the study, and the right to withdraw at any time. I also explained my role as a researcher to the participants, thus reducing possible false expectations on their side. I was careful to not cross any boundaries in the researcher participant relationship (Houghton *et al.*, 2010; Orb *et al.*, 2001). Regarding *benefice*, I told the participants how results would be published and obtained their approval for using their quotations in publications. I demonstrated my understanding and application of the *principle of justice* by recognising the exposure and vulnerability of the participants and their contributions to the study. During data analysis and interpretation, I requested permission for using a quotation, concept or heading based on the contribution of a specific participant, thereby acknowledging the contributions of the participants (Orb *et al.*, 2001).

During the research process I adapted Ellis' (2007) concept of relational ethics, which involves ethical self-consciousness. I was mindful of my own character and actions, and their potential effects on the participants. Relational ethics are "*related to an ethic of care that recognises and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work*" (Ellis, 2007: 4). In

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<sup>41</sup> At the time of the study, the participant was receiving psychological support from a health professional.

addition, I adopted Christian's (2005) concept of feminist communitarianism, which is a philosophy that emphasises the importance of keeping promises, relationships, caring, collaboration, emotionality and connectedness with research participants. Communitarianism *"stresses the primacy of relationships, compassion, nurturance and intimacy - interlocking 'personal autonomy with communal well-being (participant well-being)"* (Christians, 2005:151). To this end I kept my promise to the participants and shared my findings with them (Tracy, 2010).

To further build rapport and trust between myself and the participants, I relied on strategies of active listening, showing respect and empathy, being truthful and showing a commitment to the well-being of the participants. Being involved in such interactions ensured that the young adults felt secure and comfortable to share their biracial identity experiences with me and that the information gathered would be reported accurately and dependably. I further established trust by assuring the participants that they could share personal narratives without any risk that their identities would be exposed to others (Kawulich, 2005).

Throughout my research I considered ethical considerations involving my role as an insider to the participants' reality. I aimed to establish supportive and respectful relationships with the participants by taking care not to stereotype or utilise labels that the participants did not embrace. I also aimed to acknowledge the participants' voices in the final study. I kept a reflective journal to reflect on my personal identity and the identities of the people I was studying. Thus I aimed to be sensitive to imbalanced power relations and placing participants at risk (Creswell, 2013). In conclusion, Table 3.3 provides a summary of the ethical issues I considered during the research process.

**Table 3.3: Ethical guidelines considered during the research process** (APA, 2010; Creswell, 2012 & 2013; Lincoln, 2009; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009)

<b>Steps in the research process</b>	<b>Essential elements for ethical consideration during the research process</b>
<b>1. Prior to conducting the study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I obtained approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, to conduct the study (Appendix B).</li> <li>- I consulted literature on ethics and examined standards of ethical conduct of research available from the Health Professions Council of South Africa and other professional organisations.</li> </ul>

<b>2. Beginning to conduct the study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I made initial contact with the participants and presented them with informed consent forms. Before signing the document, I informed them of the purpose of the study, voluntary participation and respecting their anonymity and privacy.</li> <li>- Participants were not pressurised into signing the consent forms. I emphasised that they did not have to take part and could withdraw at any time from the study.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Collecting data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I informed the participants that the data collected (narrative interviews and written narratives) would be used for my PhD research and published at the end of the study.</li> <li>- I respected the site that was chosen by the participants for the narrative interviews (either their own homes or my office, as suggested by them).</li> <li>- I aimed to be cognisant of perceived potential power imbalances by respecting participants and building trust, and avoiding leading questions.</li> <li>- I aimed to gain and maintain the trust of the participants and to treat them as co-investigators in order to reduce the chances of marginalising and stereotyping them.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Analysing data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I avoided siding with participants by presenting multiple perspectives and reporting contrary findings.</li> <li>- I was mindful of protecting the participants' privacy by assigning pseudonyms to protect their identities.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Reporting data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I reported the results honestly and did not falsify any authorship, evidence, actual data, findings or conclusions.</li> <li>- I avoided plagiarism by citing all authors used in the literature and study.</li> <li>- I avoided disclosing information that could harm participants, using composite stories so that individuals cannot be identified, thus providing adequate descriptions without compromising the anonymity of the participants.</li> <li>- I ensured that I published and communicated in clear, straightforward and appropriate language that would be understood by a wide audience.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Publishing study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In preparing the final report, I included thick descriptions of the procedures and results so that the participants' voices and world views could be presented (Ponterotto, 2010).</li> <li>- During meetings with the participants, many indicated that they would like copies at the end of the study. I will therefore send copies of the final report to all the participants.</li> </ul>

### 3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

Rigour within qualitative research indicates that the research findings accurately reflect 'an external objective world' (Essy, 2002:51). Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2005) outline five criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). I view quality criteria as *guiding principles*, rather than fixed standard criteria.

### 3.7.1 CREDIBILITY

Credibility can be compared to internal validity in quantitative research and is a criterion that evaluates the integrity and quality of a study (Kumar, 2011; Polit & Beck, 2008). Credibility thus implies establishing whether or not the evidence provided by a study is free from distortion and error (Flick, 2009). Credibility is concerned with the extent to which the final results of a study offer a true reflection of the 'truth', and whether or not the trail of evidence is convincing and credible. I believe that the data interpretations and conclusions arrived at in this study are a true reflection of the raw data collected from the narrative interviews, field notes and written narratives, which is in turn supported by the perceptions of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 2003, Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004; Toma, 2006). Credibility within the study implies professional integrity, methodological capability and intellectual rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Patton, 2002; Seale, 2000). Throughout the research process, I endeavoured to maintain credibility by accurately describing the experiences and perspectives of the young biracial adults so as to build a tight and holistic case (De Vos *et al.*, 2002; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In striving towards obtaining credible findings, I employed various strategies. Firstly, I ensured prolonged engagement in the field. To this end I undertook rapport-building sessions with the participants and collected data by conducting two narrative interviews and obtaining written narratives from each participant over a period of one year (August 2012-July 2013). During data collection, I placed a high priority on building trust and rapport with the participants to ensure that they would be comfortable with disclosing information about the phenomenon under study. Thus pluralistic perspectives were voiced by the participants and a better understanding of the context of their views could be developed (Creswell & Miller, 2000). (Refer to Appendix K for an overview of the research study schedule.)

The prolonged engagement in the field was supported by field notes in which I continually reflected on the research process in order to make decisions relevant to my study. Secondly, I therefore used field notes to engage in *researcher reflexivity* and provided a detailed account and descriptions of the research context and my observations of the participants' interactions and behaviours during the narrative interviews. I also continually reflected on and self-disclosed my personal assumptions, beliefs and biases that may have shaped my inquiry. I acknowledged and described my beliefs and biases early in the research process in order to give the readers the opportunity to understand my position, and then to group or suspend my biases as the study progressed (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Thirdly, both my supervisors and the participants engaged in the research process through peer review and debriefing sessions during which discussions about the research assisted me in expanding my vision. The probing of my supervisors during these collaborative sessions helped me to recognise my own biases and preferences in the study (Shenton, 2004). Fourthly, I used member checking by asking the participants to review the results in order to confirm or challenge the accuracy of my interpretations. This strategy gave authority to the participants' perspectives, thereby overcoming the threat of bias. Accordingly, trustworthiness was established as feedback from the participants indicated that the findings reflected, as closely as possible, the meanings described by them (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Finlay, 2006; Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006). Finally, I relied on *crystallisation* to obtain multiple perspectives about the phenomenon under study as a way of obtaining layered multiple meanings from diverse data collection methods (field notes, two narrative interviews and written narratives obtained from the participants). Accordingly, through the process of crystallisation I could enhance the richness and complexity of the views of reality being researched (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Janesick, 2000).

### 3.7.2 TRANSFERABILITY

In qualitative research, transferability (which is also known as external validity or generalisability in quantitative research) refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred or generalised to other contexts or settings (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2002). I agree with Lincoln and Guba (2002) that when engaging with qualitative research there is no context-free generalisation since the aim is not to generalise, but rather to transfer the findings to other research sites and settings (Merriam, 2002; Shenton, 2004; Toma, 2006).

I included rich descriptions of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon and of the contexts in which their experiences occurred, as well as the multiple layers of culture and context in which their experiences are embedded in my field notes. I thus present the reader with *in-depth and rich, thick descriptions* of the phenomenon being studied so as to enable him/her to decide on the extent of similarity between this research field and other similar contexts (Janesick, 2000; Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2002). Although I provided comprehensive information about myself (the researcher as instrument), the research process, the research context, the participants and the researcher-participant relationship to enable the reader to decide how the findings may be transferred to similar contexts, settings and/or participants, the decision to use the study's findings and transfer these to other settings lies with the reader, who

will be in the best position to determine whether or not the findings can be transferred to other contexts (Ferreira, 2006; Morrow, 2005).

### **3.7.3 DEPENDABILITY**

Dependability (which is the equivalent of reliability in quantitative research) refers to whether or not the findings in a study can be replicated and are likely to yield the same results in another study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2002). As a qualitative researcher, I remained cognisant of the fact that there is no unchanging universe in which pure replication is either possible or desirable, as human behaviour is not static but continuously changes and adapts to new circumstances. Rather, I put an emphasis on questioning whether the results were consistent with the collected data (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Merriam, 2002; Toma, 2006; Shenton, 2004). As I utilised a narrative inquiry design, which emphasises the uniqueness of each participant's story, similar studies may be different and may result in a limited possibility of merely replicating this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Nevertheless, I include an audit trail to achieve dependability in the study. Rather than focusing on replication of the study, I provided detailed and comprehensive documentation of the methods and strategies followed and decisions taken during the study. Data were audio-taped and the use of verbatim transcriptions, a field journal and written narratives contributed to the depth and rigour of the study. The audit trail enabled me to write a reliable research report and provide a trustworthy reflection of the research process that was followed (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Silverman, 2000; Toma, 2006).

### **3.7.4 CONFIRMABILITY**

The criterion of confirmability (with objectivity being the corresponding criterion in quantitative research) is met when the data from a study may be confirmed by someone other than the researcher. In other words, confirmable findings reflect the views of the participants and the inquiry itself, and are not mere fabrications from the researcher's 'biases and prejudices' (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Patton, 2002; Toma, 2006).

In an attempt to adhere to the criterion of confirmability, I acknowledged my own subjectivity and biases throughout the study. This entailed involving the participants during data analysis and interpretation by engaging them in member checking. I also sought guidance from my supervisors to ensure that the interpretations and findings were in line with my data. In addition,



I employed the strategy of reflexivity by constantly reflecting in my researcher journal (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Seale, 2000). I relied on a researcher journal to document and make my experiences, opinions, thoughts and feelings visible during the research process. Keeping a researcher journal facilitated reflexivity and helped me to examine personal assumptions and clarify my own belief systems and subjectivities (Greef, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Ortlipp, 2008). Distinct from the field notes, the research journal enabled me to also keep track of my theoretical perspectives and assumptions, my research aims and issues surrounding the methodology, thus assisting me in conducting my research and justifying my decision-making in the study (Arber, 2006; Gilbert, 2001; Ortlipp, 2008).

### **3.7.5 AUTHENTICITY**

*'Authenticity is demonstrated if researchers can show that they have represented a range of different realities (fairness)'* (Seale, 2002:105). I aimed to provide a fair, honest and balanced account of the participants' social lives. Thus the goal of my study was to use qualitative methods to accurately describe a social phenomenon in such a way that my description correlated with and represented the participants' views and voices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Neuman, 2006).

In order to enhance the authenticity of the research findings, I used various perspectives (realities) and contributions during my study and reported on the contradictions and conflicting values in order to address the criterion of fairness. Furthermore, I employed member checking and an audit trail to ensure that I had understood the participants' perceptions correctly and had captured and reported them accurately (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mbongwe, 2013).

### 3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed the methodological processes I employed in my exploration of young adults' biracial identity construction. I reflected on my role as researcher and then explained and justified the choices I had made. I focused on my selected meta-theoretical (postcolonial feminist epistemology) and methodological (qualitative methodological approach) paradigms. I justified my use of a narrative inquiry research design and discussed the different data collection and documentation techniques I employed. Throughout I discussed the strengths and challenges that I faced as a result of my methodological choices. The process of data analysis and interpretation was explained and I concluded the chapter with discussions of ethical considerations and quality criteria that applied. In the next two chapters I will present the results of the study in terms of the themes, subthemes and categories that emerged, and discuss and interpret the findings against the background of existing literature.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL OF THE STUDY: THEMES 1 AND 2

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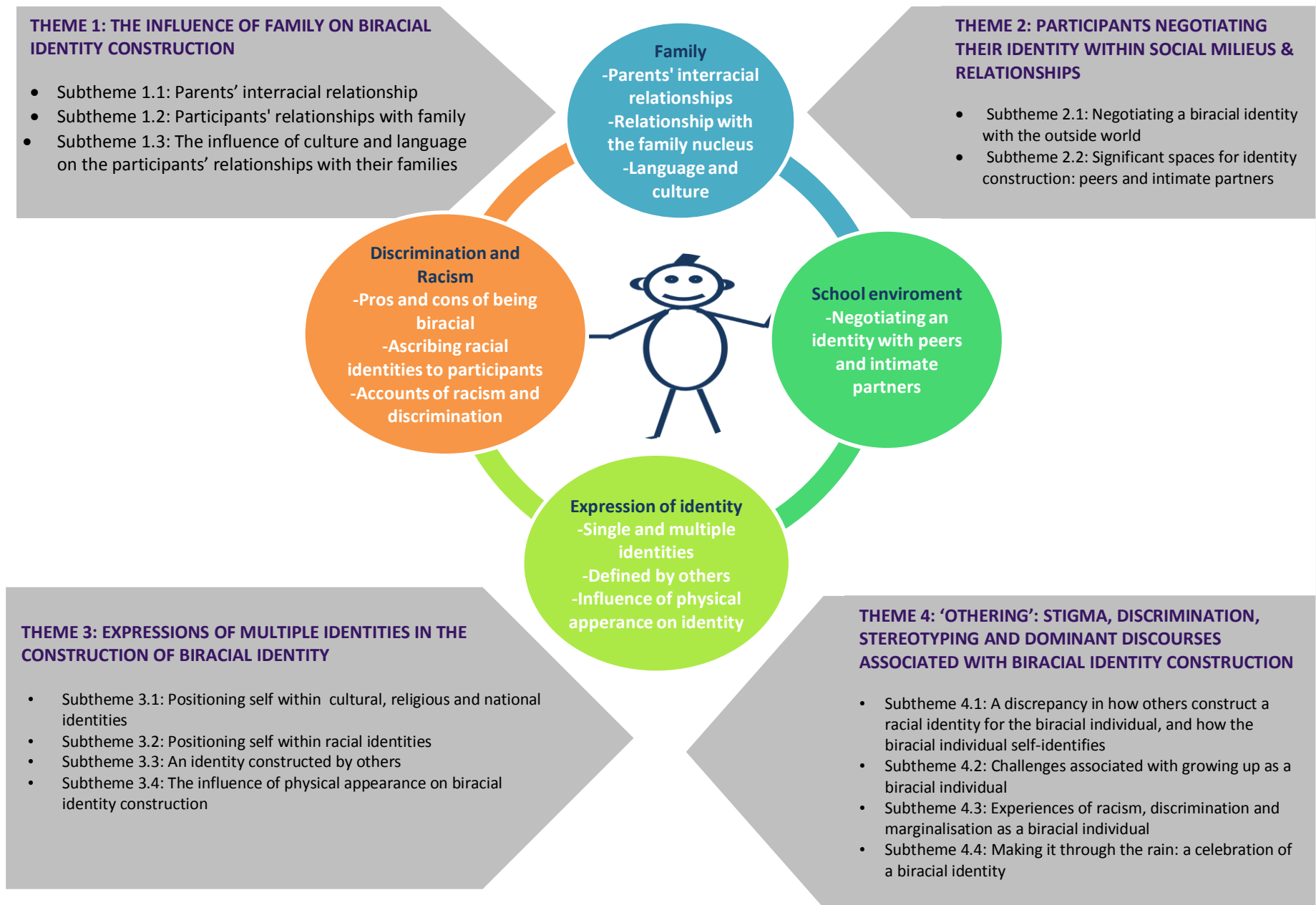
#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, I justified my selected research design and methodological strategies by explaining why I regarded these to be suitable for addressing the research questions and purpose of the study. In Chapters 4 and 5, I report on the results of the study, providing an overview of the themes that emerged in Figure 4.1 and integrate and interpret the results in terms of existing literature. I highlight correlations and discrepancies between the findings of this study and those reflected in existing literature. Throughout the chapters, potential contributions of the study to the existing racial identity theory knowledge base are highlighted.

Themes 1 and 2 are presented in Chapter 4, and Themes 3 and 4 in Chapter 5. The main themes that emerged are:

- (i) Theme 1: The influence of family on biracial identity construction (Chapter 4).
- (ii) Theme 2: Participants negotiating their identities within social milieus and relationships (Chapter 4).
- (iii) Theme 3: Expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity (Chapter 5).
- (iv) Theme 4: 'Othering': Stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity construction (Chapter 5).

Figure 4.1: Overview of themes and subthemes



In this chapter, I present Theme 1: *The influence of family on biracial identity construction*, and Theme 2: *Participants negotiating their identity within social milieus and relationships*. Before discussing each theme, I provide the inclusion and exclusion indicators (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), referring to the related subthemes and identified categories (Merriam, 1998). In line with postcolonial feminism and narrative inquiry traditions and in support of the themes I discuss, I include participants' verbatim quotations and written narratives, as well as extracts from field notes<sup>42</sup>. When reading Chapters 4 and 5, more specifically the participants' narratives, the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- The essence of the participants' narratives is included in Chapters 4 and 5. Examples of comprehensive transcripts and written narratives are included in Appendices G and H.
- Original transcripts and written narratives are available in PDF format as appendices on the accompanying CD-ROM.
- Where a certain word or phrase needs clarification (especially words relating to the South African context), a clarifying footnote is included in the document.
- Although the results of the study are presented as four themes, these themes should not be viewed in isolation. The participants' identity construction should be viewed as fluid and evolutionary, rather than as a fixed process, and as being influenced by the various contexts and relationships discussed in the four themes. Thus, the themes should be viewed as interacting systems/contexts and relationships (family, peers, communities and wider society) that have influenced the identity construction of the young biracial adults.
- I used Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework of multiracial identity development to study the themes, subthemes and categories. By doing so, the way in which the biracial individuals have constructed their identity is aligned with the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and temporal systems in their worlds. Gaventa's (2003; 2006) power cube theory was also utilised to interpret and understand the identity construction of the participants in relation to issues of power.
- The names of the participants have been changed to adhere to the ethical guideline of anonymity.
- As an introduction to my discussions, Table 4.1 summaries the themes, subthemes and categories dealt with in Chapter 4, in relation to the research questions of this study.

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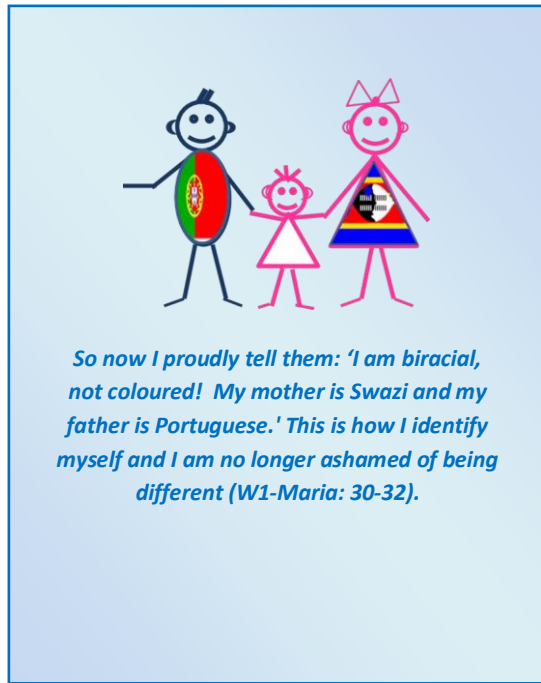
<sup>42</sup> Data source key used in Chapters 4 and 5: N1 - Narrative interview 1; N2 - Narrative interview 2; W1 - Written narrative 1; FN - Researcher's field notes

**Table 4.1: Themes, subthemes and categories related to research questions in Chapter 4**

Thesis chapter	Secondary research questions	Themes	Subthemes and categories
Chapter 4	How do intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of biracial young adults?	Theme 1: The influence of family on biracial identity construction	<b>Subtheme 1.1:</b> Parents' interracial relationship
			A: Proud narratives of how parents met each other
			B: Family's reactions to the parents' interracial relationship
			C: Acceptance of the parents' interracial relationship
			<b>Subtheme 1.2:</b> Participants' relationships with family
			D: Participants' relationships with their fathers
			E: Participants' relationships with their mothers
			F: Participants' relationships with their sibling(s)
			G: Participants' relationships with their extended families
			<b>Subtheme 1.3:</b> The influence of culture and language on the participants' relationships with their families
	H: Language affecting family relationships		
	I : Parents' cultural influences on identity		
	How do intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of biracial young adults? How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?	Theme 2: Participants negotiating their identities within social milieus and relationships	<b>Subtheme 2.1:</b> Negotiating a biracial identity with the outside world
			J: What are you? Naming and locating oneself socially
K: Where do I belong? Stuck in between two worlds			
L: The influence of media on biracial identity development			
<b>Subtheme 2.2:</b> Significant spaces for identity construction: Peers and intimate partners			
M: Education settings, peers and the biracial individual			
N: Intimate relationships and the biracial individual			

## 4.2 INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVES OF PARTICIPANTS

Before I discuss the four themes related to the research study, I use a narrative to introduce the participants in order to provide some background information and contextualisation.



Maria is a 20-year-old student and is originally from Swaziland. Currently she resides in Gauteng, where she is completing a BA degree in Administration in International Relations. She speaks English and SiSwati. Her mother, a Swazi, is black and her Portuguese father is white. Her parents are divorced and Maria lives with her mother in Swaziland. She has four siblings-two siblings from her mother's current marriage to a black Swazi man and two from her father's current marriage to a black Swazi woman. Growing up, Maria's physical appearance reportedly played an important role in the construction of her identity. At a young age, she sometimes longed to look white so as to be like her white peers and white father, while at other times she longed to look black so that she could fit in with

her black mother and siblings. She reflected on how she struggled to accept her ambiguous racial features and wanted to fit into a specific racial group. However, after she had arrived in South Africa to engage in her university studies, people's interest in her biracial heritage seemingly made her feel special, interesting and unique. This led her to embrace her 'otherness' and proudly identify as biracial.

Lucia is 20 years old and resides in Gauteng. She is currently enrolled at a university in Gauteng, where she is studying Anthropology, International Politics and Law. She can speak Afrikaans and English. Her mother is a white South African and her father a black South African. Lucia's father passed away when she was six years old. She has nine siblings (six sisters and three brothers) whose racial identities vary; some are biracial, while others are either white or black. Owing to the absence of her father, Lucia has experienced her identity construction as challenging. She had to gather information from his family members in order to gain knowledge about his black heritage. Although she has been influenced by her mother's Italian culture, Lucia seemingly constructs her identity in non-racial and cultural terms. If really pushed to choose a racial identity, she identifies as biracial, as she refuses to ignore or reject any part of her heritages.



*Race is no longer a factor when considering my identity; I think issues of my culture matter most to me. It's more about where I've come from. I don't feel the need to prove anything to anyone as I am my own person (W1-Lucia: 318-321).*



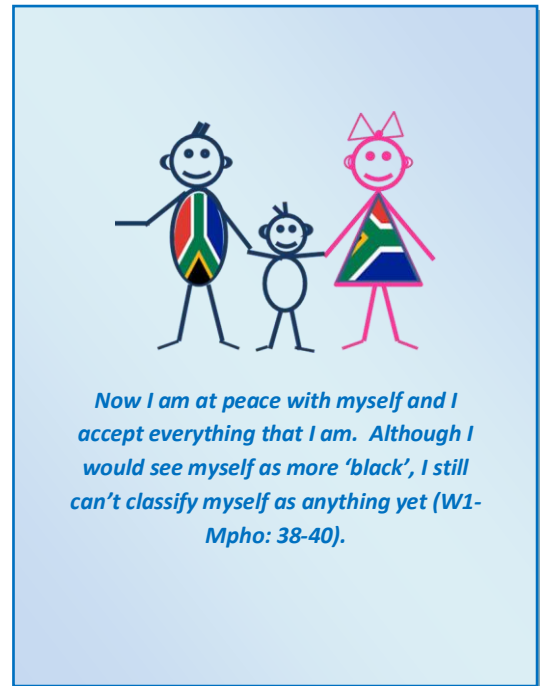
*I feel race is just a variant of who we are. As much as my race has played a larger part of who I am, I would not want to be judged on my race (W1- Vuyani: 120-123).*

Vuyani is 22 years old and resides in Gauteng. He is currently a fourth-year Economics student at a university in Gauteng. He speaks Xhosa and English. His father is a black South African and his mother a white American. His parents have been married for 26 years and Vuyani has three brothers. He is fluid in his identification; he identifies as black, sometimes as non-racial (human) and sometimes as Xhosa. Vuyani was reportedly strongly influenced by his father's culture while growing up. He therefore identifies primarily as black because of his affinity with the Xhosa culture. Although he primarily constructs his identity within his father's culture, Vuyani also identifies with his biracial heritage, but



dislikes being categorised into any racial category. Influenced by his siblings, Vuyani prefers to identify as 'human' and in non-racial terms.

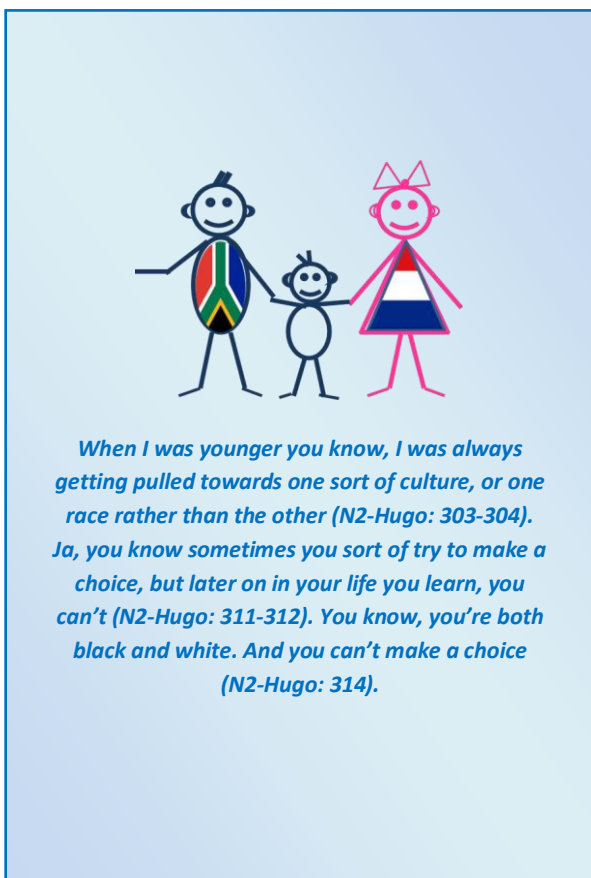
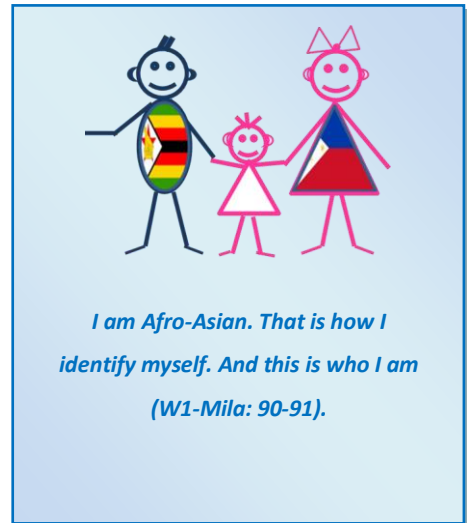
Mpho is 18 years old and resides in Gauteng. He is currently studying BCom marketing management at a university in Gauteng. He speaks Afrikaans and English. His father is white South African and his mother a black South African. His mother passed away in 2012. He has an older brother and a younger sister. At an early age Mpho identified as white. Facing rejection from his white peers, he gravitated to his black peers and started to identify more with his black heritage. Although he also identifies himself as mixed race, he does not necessarily classify as anything and at times chooses to identify in non-racial terms.



Christopher is 20, hails from Gauteng and studies in Cape Town (a BCom degree) and speaks English. His father is a black South African and his mother a white South African. He has four black siblings. He is the only biracial child in the family. Christopher prefers to identify as South African and does not like to be racially categorised and would rather tell the story of his biracial heritage. His interest in history stems from his desire to explore his heritage. He believes that one's identity is shaped in part by knowledge of one's family's cultural and historical background. His diverse heritage is important to him and he regards it as a part of who he is.

Mila is a 20-year-old student from Gauteng and is currently studying BCom Economics at a Gauteng university. She speaks Afrikaans and English. Her father is a black Zimbabwean and her mother is an Asian Filipino. Her father passed away in 1996.

Mila and her older brother live with their mother. Her mother's Filipino culture and Catholic religion have influenced Mila's identity construction as she identifies with both. While growing up, Mila apparently struggled with her biracial identity as she found it difficult to decide whether to identify as black or as Filipino. This problem with her identity allegedly affected Mila's self-esteem and she withdrew from her social environment. With the support of her mother, she learnt that she did not have to choose one heritage over the other, but could identify as both. Watching prominent biracial celebrities on television also made her realise that she was not alone in this world. Through the media Mila learnt the term Afro-Asian, and that is how she identifies today, thus acknowledging both her heritages.

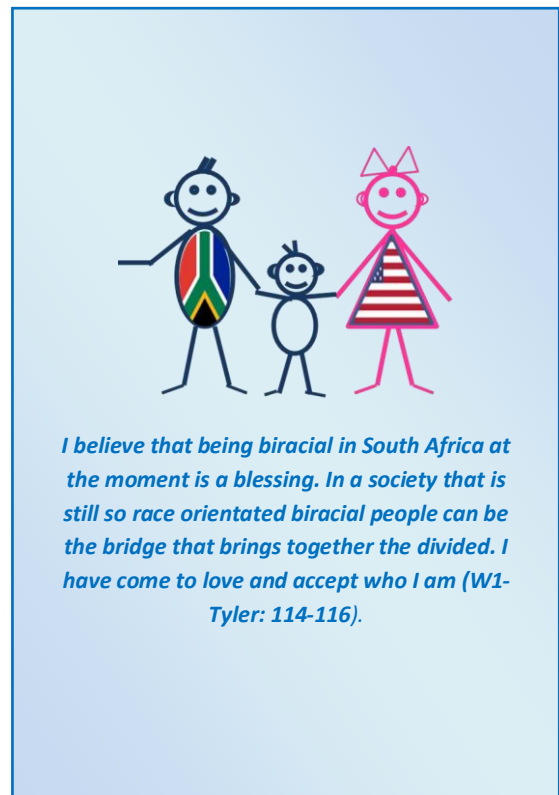


Hugo is 24 years old and lives in Gauteng. He has completed his university studies and is currently working as an engineer. He speaks Dutch, English, Afrikaans and French. His father is a black South African and his mother, who is white, comes from the Netherlands. His parents have been married for 28 years and he has an older sister. Growing up, Hugo often felt that he was pulled into two directions. Depending on circumstances and the people with whom he associated, he would feel drawn more to either his black or his white heritage. He particularly identifies with English-speaking South African peers, as he feels accepted by this social group. Hugo is content with the fact that he cannot choose between his two heritages as he prefers to identify with both, thus constructing a biracial identity.



Adrianna is 18 years old and lives in Gauteng. She is currently completing a BA (Law) degree at a Gauteng university. She speaks English and Yoruba. Her father is a white Italian and her mother a black Nigerian. Her parents are divorced and she lives with her mother. She has three siblings. Her two older siblings from her mother's previous relationship with a black Nigerian man are black and her younger brother is biracial like Adrianna. Living with her mother has influenced Adrianna's identity. As a result she identifies strongly with her mother's Nigerian nationality and Christian religion. Due to her father's absence from her life, Adrianna does not associate herself with her father's Italian culture, but does identify as a biracial individual. She views being biracial as a symbol that black and white people can live together in harmony.

Tyler is 18 years old, lives in Gauteng and is currently completing his high school diploma. His father is a black South African and his mother a white American. His parents are divorced and Tyler and his sister live with their mother. Tyler speaks English. While growing up, he constructed a white identity by cutting his afro short so that he could pass for white. He attributed this identity construction to his predominantly white school and neighbourhood, and to the fact that his black father was absent from his life at that particular time. His mother encouraged Tyler and his sister to embrace both heritages by consciously exposing them to both cultures. Tyler credits his mother's influence for the way he identifies today. He now proudly grows his afro and identifies as mixed race.



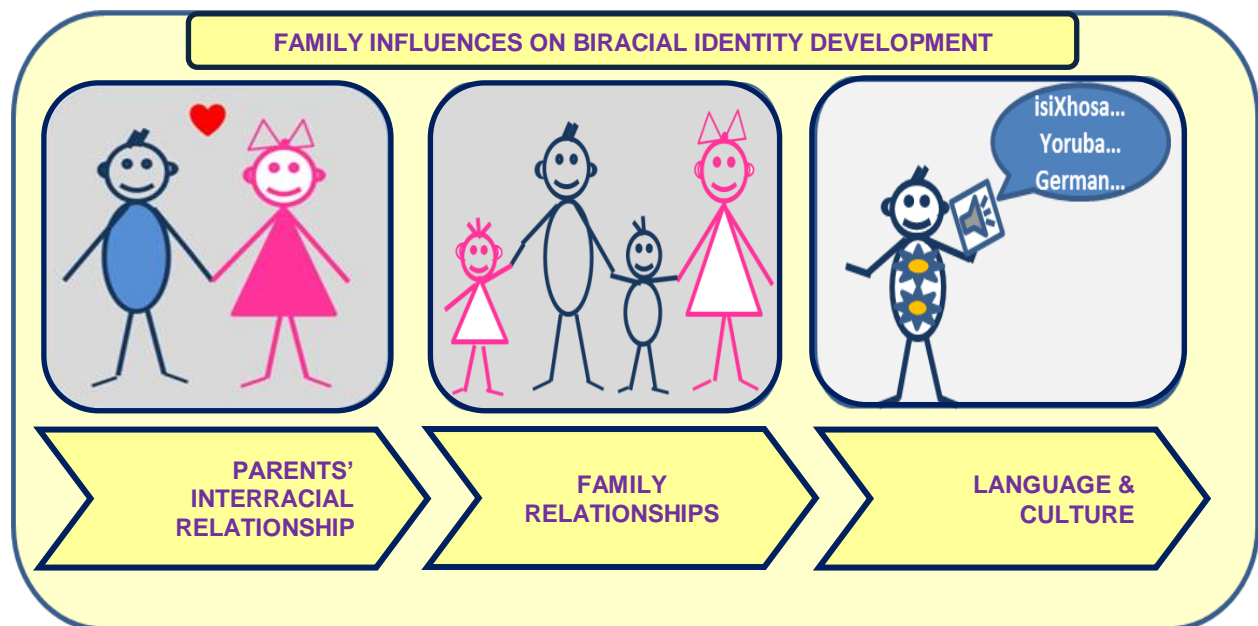


*I don't classify myself in just one race. If people do ask what race I am, I would say 'I'm biracial' or 'I'm mixed' (W1-Serena: 11-12).*

Serena is 19 years old and lives in Gauteng, where she is studying Education at a Gauteng university. She speaks English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. Her Welsh father is white and her mother is a black South African. She has a younger brother and lives with her mother as her parents are divorced. Serena loves her diverse family. She takes pride in knowing that she has a 'colourful' heritage and celebrates it publically by proudly identifying as biracial.

#### 4.3 THEME 1: THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The first theme encapsulates how parents, siblings and extended family influence the identity construction of young biracial participants. The subthemes that support this theme are: 1.1) parents' interracial relationship; 1.2) participants' relationship with family; and 1.3) the influence of culture and language on the participants' relationship with their parents and extended family. Figure 4.2 illustrates the subthemes that are represented in Theme 1, and Table 4.2 provides a summary of the related subthemes, categories and subcategories, as well as inclusion and exclusion indicators.



**Figure 4.2: Subthemes of Theme 1**

Chapter 4 focuses on answering the following secondary research questions posed in Chapter 1:

- How do intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of young biracial adults?
- How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?

**Table 4.2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1**

**Theme 1: The influence of family on biracial identity construction**

*I would have to say it is my mom and my dad. I think they have both made an effort to make sure that I know that I am not just a single race (N1-Tyler: 660-661).*

Subtheme 1.1: Parents' interracial relationship		This subtheme focuses on the impact of the parents' interracial relationship on the participants' identity construction, specifically focusing on narratives of (i) how their parents met and (ii) how the family's reactions to the parents' interracial relationship influenced their self-concept.
Subthemes and categories	Inclusion indicators	Exclusion indicators
<b>Category A: Proud narratives of how parents met each other</b>	This category includes data obtained from participants' discussions of how their parents met in the context of the apartheid struggle and in other contexts.	This category excludes data that does not refer to participant's parents and how they met each other.
	<b>a) Subcategory A1: Parents who met in the context of the apartheid struggle:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed their parents' involvement in the anti-apartheid movement and how they met each other during the anti-apartheid struggle.	This subcategory excludes data that refers to participants' parents meeting each other in other contexts, such as at university, <i>via modes of transportation</i> and music bringing parents together.
	<b>b) Subcategory A2: Finding love in an education context:</b> This subcategory includes data about how participants' parents met at university.	This subcategory excludes data that refers to participants' parents meeting each other in other contexts, such as the apartheid context, <i>via modes of transportation</i> and music bringing parents together.
	<b>c) Subcategory A3: Finding love using the same modes of transportation:</b> This subcategory includes data provided by participants on how their parents met <i>via transportation</i> .	This subcategory excludes data that refers to participants' parents meeting each other in other contexts, such as the apartheid context, university context and music bringing parents together.
	<b>d) Subcategory A4: Music bringing two people together:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how their parents met as a result of both being musicians.	The subcategory excludes data that refers to participants' parents meeting each other in other contexts, such as the apartheid context, university contexts and <i>via modes of transportation</i> .
<b>Category B: Family reactions to the parents'</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how their parents' family members were	This category excludes data in which participants discussed people's opposition to their own intimate

<b>interracial relationships</b>	opposed to the parents' interracial relationship.	interracial relationships and their family's acceptance of their parents' interracial relationship.
	<b>a) Subcategory B1: Opposition to the parents' interracial relationships as a result of racial differences:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families were opposed to the interracial relationship due to racial differences.	This subcategory excludes data that refers to the families of the participants' parents being opposed to the interracial relationship due to cultural differences.
	<b>b) Subcategory B2: Opposition to the parents' interracial relationships due to cultural differences:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families were opposed to the interracial relationship due to cultural differences.	This subcategory excludes data that refers to the families of participants' parents being opposed to the interracial relationship due to racial differences.
<b>Category C: Acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships</b>	This category includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families were accepting of the interracial relationship.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed their families' opposition to the interracial relationship.
	<b>a) Subcategory C1: Commonalities lead to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship due to common interests.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship after adapting to a specific ethnic culture and the diversity in the family.
	<b>b) Subcategory C2: Adapting to the partner's African culture leads to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship once the mother had adapted to the father's ethnic culture.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship due to shared interests and adapting to the diversity in the family.
	<b>c) Subcategory C3: Adapting to diversity in the family leads to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship after adapting to the diversity in the family.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship due to shared interests and adapting to a specific ethnic culture.

	<p><b>d) Subcategory C4: The birth of a baby leads to the acceptance of the parents' interracial relationship:</b>          This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship as a result of the birth of a grandchild in the family.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship after adapting to a specific ethnic culture and the diversity in the family, and sharing common interests.</p>
<b>Subtheme 1.2: Participants' relationships with family</b>	<b>This subtheme focuses on the participants' relationships with their family members.</b>	
<b>Category D: Participants' relationships with their fathers</b>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their fathers.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their mothers, sibling(s) and extended family.</p>
	<p><b>a) Subcategory D1: The influence of divorce on their relationships with their fathers:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how divorce affected their relationships with their fathers.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared narratives about the absence of a father-daughter relationship due to the father's passing, and close relationships with their fathers.</p>
	<p><b>b) Subcategory D2: Absence of a father-daughter relationship due to their fathers' passing:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how they yearned for a relationship with their fathers who had passed away.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared narratives of the influence of divorce on the relationship with the father and close relationships with the father</p>
	<p><b>c) Subcategory D3: Close relationships with fathers:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared their close relationships with their fathers.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants shared narratives about the absence of a father-daughter relationship due to their fathers' passing and the effect of divorce on their relationships with their fathers.</p>
<b>Category E: Participants' relationships with their mothers</b>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their mothers.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their fathers, sibling(s) and extended family.</p>
<b>Category F: Participants' relationships with their sibling(s)</b>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their sibling(s).</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their mothers, fathers and extended family.</p>
<b>Category G: Participants' relationships with their extended family</b>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their extended family.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed their relationships with their mothers, fathers and sibling(s).</p>



<b>Subtheme 1.3: The influence of culture and language on the participants' relationships with their families</b>	<b>This subtheme entails data in which the participants discussed their parents' language and culture.</b>	
<b>Category H: Language affecting family relationships</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed their parents' languages and also discussed how their own language barriers created distance and alienation between some family members.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed how language made them feel excluded and included in various peer groups.
	<b>a) Subcategory H1: Understanding an African language:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared their experiences of understanding an African language.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed families speaking in English so as to accommodate the biracial participants, and how language was a barrier that created distance and alienation between some family members.
	<b>b) Subcategory H2: Being accommodated for not understanding an African language:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared their experiences of families speaking English to accommodate the biracial participants.	This subcategory excludes data about participants who understood an African language, and about how language was a barrier that created distance and alienation between some family members.
	<b>c) Subcategory H3: Family relationships affected by language barriers:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how language was a barrier that created distance and alienation between some family members.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed families speaking English to accommodate the biracial participants and data about understanding an African language.
<b>Category I: Parents' cultural influences on identity</b>	This category includes data in which participants shared narratives on their a) mother's culture and belief system; b) father's culture and belief system; and c) conflicting views relating to their parents' cultures.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed how their parents' cultures influenced their construction of a cultural identity.

	<p><b>a) Subcategory I1: Mother's culture and belief system:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed their mothers' culture and belief system.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed their fathers' culture and belief system.</p>
	<p><b>b) Subcategory I2: Father's culture and belief system:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed their fathers' culture and belief system.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed their mothers' culture and belief system.</p>
	<p><b>c) Subcategory I3: Conflicting views relating to parents' culture:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how their own beliefs come into conflict with their parents' cultures.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data relating to participants not opposing or having conflicting opinions regarding their parents' cultures.</p>

#### 4.4 SUBTHEME 1.1: PARENTS' INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

This subtheme focuses on the effect of the interracial relationships of the parents on the young biracial adults' identity construction. The following categories are presented under Subtheme 1.1: (i) proud narratives of how parents met each other, (ii) family reactions to the parents' interracial relationships and (iii) acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships.

Within subtheme 1.1, participants' narratives about their parents' interracial relationships and the acceptance and opposition they faced from society and their families can be seen as a precursor to what participants could possibly experience in their own lives. In Chapter 5, I present the young biracial adults' memories and experiences of opposition to and rejection of their chosen identities. This opposition was experienced from society at large (i.e. a participant choosing to identify as mixed, but not being given the opportunity to choose that identity on an official form), or not having the chosen identity validated by peers (i.e. a participant identifying as mixed, but instead being ascribed a black identity by peers). It seems that at times the participants' chosen identities were opposed and invalidated, while at other times their chosen identities were accepted and validated by others through a constant negotiation of their identities internally and with the outside world.<sup>43</sup>

##### 4.4.1 CATEGORY A: PROUD NARRATIVES OF HOW PARENTS MET EACH OTHER

The pride that the participants felt in their biracial identity was influenced in part by how their parents met and formed an interracial relationship. The subcategories reflect how the young biracial adults shared narratives of their parents' meeting: (a) within the context of the apartheid struggle and in other contextual settings; (b) finding love in an education context; (c) finding love using the same modes of transportation; and (d) music bringing two people together. All the male participants (n=5, 5 males) shared narratives of how their parents met during the apartheid struggle. Other participants' (n=2, 2 females) parents met while studying at university; and two participants' (n=2, 2 females) parents met while using similar modes of transport. Only one participant (n=1, 1 female) mentioned that her parents met through a shared love of music.

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<sup>43</sup> How participants constructed their identities and how they experienced feedback from others regarding their identities is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

### a) Subcategory A1: Parents who met within the context of the apartheid struggle

In their conceptualisations of their identities, the majority of the participants took time and care to explain how their parents met and therefore how their own story began. The five male participants described how their parents met while in exile<sup>44</sup> and passionately narrated their parents' role during the anti-apartheid movement, as reflected in the following verbatim quotations:

- Mpho's parents were both musicians who met in Japan while involved in the anti-apartheid movement: *My mom was highly involved in the struggle and played an active role as an MK<sup>45</sup> Umkhonto we Sizwe member. My parents were both involved in performing arts, specifically music, and that is how they met. They met in Japan as both of them were involved in the political struggle (W1-Mpho: 6-9).*
- Tyler's parents met in Zimbabwe when working for the underground anti-apartheid movement: *My parents met in Zimbabwe in 1984. This was during the days of apartheid and my father, who was in the ANC<sup>46</sup> underground since the age of 18 lived in exile. My mom was working for an anti-apartheid movement in Zimbabwe. It was here that my parents met and got married (W1-Tyler: 5-8).*
- Vuyani's father met his mother during exile in the United States of America. Although his mother was not part of the political movement, he talked about her involvement in the Peace Corps to illustrate her dedication to human rights and her selfless dedication to improving the lives of others: *My mother from a young age joined the Peace Corps (an American NGO involved in teaching mostly in less developed countries). My father was a member of the ANC during the apartheid regime. He went into exile at a young age (W1-Vuyani: 5-7). My dad was in exile so he had to leave the country at a young age, so he went to England mostly and then the States, and met my mother (N1-Vuyani: 8-9).*

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<sup>44</sup> In South African history many people working against the apartheid government were forced into exile during the period 1960 to 1990 as a result of the harsh political climate. Many in exile moved to countries such as Tanzania, England and Zambia, where African National Congress (ANC) headquarters had been established (Stiftung, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in the English language means 'Spear of the Nation'. It was the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) and fought against the South African apartheid government.

<sup>46</sup> The ANC, which is currently the Republic of South Africa's governing political party, was formed during the apartheid era to fight for black people's rights.

Hugo and Christopher shared narratives on specific roles that their parents played within Umkhonto we Sizwe. Hugo described how his parents were involved in offering educational support and training to young people who had been involved in the 1976 Soweto uprisings<sup>47</sup>:

- *He originally escaped to Mozambique and joined Umkhonto we Sizwe. The MK sent him around to many countries for training and assignments, and eventually sent him to the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (Somafo)<sup>48</sup>, a school created by the ANC in Tanzania to accommodate some of the youths that fled the country following the 1976 uprisings (W1-Hugo:3-6). My mother came from the Netherlands. During her studies she became involved with various groups who were sympathetic to the plight of the South African Freedom Fighters. Eventually, she was offered an opportunity to be a volunteer teacher in Botswana for a year. This she completed, and upon her return she immediately applied to play a similar role in Somafo. She was accepted, and a year later she moved to Tanzania where she met my father. I can honestly say that I feel very proud of this family history (W1-Hugo: 14-19).*

Christopher recalled how his mother joined the political struggle as a freedom fighter and activist: *She went to UCT (N1-Christopher: 124) and there she met likeminded students that were unhappy with the politics in the country and she joined the Student Representative Council (N1-Christopher: 127-128). And through the SRC, they interacted with other student bodies and student structures and that's how she joined the ANC and became an activist and a freedom fighter (N1-Christopher: 130-132). He further expressed how his father was involved in Umkhonto we Sizwe: He became a soldier for Umkhonto We Sizwe, he was a commander (N1-Christopher: 192-193). So through those structures that's how my parents met each other (N1-Christopher: 195-196). Christopher proudly related how his mother gave up the privileges she enjoyed as a white person and interrupted her studies to fight against the apartheid government:*

- *She abandoned all of her privilege, originally she was studying genetics (N1-Christopher: 212). She's a geneticist, but she decided that this thing is so wrong that*

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<sup>47</sup> The Soweto Uprisings refer to the events of 16 June 1976, when many high school learners from several Sowetan schools protested against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This historic day is now a public holiday in South Africa and is known as Youth Day. Youth Day is commemorated in remembrance of the many young people who died on that day at the hands of the police, who used tear gas and live bullets against them.

<sup>48</sup> The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) was established in the early 1970s in Tanzania as an ANC political school. Young men and women participated in educational and political awareness programmes in which they equipped themselves in order to contribute to the ANC's liberation efforts to create a democratic South Africa <http://www.somafcotrust.org.za/solomon-mahlangu-freedom-college-somafco/>.

*she has to become involved in politics (N1-Christopher: 215-216). She sacrificed her white advantage for something that she believed in (N1-Christopher: 220).*

Participants' pride in their parents' involvement in the apartheid struggle is also evident in my field notes:

*Participants shared how proud they felt that their parents fought against apartheid. Hearing their story makes me realise how much their parents sacrificed to be part of the struggle; not only did they put their own lives in danger, but also the lives of their families. It seems as if most of the participants' parents met while living in exile (FN: 13 April 2013).*

In Subcategory 1.1, participants expressed pride in their parents' involvement in the fight for democracy in the South African context. Their parents met under challenging circumstances during which time interracial intimacy was against the law<sup>49</sup>. Their stories illustrate how their parents risked their lives and livelihoods by being involved in the anti-apartheid movement. More specifically, these stories reveal how their parent's interracial relationships were an example of how love could conquer all during the dark time of racism and discrimination in South Africa. Individuals involved in interracial relationships formed during the apartheid era and the period of colonisation were exposed to extreme racism and discrimination as a result of the state enforced apartheid laws, which were imposed to maintain racial segregation, racial categories and identities. These individuals took great risks in their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement. They risked not only their own lives, but also the lives of their families. Participants reported how their parents displayed bravery in trying to bring about social justice to make the world a better place.

The subcategories in the following sections capture how the rest of the participants' parents met each other. Participants shared narratives on the diverse and colourful situations in which their parents met, ranging from meeting through music to meeting on a plane. This illustrates that love had no contextual boundaries in these love stories.

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<sup>49</sup> In Chapter 1, I discussed how apartheid policies affected interracial relationships and biracial individuals in South Africa.

**Think box 4.1: My mom being a part of the anti-apartheid movement**

*Writing this thesis led me to question my own biracial heritage and led me to ask my mom about her own story in order to understand my own heritage and identity better. My mother was involved in the anti-apartheid movement, something I am very proud of. She mentioned that from a young age she wanted to be a journalist, and she followed world events with eagerness.*

*She followed all major political events of the 70s, but for some reason the Soweto uprising in June 1976, changed my mum's world upside down. She was 16 years old doing grade 11 and she was deeply touched by the South African story. She thought it was unconceivable that a whole nation (specifically people of colour) was not allowed to vote, or move freely in their own country. Apartheid shook her core, she thus felt she had to do something, and she joined the anti-apartheid movement and the rest is history... The anti-apartheid movement became the biggest humanitarian movement in world history, and my mum with her strong sense of social justice was not going to watch it from the sidelines, she embraced it and fully participated in all sorts of activities. Thanks to her participation in the anti-apartheid movement, that is how she met my South African exiled father and that is how me and my siblings came to this world.*

**b) Subcategory A2: Finding love in an education context**

In this subcategory two female participants, Serena and Mila, report on how their parents met in a non-political context. They narrated how their parents met at institutions of higher education:

- *My mom was studying at UCT. My father is a musician so he was studying to become a musician, and he was also studying close to UCT and they met through school (N1-Serena: 23-25).*
- *They met in the Netherlands as they were doing their CA Board exams there (N2-Mila: 7-8).*

**c) Subcategory A3: Finding love using the same modes of transport**

Maria and Adrianna reflected on how their parents met while using the same modes of transport. Maria's parents met each other at a bus stop and Adrianna's parents met on a flight to Ghana. They told their parents' stories:

- *My dad just always saw her getting on a bus to go to work. He saw her once and then every morning it was like seven a.m. he would just park his car there and wait for her to get on the bus, and then eventually my mom noticed him and then I think they approached each other, and then they just started dating (N2-Maria: 120-123).*

- *My parents met in an airplane. They were both on their way to Ghana (N1-Adrianna: 30). And it just happened that they sat next to each other and then they started talking and they went on a few dates and then they ended up together (N1-Adrianna: 32-34).*

#### **d) Subcategory A4: Music bringing two people together**

Lucia shared how her parents met as a result of both being musicians and sharing a love for music. Lucia explained how her parents' love for music influenced her identity, as she too has a passion for singing:

- *She fell madly in love with my dad as they were both musicians and the music created a great connection between them. This perhaps explains my intense passion for singing and the arts in general (W1-Lucia: 83-84).*

Although these participants' parents met under 'peaceful circumstances', their stories are no less relevant than those of the parents who were involved in the anti-apartheid movement. It is also important to note that even though the two previous narratives show an absence of outward resistance to the apartheid movement, the apartheid policies pertaining to interracial relationships still applied and affected their lives.

#### **4.4.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category A: Proud narratives of how parents met each other**

In this category, the participants shared narratives about how their parents met. Specifically, participants took pride in sharing how their parents were involved in the anti-apartheid movement. The current study contributes to the existing knowledge base by highlighting how the anti-apartheid movement influenced the identity construction of biracial individuals. I argue that the 'family genesis' of biracial individuals is the cornerstone of their existence and of their identity. Furthermore, I posit that the parents' histories and backgrounds seem to have instilled a sense of pride in the young adults' biracial heritage and identity formation. Tracy and Robins (2007) state that by expressing pride, individuals may communicate success to others and enhance their social status. Furthermore, feelings of pride can maintain and promote an individual's social status and group acceptance, thereby preventing group rejection. An emotion like pride is elicited when an individual directs attention to the self, activating self-representations. It seems that the participants in this study shared narratives about their parents' involvement in the anti-apartheid movement to project a positive self-representation and identity to the world (Tracy & Robins, 2007).



In the past, individuals who fought against the apartheid system were viewed as enemies of the state and were regarded negatively by society. They were excluded socially and seen as outsiders. However, in the new democratic South Africa, such individuals are likened to heroes such as Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, Helen Suzman and Oliver Tambo, all stalwarts who are highly regarded in society. Currently individuals who fought against apartheid enjoy privileged social status. In line with this trend, participants in this study have used their parent's anti-apartheid experiences to construct identities that are associated with a privileged social status in society, i.e. identities that place them in the in-group.

In the above narratives it is evident that participants are proud of their parents who were anti-apartheid activists and took a stand against injustice and suffered hardships, such as being separated from their families and friends as a result of being exiled by the national government. The white parents in this study renounced the privileges given to them by the apartheid government and dedicated their lives to combating injustice. Parents from different backgrounds and racial identities became involved in the anti-apartheid movement and provided an invaluable service to their country and to their fellow Africans. Thus, narratives about how their parents fought in the anti-apartheid movement form part of the young adults' legacy and identity. Participants feel privileged to have parents who contributed to the establishment of the free and democratic South Africa in which they live and seem to indirectly view their biracial identity as privileged. The findings correlate with the view of Saunders (2011). These findings merit further research in terms of the relationship between the socio-political context of South Africa (specifically apartheid) and the construction of a positive self-identity by young South African adults with a biracial heritage.

#### **4.4.2 CATEGORY B: FAMILY REACTIONS TO THE PARENTS' INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Another aspect which participants foregrounded in discussing their identity formation is how family members reacted to their parents' interracial relationship. Not only did their parents reportedly experience opposition in the form of apartheid policies in society, but many of them allegedly also experienced opposition from their immediate and extended families. Although this was indicated as a difficult period for their parents, participants expressed feelings of pride in terms of their parents' ability to continue loving one another despite opposition from various systems (family and society). Participants' narratives depict how in a racialised world, their parents' interracial relationships went against societal norms, potentially predicting how they as

biracial individuals could experience difficulty in their identity construction. Hence, being from two racial groups would go against the tide of constructing a sovereign identity far removed from society's strict racial classifications and benchmarked racial identities.

The following subcategories capture the grounds on which families were reportedly opposed to the participants' parents' interracial relationships: (a) opposition to the parents' interracial relationships owing to racial differences and (b) opposition to the parents' interracial relationships owing to cultural differences. The majority of participants (n= 7, 3 males, 4 females) reported opposition from families to their parents' interracial relationship owing to racial differences; while three participants (n=3, 2 males, 1 female) indicated cultural differences as the causal factor.

**a) Subcategory B1: Opposition to the parents' interracial relationships owing to racial differences**

Participants stated that their grandparents and extended family expressed disapproval of the interracial relationship of their parents in various ways. The following verbatim extracts provide evidence:

- Adrianna remarked how her white Italian father's family was unhappy as a result of the interracial relationship: *I don't think my father's family was so happy about it. (N1-Adrianna: 80). I think it's more of a 'white thing' for them to stick with white people (N1-Adrianna: 82).*
- Mpho's white South African father's family was not accepting of his black mother: *They didn't accept my mother and if there were dinners, they'd invite his ex's to spite him (N1-Mpho: 383-384).*
- Serena's black South African mother's family and her white Welsh father's family were both shocked when introduced to a person from a different racial group: *I think they were shocked at first, because he was the first person who introduced someone from a different race into his family (N1-Serena: 39-40).*
- Lucia mother's white Italian family formally disowned her because of her involvement with a black man: *At 17 she fell in love with my stepdad, and only problem was that he was non-white (half Swazi, half Indian-Muslim). Her family arranged a meeting and formally disowned her; they had told my mother that if she wanted to have a coloured baby she would have to reclassify her race and abandon the family name and marry my stepdad (W1-Lucia: 41-44).*

- Mila's Asian Filipino mother's family was taken aback when they found out that her father was black: *I think from my mom's side it was a bit different because they have never seen an African man (N2-Mila: 25-26). So it was a bit hard for my grandfather to accept that they will be getting married (N2-Mila: 28).*

Hugo said that the family opposition came mainly from his black Xhosa father's extended family. This rejection was because his Dutch mother was white and his father's family felt that he was marrying 'the enemy' as a result of the family's experience of the apartheid regime: *A lot of them didn't like the idea of him being with a white woman. Don't forget when they were young, whites were the enemy. I think for them they saw it as a betrayal on his part (N1-Hugo: 299-301). Not realising that my mother was actually one of the people who was fighting against it (fighting against apartheid). She had obviously nothing to do with the Afrikaans government but they saw her as Dutch. She's got that same sort of accent as a lot of the Afrikaners do, so they see it as you know he married a Boer (N1-Hugo: 306-308).* Hugo's white Dutch family were also shocked when his mother brought a black man home as her husband:

- *You know my mother brought her husband back from Tanzania, it was a bit of a shock for them because they'd never met a black person before (N1-Hugo: 76-77).*

Tyler stated that his white American grandfather expressed shock: *My mom's dad, I think it was a shock for him you know. First of all he didn't expect his daughter to go to Africa. I think that was the first big thing for him and then to come back with an African husband was (laugh), I think, it was a transition for him (N1-Tyler: 95-97).* Tyler went on to explain that his white American grandparents were not really against the interracial relationship, but were concerned about how their children would navigate a racially segregated world as biracial individuals:

- *So for him he was less worried about my mom and my dad getting married and more about us, me and my sister the way society would treat us (N2-Tyler: 16-17).*

Five participants (Adrianna, Mpho, Serena, Lucia and Tyler) therefore narrated that their white families were opposed to the interracial relationships of their parents, while Hugo and Serena stated that their black families were also opposed to the interracial union. The only Asian family (Mila) included in the study was seemingly also against the interracial relationship.

**b) Subcategory B2: Opposition to the parents' interracial relationships owing to cultural differences**

Participants described how their white and Asian mothers experienced cultural intolerance from members of their fathers' black African families as they did not share their fathers' ethnic culture and had no knowledge of the African cultural beliefs, traditions and practices. Mila and Vuyani specifically discussed how their mothers were not accepted into the fathers' African families as they were unable to perform roles assigned to women within the culture (such as cooking for the family and dressing in a specific, respectable manner):

- *She wasn't like other cultural woman. Like she can't cook pap<sup>50</sup>, she can't do the things that black women can do (N2-Mila: 34-35).*
- *When we were very young, my grandmother used to argue or fight a lot with my mother. She never really accepted my mother because you know in black cultures, as a daughter you grow up knowing what to do. You supposed to cook, you can't just smoke out in the open and my mom is this American lady and you know she doesn't know anything about culture (N1-Vuyani: 463-466).*

Hugo's father did not fulfil expectations and follow cultural traditions as he did not pay lobola to his mother's white family, therefore his father's African family rejected his mother and refused to recognise the marriage: *Some of them completely reject her from the family because he never paid lobola (N1-Hugo: 259).* Hugo explained his understanding of lobola:

- *Lobola is basically, a payment. In Xhosa culture when you marry a woman that woman gets brought into your family and you pay that family of that woman (N1-Hugo: 264-265). Of course in Dutch culture it would be seen as buying and that would be completely unacceptable (N1-Hugo: 270-271).*

In my field notes I reflected as follows on the interviews during which stories of the parents' interracial union were related:

*Listening to the interviews, it seems that the parents' families mainly experienced shock more than a total rejection of the interracial relationship. Several factors seem to make families hesitant about the interracial relationship, such as culture. Some parents, specifically the mothers, were not accepted as they either did not conform to their husband's culture nor had knowledge of their role as a 'woman' in the African culture. I also find it interesting that Tyler's grandparents were concerned about how the biracial children would fair in a society that is racially segregated. As people usually think that biracial children will face their whole lives rejected and lonely because of being from two racial groups in society (FN: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*

<sup>50</sup> Pap is a traditional porridge made from ground maize meal (corn). It is the staple food for people of various African cultures in South Africa.

#### **4.4.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category B: Family reactions to the parents' interracial relationships**

According to McFadden (2001), it is not uncommon for individuals to experience opposition from loved ones, including immediate family and friends, when confronted with a relationship across the racial divide. The results of the current study correlate with the findings of Tomishma (2003) and Sechrest-Ehrhardt (2012), which indicated family opposition as an obstacle that interracial couples have to overcome. The opposition experienced from both white and non-white families in the current study is also reflected in several other studies that highlight the trend among families of colour to encourage marriage within their own culture (Killian, 1997; Miller, Olson & Fazio, 2004; Phoenix & Owen, 2000), and the opposition of white families to interracial relationships on account of racial differences (Mojapelo-Batka, 2008). My study also revealed that black families are opposed to interracial relationships due to the partner not having an African identity, whilst white families are opposed to such relationships because of the partners' different racial identities. This attitude resulted in the participants' parents experiencing opposition to their interracial relationships from family members, as also concluded by Smith (2010).

Another aspect of the opposition present within black families, as discussed by Hugo, relates to the idea of so-called 'selling out' by marrying a white person, rejecting one's black heritage. Yet another factor that contributes to such opposition is the general distrust of white people. This is also highlighted by Child (2002) and Sullivan (2005), who maintain that interracial relationships are often viewed as signifying that one is removed from the black community and has a negative image of oneself as a black individual and the black community in general. Some individuals may even feel that marrying a white person is an indication of the rejection of the black race and identity, and buying into the dominant belief held by whites that blacks are inferior. Sullivan (2005) reiterates that a black person who is in a relationship with a white person may be seen as wanting to be white, and that racial loyalty to people of colour may therefore be questioned. In Hugo's narrative, for example, it seems that his father's black family had a hard time accepting his mother because of a general distrust of whites by black people in the South African context as a result of the painful history of race relations, racism and the country's apartheid and colonial past.

These results further correlate with findings by Child (2002) and Tomishma (2003), who state that opposition to interracial relationships is often masqueraded as a concern for biracial children, usually expressed by white families (in this case Tyler's grandfather). Families may worry that children produced from racial mixing will be stigmatised as misfits who do not belong to one specific racial group in society. Mojapelo-Batka (2008), a South African scholar, states that grandparents usually oppose the interracial union as they believe that the racial identities of children born from such a union will not be accommodated in the existing racialised social context. Child (2002) explains that opposition to biracial children has a historical basis as it was once believed that biracial children were flawed and physically inferior, and that the perception of these children as mentally inferior or 'mixed up' still persists in certain contexts.

A new insight that emerged from my study relates to the role of African culture in the identity construction of black South African families. The mothers of the young biracial South African adults who participated in this study were rejected by their husbands' African families on account of their ignorance regarding African culture and the traditional role and responsibilities of women, such as cooking traditional foods and wearing appropriate clothing in the presence of African families. Furthermore, Hugo's mother was rejected by her husband's African family as he had not paid Lobola for her. The custom of paying lobola, which is found mainly in Southern Africa, requires a man to make a payment in the form of either money or cattle to the bride's family for her hand in marriage. The main purpose of this transaction is to create a relationship between the two families and to show the bride's family that the man is able to provide for his future wife. The white and Asian mothers in this study faced opposition from their African husbands' families as they were unaware of the African customs and traditions.

#### **4.4.3 CATEGORY C: ACCEPTANCE OF THE PARENTS' INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

One distinct aspect that was evident in the narratives relates to how the young biracial adults' parents seemingly demonstrated resilience during the resistance they faced from their families and society regarding their interracial union. Participants recalled how their parents adapted to the challenging circumstances and sought acceptance from their partners' families. Some of these stories seem to testify to how individuals adapt to their contexts and surroundings in order to be accepted by a group. It appears that their parents actively sought to be accepted by their partners' families. Even though their partners' parents looked physically different and came from a world that was vastly different from their own, they searched for commonalities to bridge the

gap between them. According to the participants, their parents had to prove to both their families and to society in general that their relationships were 'okay'.

In this search for validation and approval it became evident that certain actions and events lead to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships. These are: (a) finding commonalities; (b) adapting to the partner's African culture; (c) adapting to diversity in the family; and (d) the birth of a baby. Participants (n=4, 2 female, 2 male) discussed how families adapt to the diversity of the interracial family. Three participants (n=3, 1 female, 2 male) stated that their mothers' adaptation to their fathers' cultures led to acceptance of their interracial relationships. Other participants (n= 3, 3 male) shared stories in which commonalities led to the acceptance of the interracial family. Finally, one participant (n=1, 1 female) stated that the birth of her sister led to acceptance of her mother's interracial union.

**a) Subcategory C1: Commonalities lead to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships**

Participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship as a result of sharing common interests. Vuyani and Hugo explained that commonalities between their black South African fathers and white fathers-in-law brought them together and led to the acceptance of their fathers into their mothers' families. Both stated that their fathers' knowledge of farming led to them being accepted by their fathers-in-law:

- *The one day he saw my dad in the garden and he was just pulling these carrots out. So he shouted at my dad and my dad was like, 'Now you can't do this with carrots, you have to do this to it' and when the carrots came up again they were bigger. So from then my dad always got along with the family. I guess that was the accepting point (N1-Vuyani: 524-526).*
- *They started speaking and it turns out that you know my father, he also comes from a bit of a farming background and as soon as they realised this, the two just got along (N1-Hugo: 93-94).*

Another scenario involves Tyler's dad and grandfather who found common ground as they were both intellectuals:

- *I mean my dad is an intellectual and my grandfather is a complete intellectual (N1-Tyler: 75). So I mean he fell in love with my dad and my dad fell in love with him (N1-Tyler: 84).*

**b) Subcategory C2: Adapting to partners' African culture leads to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships**

Participants shared how their parents' families accepted the interracial relationship once it became apparent that their mothers were willing to adapt to their fathers' ethnic cultures. Vuyani and Mila indicated that their mothers adapted to their fathers' African cultures:

- *So my mom had a lot of fights with my grandmother, but after a while they actually became very close and I think my mother in a way kind of started understanding where they are coming from. For example, she wouldn't just smoke out in the open; she'd go into her room and smoke there. She changed the way she dressed. They respect her now because she's adapted into it (the culture) (N1-Vuyani: 498-501).*
- *They taught her how to cook African food and also the way she should dress. We had two weddings, the traditional and then the white wedding, and in the traditional wedding they taught her what to wear and what everything symbolises (in the African culture) (N2-Mila: 42-44).*
- *Mpho shared how his father's fluency in African languages led to acceptance by his mother's family: They were welcoming because, here comes this white guy and he can speak African languages (N1-Mpho: 396-397). A very charming man who speaks to them in their language of choice (N1-Mpho: 401). So they accepted it, they were very warm and open to him (N1-Mpho: 408).*

**c) Subcategory C3: Adapting to diversity in the family leads to acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships**

Being open to the notion of diversity within their families allegedly led to some families' acceptance of the union. This is evident in the following extracts taken from participants' narrations:

- *Maria's grandfather was also involved in an interracial relationship: My grandfather was okay with it, because he came to Swaziland and he is dating a black woman now (N1-Maria: 346-347).*
- *Serena mentioned other family members' attitudes to interracial relationships: In my family everyone is happy and has different racial partners (W1-Serena: 34). So I am sure they were shocked at first, on both sides. But after a while they got used to it, because my aunt got married now to a white man and he is Afrikaans (N1-Serena: 45-46).*



- Hugo stated that his mother's sister later married a Turkish man, which made the family more diverse: *My mother's sister married a Turkish man later on (N1-Hugo: 76).*
- Vuyani's father's family seemingly bragged about the diversity in their family as having a white partner elevated the status of the father's family: *They kind of in a way bragged about it, because for guys it is like you hit the jackpot you know (N1-Vuyani: 447-448). I would say black people see hooking up with a white girl as better than hooking up with a black girl (N1-Vuyani: 451-452).*

**d) Subcategory C4: The birth of a baby leads to the acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships**

Lucia appeared to be the only participant whose mother was seemingly accepted and welcomed back into her own family due to the birth of her sister: *After Tania's birth, they kind of like accepted them again (N1-Lucia: 253).*

**Think box 4.2: Acceptance of my parents' interracial relationship**

*I remember living in exile amongst a colorful community of people fighting against the apartheid movement. My parents' interracial relationship was the norm as many of their friends and neighbours were also involved in interracial relationships and had biracial children. Also, my mum's family is very progressive and my grandparents had no issues accepting my South African dad.*

**4.4.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category C: Acceptance of the parents' interracial relationships**

According to Sullivan (2005), family approval is dynamic and many couples have family members whose opinions towards the interracial family do change. Tomishima (2003) reiterates that although families may initially disapprove of an interracial relationship, they may adapt over time and eventually learn to accept interracial families as the relationship progresses (Sullivan, 2005). Sullivan (2005) also found that once parents become better acquainted with the partner, race becomes less important. However he cautions that this does not mean that race in general becomes less important to the family, but rather that family members can claim that an individual's racial identity is less salient (Sullivan, 2005). This study found that acceptance was facilitated by commonalities between family members, and by other family members also engaging in interracial relationships, thus increasing the diversity in the family. Furthermore,

Sullivan (2005) states that the birth of a child usually leads to acceptance of the interracial family and can reunite families, as seen in the case of Lucia's mother.

A new insight that relates to the South African cultural context is that acceptance despite cultural differences was seemingly acquired when the participants' mothers adapted to their African fathers' cultures and traditions. When the mothers of the young biracial South African adults accepted the gender roles expected within the African culture into their identity, they were included in their husbands' African families. Both white and Asian female partners were willing to participate in the prescribed African customary practices to gain acceptance from their partners' African families. It is interesting to note a patriarchal tone in the participants' narratives that tell how their fathers were accepted because of their knowledge of a topic, thus being revered for their intellect, whereas their mothers had to perform specific gender roles such as cooking and serving the family to be accepted into the African family. Men seem to be valued for their intellect and women for being able to perform traditional gender roles within their families in order to be accepted. This may, however, be related to the African culture and how the various genders are viewed within this group. As these are mere hypotheses, this possibility requires further investigation.

#### **4.5 SUBTHEME 1.2: PARTICIPANTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY**

Jackson (2009) states that family relationships are influential in the identity development of biracial individuals, since greater exposure and proximity to parents, siblings and extended family members and a certain heritage can lead to a stronger connection to that specific racial identity. Furthermore, the family plays an important role in identity construction as the family is the main agent of socialisation during the first five years of life when the child learns that his/her identity is somehow linked to the parents' identities (Bowlby, 2007; Roth, 2005). The relationship with family is particularly important for biracial individuals as more support and reassurance is needed in constructing an identity within a racially divided society.

The parents of the majority of the participants in this study were divorced or separated, consequently they lived with a single parent, which is characteristic of many South African families<sup>51</sup>. Hugo, Mpho and Vuyani's parents remained married, but Tyler, Maria, Adrianna and Serena's parents were divorced and Christopher's parents were separated. Lucia and Mila experienced their fathers' passing away at a young age. In most cases the father figure was

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<sup>51</sup> According to statistics South Africa 2011, only a third of children are growing up with both of their parents and 48% are growing up with an absent but living father (Jones, 2011).

therefore reported to have been absent. This resulted in the majority (seven out of ten) of the participants living with their mothers, which seemingly influenced the outcome of the participants' chosen identities, as discussed in Chapter 5.

In Subtheme 1.2 the influence of their families on the participants' identity formation is discussed by focusing on relationships. The following categories support this subtheme: (i) participants' relationships with their fathers; (ii) participants' relationships with their mothers; (iii) participants' relationships with their siblings(-s); and (iv) participants' relationships with their extended families. With the exception of one participant (Mpho), most of the other participants (n=6, 4 female, 2 male) indicated that they had a positive relationship with their mothers.

#### 4.5.1 CATEGORY D: PARTICIPANTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR FATHERS

Participants shared their experiences of their relationships with their fathers in terms of the following subcategories: (a) influence of divorce on the relationship with their father (n=3, 2 female, 1 male); (b) absence of a father-daughter relationship as a result of their fathers' passing (n=2, 2 female); and (c) close relationships with their father (n=2, 2 male).

##### a) Subcategory D1: The influence of divorce on the relationship with their fathers

Five of the ten participants reported that their biological parents were divorced or separated, and that they lived with their mothers. Three participants (Serena, Adrianna and Tyler) discussed the effects of divorce on their relationships with their fathers in more detail:

- Serena shared that she was closer to her mother: *My father, well I love him to bits but because I don't see him often I am not as close to him as I am with my mom (N1-Serena: 113-114).*
- Adrianna also spent more time with her mother as a result of the divorce: *He is involved with my life but I do obviously spend more time with my mom, and I speak to her about more personal things (N1-Adrianna: 87-88).*

Tyler talked about how his father's leaving home affected him deeply: *When I turned 7 my parents got a divorce and for a long time this wounded me deeply. My mom, my sister and I stayed in Pretoria while my dad moved to Limpopo (W1-Tyler: 17-19).* Tyler described his relationship with his father by naming it 'black dad syndrome'. He explained that his father grew up 'mirroring' his own grandfather, who placed an emphasis on providing economic rather than emotional support to the family: *A lot of my friends are also black and we call it 'black dad*

*syndrome* (N1-Tyler: 146). His grandfather showed his love by ensuring that Tyler's father received an education: *He showed him in a different way, he showed it by sending him to school, by making sure that he went to University* (N1-Tyler: 150-151). Their shared interest in politics and books allegedly brought them closer over the past few years: *I have wanted to get into politics, but as of late it is a serious thing for me and I mean I have been able to learn a lot from him* (N1-Tyler: 167-168). *I mean my dad has the biggest library. I have gotten really into reading. So I think it has been a big thing for us because we have a lot more to talk about* (N1-Tyler: 202-204). It seemed that, since resuming his relationship with his father, Tyler felt proud of his father and his achievements:

- *My dad is one of the most inspirational men you will ever meet. He left home at age 18 to fight for his country and is now a MEC in the province of Limpopo. My dad is a leader; he has an energy about him, a passion for making South Africa a better place and I have learnt a lot on leadership from him* (W1-Tyler: 104-107).

**b) Subcategory D2: Absence of a father-daughter relationship as a result of their fathers' passing**

Two participants indicated how they missed a relationship with their fathers who had passed away. As a result of this loss, Mila and Lucia appear to not have had sufficient opportunities to experience close relationships with their fathers:

- Mila shared growing up with her mother and brother: *My father passed away in 1996 so I grew up with my mother and my older brother* (W1-Mila: 4-5).
- Lucia recounted the memories she had of her father: *The time he did spend with me was quiet memorable. I remember how I could feel his love for me radiating even when he wasn't there. To this day I can still feel him in my heart, he will always be a part me and everything that I am* (W1-Lucia: 89-92).

**c) Subcategory D3: Close relationships with fathers**

The two participants whose parents remained married both have close relationships with their fathers. Even though Vuyani and Hugo both said that they felt close to their fathers, this had not always been the case for Vuyani, who said that he had experienced his father as very strict when he was younger. The participants' experiences are captured in the following extracts from their narratives:

- *We very close. I think now, we are more open than we were back in the day. Back in the day he was very hard on us* (N1-Vuyani: 116-117).

- *I get along with him, we're very close all four of us, as a family (N1-Hugo: 242).*

Except for Vuyani and Hugo, who said that they have close relationships with their fathers, the rest of the participants reported that divorce played an important role in their relationships with their fathers. Divorce appeared to have caused a barrier in their father-child relationships as they lived permanently with their mothers and did not spend much time with their fathers. Mila and Lucia, having lost their fathers at a young age, regretted the fact that they never really knew their fathers.

#### **4.5.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category D: Participants' relationships with their fathers**

The finding of this study that having a parent who was emotionally or physically absent led to strained relationships is confirmed by a German study on biracial young adults conducted by Hubbard (2010), and another study by Tomishima (2003). In line with the aforementioned studies, the young biracial South African adults talked about a lack of connection, limited contact and strained relationships with their fathers. Even though most of the participants knew their fathers and had spent time with them at home during childhood, their relationships with their fathers largely disintegrated as a result of divorce.

Root's (1990 1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework of racial identity development states that family discord, such as divorce, can affect the identity development of a biracial individual. I agree with Root (2003a) that divorce in the family may have affected the identity development of the young biracial adults in this study. From Theme 3 (Chapter 5) it seems evident that the young participants were strongly influenced to identify with their mothers' cultural, national and religious identities. I posit that the absence or lack of an emotional bond with the fathers may have influenced the young adults to strongly identify with their mothers' various social identities. I speculate that the absence of a parent could affect identity development as the absence of a parent may result in a limited understanding of themselves as young biracial adults due to limited knowledge about the absent parents' heritage, background and social identity, which all contribute to identity construction.

#### 4.5.2 CATEGORY E: PARTICIPANTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR MOTHERS

Many participants (n=6, 4 female, 2 male) reported having a close connection with their mothers. Participants explained how they experienced their relationships with their mothers:

- Serena expressed love for her mother: *Me and my mom are 'thick as thieves.' I am very close with my mother and I love my mother (N1-Serena: 54-55).*
- Mila stated: *We are very close. We do a lot together, we always visit the side of her family in the Philippines in December for Christmas (N1-Mila: 174-175).*
- Maria's mother seemed to be her best friend: *She is my best friend (N1-Maria: 86).*
- Lucia talked about a so-called partnership with her mother: *We have like a partnership. I help her, she helps me, and I don't see myself leaving home any time soon. I just want to be with my mother for quite a while (N2-Lucia: 205-207).*

Tyler and Hugo seemed proud of their mothers' qualifications and careers:

- Hugo explained how his mother's qualifications enabled her to assist with education: *She's extremely educated and when I was young, when [we] first moved to South Africa, she wanted to make sure that I spoke Dutch (N1-Hugo: 1247-1248), and which I did, but I couldn't read and write Dutch, so she had this little home schooling kit and while I was at school, she taught me to read and write, she also taught me math (N1-Hugo: 1250-1252).*
- Tyler seemed proud of his mother's involvement in community projects: *My mom works in rural communities and does community development work. She is also a Buddhist, and so I have been brought up in a very peaceful and loving environment (W1-Tyler: 98-100).*

Only one participant, Mpho, stated that his relationship with his mother fluctuated:

- *My relationship with my mom fluctuates because we fight a lot (N1-Mpho: 121), and black people in general, black moms especially, they believe in authority. So if you're older, you listen to the older person and you show respect. You don't talk back to an older person (N1-Mpho: 124-126).*

Six participants expressed having very close relationships with their mothers. Hugo and Tyler also said that they were proud of their mothers' academic and career achievements. Mpho, however, appeared to find it difficult to maintain a close relationship with his mother due to cultural values and beliefs. In most African families elders have to be respected by young

people, which may sometimes (as in Mpho's case) lead young people to believe that they have no voice.

#### **4.5.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category E: Participants' relationships with their mothers**

As also reported in several other studies on biracial identity development (Basu, 2007; Jackson, 2009; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007), participants in this study who lived with their mothers after separation or divorce generally had a closer connection and relationship with their mothers than with their fathers. I posit that their close relationships with their mothers influenced the participants' identity construction as most of them chose to identify with their mothers' racial, cultural and national identities. However, participants chose not to identify with their maternal racial identities.

A discrepancy between the results of the current study and findings discussed in existing literature can be found in a study by Miville *et al.* (2005), according to which a biracial individual's identity may be impacted by the physical and emotional availability of parents. Participants in the Miville *et al.* (2005) study adopted the racial identity of parents with whom they felt the closest emotional bonds. In this study, Tyler and Lucia (who have white mothers), and Mila (who has an Asian mother) expressed close bonds with their mothers due to divorce (Tyler) and their fathers' passing (Mila and Lucia). However, these young biracial adults did not choose to identify with their mothers' racial identities. Instead, Tyler, Mila and Lucia chose a biracial identity (see Theme 3) rather than to identify as white (Tyler and Lucia) and Asian (Mila). Serena, whose parents are divorced and who lives with her black mother with whom she has a close relationship, chooses to identify as biracial rather than choose an exclusively black identity.

I posit that the young adults who have white mothers did not identify with their mothers' racial identities as they may have felt that, on account of their physical appearance, society did not perceive them as white, Asian or black. I further postulate that because society tends to categorise individuals according to their physical appearance, young biracial South African adults might avoid choosing white and Asian identities to avoid possible public rejection, a possibility also mentioned by other researchers (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934).

#### 4.5.3 CATEGORY F: PARTICIPANTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR SIBLING(-S)

Participants (n=6, 2 female, 4 male) shared how they experienced their relationships with their siblings. Relationships with siblings seemed positive, as captured in the excerpts below.

- Mila articulated sharing a close relationship with her brother: *Extremely close and we've been to the same school and now the same University (N2-Mila: 208-209).*
- Hugo expressed sharing the same heritage with his sister: *We've been close because in a sense she's the only person in the world that's like me, and that has the same cultural background (N1-Hugo: 1041-1043).*
- Tyler apparently supported his sister: *I don't think you could get a better sibling relationship than me and my sister. We don't fight, we support each other (N2-Tyler: 456-457).*
- Mpho seemed protective over his younger sister: *We are very close, I mean we fight a lot but I love my sister dearly, I will do anything for her, I will protect her (N2-Mpho: 266-267).*
- Christopher appeared to be respected as the older sibling: *I have a very good relationship; they respect me because I'm also their oldest sibling (N1-Christopher: 942-943).*
- Adrianna felt close to her older sister: *I'm very close to her. We are best friends. We do almost everything together (N1-Adrianna: 202-203).* She was reportedly also close to her biracial brother: *We relate more to each other because we are younger and we go out more, and we have similar interests. So my brother and I are very close (N1-Adrianna: 217-218).*

Participants thus expressed feeling close to biracial siblings as they shared the same diverse racial heritage. In support of these accounts, I noted the following in my field notes:

*Whilst building rapport early in the data collection process, participants casually conversed about their relationships with their siblings. According to the participants, their siblings seem to be an important support system in the journey of identity construction. The participants mentioned siblings supporting each other during experiences of discrimination, encouraging each other to accept both heritages or to identify in a way that they felt comfortable with and proud of. Siblings reportedly shared similar experiences, resulting in them understanding the different journeys the biracial individuals undertook when constructing their identities (FN: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*



#### 4.5.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category F: Participants' relationships with their sibling(s)

The dynamics between biracial individuals and their siblings reflect the dynamics of siblings in other families; they might disagree at times, but generally relationships are close. For biracial individuals in particular, siblings may be important support systems in the journey of identity construction. During my interactions with the participants, they mentioned that they support each other during experiences of discrimination and racism, and during the challenging process of identity construction. They regarded their biracial siblings as the only other people in their families who understood the different passage taken by biracial individuals when constructing their identities. These findings merit further research into sibling relationships and the identity construction process.

#### 4.5.4 CATEGORY G: PARTICIPANTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR EXTENDED FAMILY

Seven of the ten participants (n=7, 3 female, 4 male) discussed their relationships with their extended families. Both maternal and paternal families seemed to play an important role in the participants' identity construction. Participants' experiences of their relationships with their extended families are captured in the following extracts:

- Serena talked about her close relationship with her mother's Xhosa family: *We are very close, and I can talk to my aunts and my grandmother and my grandfather about anything, whereas I can't really talk to my Dad's side about anything (N2-Serena: 68-70)*. As her father's family live overseas, Serena seemed not to share a close bond with them: *We don't see them a lot, we see them once a year. So we will be quiet, and I think reserved is the word. We won't be as comfortable as we are when we are with my mom's side (N1-Serena: 90-92)*.
- Mila visits her mother's Filipino family once a year and finds them to be warm and loving: *There's no difference in the relationships because of what we look like, they treat us perfectly (N1-Mila: 177-178)*, and *they are very warm and loving people (N1-Mila: 234)*.
- Hugo seemed closer to his mother's extended family in the Netherlands than to his father's South African family. He appreciated the diversity in his family in the Netherlands: *I'm very close with them (N1-Hugo: 1346)*, and *like I said my uncle he is from Turkey and his kids are mixed as well (N1-Hugo: 1369)*.
- Tyler recalled how his mother's American family always made an effort to engage in fun activities whenever he visited them. Tyler's parents' divorce seems to have

affected his relationship with his father's family because for a while his American mother was not welcomed in his father's family home: *My mom wasn't allowed back into the village for quite a long time because they got a divorce. They have allowed my mom back into the family again and that's the reason why over the past year, I have seen my dad's family a lot more because I can drive down to the village (N1-Tyler: 240-243).*

- Adrianna has met her mother's Nigerian family, but not her father's Italian family: *I met my extended family from my mother's side. But we haven't gone back to Nigeria, so the only time where I've seen my family from my mom's side is when they come here to visit us (N1-Adrianna: 193-195), and his parents passed away before I was born. And his siblings, he never really spoke about them much, so I wasn't involved in that side of the family (N1-Adrianna: 197-199).*
- Mpho shared positive memories of time spent with his mother's Zulu family: *In my black side of the family, they're very warm. Even with the little they have, they will share with you (N1-Mpho: 362-363).* Mpho also spoke about the contrast between the two families with regard to their socioeconomic status: *Most of my black family is poverty struck. My white side of the family are doing ok for themselves and are better off than the black side of my family (W1-Mpho:16-17).*
- Vuyani indicated that death in his father's family prevented him from establishing relationships with some members of his father's extended family. However, he seemed to be close to some of his uncles: *We are very good friends you know and so that's the one uncle I can say I do know (N1-Vuyani: 425).* Vuyani stated that he hasn't spent time with his mother's American family because of the distance, which suggested that he did not share a close relationship with them: *I went over once when I was eighteen in 2008 and when we went over it was cool. They showed a lot of love towards us. I don't talk to them but I have them on Facebook. It wouldn't be awkward talking to them but I actually don't know them (N1-Vuyani: 543-545).*

#### **4.5.4.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category G: Participants' relationships with their extended family**

When asked about extended family, participants discussed and contrasted both sides of their extended families. This corresponded to findings in a study by Tomishima (2003). Chapman-Huls (2009) states that for biracial individuals, maternal and paternal families play a role in identity formation. Significant experiences that may have impacted the identity construction of

biracial individuals in this study include the following: (i) frequent trips abroad to visit family (Mila, Hugo, Tyler and Vuyani); (ii) stronger connections to family they spent the most time with (Serena, Mila, Hugo, Tyler, Adriana and Mpho mentioned spending more quality time with their mothers' families); and (iii) negative or strained relationships with extended family members (Serena, Hugo, Tyler, Adriana, Mpho mentioned having strained relationships with their fathers' families, whereas Vuyani experienced a strained relationship with his mother's family due to distance).

The young South African biracial adults explained that their interactions with the maternal and paternal sides of their extended families were very different. This was also found in several other studies (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Tomishima, 2003). Participants were generally closer to their mothers' extended families than to their fathers' families. I contribute this trend to the fact that they were exposed to their maternal family members regularly as they lived with their mothers. Regardless of whether the mothers' families lived overseas (Mila, Hugo, Tyler and Adrianna) or in South Africa (Mpho), they shared closer connections with them. Only Vuyani was not close to his mother's extended American family who lived abroad. It appears that the distance that separated them made it difficult to develop and sustain close relationships. The way in which the extended families identified the biracial individuals who participated in this study is discussed in more detail under Theme 3 (Chapter 5).

Regarding the relationship with extended family, I posit that extended family influenced the identity construction of the participants in the following ways: (i) Serena was influenced to identify with her maternal family's Christian identity; (ii) Mila identified with her maternal family's Catholic identity; (iii) Adrianna identified with her maternal family's Nigerian culture and nationality; (iv) Hugo's maternal family was influential in his construction of a Dutch cultural identity, and (v) Vuyani, who had a stronger relationship with his father's extended family, identified with his paternal family's cultural Xhosa identity. Evidence for the construction of these identities can be found under Theme 3 (Chapter 5).

According to the findings of a study by Tomishima (2003), biracial children may be shunned by their white grandparents. However this finding was not confirmed by my study as both Hugo and Tyler said that they were closer to their white extended family than to other family members and mentioned how their white extended families made an effort to engage in family activities as a way to make them feel welcome and comfortable in the family environment. These different findings may be ascribed to their white families being accepting of their parents' interracial

relationship, as stated in Category C. However, this potential reason for the discrepancy is a mere hypothesis and requires further investigation.

In conclusion, this subtheme focused on the participants' relationships with family members. It was evident that participants shared a closer relationship with their mothers and siblings than with their fathers. I reflected on the participants' relationships with their families in my field notes:

*Divorce seems to have had a negative impact on the participant's relationships' with their fathers, whilst extended families living overseas also affected the quality of relationships between the young biracial adults and their family members. I sensed a longing at times by participants to have shared a closer relationship with their extended families (FN: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*

#### **4.6 SUBTHEME 1.3: THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ON THE PARTICIPANTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR FAMILIES**

In subtheme 1.3, the participants recalled how their parents passed on their cultural practices and values through the process of cultural socialisation. They viewed their parents' cultures as part of their everyday lives. This subtheme includes data specifically related to how exposure to their parents' language and culture provided participants with opportunities to construct their biracial identity. The categories that support this subtheme are: (i) language affecting family relationships and (ii) parents' cultural influences on identity.

##### **4.6.1 CATEGORY H: LANGUAGE AFFECTING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

Participants explained that language played an important role in communication and forming relationships with family members. Some participants remembered family members accommodating their inability to understand the family language by using non-verbal language and asking family who were fluent in English to interpret, while other participants claimed feeling left out during family events and recalled how language barriers deprived them of the possibility of establishing relationships within their family. Consequently, participants experienced language as either a barrier, or as a catalyst for forming family relationships and influencing their choice in forming racial and cultural identities. The following subcategories apply: (a) understanding an African language; (b) accommodated for not understanding an African language; and (c) family relationships affected by language barriers. Some of the participants (n=3, 1 female, 2 male) found that language barriers made it difficult to form close relationships.

Two participants (n=2, 1 male, 1 female) shared how their families spoke English to accommodate them during family discussions, while two others (n=2, 2 female) were able to understand their family's native language.

### **a) Subcategory H1: Understanding an African language**

A few participants shared their experiences of understanding an African language. Serena and Adrianna indicated that they could understand their mothers' native languages, but were not able to speak them. In the examples below, the participants were addressed in their mothers' native tongues and responded in English:

- *My grandmother has this rule because me and my brother can't speak Xhosa. So she will speak to us in Xhosa and she will make everyone else in the family speak to us and we will know what they are saying but we will reply back in English (N1-Serena: 63-65).*
- *My mom she does speak to me in Yoruba<sup>52</sup> sometimes, but only when she doesn't want everybody else to hear what she wants to say (N2-Adrianna: 53-55). I can understand but I can't speak it (N1-Adrianna: 118).*

From the narratives it seems evident that, regarding language, a compromise was reached between the biracial individuals and their family members to enable them to establish relationships with each other.

### **b) Subcategory H2: Accommodated for not understanding an African language**

Tyler and Mila seemed to appreciate the fact that their families made sure to include them in conversations even though they were unable to speak their native languages. Although not fluent in English, their families made an effort to speak English in their presence and used interpreters when necessary. This is evident in the following verbatim statements:

- *They speak English well except my grandparents. They don't pressure you to speak a language so that you can take part in the conversation (N1-Mila: 234-235), and for them, it doesn't really matter that there's like a language barrier because it's family at the end of the day (N2-Mila: 127-128).*
- *When I go to the village they were always very accommodating. Their first language is Pedi and they all make an effort when I am around to speak English and if there is*

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<sup>52</sup> Yoruba is one of the four official languages of Nigeria.

*someone that can't, they will always sort of translate for each other (N2-Tyler: 317-319).*

### **c) Subcategory H3: Family relationships affected by language barriers**

Participants indicated how the language barrier created detachment and estrangement from some family members. Hugo and Christopher referred to how distance and alienation from some family members were caused by language barriers. Hugo felt alienated and not accepted in his father's family because he could not speak Xhosa: *I never really learned Xhosa properly because you know I was living in exile. It was difficult to learn because I already had to learn English and Dutch. As a result now like my father's side of the family, I feel like I'm not really ever accepted there. I mean they get along with me, because you know as family you always feel an obligation to get along with each other, but they don't ever really want to spend time with me because I don't speak the language (N1-Hugo-157-162).*

Christopher could converse with his white family in English, which resulted in closer relationships: *With my white family, I'm obviously fluent in English, so if I'm having a high level discussion, I can describe so much more (N2-Christopher: 348-349).* However, his relationship with one of his black cousins did suffer as a result of the language barrier: *We would have been even closer if I was able to speak the language (N2-Christopher: 359).*

Lucia said that she struggled to gain information about her father's African heritage due to her inability to speak his language. Since her father passed away when she was young, she had been trying to collect information about him and his family in an attempt to understand her black heritage. Sadly she has occasionally been unable to access the information she would like to have as she does not speak his language and had to rely on her sisters to inform her: *It's hard, my sisters actually speak a lot of the indigenous languages, and they'd be more successful at finding out what's going on than I would be able to (N1-Lucia: 230-232).* Therefore language was an obstacle in Lucia's efforts to form her biracial identity.

I also noted the participants' experiences regarding African languages within their families in my field notes:

*Language keeps coming up as an important factor in identity construction. Talking to the participants made me realise that language is a crucial factor when participants constructed their multiple identities. Participants seemed to feel closer to a specific heritage and identify with a specific heritage (racial or cultural) if they could converse in the mother-tongue language and communicate with their family members through translators. Participants who experienced language barriers seemed to experience barriers with bonding and identifying with their extended family members. Language is so important to the construction of identity as it's a way for families to transmit their beliefs, values, traditions, heritage and culture to their biracial children (FN: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013).*

#### **4.6.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category H: Language affecting family relationships**

According to Mda (2010; 2004) South Africans during apartheid (1948 until 1994) were not only divided by race but also according to their ethnicity, culture and language. This partition was realised through the laws mentioned in chapter 1 and other laws during the apartheid regime. Therefore racial dominance was linked to language dominance as those who had power belonged to a particular race, thus their language(s) became the language(s) of power. Africans and their African languages became the dominated and powerless groups as English and Afrikaans were declared South Africa's official languages, and both were the languages of the powerful minority race, as these speakers possessed the cultural and political power during colonisation and apartheid. Alexander (1998:4) reiterates that during apartheid "*African languages [were] deliberately underdeveloped and neglected*" (Mda, 2010). Although today the speakers of the African languages are still in the majority, African languages are still the languages of the minority as English and Afrikaans languages remain the languages of power (Mda, 2010).

Regardless of the Constitutional provisions and the Education Language policies in post-apartheid South Africa, learning still occurs exclusively in English and/or Afrikaans in the majority of schools. African languages are usually not part of the curriculum and are sometimes taught as third, additional or foreign languages. Thus most African home languages are not affirmed at schools. In present day South Africa, many African language speaking parents send their children to schools where the language of instruction is not the home language. In this study participants mostly resided in suburban or residential areas and were raised in upper

socio-economic families. Although participants may have attended schools which may have reflected multicultural or multilingual social groups, such schools have a few if any African teachers and the teaching staff is almost always monocultural, monolingual or bilingual (meaning English and/or Afrikaans-speaking). It can be postulated that learners (the participants in this study) who attend the above mentioned schools thus speak English to one another and with their parents (Mda, 2010).

Although participants grew up in homes where parents spoke different languages, it seemed that not all parents exposed their biracial children to their mother (native) tongue. Participants' parents may have encouraged the use of the English language as parents may believe English speakers have better chances to succeed at school and in the world of work (Mda, 2010). As Tuhus-Dubrow (2002:10) states, *“English, as the linguistic branch of the mighty American Empire, has run rampant across the globe, in perhaps the most insidious form of linguistic imperialism: seduction. People want to speak English, because it is the language of advertising, blockbuster movies and pop music, as well as a vital tool for success”*.

Language provides a common bond for individuals with the same linguistic heritage (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013). A new insight proposed in this study is that language can play a role in biracial individuals feeling either part of a family or different from the family (Patel, 2012). I argue that language may thus influence not only an individual's identity, but also the construction of a group identity. In this regard language made the biracial participants in this study feel either part of the in-group, or the out-group within their families. A sense of belonging within their families was reported by Serena, Adrianna, Tyler and Mila. Their families accepted their inability to speak the family language, supported them and made them feel part of the family by speaking exclusively in English, using interpreters in the family and/or allowing participants to respond in English when spoken to in their mother tongue. This was done so that the participants could be included in family conversations and family relationship dynamics.

However, Hugo and Christopher felt excluded from their families as they experienced language as a barrier to forming close relationships with their family members. This made them feel that they were part of the out-group in the family as they felt alienated by the fact that they were not accepted because of their inability to speak the family's language.

Lucia, in the process of her identity construction, began to ask questions about her late fathers' cultural background, his experiences and heritage. However, her inability to speak an African



language was a barrier to her gaining information and furthering her self-exploration during identity construction.

Based on the findings of this study, I posit that language as a barrier will not only affect personal relationships between biracial individuals and their extended families, but may also affect the identity construction of young adults. Participants in this study who were unable to converse in an African language may have felt uncomfortable about identifying with a specific race or culture as a result of their inability to learn about the cultural values and beliefs of their African families. An example of this is Hugo and Lucia, who have not identified with their fathers' cultural identities and even experienced conflict with their fathers' African values and belief systems. (See Category 1 and Theme 3 in Chapter 5 for a comprehensive discussion). These findings merit further research into how language may contribute to constructing an identity with regard to a particular heritage.

#### **4.6.2 CATEGORY I: PARENTS' CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON IDENTITY**

The construction of the participants' cultural identities (which is discussed in detail in Theme 3) were seemingly influenced by parents' cultures. Participants shared narratives of their parents' cultural influences in terms of the following subcategories: (a) mother's culture and belief system; (b) father's culture and belief system; and (c) conflicting views relating to parents' cultures. The majority of the participants (n=7, 4 male, 3 female) stated that they had been strongly influenced by their mothers' cultures. Some participants (n=5, 1 female, 4 male) had not been exposed to their fathers' cultures, while two stated that they had been influenced by their fathers' cultures. Finally, some participants (n=4, 2 female, 2 male) said that their personal views were in conflict with one of their parents' cultural practices and traditions.

##### **a) Subcategory I1: Mother's culture and belief system**

Participants discussed their mothers' cultural and belief systems. As the majority of the participants lived with their mothers, most of them practised and identified with their mothers' cultures and religions. The following verbatim extracts from narratives attest to this:

- Mpho spoke about his mother's culture by discussing lobola and wedding traditions in the Zulu culture: *I know of the Zulu tradition. I know how lobola is paid (N1-Mpho: 347)*. Mpho gave an example of how weddings are organised in the Zulu culture: *It*

would be very traditional, the woman would be wearing a traditional outfit, not the white dress and the men would have to drink Umqombothi<sup>53</sup> (N2-Mpho: 53-54).

- Hugo described his mother's culture in terms of her liberal outlook on life: *So my mother is very liberal (N2-Hugo: 130)*. He gave an example of how her liberal views influenced her parenting style: *My mother was a lot more open about issues of sex for instance. She was not scared to discuss it with us at all (N2-Hugo: 164-165). I mean not just the science of it, also just the personal aspect of it and whenever we had questions, her philosophy was if you're old enough to ask, you're old enough to hear the answer (N2-Hugo:168-170)*, and *compared to most people in my class, most parents that I know, just continued like it didn't exist (N2-Hugo: 172-173)*.
- Tyler discussed his mother's culture in terms of her ability to communicate and show her emotions to him and his sister: *In my mom's culture there is a lot more showing of emotions (N1-Tyler: 338)*. He also talked about how his parents' different cultures influence the ways in which they show their love: *My dad makes a lot more money than my mom and I think he shows his love by I mean ...he bought me my motorbike and he pays for a lot of my clothes and expenses. Compared to my mom she does less of that but she shows it by spending a lot more time with us and talking to us (N1-Tyler: 369-372)*. He discussed her American culture and gave examples of how they celebrated some traditional American holidays: *She's American I mean the only real thing is usually Christmas, we have a huge capitalist Christmas, and the whole floor is covered in presents (N2-Tyler: 256-258)*. *On Valentine's Day we always get lots of heart shaped sweets (N2-Tyler: 263-264)*, and *besides the presents and stuff, the most important thing for her actually is that we write cards to each other, just showing appreciation for each other (N2-Tyler: 289-290)*. Tyler stated that because he had been exposed to his mother's culture more than to that of his father, he identified with this culture: *I would say my mom, which is because I have lived with her. I haven't really been exposed to my dad's culture in quite the same way (N2-Tyler: 299-300)*.
- Similarly, Adrianna indicated that she practised her mother's culture as she has been living with her and not with her Italian father. She explained how her mother expressed her Nigerian culture at home: *She still wears her traditional clothing even if it's a casual day (N1-Adrianna: 114)*. Adrianna shared her mother's religious beliefs, which contributed to her religious identity: *My family is very religious and that is because of*

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<sup>53</sup> Umqombothi is a traditional South African beer made from maize (corn), malt, yeast and water and has a distinct sour taste.

*my mother (N1-Adrianna: 103), and I follow her form of Christianity and religion plays a big role in my family and in shaping us to be who we are (W1-Adrianna: 66-67).*

- Mila also referred to her mother's religious beliefs: *My mom's culture is very Catholic, because they go to church every Sunday, they pray every day, they do rosaries as a family from time to time (N1-Mila: 44-45).* Her mother's culture extended to a woman's role in the house: *She's just a very cultural woman in terms of you have to be home and look after the house (N2-Mila: 46-47).* Mila's identity resonates strongly with her mother's culture as she had not been exposed to her father's culture due to his passing: *Definitely my mom's, because since my dad passed away my mom has been raising me up. So her upbringing is reflected in the way she brought us up (N2-Mila: 65-67).*
- Christopher reflected that his mother's culture has been influenced by her South African heritage: *They still retain a lot of cultural elements of white South Africans. My uncles love watching rugby on a Saturday (N2-Christopher: 117-118), and they wear their Springbok jerseys, and they have a braai (N2-Christopher: 120).*
- Maria stated that her mother was westernised and did not follow her Swazi traditions: *She is Swazi but she is not really African, as in she is more Western (N1-Maria: 97). She is not very traditional, like at her wedding, we did the whole traditional wedding thing because she was forced to (N1-Maria: 109-110), and then she had her own white wedding (N1-Maria: 116).*

## **b) Subcategory I2: Father's culture and belief system**

Participants also discussed their fathers' cultural and belief systems. With the exception of Vuyani, whose strong identification with his father's Xhosa culture was evident, the majority of the participants had not been exposed to their fathers' cultures and stated that their fathers had not made an effort to impart their everyday cultural traditions or practices to their children. The following verbatim extracts from narratives attest to this:

- Hugo stated that although his father came from a very traditional and religious background, he did not practice his culture, but rather shared his mother's liberal views: *My father comes from a very traditional background but at the same time he has always had a very liberal view of the world so I haven't seen as much of his culture coming through in how he lives his life (N2-Hugo: 134-136), and he was brought up obviously very religiously by his grandmother and mother, but he himself was never really that religious (N2-Hugo: 139-140).*

- Tyler stated that his father had not shared any cultural traditions or knowledge with him: *My father's Pedi and his family are all Catholic but he never goes to church. For example, often when we are in the village they have prayers, he won't do that. I think in terms of culture I mean he doesn't spend a lot of time trying to teach me anything about our culture (N2-Tyler: 126-129)*. Tyler shared his experience of a funeral in his father's culture: *When there is a funeral they do the whole slaughtering of the cow, and the body stays inside the bedroom for a while (N2-Tyler: 178-179), and I've always been scared to sleep in the bedroom that the body was in, I haven't slept in it ever since I saw the body there (N2-Tyler: 183-185)*.
- Adrianna said that she knew little about her father's Italian culture due to his absence in her life. However, she did mention love for art and food as part of his culture: *I'm not so sure about my father because he wasn't very big on culture, but I noticed from the books that he read that he reads books related to art and food. And my dad was very 'let me introduce you to books, let me take you to museums, let's go to the zoo'. You know the typical 'white parent thing' (N1-Adrianna: 174-178). But now that he's not around I can't really learn from his culture (N1-Adrianna: 184-185)*. However, Adrianna did say that she had inherited some of her father's characteristics, such as: *I'm the one who is more social and more artsy. I like art and I like music (N1-Adrianna: 202-203)*.
- Christopher shared his experience of practising his father's culture: *My Dad is Tsonga (N2-Christopher: 129). So for example, I turned 21 in December and one of the customs is you can be given a new name as a present, in my culture, according to your achievements (N2-Christopher: 133-135). I would have been named Giyani, It means 'joy and happiness' (N2-Christopher: 141). When warriors come back from battle, it's the war cry that they exclaim, Giyani! (N2-Christopher: 149-150), and so I was kind of blessed with the name, according to Tsonga culture (N2-Christopher: 166)*. He explained the differences between his mother and father's cultures: *There are smaller differences, so for example, like if a lady from my father's side of my family, gets married there's lobola (N2-Christopher: 172-174), and whereas in my white family, lobola is not so (N2-Christopher: 183)*. He described the importance of lobola in his culture: *The crux is an agreement between two families and a marriage between two families (N2-Christopher: 288-289)*. Christopher discussed specific cultural differences regarding communication between his mother and father: *In my white family, you are a lot more direct to elders (N2-Christopher: 192-193)*. He recalled how he talks to his white uncle: *First, we call him by his first name. I say 'Hey, Paul'. I am a lot more direct, but I still find that I'm still respectful (N2-Christopher: 195-196)*.

Interactions were reportedly different in his black family: *It's a bit more distant with some of my black family. So I wouldn't address my uncle as directly, as I would some of my white uncles (N2-Christopher: 201-203)*. He identified yet another difference between the two cultures: *In the African community, things like drinking are a lot more taboo (N2-Christopher: 230)*. *So even a 35-year-old black man won't drink in front of his mother (N2-Christopher: 233)*. *So my uncles will never drink in front of their mother (N2-Christopher: 235)*, whereas in my white family, your uncle will offer you a drink (N2-Christopher: 237-238), and I will have a glass of wine with my mom (N2-Christopher: 241). Personally he related to different elements of his parents' cultures: *Personally I relate to different elements of all cultures, and I try to understand the reasons from both (N2-Christopher: 251-252)*.

- Vuyani's father was seemingly very traditional and identified himself and Vuyani as Xhosa: *From my father's side, he is also very traditional and very rigid in his culture (N2-Vuyani: 33-34)*. *We are Xhosa people. So a lot of the things we do are very traditional and very connected with Xhosa culture (N2-Vuyani: 36-37)*. Vuyani spoke about his Xhosa initiation<sup>54</sup> and what the purpose of the practice is: *When you get to the age of being a man you go to the mountain and there's a whole ceremony (N2-Vuyani: 39-40)*, and *you are not allowed to talk about it. I can tell you that it is a very hectic thing. I mean you are living on a mountain; you don't really have a bed. What it is practically is the men tell you about how a man is supposed to be (N1-Vuyani: 693-695)*.

### c) Subcategory I3: Conflicting views relating to parents' culture

Participants talked about how their own belief systems were in conflict with their parents' cultures. This is evident in the following excerpts:

- Hugo shared aspects of his Xhosa culture that he did not agree with: *I've never really been that much into the Xhosa culture, there's a lot of things there that I completely disagree with (N1-Hugo: 840-842)*, and *I also don't feel comfortable with the situation where men sit down and the women just come and serve them. Something that comes up a lot in the mines is this thing of polygamy, which a lot of the men there say it's a cultural thing. I don't fully buy into this, but they say that men can have more than one woman in their lives, but the women are expected to just be loyal (N1-Hugo: 844-848)*.

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<sup>54</sup> The Xhosa initiation symbolises a cultural transition from boyhood to manhood. The initiation usually takes place in a remote mountainous area and includes circumcision.

- Vuyani shared how his father's Xhosa culture came into conflict with his religious beliefs: *Being a Christian, I've let go of cultural things, like a lot of the ancestral*<sup>55</sup> *things (N2-Vuyani: 95-96). I don't believe that my ancestors are still influencing the way I live life, or have anything to do with the way I live life (N2-Vuyani:134-136), and things like going to see a Sangoma*<sup>56</sup> *that I disagree with (N2-Vuyani: 145).*
- Lucia indicated that the way she engaged in her relationship with her boyfriend would not be allowed in her father's African culture: *The way we are together wouldn't necessarily be appropriate in the eyes of my black family, the fact that he's in this house (N2-Lucia: 642-644), and he sleeps here. I smoke, and in the black culture it's very wrong for females to smoke (N2-Lucia: 647-648).* Lucia did not feel connected to her father's culture, but respected his cultural traditions in cultural settings: *It's not really my culture. It is by assignment (N2-Lucia: 656-657), It's my father's culture, but I don't necessarily feel I'm bound by any culture (N2-Lucia: 659-660). If I go to a black funeral, I may not necessarily agree with the way that the funeral goes, but I'm still going to respect it (N2-Lucia: 674-676).*
- Maria disagreed with her mother's cultural tradition of lobola: *I don't like the whole lobola thing (N2- Maria: 132).*

This subcategory is further supported by my field notes:

*When asked to tell me about their parents, participants automatically jumped to their parents' culture and a few mentioned their parents' religious views. Participants also shared certain aspects of their parents' culture that they did not agree with. It seems a few of the girls did not want to engage with lobola and also mentioned difficulty adapting to the gender roles in the African cultures (FN: 15th April 2013).*

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<sup>55</sup> In several African cultures, including the Xhosa culture, ancestors are the spirits of those who have passed on. People connect to their ancestors, also known as their spirit guides, for guidance and support in their daily lives. Xhosa people connect with their ancestors through cultural rituals and ceremonies. During these ceremonies animals are slaughtered to invoke the ancestors (Nel, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> A Zulu term that is used to describe a South African traditional healer.

**Think box 4.3: My mother's culture**

*My mother's culture, values and traditions have had a major impact in my upbringing. My father was absent for long periods in our lives, and mum was there for all our milestones and thus she greatly influenced my outlook on life. My father's absent periods become permanent and official after the divorce and honestly speaking I did not notice his absence, because my mum was such a hands-on parent. Due to the very short periods I lived with my father, I was not influenced by his African culture and that is why I identify more with my mom's Spanish culture.*

*My mom loves sharing her Mediterranean culture, whether it is through the music we listen to in the house; the European movies we watch; the delicious food she cooks; and her speaking to us in her native tongue. When I visit my mum's family, I am home ... my mother's family's cultural traditions live in my blood and I hope to share these traditions with my own family one day. However, concurrently with my mum's cultural influences, my diversity in friends from all over the world has created this multicultural imprint on my heart. I have welcomed these foreign influences in my life, and thus also see myself as a citizen of the world.*

**4.6.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category I: Parents' cultural influences on identity**

According to Boykin and Toms (1985, cited in Rollins, 2009) *cultural socialisation* refers to the cultural conditioning that occurs within the family system. This conditioning includes the transmission of cultural beliefs and values (cultural ethos) embedded in interpersonal relationships and daily activities. Hence children are influenced by both articulated and unarticulated messages about who they are, how they should behave and interact, and how they are connected to their 'cultural group'. Cultural exposure influences the identity construction of biracial individuals (Rollins, 2009).

As encountered in studies by Fhagen-Smith (2003) and Suyemoto and Dimas (2003), the biracial adults in this study showed a preference for a certain cultural heritage in their family. The participants identified strongly with their maternal cultural heritage. In line with the findings of several other studies (Basu, 2007; Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson & Spicer, 2006; Jackson, 2009; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007; Rollins, 2009), many of the young biracial adults lived with their mothers in single-parent homes after the parents' separation or divorce. Living in a homogenous cultural environment and being exposed to the mothers' cultures, resulted in most participants identifying with those cultures. The majority of participants were able to find cultural connections to the mother's culture. As also found in the above-mentioned

studies, mothers made an effort to inculcate the values, norms, and beliefs of their numerous cultural associations in their biracial children. Hence, in this study, mothers can be viewed as sources of cultural socialisation as they promoted their children's cultural and ethnic pride, cultural knowledge and traditions by consciously engaging in parental practices that taught their children about their cultural heritage, customs and traditions. In this manner, mothers in this study supported their children in learning about their cultures to assist their cultural identity formation.

The exceptions in this study were Christopher and Vuyani, who were the only participants who had been exposed to their fathers' cultures. This resulted in Vuyani claiming a Xhosa cultural identity (see Theme 3, Chapter 5) and Christopher practising his father's cultural traditions in his own life. Hubbard (2010) states that a particular group of biracial individuals that has been neglected in the biracial identity literature are people of African descent living in other countries. Knowledge of the problems that they experience with the development of an African cultural identity could provide a new insight that may contribute to existing knowledge about culture and the process of biracial identity development and how biracial individuals experience African cultural identities outside of the USA context. I believe that this study will aid our understanding of environmental similarities and differences in biracial identity literature.

It seems that gender constructs roles in society that dictate appropriate roles for women and men. Patriarchy is advocated, with men generally occupying positions of power (Diako, 2012; Ruben, 2006). Some of the participants (Lucia, Maria and Hugo) were in conflict with their fathers' African cultures. In this study, it seemed as if their fathers' African cultures may have been in conflict with the participants' value systems, so that they constructed identities that were different from how African cultures construct them (Diako, 2012). Thus, participants in this study may have constructed personal identities that distanced them from African cultural expectations. Specifically, the young adults in this study did not agree with issues of polygamy, lobola and the traditional gender-defined roles of women. Regarding their opposition to lobola and polygamy, the participants may have equated these practices, as well as the placing of women in subordinate positions, as described by Kambarami (2006), to gender inequality. Vuyani's African culture may have been in conflict with his own religion as he did not believe in consulting the ancestors and Sangomas. Furthermore, participants may have been *assimilated* into the dominant culture at the expense of their minority cultures (in this case African cultures, as also discussed by LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993).



From a post-colonial perspective, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) states that the English language continues to wipe out pre-colonial histories, cultures and identities. According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) identification with the dominant culture is the result of the '*cultural bomb*'. This term discussed by Ngũgĩ (1986) states that "*the effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environments, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves*" (1986:3). He further argues that it leaves colonised nations "*wastelands of non-achievement*", resulting in colonised peoples wanting to "*distance themselves from that wasteland*". Thus colonised people want to identify with that which is farthest removed from themselves, such as identifying with other people's languages and in this research study, participants' identifying with the visibly dominant culture in society (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986: 3). In this regard, I posit that although African culture is highly prevalent in South Africa, North American and European cultures are prominent in the media and are more visible in South African society, resulting in the participants identifying with the privileged, powerful and visible culture in society.

Gollnick and Chinn (2013) state that language socialises children into their linguistic and cultural communities. I agree with Fanon (1952; 1986:25) who states that "*to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture*". Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) reiterates that language has a dual role, that of communication and a carrier of culture. Accordingly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) states that an African experience cannot be understood or expressed properly in another language. As a result of a lingering colonial sentiment, modern day Africans are displaying "dislocation" and "separation" from their groups by rejecting their African languages and Africanness (Fanon, 1967:25). I further propose that a possible explanation of the phenomenon of the absence of African cultural ties relates to language barriers having influenced the young biracial adults to dissociate from identifying with an African culture as most of the participants expressed a lack of belonging to their African families due to language barriers. Finally, most of the participants had close relationships with their mothers, who were either white or Asian, and may therefore have felt closer connections to their mothers' European (white) and Asian identities than to an African cultural identity. In *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ (1986:28) terms this *colonial alienation*, as the individual eventually alienates themselves from their self, identity, and cultural heritage. These findings merit further research into how African cultures within the South African context influence young biracial South African adults in their construction of a cultural and racial identity.

#### 4.7 THEME 2: PARTICIPANTS NEGOTIATING THEIR IDENTITY WITHIN SOCIAL MILIEUS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The second theme focuses on how the biracial participants negotiated their identities within social milieus and relationships. Participants discussed how they negotiated their identities with individuals outside the family system. More specifically, participants reportedly negotiated their identity construction amongst their peers in a school setting and with their romantic partners during dating. The subthemes that support this theme are: 2.1) negotiating a biracial identity with the outside world; and 2.2) significant spaces for identity construction: peers and intimate partners. Figure 4.3 illustrates the subthemes discussed under Theme 2. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the related subthemes, categories and subcategories, together with the inclusion and exclusion indicators I relied on when identifying these subthemes, categories and subcategories.

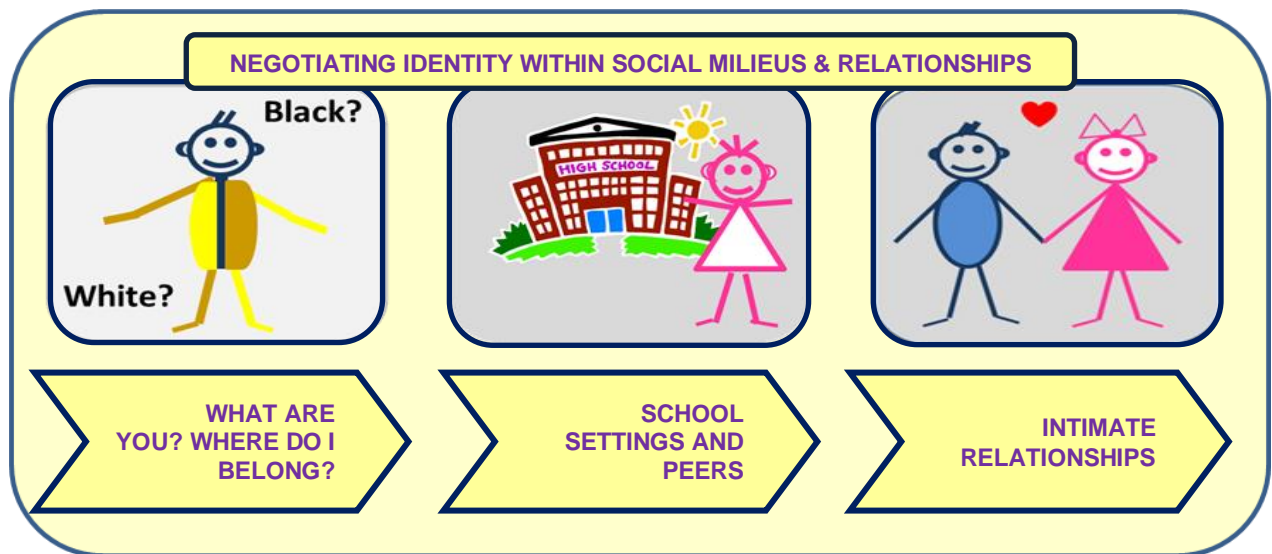


Figure 4.3: Subthemes presented in Theme 2

**Table 4.3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2**

<b>Theme 2: Participants negotiating their identity within social milieus and relationships</b>		
<i>... because I am biracial, so I have two different backgrounds. So one will be my mom's side, which is Xhosa and then my dad's side which is Welsh and British (N1-Serena:7-9)</i>		
<b>Subtheme 2.1: Negotiating a biracial identity with the outside world</b>		<b>This subtheme focuses on experiences that biracial individuals have faced when constructing their identity with the outside world (various contexts and relationships outside the family context)</b>
<b>Subthemes and categories</b>	<b>Inclusion indicators</b>	<b>Exclusion indicators</b>
<b>Category J: What are you? Naming and locating oneself socially</b>	This category includes data in which participants were asked about their biracial heritage and how a) they responded to the questions asked by the outside world and b) they felt about the questions asked by the outside world.	This category excludes data in which participants did not discuss their response to questions relating to their biracial heritage.
	<b>a) Subcategory J1: Giving answers to the question 'What are you?':</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants specifically shared narratives when they answered the question 'What are you?', in which the outside world questions their biracial heritage.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed how they felt about the question 'What are you?'
	<b>b) Subcategory J2: How participants feel about the question 'What are you?':</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how they felt about the question frequently asked by others, namely 'What are you?', which specifically questions their biracial heritage.	This subcategory excludes data in which the participants gave answers to the question 'What are you?'
<b>Category K: Where do I belong? Stuck in-between two worlds</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed feelings of not belonging to any racial group amongst their peers as a result of their biracial heritage, and sometimes feeling as if they a) did not fit into any racial group and b) were stuck in the middle when tensions arose between their black and white peers.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed belonging to a racial/ethnic peer group and experiencing tension between different racial groups.

	<p><b>a) Subcategory K1: Feelings of not belonging and not fitting in:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed difficulties in fitting into racially constructed groups in society.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed belonging to a racial/ethnic peer group.</p>
	<p><b>b) Subcategory K2: Caught in between allegiance to two different racial groups:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed feeling stuck in the middle when tensions arose between their black and white peers.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants did not experience tension between different racial peer groups.</p>
<p><b>Category L: The influence of media on biracial identity development</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed how the media affected how they themselves viewed their biracial identity.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed how the media and affected how they themselves viewed biracial identity.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 2.2: Significant spaces for identity construction: Peers and intimate partners</b></p>		<p><b>This subtheme focuses on the participants' relationships with peers and intimate partners.</b></p>
<p><b>Category M: Education settings, peers and the biracial individual</b></p>	<p>This category includes data on participants' relationships with their peers during their different school stages: a) pre-primary and primary school; b) high school; and c) relations with current peers; and d) the influence of language on peer relations.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed relationships with family and intimate partners.</p>
	<p><b>a) Subcategory M1: Pre-primary and primary school - an awakening to racial differences:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed their experiences in pre-primary and primary school. This included the peer relationships constructed during this school stage. This also includes information on the racial peer groups to which participants related during this particular school stage.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed current relationships with peers and peers in high school.</p>
	<p><b>b) Subcategory M2: High school - racial differences are prominent:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed their experiences in high school and the peer relationships constructed during this school stage. This also includes details about the racial peer groups to whom participants related during this particular school stage.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed current relationships with peers and relationships with peers in pre-primary and primary school.</p>

	<p><b>c) Subcategory M3: Current peers - a diversity of peers:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants' discussed their current peer relationships and the racial peer groups to whom they currently related to.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed relationships with peers in high school, primary school and pre-primary school.</p>
	<p><b>d) Subcategory M4: The influence of language on peer relations:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how language influenced their peer relations.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed the influence of language on their family relations.</p>
<p><b>Category N: Intimate relationships and the biracial individual</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed a) being open to dating individuals from different racial and cultural groups, but b) preferring to date partners from specific races. This also includes c) the role the participant's physical appearance played in dating.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed relationships with family and peers.</p>
	<p><b>a) Subcategory N1: Open to dating partners from different racial groups:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed being open to dating partners of different races and cultures.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed being attracted to certain racial partners.</p>
	<p><b>b) Subcategory N2: Preferring certain intimate partners over others:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed being attracted to partners of specific races.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed being open to dating partners of different races and cultures.</p>
	<p><b>c) Subcategory N3: The role of physical appearance in dating for the biracial individual:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how their physical appearance influenced the dating experience.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed instances where their physical appearance did not play a role in their dating experience.</p>

## **4.8 SUBTHEME 2.1: NEGOTIATING A BIRACIAL IDENTITY WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD**

The young biracial adults said that they struggle to define their identity in a world that is seemingly quick to label them (specifically with ethnic and racial labels). In the sections below, I report participants' experiences of being constantly questioned about their racial identity and how they have learnt to assert their chosen identities in diverse contexts. As a result of their biracial heritage, participants appeared to feel like outsiders among their peers; they felt that they did not fit into any of the racial groups in their school contexts. They also shared how they had developed a positive biracial identity through being exposed to American celebrities in the media. I discuss this subtheme in terms of three categories: (i) What are you? Naming and locating oneself socially; (ii) Where do I belong? Stuck in-between two worlds; and (iii) the influence of the media on biracial identity development.

### **4.8.1 CATEGORY J: WHAT ARE YOU? NAMING AND LOCATING ONESELF SOCIALLY**

The question 'What are you?' is often posed to biracial individuals by the majority culture, for instance in the school environment. Questioned by their peers about what they are awakened a desire to explore their own identities by creating an internal dialogue on identity within themselves and with the outside world. As this question is still being asked today, participants said that they continuously revise their internal dialogue on identity, preparing themselves for the next time they face such a question.

However, the participants' answers did not always satisfy other people's curiosity as they mostly did not choose one of the identities that are common in South Africa's racial classification system (black, coloured, Indian or white). Instead, they chose to explain their parents' racial backgrounds as part of their identity, which often resulted in a frustrating dialogue between the participants and their peers. The following subcategories apply: (a) giving answers to the question 'What are you?' and (b) how participants feel about this question.

#### **a) Subcategory J1: Giving answers to the question 'What are you?'**

Five participants (n=5, 2 male, 3 female) shared their experiences about responding to the all too familiar question that biracial individuals often encounter, namely, 'What are you?' Most participants would respond by explaining the racial constructs of both parents (i.e. my father is

white and my mother is black) or by giving various self-identification responses to the question. The following extracts provide supportive evidence:

- Mpho answered the question as follows: *Yes, Grade 3 it was, to be specific, that's when people asked me, 'Hey, what are you?' When they actually saw my parents come to school, my black mom and my white dad (N1-Mpho: 273-275).* Mpho said that he was often asked the question as he does resemble the typical coloured person with a 'coloured' accent: *Normally when people see me, they just assume that I'm coloured (N1-Mpho: 542), and then they ask 'What are you?' because I don't speak like a coloured guy (N1-Mpho: 546-547),* Mpho described how he chose to self-identify: *'I am black and white' (N1-Mpho: 416).*
- Just like Mpho, Serena was asked the question when peers realised that she was not coloured as she spoke English and not Afrikaans: *I got that question a lot because I speak English and I don't have an accent and they would always ask me are you coloured? And I would be like no, I am biracial, (N2-Serena: 225-226).* As people were not familiar with the term biracial, she explained the racial backgrounds of her parents: *My mom is black and she is Xhosa and my dad is Welsh and he is white (N1-Serena: 262-263).*
- Lucia's answer was: *I just say my mom is white and my dad's black (N1-Lucia: 291).*
- Vuyani responded: *My Dad's black, my Mom's white (N2-Vuyani: 556).*
- Maria told about how, when she arrived in South Africa, she was confronted with the question for the first time. She stated that in Swaziland, where she previously lived. interracial relationships are the norm and everyone in her community knew her biracial heritage: *My identity was never an issue growing up in Swaziland, no one really questioned my race as it was very normal to people (W1-Maria: 3-4).* Once I got to Pretoria, South Africa in 2011 people began to ask me, 'what I am?' She responded: *I proudly tell them; 'I am biracial, not coloured!' My mother is Swazi and my father is Portuguese' (W1-Maria: 28-30).* Maria explained her view on why she is consistently questioned about her ethnicity: *I do not think I look coloured and I do not look black, they do get confused. That is why everybody always asks me (N1-Maria: 19-20), and they can tell that there's a mixture there (N2-Maria: 229).*

#### **b) Subcategory J2: How participants feel about the question 'What are you?'**

Frequent enquiry regarding their racial self-identifications was experienced by the participants (n=6, 3 female, 3 male) as an expression of other people's interest in their biracial heritage. This is evident from the following:

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- Maria stated: *I actually did not mind (N1-Maria: 42).*
- Christopher said: *I actually appreciate it (N1-Christopher: 415).*
- Lucia stated that the way she was asked the question influenced how she answered: *Well depending on the person and how they are asking me (N1-Lucia: 719), and If it's someone that's being kind of rude about it, I just be like, I'm biracial and that's done but if they are actually interested I'll explain to them like, how I came to be (N1-Lucia: 721-723).*
- Vuyani seemed to be relaxed when faced with the question: *Recently I've become more relaxed about it (N2-Vuyani: 553).* When he was younger Vuyani felt embarrassed as he did not know how to answer: *Previously when someone would ask me, I think I was actually a bit embarrassed because it was different (N2-Vuyani: 559-560).* At the time of the study he stated: *I actually feel privileged. I actually feel I'm quite different. It's an interesting story you know (N1-Vuyani: 227-228).*
- To Hugo it seemed challenging and annoying to be asked to explain his biracial identity: *Having to explain it to people like saying I'm not coloured or I'm Dutch, but I'm also South African, constantly having to explain that to people is a challenge (N1-Hugo: 1181-1183), and I say challenge, but I think it's more of an annoyance (N1-Hugo: 1186).*

Mila and Christopher said that they struggled to answer the question when they were young as they had not thought about their identity at that stage. Their uncertainty about how to explain their identities to others caused distress and anxiety:

- Mila experienced the question as upsetting and felt confused about who she was at the time: *I was so lost I didn't know what I was (N1-Mila: 40), and when people asked me 'what are you?' I used to just say 'I don't know'. Because I didn't know if I should say I'm black or if I'm Asian (N1-Mila: 42-44).* This confusion surrounding her identity apparently influenced her interactions at school, as Mila reportedly isolated herself from her peers and chose to rather be alone than to be probed about her biracial heritage: *That's why I didn't talk a lot because when people asked me a lot of questions, I didn't know the answers. I was just a very closed person, always sitting by myself (N1-Mila: 368-370).* At the time of this study, Mila seemed comfortable to answer questions relating to her biracial heritage: *I definitely do feel comfortable about myself now, I am more confident. I'm more open to conversation and I don't mind talking about it at all (N1-Mila: 380-382).*



- Christopher indicated that he was confused when answering the question during his childhood: *Until about six or seven, I didn't see race (N1-Christopher: 490), and people at school used to ask me 'Christopher, what are you?' And I used to get so confused and I would say 'I'm Christopher' (N1-Christopher: 492-493).* When people were not content with his answer, he would explain: *I've got a white Mom and a black Dad' (N2-Christopher: 525).*

Participants remembered feeling unsure about how to explain their biracial identity when they were younger, but apparently became more confident as they grew older. Once they started socialising more, they felt that they were being pressurised to choose a racial identity. In some cases this caused anxiety as they had not previously given much thought to their identities. I reflected on this in compiling my field notes:

*Participants seemed to express confusion and embarrassment when they were asked this question as young children but it seems as they have grown older, they feel comfortable answering the question and show pride in their biracial heritage (FN:18<sup>th</sup> December 2012). I think why others ask this question is because biracial individuals have ambiguous physical characteristics, thus placing them in one racial category is hard, especially at face value or maybe they do automatically place them in a racial category but are thrown off when they do not have a stereotypical accent associated with a S.A. race group (specifically a coloured racial group) (FN: 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

#### **Think box 4.4: What are you?**

*'What are you?' This question has followed me everywhere since I have arrived in South Africa. I usually answer that I am from Pretoria, South Africa, but people are very persistent and they ask again, 'But what are you?' This usually means they want me to choose a racial group. Now depending on the day and how I feel, I may give them my background or simply tell them I am black. The reason why I don't like to answer this question is because it forces me to choose a race, just like the high school forms that I had to fill in, during my school days. I dislike being forced to choose a particular race, just to please, the racially divided South Africa. Sometimes I feel that being biracial 'unnerves' some people and that being biracial in a way is the equivalent of being a 'rebel', somebody that is not conforming to the established 'racial norms' and 'racial categories and labels' that are established within the South Africa context. 'What are you?' Well the answer to this question is simple: I am human, I belong to the human race ...*

#### 4.8.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category J: 'What are you?' Naming and locating oneself socially

The 'What are you?' question so commonly asked of biracial individuals is a poignant and striking theme that runs through many studies (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Dalmage, 2003; Hyman, 2010; Suyemoto & Dimas, 2003; Root, 2003; Suyemoto & Dimas, 2003; Williams, 1996) on biracial individuals and identity development. As was determined in this study, Sechrest-Ehrhardt (2012) also found that the school environment is where biracial individuals first begin to come across questions about their racial heritage and identity, and where they first encounter the question 'What are you?' This question creates awareness in biracial individuals that they may be different from their peers and that the difference might be connected to their racial heritage. The question 'What are you?' could act as a catalyst for the participants to begin reflecting on their identity construction process (Dalmage, 2003; Patel, 2012).

The young South African biracial adults explained the racial constructs of both parents (i.e. my father is white and my mother is black) or gave various self-identification responses to the question. This supports other biracial studies (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Johnson, 2010; McCall, 2003; Walker, 2011). Participants responded by verbally asserting their preferred identities by stating, 'I am black and white' or 'I am biracial' (McCall 2003). As also seen in Sechrest-Ehrhardt's (2012) study, participants expressed frustration at being asked about their racial identity, especially at an early age when race was not a major part of how they viewed themselves. According to Fhagen-Smith (2003), younger children do not use racial markers to describe themselves, but instead use colour terms. In this regard I posit that racial self-representations only become more prominent during the middle-childhood years. Thus the participants in this study may have felt more comfortable answering the question at an older age, when they were aware of racial markers and identities in society. Being constantly questioned about their racial heritage may also have made the participants more aware of their racial identities and may have motivated them to commence the process of establishing a strong biracial identity during adolescence and young adulthood (as evidenced in Theme 3, Chapter 5). These hypotheses require further investigation.

Participants used *selective disclosure* thus revealing and concealing particular racial identities, which corresponds to the findings of Khanna and Johnson (2010). Mila, Christopher, Hugo and Vuyani shared how during their earlier years they struggled to answer the question and at times revealed their biracial heritage, whereas Lucia preferred to conceal her heritage if she did not

feel that the person asking was genuinely interested in her answer and preferred identity. As seen in other studies (Collins, 2000; Francis, 2008; Henriksen & Trusty, 2004; Mouzong, 2009; Salahuddin, 2008; Tessman, 1999; Williams, 1996) this question was often asked as a result of: (i) others' lack of understanding regarding their racial backgrounds; (ii) difficulty placing the biracial individuals in a racial category because of their ambiguous biracial physical features; (iii) a need to racially categorise people; and (iv) questioning their identity and wanting to know which racial identity they prefer, thus wanting to ascertain where their allegiances lie in a racialised society.

#### **4.8.2 CATEGORY K: WHERE DO I BELONG? STUCK IN-BETWEEN TWO WORLDS**

The feeling of not belonging was reportedly awakened at school when participants realised that learners were divided into racial social cliques. This seemed to be a confusing time for the participants as they had grown up in interracial homes where family members from different racial and cultural groups loved and respected each other. Participants highlighted the fact that being biracial caused feelings of not belonging to any racial group amongst their peers in the following subcategories: (a) feelings of not belonging and not fitting in; and (b) feeling allegiance to two different racial groups. Several participants (n=4, 1 female, 3 male) said that they had felt alienated from the different racial peer groups at school, while others (n=3, 2 female, 1 male) felt conflicted when disagreements arose between friends belonging to different racial groups.

##### **a) Subcategory K1: Feelings of not belonging and not fitting in**

Participants shared narratives on how they experienced society (in particular in the school context) to be racially divided. Many of the participants felt alienated from white and black racial groups. This is evident in the following verbatim extracts:

- Vuyani reflected on not belonging anywhere: *I was hanging with white people you know but I'm actually not white (N1-Vuyani: 847), and you always question okay, I'm not fully black and I'm not fully white (N1-Vuyani: 856). Do I belong to any group here you know? I mean it's, black, coloured or white (N1-Vuyani: 224).*
- Mpho didn't feel that he belonged among either his black or his white peers: *The main challenge would just be fitting in because you have a white side and white people would chill with each other and they'd spend time together. Then you have the black side doing that as well. As a person, I don't know where I'd fit in (N1-Mpho: 632-635).*
- Lucia remembered her difficult transition from an international school in which diversity was celebrated to a school where racial divides were evident. This made her question

her identity and where she belonged in her new school context: *Race was such an issue. It was 'Where are you going to sit?' I'm going to go sit there with my friends! And my friends happen to be white (N1-Lucia: 326-327).* Lucia felt pressured to associate with people of colour: *I became embarrassed about my race at a stage especially because I realised how much of an issue it really was. The 'popular' people in school that appealed to me were all white and the people I was generally told to hang out with was the people of colour. I didn't fit in anywhere (W1-Lucia: 154-157).*

- Hugo explained that as a child he felt that he did not fit into and was not accepted in the diverse racial groupings in society, specifically the white and black racial groups: *When I was young I once put it to my parents in such a way that I said 'I'm both black and white, but I'm neither black, nor white' (N1-Hugo: 1120-1122), Being neither black nor white also means that you're never really fully accepted into any specific community. Like no one in the black community would specifically go out of the way to say he's one of us, same thing with the white community. I'm sort of in limbo in between them (N1-Hugo: 1124-1126), and you never really fit in both sides (N1-Hugo: 1134).* He explained how the feeling of not belonging affected him in his youth: *Not fitting in fully, never being fully accepted in your youth (N2-Hugo: 614), and you know this whole thing of not being black enough or white enough, I find it very hurtful in a lot of ways (N1-Hugo:1224-1225).*
- Tyler remembered playing in a soccer match at school for which the learners were divided into a white team and a black team. He experienced the event as confusing as he did not know in which team he belonged because of his biracial heritage: *We had a soccer game at a park and people just started joining in, eventually it was too difficult to say this person is on my team and this person is on my team. So eventually they said okay how about we just make it sort of black people versus white people. (N1-Tyler: 476-478), and so we split up, and 'umm' (laughs) 'who do I play for you know?' And then they decided like I play for both sides and it was a confusing thing but it was fun (N1-Tyler: 483-484).*

## **b) Subcategory K2: Caught in between allegiance to two different racial groups**

Participants talked about how their peers expected them to show allegiance to a specific racial group in the following contexts: (i) during racial conflicts between black and white peers; (ii) being forced to choose one racial peer group over another instead of fraternising with all racial groups; and (iii) having to deal with racial insults from both black and white peers. This is evident in the following excerpts taken from participant narratives:

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- Serena told about an event where there was conflict between two racial groups at school and how she felt stuck in the middle: *When there'd be conflict there would be two sides. And then I'd be in the middle, because I was always the neutral party and I couldn't be affected by racist comments said by one side to the other side. So I'd always stand back but I did feel left out (N2-Serena: 309-311).*
- Vuyani recalled how peers from different racial groups would make racist comments about other racial groups in his presence. It seemed as if his peers were comfortable voicing their racist comments in front of him because of his biracial heritage. Vuyani described feeling upset in such situations: *People were trying to talk about black people around me and think that I wouldn't feel offended. And the same thing with black people, speaking about white people (N2-Vuyani: 283-285), whichever side it was on, it would upset me (N2-Vuyani: 291), and I'd question them, I'd be like 'But that's racist' (N2-Vuyani: 294).*
- Because of the racial divide in her high school, Lucia resented the fact that she could not be friends with people of different races and was expected to pick one racial group to socialise with: *It was like, pick a race, a racial path, go chill with the black girls or go chill with the Afrikaans girls or go chill with the white girls (N1-Lucia: 349-350).*

In an attempt not to betray one of their parents' heritages, participants chose to remain neutral when there was racial conflict between their peers by choosing to challenge the racist attitudes of their friends and engaging with friends from all racial groups.

#### **4.8.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category K: Where do I belong? Stuck in-between two worlds**

Young teens constantly seek social acceptance, especially from their peers, as many of the contexts they interact with are determined by who is accepted and who is rejected. During adolescence young people are expected to conform and being different is frowned upon. Since many young biracial individuals find it particularly difficult to fully conform to any group, socialisation is more challenging (Bulter-Sweet, 2011; Gibbs, 1998; McClurg, 2008). Socialisation may be challenging as it may be inherently difficult for biracial individuals to feel they are truly part of a group that represents only a part of their identity (Roque, 2011).

In support of several other biracial studies (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Henriksen & Trusty, 2004; Korgen, 1998; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Nakazawa, 2003; Miville *et al.*, 2005; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007; Roque, 2011; Suyemoto, 2004; Tahiro, 2002; Tang, Ann, Mullins, Brackett & McKenzie, 2006; Williams, 2011), the young South African biracial adults in the current study confirmed that they found it hard to fit in during their school years; they felt that they were 'different' from others and did not belong to either black or white peer groups. Like other biracial individuals (Jackson, 2010; Rockquemore *et al.*, 2009; Salahuddin, 2008), the young adults in this study mentioned feeling like outsiders in their social networks and disconnected from their mainstream peers.

Nakazawa (2003) states that such a feeling of not belonging usually stems from biracial individuals being racially unique within their school and community milieus. Furthermore, children in school generally form cliques along racial lines. The participants may thus have felt pressured to choose one racial group and distance themselves from their other racial heritage. However, for a young biracial adult it may be difficult to choose a social group without consciously thinking through that identity choice and what it says about who he/she is and is not. Thus, choosing one racial group over another may be seen as denying one part of the biracial heritage (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Nakazawa, 2003).

#### **4.8.3 CATEGORY L: THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

According to Mila and Maria (n=2, 2 female), engaging with American media helped them to construct their identities. By watching prominent American biracial celebrities on television, they came to realise that they could identify with both their parents' heritages and be proud of their constructed biracial identity. The following statements reflect how the media assisted Mila and Maria in their self-identification process:

- Mila identified as Afro-Asian: *I don't know what show I was watching and they had a lot of biracial people there and I saw somebody who was half Asian and half black and she just called herself Afro-Asian. So I googled the word and then I found out what the word means. Then I saw a bunch of celebrities that is when I said ok, now I'm not alone in this world. So that's when I started telling people that is who I am (N1-Mila: 82-86).* Mila was comforted by the knowledge that she was not the only one having difficulty in constructing her identity: *They talk about how they were also in a stage of confusion where they didn't know how to identify themselves, but once they did learn they carried that with pride (N1-Mila: 419-420).*

- The Tyra Banks<sup>57</sup> show helped Maria to realise that she did not have to choose only one race, but could embrace both her heritages: *Growing up I did not know how to identify (N1-Maria: 384)*. Tyra Banks was interviewing biracial people on her show: *She was interviewing people in America that were mixed and they came up with the term, biracial. One woman was telling her (Tyra Banks) about how she wants to embrace all her cultures. She doesn't want to be considered Hispanic, black or white, because she knows she's biracial because her parents are not one race (N2-Maria: 283-287)*.
- Both Maria and Mila referred to biracial celebrities whose stories influenced how they identified themselves and who made them realise that they could be proud of their biracial identity. Maria talked about Mariah Carey (an American singer who is Irish, African American and Venezuelan) and Halle Berry (an American actress who is European-American and African-American): *Mariah Carey, cause I used to be a fan (N1-Maria: 244), and it made me feel so good, knowing she was like me (N1-Maria: 249), and I then I learned about Halle Berry and all these other people, that also felt good (N1-Maria: 260-261)*. Mila, being of Afro-Asian descent, specifically identified with two celebrities of Afro-Asian descent namely Amerie (an American singer of African and Korean heritage) and Kimora Lee Simmons (an American model who is African and Japanese American). Mila seemed pleased to be associated with prevalent stereotypes associated with biracial women such as being 'exotic' and 'good looking'. Mila capitalised on the stereotype and discussed how she received attention from the opposite sex because of her biracial physical features: *Another thing that seemed to make things better was the media. For some odd reason, biracial women are considered extremely attractive. And I guess me being half Asian was a bonus. Boys would walk past me and say lines from famous rap songs about Asian eyes. And obviously being a teenager, getting attention from boys was never something that bothered me (W1-Mila: 47-51)*.

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<sup>57</sup> An American talk show hosted by Tyra Banks.

The American media thus played an important role in building these two participants' confidence and pride in their biracial heritage. I captured this idea in my field notes:

*I think growing up as biracial individuals may be challenging at times, as there are not many biracial role models in the South African media. This can leave biracial individuals feeling alone and different from their friends. I think the media and specifically American biracial celebrities played an important role in the construction of a positive biracial identity. Talking to participants after the interviews, most girls shared that watching or reading interviews where biracial celebrities discussed their own difficulties constructing their own identities, helped them to feel that they were not alone in their biracial identity struggles (FN: 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2012).*

**Think box 4.5: The influence of the media on my identity**

*I have always been encouraged by my mom, to be proud of my heritage and who I am. She told me many times how lucky I am to belong to two different worlds, and how versatile my life is for experiencing a multiracial and multicultural world. Despite all the challenges of racism and discrimination that I experienced, she taught me not to be bitter and actually have empathy and respect for other people in the world, no matter how they treat me or react to my biracial heritage. My sister Natasha also influenced my decision to identify mostly as a biracial individual. She is proud of our heritage and being different to others. I remember how she researched the internet for answers regarding our biracial status. She found websites dedicated to biracial individuals, and she told me about all the biracial celebrities (such as Mariah Carey, Bob Marley, and Alicia Keys) that were just like us. Researching about other biracial individuals helped Natasha and I to develop confidence in our biracial heritages. From these biracial celebrities, we learnt how to be proud of our biracial heritage and how they have used their biracial heritage to understand the world and different people in it. We have gradually found that we have the best of both worlds... And yes Natasha and I realise that our biracial world had opened the doors for a greater understanding of the human race.*

#### **4.8.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category L: The influence of the media on biracial identity development**

Suyemoto and Dimas (2003) maintain that because many biracial children do not grow up with biracial mentors and biracial individuals within their social environments, they usually seek out biracial role models through the media so as to better understand their own experiences. These experiences include being perceived as different and being excluded as a result of their biracial heritage, and the struggles they face in constructing an identity within society. As also found in studies by McClurg (2008) and Suyemoto and Dimas (2003), participants Mila and Maria found that the media contributed to them feeling unique, which enabled them to construct their biracial



identities with pride. Seeing biracial people on television made them realise that they were not alone in the world and that they were not the only biracial individuals who struggled to construct an identity.

Wallace (2003) states that females of mixed ancestry are usually praised and validated for their 'exotic' looks, which results in biracial women identifying as biracial. This applies to Mila, who actively identified as biracial (Afro-Asian) and embraced the idea that biracial women are typically very attractive (Suyemoto & Dimas, 2003).

#### **4.9 SUBTHEME 2.2: SIGNIFICANT SPACES FOR IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: PEERS AND INTIMATE PARTNERS**

This subtheme focuses on the participants' relationships with their peers and intimate partners. Participants revealed that the friends they chose to socialise with were individuals who re-affirmed and accepted their identities and celebrated their biracial heritage, rather than challenged it. They also discussed being open to dating partners from different racial backgrounds, but admitted to preferring certain intimate partners over others, gravitating towards peers and intimate partners who accepted and validated their biracial identity. I discuss this theme in terms of two categories: (i) education setting, peers and the biracial individual, and (ii) intimate relationships and the biracial individual.

##### **4.9.1 CATEGORY M: EDUCATION SETTINGS, PEERS AND THE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL**

Peers played an influential role in shaping the identity development of the biracial participants. Within this category, participants divided their narratives in terms of school ages (i.e. pre-primary school, primary school, high school and university). According to them, the school context was the setting where they first became aware of race, racial differences and their own racial identities. Most of the participants socialised with white peers in their early childhood and with black peers when they were older. They indicated that during this time they felt that their black peers were more accepting of them than their white peers and that they shared common experiences, values and beliefs with their black peers.

It is interesting to note that within the school context, participants quickly became aware of in-groups<sup>58</sup> (a social category or group with which the individual strongly identifies) and out-groups

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<sup>58</sup> In-group and out-group terms are part of the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1986). Social identity theory is briefly discussed in Chapter 2.

(a social category or group with which the individual does not identify). All the participants, excluding Hugo (who found acceptance with English-speaking peers who happened to be white), found themselves to be placed in the out-group by their white peers. At times the biracial individuals were also placed in the out-group by their black peers because of their inability to converse in an African language. They consequently fraternised with peers who used mainly English to communicate (e.g. foreigners). At the end of the day, the young biracial adults chose friends who accepted them and whom they liked.

The following subcategories emerged: (a) pre-primary and primary school - an awakening of racial differences; (b) high school - racial differences are prominent; (c) current peers - a diversity of peers; and (d) the influence of language on peer relations. The majority of the participants (n= 8, 3 male, 5 female) talked about the important role of language in the formation of peer relations. Several of them (n=6, 2 female, 4 male) indicated that they form part of racially diverse peer groups at university. Some participants (n=6, 2 female, 4 male) said that they gravitated towards their white peers in primary school, while the rest (n=3, 2 female, 1 male) felt accepted within black peer groups.

**a) Subcategory M1: Pre-primary and primary school - an awakening of racial differences**

Within this category, participants gravitated towards white peers when they were young. They described the racial composition of their education settings in pre-primary and primary school, and how these influenced their choice of friends as follows:

- Adrianna and her family moved from Nigeria to South Africa in 1998. She described her pre-primary school as predominantly white and said that she had many white friends at the time: *I had predominantly white friends and just a few black friends. My best friends were white for a long time in pre-primary school (N1-Adrianna: 14-15).* Adrianna indicated that while in pre-primary school she did not feel 'different' because of her biracial status. She only became aware of racial differences in primary school: *Race never came up during that time. I don't remember being made to feel uncomfortable or different because I was biracial or because they were white, and I was different from them. But then when I got to primary school, I could see the difference you know (N1-Adrianna: 287-290).* Adrianna's primary school was racially diverse. However, she gravitated towards her black peers as she felt accepted by them: *In primary school my friends were mainly black. I realised that I could relate to them more and their mothers. The way their mothers treated them is the same way my*

*mom treated me. I just felt more comfortable with black people. I just felt like I fit in more and I didn't have to impress anybody (N1-Adrianna: 372-375).*

- Mila reportedly associated with white peers as she lived in a predominantly white neighbourhood and attended an Afrikaans school: *Our neighbours were predominantly white. By this time I was already old enough to go to pre-school and the only one that was close to our house was Afrikaans. And that is how I learnt the language and I became used to having white friends (W1-Mila: 14-16).*
- While in a predominantly white school, Mpho made his white identity more salient, but his white identity was not validated by his white peers and he gravitated to his black peers where he experienced acceptance. As a result his black identity became more salient: *From primary school I wanted to be white, I gelled my hair and I did whatever I could do to be white. I listened to rock music, chilled out with the white kids, until I think I was just tired of getting rejected by white girls. Then Grade 10 and end of Grade 9, I started hanging out with black people and I was like these guys are actually so cool, this is actually where I need to be, and they accepted me for who I was. That's when I realised I am more comfortable with black people rather than white people but I would still have relationships with black and white people, but mostly black (N2-Mpho: 288-294).*
- Tyler's transition to a racially and ethnically diverse primary school helped him to develop a positive biracial identity. This could be attributed to the fact that his biracial heritage was celebrated in a diverse school context, and specifically to the acceptance he experienced from his diverse peers: *That was when I started to grow and it was a lot more diverse. There was black, white, Indian. I think I was a lot more accepted for who I was (N1-Tyler: 416-417).*
- Christopher's school environment was mostly white during his pre-school years. He claimed that race was not an issue when choosing peers: *It was a Model C school, mostly white (N2-Christopher: 463). I would say when I was younger I didn't see race (N2-Christopher: 467).*
- Hugo talked about how he struggled to make friends in pre-primary school after arriving in South Africa from the Netherlands. He experienced rejection and was ignored by both racial groups because of his 'otherness' (his biracial heritage). He also mentioned how being in such a situation made him question his racial identity for the first time in his life: *There was a gang of black kids and a gang of white kids at the school, everyone fit into that, and I just didn't. And it's the first time I ever really thought about race. I could communicate with both of them, but you know the black kids*

*seemed scared of me (N1-Hugo: 729-730), and they were like he's white let's just stay away from him. They didn't bother me or anything, they just left me alone and the white kids they rejected me completely (N1-Hugo: 736-738).* When his parents moved him to another school, Hugo found acceptance from his English-speaking peers. This influenced his identity and peer choice as he identified strongly with white English-speaking South Africans: *They moved me to this other nursery school (N1-Hugo: 759), and that was a very liberal English-speaking white nursery school. There weren't many black kids there but I think it's probably part of the reason why I fit into that culture so well because they accepted me (W1- Hugo: 37-39).* Hugo's racially diverse school context apparently enabled him to explore his biracial heritage: *It was the most racially mixed school and this experience allowed me to develop my racial identity, whilst learning about other race and culture groups (W1-Hugo: 52-54).*

#### **b) Subcategory M2: High school - racial differences are prominent**

Within the high school context, racial differences between the participants and their peers seemed to become more prominent. The young biracial adults who participated in this study discussed the racial composition of their peers in high school:

- Adrianna noticed the racial cliques at school: *When I got to high school I had moved to a co-ed school and that is where I started to notice cliques according to race and this was because people felt comfortable hanging out with people of their own kind and I understood this very well despite the fact that I was raised never to discriminate against another person on the basis of their skin colour. White girls were more comfortable and could relate to other white girls and the same went for boys. Black girls could also relate to other black girls and that was the norm (W1-Adrianna: 21-26).* Adrianna befriended mainly black peers as she found it easier to relate to them, sharing similar experiences: *My group of friends were predominantly black and I found it easier to relate to these black girls in the sense that our hair problems were the same, our family issues were dealt with in a parallel sort of manner and I began to prefer the attributes that came with being black (W1-Adrianna: 28-30).*
- Serena shared how she loved her diverse friends and how they celebrated each other's cultures: *High school was a breeze, it was very fun because I had friends from different races and different cultures (N1-Serena: 240-241).*
- Tyler shared this experience with her: *I mean we have black friends, white friends, Indian friends, Chinese friends and we all get along (N1-Tyler: 592-593).*

### c) Subcategory M3: Current peers - a diversity of peers

Participants described the racial composition of their current peer groups. The following narratives capture their experiences:

- Serena said that she had a diverse group of friends from her peer group: *I have Indian friends, white friends, and my best friend is Indian. I have so many different races (N1-Serena: 375-376).*
- Vuyani reported: *Ever since I can remember I've had a lot of white friends and I've had a lot of black friends (N1-Vuyani: 794-795). The friends I'm with now, my white friends are mostly English. I have a very close friend from Ghana (N1-Vuyani: 704-705).* Although Vuyani stated that he was comfortable with peers from different racial groups, he indicated that he felt more accepted by his black peers: *I must say that I do find it easier from my side to engage and be accepted by black people compared to Afrikaans people (W1-Vuyani: 53-54).*

In line with Vuyani's experience, Mila, Mpho and Christopher also said that they were more comfortable with their black peers than with their white peers. They attributed this to feelings of acceptance by black peers and sharing commonalities with them, as is evident in the following verbatim quotations:

- *What made me feel more comfortable was that they accepted me more than the white people did (N2-Mpho: 330-331). My white friends always looked at me different because of racial classification (N2-Mpho: 335-336).*
- *I could sit down with black people, and I can understand them, and be one of them, more so than I could with white people (N2-Christopher: 533-534), But I think just because of the colour of my skin, or how I look, black people feel a lot more easy with me than white people do feel easy with me (N2-Christopher: 540-543).* However, he stated that his white peers became more open and accepting of him once they learnt about his biracial heritage and specifically that his mom was white: *The white people at first see me as black because I appear more black, but then when they got to know me they would be more familiar with me and they would even take to me more. When they found out my mom was white, which is actually a bit racist (N1-Christopher: 748-750).*
- *All my friends are black actually (N1-Mila: 115), and it is not something that I look for, like I only want to be friends with black people it just happened to be that way (N1-Mila:117-118).* Mila also associates with biracial peers. She said that these relationships are important to her as they can converse about similar experiences

related to their biracial status. She furthermore stated that she was able to relate to them because of their shared biracial heritage: *In our Filipino community there is quite a lot who have Afrikaans fathers or British fathers (N1-Mila: 394-395). It's nice to share your experience with someone who understands your problems (N1-Mila: 406-407).*

- Only one participant, Hugo, indicated that his social circle consists mainly of white peers. Most of his close friends are white because they share the same world views and are English speaking: *Most of my friends are white all but a few (N1-Hugo: 141), and I never specifically chose it that way but you know for me, I feel most comfortable speaking English, so obviously my friends are going to be people who also speak English as a first language. The culture that I have is very European. My views are very liberal which doesn't really fit in well in South Africa. People are quite conservative here and the people who do have the same sort of views as me are generally white (N1-Hugo: 144-148).*

#### **d) Subcategory M4: The influence of language on peer relations**

South Africa has eleven official national languages, but English is widely used in the country. In the demographic forms (Appendix D), the majority of the participants listed English as their main language of communication and the language spoken at home. English is also the main medium of instruction in South African schools and many parents encourage their children to study in English as it is the main language used in the work environment. In this subcategory participants discussed how language had influenced their peer relations. Several participants shared the frustration of being 'othered' for not speaking an African language and said that they felt excluded within their peer groups when an African language was used for communication:

- Mila stated that because of her African physical features, people would automatically assume that she spoke an African language: *I always have to correct them and tell them that I only speak English (N1-Mila: 128).* Mila talked about the frustration she felt because of her inability to understand an African language and how this made her feel less South African: *There was definitely the language barrier that made me feel like I wasn't South African, despite the fact that I am a citizen. As soon as black people see John (her brother) and I, they automatically think we are black South Africans. They think we can speak Tswana or Zulu. But for me, it's a constant battle to get random strangers or grocery tellers to speak to me in English. Even though most of my friends are black now and my past relationships have always been with black boys, I've never learnt the language (W1-Mila: 59-63).* Mila was concerned about the possibility that her inability to speak an African language could be construed as arrogant: *I'm always*

*considered arrogant because I've been living here for 19 years and I haven't bothered to learn any language besides Afrikaans (W1-Mila: 68-69). This has influenced her choice of friends, as she tends to befriend individuals from African countries who can speak English: I'd still say that most of them are black but I haven't really met any South African friends here, I've got friends from Uganda and Malawi (N2-Mila: 259-261). What's cool though, is that we all can speak English because they're all from different countries (N2-Mila: 265-266). Because of the communication barriers she experienced, Mila did at some point consider learning an African language, but has since made peace with the fact that she can speak only English: At one point it made me feel like maybe I should just learn some of the African languages because there is always this awkwardness in the beginning but then you don't have to do something just so that you can fit in with other people you know (N1-Mila: 141-144).*

- Serena stated that although she was unable to understand an African language, her friends would accommodate her by translating what was being said into English: *When I was younger, especially in primary school, the black girls would speak Sotho, and Zulu to each other. Because they were my friends they'd also translate it for me when I didn't understand (N2-Serena: 129-131).*
- At times Adrianna felt left out when her friends conversed in an African language: *I do hang out with majority black South African people. So, you know sometimes they will speak in their language just to make things easier for themselves or when they want to explain something. I don't understand you know, they crack jokes sometimes and I'm just there like hmm okay....this is weird but I've gotten used to it but sometimes I do feel a bit left out (N2-Adrianna: 12-15). Adrianna would have liked to be able to speak Zulu, as well and her father's native tongue, Italian: I wish I could speak Zulu for some strange reason and another South African language. I think I would have liked to have learned how to speak Italian because I think that would have been nice, but other than that I don't have a longing to learn any other language (N2-Adrianna: 38-41).*
- Hugo befriended black peers who could converse in English: *All of my black friends, who I know from the university, are people who do speak English (N1-Hugo: 172-174). And for whom the language barrier is not a problem (N1-Hugo: 176).*
- Lucia expressed her view that language separates people and said that she wished she had learnt her father's language as that would have made it possible for her to communicate with the black girls at school and be accepted by them: *Language separates people in a way (N1- Lucia: 769). The black girls would get on me about not being able to speak Zulu (N1- Lucia: 739-740). So in my young mind I wanted to go*

- live with my dad so that I can pick up on his things that would make me more cultured in a black way because I felt like maybe I could be accepted by them (black peers) (N1- Lucia: 746-748). I still do want to learn the languages. I just felt like a piece was missing, like I was meant to speak another language (N1- Lucia: 755-757). Lucia experienced discrimination from her peers on account of her 'English' accent: 'You think you better than us because of the way you speak!' (N1-Lucia: 339), and 'Are you putting on an accent so you can look more intelligent?' (N1-Lucia: 341). She reflected as follows on the above statements: I think they thought that I was too good to learn their language but I don't feel that way at all, I just never had the opportunity (N1-Lucia: 763-764).*
- Mpho said the following about his experience: *I can speak a little bit of Zulu but I can understand a lot of it but I couldn't exactly respond or I couldn't speak to them in Zulu (N2-Mpho: 415-416). He said that he was seen as a snob by others because he could not speak his mother's African language: Let's say if I went to Durban, to KwaMashu, to my own home town they look at you different like he's a snob, he doesn't speak Zulu (N2-Mpho:427-428).*
  - According to Tyler, people automatically assume that he can speak an African language because of his African surname: *Whenever I'm at an airport or I have to hand in my passport they always start speaking to me in an African language, I'm like I don't speak that! (N2-Tyler: 331-333).*
  - Maria stated that people are usually surprised that she can speak an African language because of her physical appearance (having a lighter skin tone). Because of this assumption, people often do not realise that she can understand what they are saying about her when they speak an African language: *They do really find it odd that I can speak the language and that I understand because sometimes people would talk about me. You know when you go to the shops and they think you are being snobby, so then they talk about you and you actually understand what they are saying (N1-Maria: 561-564).*

Although many South Africans speak more than one of the official languages, it was evident participants struggled to interact with their black peers as they were not fluent in an African language. Although most of their peers spoke English to the participants, they sometimes chose to converse in their own African languages, which caused the participants to feel left out. The participants tended to befriend people who were articulate in English.



It therefore appears as if the construction of peer groups was influenced by the participants' contexts, specifically the racial composition of the school and fluency in the English language. Although most participants indicated that they had friends from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, several chose to interact with black rather than white peers. I captured this in my field notes:

*It seems that the participant's neighborhoods and the racial composition of their schools influenced their choice of peers. Although the participants befriended white peers, they expressed being more accepted by black peers and feeling more comfortable with their black peers (FN: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013). Language barriers made the participants feel like an outsider in their own country and even affected the choice in peers. Participants' inability to converse in an African language affected their relationships with their black South African peers, which made them feel alienated in their social contexts and may have alienated them from choosing a black identity (FN: 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

#### **4.9.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category M: Education settings, peers and the biracial individual**

This category is discussed in two sections: (i) identifying with single and multiple racial social groups and (ii) the influence of language on peer relationships.

##### **a) Identifying with single and multiple racial social groups**

Kerpelman and Pittman (2001), as well as Sugimura and Shimizu (2010), emphasise that adolescent peer relations provide a mirror for the self through feedback and validation about one's own behaviours and ways of thinking. Young adults want to know how they are viewed by others, and the feedback from others will confirm or modify their knowledge about who they are, thus influencing their identity construction. Peers also assist young adults in projecting the self into the future (Josselson, 1996; Kerpelman & Pittman, 2001; Sugimura & Shimizu, 2010).

As also reported in Jackson's (2009) study, participants in this study experienced the school setting as highly influential in their identity development and choice of peer groups. They divided their timelines and significant events according to school ages (i.e. pre-primary, primary school, high school and university) – probably because school is usually the first place where children become aware of race and racial differences. Other biracial studies (Fhagen-Smith, 2003; Jackson, 2009; Sheets, 2003; Williams, 2011) confirm what the young South African biracial participants expressed, namely that in pre-primary school race was not an issue when

socialising with their peers. During pre-primary school, the participants remembered being embraced by all racial groups, but specifically reported having white friends as a result of their predominantly white environment. However, as they grew older, and specifically in primary school, their racial identities came into question as a result of the greater awareness of racial differences among their peers. Congruent with the findings of the above-mentioned studies, most of the young biracial South African adults gravitated towards black peers or people of colour, who were more accepting of them, and mentioned the importance of similar experiences, values and beliefs. Some participants felt that they were more readily accepted by their black peers than by their white peers. The majority of the participants claimed that their black characteristics (such as dark skin) may have prevented full acceptance by white peers (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Wilton, Sanchez & Garcia, 2013). The rejection received from their white peers could be attributed to South Africa's apartheid<sup>59</sup> past in which schools were segregated according to race prior to 1994<sup>60</sup>.

In this study Hugo was an exception. His friends were predominantly white English speakers. He was accepted by them and felt comfortable conversing with them in English. Parallel to other studies (Doyle & Kao, 2007b; Jackson, 2009; Gaskins, 2003) participants discussed positive experiences at university, where they could interact with diverse others. For Mila, university was her first chance to meet and interact with other biracial people from diverse backgrounds. Participants reported feeling comfortable with peers from various backgrounds and appreciating multiculturalism as part of their identity. This corresponds with Hubbard's (2010) findings.

The biracial participants were influenced by what Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) term *push and pull factors*. In this study, most participants were *pulled* towards a black social network as they experienced positive experiences within that racial group. They experienced *push factors* from white peers as they experienced rejection and negativity from them (Brunnsma, 2005). As also found in other studies (Hall, 1992; Kerwin *et al.*, 1993), participants' affiliation to a specific racial group also influenced their identity construction. While all the participants in this study chose a biracial identity, several also mentioned that they felt a stronger affinity for their black heritage. Thus biracial participants in the current study claimed a black identity when their social

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<sup>59</sup> South Africa's apartheid system is discussed in detail in Chapter 2

<sup>60</sup> Since 1994, legislation and various policies have been developed and implemented in South Africa to encourage the process of desegregation in the schooling system. Specifically, the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act no. 37 of 1996) catalysed by the Bill of Rights and the South African Constitution, formalised the process of desegregation and created the opportunity for learners from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds to attend South African schools of their choice (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006).

networks consisted mainly of black peers. Walker (2011) and Patel (2012) reiterate that biracial individuals are likely to identify themselves based on where they receive the greatest social acceptance. As a result, individuals experiencing positive feelings about their social networks are more likely to feel close to that group, which will influence their identity formation.

The way in which biracial participants in this study made friendship choices is similar to the way described in Doyle and Kao's (2007b) study, which focused on the friendship choices of multiracial individuals. The biracial individuals who participated exhibited what is termed an *amalgamation friendship pattern* in which they consciously chose to identify with their black peers. They also exhibited a *blending friendship pattern* by identifying with a diverse group of friends, especially within the university context. This is consistent with the notion that biracial individuals can bridge the gap between their monoracial counterparts. Participants gravitated either towards a diverse racial group, or to a predominantly white or black racial group. Another similarity between the findings of this study and Doyle and Kao's (2007b) study is that the friendship choices were heavily influenced by the racial composition of the school, rather than by the participants' preferences, and that even for biracial individuals groups were divided along black and white lines. This resonates with the findings of several related studies (Doyle & Kao, 2007b; Jenkins, 2008; Kenney, 2002; McClurg, 2004; Basu, 2007; Sheets, 2004; Van Buren, 2008).

One participant in the current study, Mpho, felt pressured to prove his racial allegiance in order to be accepted into a white racial group. Similar to participants in other biracial studies (Hubbard, 2010; Jackson, 2009; Root, 1998; Patel, 2012; Suyemoto & Dimas, 2003; Wallace, 2003), Mpho spoke about how he had to act in a certain way to fit in with his white peers. He felt pressured to listen to specific types of music (i.e. rock), wearing specific clothes and engaging in particular cultural activities to be accepted in a white group. According to the other studies mentioned above, once participants acted in a certain way, they were accepted by their peers. However, in this study Mpho was not welcomed and accepted by his white peers at school, who viewed him as an outsider. Participants in this study, tended to identify with peers who accepted their biracial heritage and did not judge them. This correlates with Jackson's (2009) findings.

Contrary to Park and Stonequist's theories and the findings of related studies (Collins, 2000; Henrikson & Trusty, 2004; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004; Tashiro, 2002), participants in this study did not experience rejection from both black and white racial groups. The above-mentioned authors found that biracial individuals were being rejected by

black individuals who did not accept them as black, and by white individuals who perceived them as black. The evidence in this study contradicts this trend as the biracial individuals in the current study did find a place among both single-race and diverse peer groups, which contradicts the myth that biracial individuals will spend their lives isolated and excluded from all racial social groups.

**b) The influence of language on peer relationships**

Language is an important factor in deciding who is included and excluded from friendship groups (Makubalo, 2007; Wallace, 2003) and is closely linked to an individual or group's social identity (Kamwangamalu, 2007). Patel's (2012) study on multiracial identity found that biracial individuals experienced barriers to acceptance if they did not speak the 'languages' of their biracial heritage. Some of the participants were frustrated because they could not speak African languages as this affected their interactions with black South Africans, which led to them being 'othered'. American studies (Basu, 2007; Harris, 2004; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Patel, 2012; Wallace, 2003) found that biracial African Americans reported being excluded or having strained relationships with their black peers if they were unable to speak or understand 'black vernacular' or Ebonics, which is a dialect commonly spoken by African Americans.

Within the South African context, language is used to express role relationships between individuals and indicates a social allegiance in terms of the groups people belong to or from which they are excluded (Sterling, 2000). African languages are associated with people of colour. In South Africa language, and specifically accents and the use of variants of English, were and still are commonly used to make judgments about an individual's racial or ethnic 'belonging' (McKinney, 2007). Despite the post-apartheid language policy, which explicitly recognises 11 official languages and has made a special commitment to the promotion of previously neglected African languages, English has become increasingly hegemonic in the post-apartheid era as a result of its dominance in the public sphere (Kamwangamalu, 2003; McKinney, 2007). In contrast to White South African English (WSAE), Black South African English (BSAE) carries a great deal of stigma. People of colour who speak only English are viewed by other black groups as thinking that they are better than them, or that they are rejecting their African culture and language (McKinney, 2007).

Based on these findings, I posit that the participants identified primarily with the English language and may be unable to claim an ethnic identity as a result of a lack of proficiency in an African language. I propose that the majority of the participants may have identified with their

mothers' white and Asian cultural identities, which were probably communicated to them in English. Therefore their inability to speak an African language may have resulted in a lack of identification with an African culture. This possibility requires further investigation.

Fanon (1952) stated that "*mastery of language affords remarkable power*" (Fanon, 1952; 1986: 9). I further posit that as a result of the English language being associated with power and privilege, African languages are losing their appeal amongst their speakers. During the periods of colonisation and apartheid, African languages were deemed inferior (Mda, 2010). This notion has been carried over in post-apartheid South Africa with individuals who speak English in a non-standard dialect or accent (the same English language but a different pronunciation from what is considered standard in mainstream society (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013) being stereotyped and stigmatised as being low in status, less intelligent and incompetent. Thus, language may also be the means by which one group of people stereotypes another (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013). Thus participants in this study may identify with the English language as there is an allure in speaking the power language in South Africa (Mda, 2010). This hypothesis requires further investigation.

#### **4.9.2 CATEGORY N: INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND THE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL**

Participants shared their perceptions on how their biracial identity influenced the dating experience. Most of the participants stated that they were open to interracial relationships, but preferred certain racial partners for intimacy. The following subcategories emerged: (a) open to dating partners from different racial groups; (b) preferring certain intimate partners over others; and (c) the role of the biracial individual's physical appearance in dating. Although some participants (n=5, 3 female, 2 male) mentioned being open to interracial dating, the majority (n=8, 5 female, 3 male) expressed a preference for partners from specific racial groups. Three participants (n=3, 2 male, 1 female) talked about how their physical appearance seemed to play a role in the dating world.

##### **a) Subcategory N1: Open to dating partners from different racial groups**

The young biracial participants were open to dating people from different racial groups and reported on their experiences of dating individuals from diverse racial and ethnic groups. The following verbatim statements provide examples:

- *That is the best part because I can date anybody I want. I do not, honestly see colour (N1-Maria: 486).*

- *So in primary school I dated coloured guys, black guys, white guys, whoever was my closest friend at that time (N1-Serena: 420-421).*
- *I've been open to any race (N2-Vuyani: 388).*
- *I've dated girls across the spectrum, black, white, coloured, but mostly they would have to have something familiar with me that we can talk about (N1-Christopher: 833-834).*
- *No I'm very open. I wouldn't close somebody off because they are from another racial group (N1-Adrianna: 507-508).*

Participants indicated that they were colour blind (Orbe, 1999) when it came to love matters and said that they were open to dating individuals from different racial groups.

#### **b) Subcategory N2: Preferring certain intimate partners over others**

Although they did not discriminate between races when dating, the participants indicated that they were often attracted to certain racial partners. They reported:

- *I am not sure why, but from high school I just liked white guys. I have nothing against other races. I find, we have the same interest, we both like anime and we both like metal music (N1-Serena: 427-428).*
- *There is no specific choice but it just happens to be always black (N1- Mila: 295).*
- *Towards the end of Grade 9, I met my current boyfriend. He is a white male of Russian, German, English and South African (Cape Town) decent. He has been extremely helpful in helping me appreciate and accept myself (W1-Lucia: 293-294).*  
Lucia did not find the following approaches attractive: *Not because I'm racist or anything like that, it's an attraction thing. The way the black boys would approach me, the type of lingo they used, I didn't find that appealing or attractive (N1-Lucia: 404-406).*
- *I feel I'm more attracted to black guys than I am to white guys (N2-Maria: 144).*
- *I am open to all racial groups but I think it's easier to just date a guy that's not white (N1-Adrianna: 454), and I just decided that being involved with a South African white guy might just be a bit too complicated, because of their parents, and their friends, and their environment (N1-Adrianna: 436-437).* Adrianna also mentioned that there were not many interracial couples on campus and that she did not want to deal with the discrimination that usually came with being involved in such a relationship: *I don't think I've ever seen an interracial couple here at campus. So I think people will judge you*

*and I'm not somebody who likes being out there or judged. So I'd rather just stick to what I feel comfortable with (N1-Adrianna: 461-463).*

- *You know when I was young I would date black girls more (N1-Vuyani: 747).*
- *Hugo stated his reason for preferring white South African girls: Most of my relationships have been with white South African girls (N1-Hugo: 1014). I just get along with them and I think culturally these girls specifically are very liberal as well (N1-Hugo: 1017-1018). Black girls come from a culture where it's expected that a man must pay for everything and a man must carry the conversation. You know if I say 'What do you want to do?' she'll be like, 'No I'm happy doing whatever you want' and for me that's not enough (N1-Hugo: 991-993).*
- *Mpho's reason related to the fear of being rejected: I could never get a white girl because I was not fully white (N1: Mpho: 216).*

**c) Subcategory N3: The role of physical appearance in dating for the biracial individual**

According to the participants, as biracial individuals and specifically light-skinned individuals, they attracted more attention from partners from the black community. A few participants mentioned that their skin complexion attracted partners from the opposite sex among people of colour:

- *Christopher stated that his phenotype gave him an advantage when dating: I think I'm at an advantage with black girls because some of them see being light-skinned as a good quality. So I'm put on an extra pedestal and it's also something exotic (N2-Christopher: 573-575).*
- *Adrianna experienced that some men wanted to date her because of the status attached to dating a biracial woman. In the black culture in particular, a light-skinned woman is apparently considered to be more beautiful than one with a dark skin. Furthermore, biracial women are reportedly seen as more attractive because of their biracial heritage: They just go 'wow, you come from Nigeria, she's biracial' They think it's something that's very awesome (N1-Adrianna: 494-495). I've only dated a few guys but then two of them were more interested in my appearance and the fact that they were with a biracial girl. And you know she's yellow<sup>61</sup> and since it's such a popular thing these days to be yellow (N1-Adrianna: 499-501).*

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<sup>61</sup> Yellow bone (also known as yellow) is a slang commonly used among African Americans to refer to light skinned individuals with African heritage.

- Mpho felt that he was popular among black females due to being unique and different: *I think it's because we're different, let's say, maybe unique (N1-Mpho: 803).*

**Think box 4.6: My peers in school and dating partners**

*My social circles in school consisted of English speaking peers, so mainly white peers and foreigners. It was a very organic group, I did not intentionally look for them, it just happened. To this day my friends are still English speaking South Africans (since I cannot speak Afrikaans or any of the African languages) and mainly foreigners, and expats that live in Pretoria. Another question I am asked regularly is 'what kind of men do I date?' just like my friendships, I have always been comfortable dating men of all racial and cultural groups, however my rule for dating and friendships is not to select a particular racial group, but rather I choose to surround myself with people that are not conservative but open-minded about diversity and respectful towards all races, in all shapes and sizes.*

#### **4.9.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category N: Intimate relationships and the biracial individual**

As also found in other studies (Bonam & Shih, 2009; Roberts-Clarke, Roberts & Morokoff, 2004), participants indicated that they were open to dating partners from other racial groups and that they were comfortable with being in an interracial relationship. They mentioned their biracial heritage and growing up in interracial families where they observed people of different backgrounds living together in harmony as a precursor for being more open-minded to interracial relationships than their mainstream peers.

In line with Sechrest-Ehrhardt's (2012) findings, participants did not discriminate against dating people from different racial groups, they indicated a preference for dating certain racial partners. Out of the ten participants, two female participants had been in relationships with mainly white men, while three had mostly dated black men. One participant shared mainly going out with black girls, but being open to interracial dating, while another said that he socialised mainly with white English-speaking girls due to their common liberal views.

Comparable to the findings of other studies (Francis, 2008; Korgen, 1998; Roberts-Clarke *et al.*, 2004; Patel, 2012; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Walker, 2011) biracial participants in this study experienced preference from people of colour owing to their light complexion. They acknowledged that their light skins gave them privileges over darker-skinned people of colour as they easily attracted the attention of the opposite sex in dating contexts. As a result of



society internalising Eurocentric standards of beauty, which value light skin, the opposite sex found the physical features of biracial individuals more attractive and desirable than those of other people of colour. As a result, Adrianna said that she was cautious about dating because boys were sometimes intrigued by her being biracial (Sechrest-Ehrhardt, 2012).

#### **4.10 SUMMARY OF SIMILARITIES, CONTRADICTIONS AND NEW INSIGHTS IN THEMES 1 AND 2, CHAPTER 4**

##### **4.10.1 FINDINGS WHICH ARE SIMILAR TO EXISTING KNOWLEDGE ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

- As seen in other studies (Basu, 2007; Jackson, 2009; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007), South African biracial youth strongly identify with their maternal cultural heritage. I found that young biracial South African adults identified with their mothers' cultural traditions as mothers tend to socialise their biracial children towards their own cultural beliefs and values (cultural ethos).
- As found in other studies (Hubbard, 2010; Tomishima, 2003; Root, 2003a; 2003b), I found that the young South African biracial adults' identity development was disconnected from fathers with whom they had limited contact and strained relationships as a result of separation and divorce. The absence of fathers in the lives of most of the participants in this study led to their limited understanding of paternal heritage, background and social identities and stronger identification with their mothers' socio-cultural identities.
- As seen in studies on biracial identity development by Johnson (2010), McCall (2003), Suyemoto and Dimas (2003) Root, (2003a), Dalmage (2003), and Williams (1999), the default identity responses of young biracial South Africans who participated in this study included an explanation of their parental racial heritage, expressing both their racial heritages as part of their identity.
- Like McClurg (2008) and Suyemoto and Dimas (2003), I found that the identity construction of young biracial South African adults benefitted from the fact that they could relate to especially American celebrities with a biracial heritage. Such vicarious identification provided young biracial South African adults with biracial role models with whom they could identify and helped them to realise that they were not alone in the world and that others like them also struggle to construct identities.
- Like others (Doyle & Kao, 2007; Hubbard, 2010; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Wilton, Sanchez & Garcia, 2013), I found that the majority of South African biracial youth had

a diverse group of friends and incorporated multiculturalism into their identities. As found in other studies on biracial identity development (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Wilton *et al.*, 2013), a minority of the South African young biracial adult participants identified exclusively with black peers and a black heritage in the school context, more specifically during the primary school period.

- With reference to other studies on language (Basu, 2007; Harris, 2004; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Wallace, 2003), I also found that the language spoken by the young South African biracial adults played a role in peer identification. Not speaking or understanding an African language led to participants feeling excluded from certain peer groups, so that they chose to rather identify with peers who conversed mainly in English.
- As found in other studies (Bonam & Shih, 2009; Roberts- Clarke, Roberts & Morokoff, 2004), I also found that the South African biracial youth dated across racial groups and racial identities.

#### **4.10.2 FINDINGS THAT CONTRADICT EXISTING KNOWLEDGE OF BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Contradictory to what was found in other studies (Collins, 2000; Henrikson & Trusty, 2004; Rockquemore, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004; Tashiro, 2002), the young South African biracial adults in this study did not experience rejection from both black and white peer groups, but identified with peers from various racial groups.

#### **4.10.3 NEW INSIGHTS GAINED FROM MY STUDY ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

- Young biracial South African adults in this study proudly shared narratives of their parents' involvement in the anti-apartheid movement as a way to demonstrate a positive self-representation and identity to the world. Their parents' legacy of fighting for a democratic South Africa was integrated in the participants' identity construction as a way to express their privileged social status in society.
- A further novel insight into family identity construction relates to African culture being a driving force for identity construction when African males (participants' fathers) opted for interracial relationships. The young biracial South African adults' mothers were rejected by their husbands' African families because of their lack of knowledge of African culture. Once it was apparent to an African family (kinship of origin) that a non-African maternal figure would still incorporate African traditions (mothers adapting to

- the cultural customs and traditions of the fathers' African culture), inclusion into an African family was mediated.
- Language played a role in enabling the biracial individuals to either feel part of the family or different from the family. In this study, language played an important role in the ability to integrate into a specific culture. Since most of the participants used English as their language of communication, they did not identify with ethnic cultures and African languages, which may have been used to express cultural values and beliefs within their African families. In certain cases participants were excluded from or included in their African families as a result of their inability to communicate in the specific African language. However, it should be borne in mind that I sampled only South African biracial young adults who could speak English, therefore the sampled group may have been biased. For this reason I merely posit that language matters in constructing an identity with regard to a particular heritage and that the young biracial South African youth in this study were excluded and included because of their ability to communicate in a specific language.

#### 4.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I reported on the findings of Themes 1 and 2 that emerged following thematic inductive data analysis. I used the participants' verbatim quotations, written narratives and excerpts from my field notes to enrich and authenticate my discussions. I interpreted the results and presented the findings of this study in terms of existing literature as presented in Chapter 2, and expanded on the congruent and contradictory findings in the current study and in the existing literature.

In Chapter 5, I present Themes 3 and 4. Theme 3 relates to *expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity*, and Theme 4 to *'Othering': stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity*.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND LITERATURE CONTROL OF THE STUDY: THEMES 3 AND 4

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#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this chapter I present Theme 3: *Expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity* and Theme 4: *'Othering': Stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity*. In line with Chapter 4, I include verbatim quotations and extracts from the raw data in support of the subthemes and categories I present. As an introduction to my discussions, Table 5.1 summaries the themes, subthemes and categories discussed in Chapter 5, in relation to the research questions of this study. Table 5.2 captures the related subthemes, categories and subcategories, together with the relevant inclusion and exclusion indicators on which I relied. Chapter 5 focuses on answering the secondary research questions posed in Chapter 1:

- How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?
- How do young biracial adults racially identify in a multicultural South Africa?
- What are the strengths and challenges experienced by young adults during the process of their biracial identity construction

As background to the discussions that follow, I need to explain my understanding of key concepts. In this study I view **race** as a social construct that shifts across space and time (Ifekwunigwe, 2002). Prejudice, discrimination and racism are related but distinctive concepts (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum & Carr, 2012). De la Rey and Duncan (2003) define **racism** as an institutionalised system whereby certain racialised groups are systematically dominated or marginalised by another racialised group or groups. **Prejudice** is a negative attitude towards an entire group of people. Racism is a type of prejudice in which a person holds the belief that his/her race is superior to other races. Prejudice is often directed towards ethnic or racial minorities and may lead to discrimination where equal rights and opportunities are denied to individuals and groups based on illogical and uninformed bias (Schaefer, 2001). Furthermore, **'othering'** refers to the labelling and degradation of cultures and groups outside of one's own group (Jandt, 2013; Riggins, 1997). According to Schaefer (2001), **stereotypes** refer to unreliable generalisations about all members of a group and failure to recognise individual differences within a group.

**Table 5.1: Themes , subthemes and categories related to research questions in chapter 5**

Thesis chapter	Secondary research questions	Themes	Subthemes	Categories	
Chapter 5	How do biracial young adults racially identify in a multicultural South Africa?	Theme 3: Expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity	<b>Subtheme 3.1:</b> Positioning self within cultural, religious and national identities	<b>O:</b> Positioning self within cultural identities <b>P:</b> Positioning self within religious identities <b>Q:</b> Positioning self within national identities	
			<b>Subtheme 3.2:</b> Positioning self within racial identities (singular and biracial)	<b>R:</b> Positioning self with a white identity <b>S:</b> Positioning self with a black identity <b>T:</b> Positioning self from a coloured identity <b>U:</b> Positioning of self with a biracial identity	
			<b>Subtheme 3.3:</b> An identity constructed by others	<b>V:</b> The construction of identity within the family context <b>W:</b> Biracial siblings constructing similar and different identities to the participants <b>X:</b> Through my friends' eyes: how peers identify the biracial individual <b>Y:</b> Through my boyfriend's eyes: how intimate partners identify the biracial individual	
			<b>Subtheme 3.4:</b> The influence of physical appearance on biracial identity construction	<b>Z:</b> Experiencing 'othering' as a result of unique biracial physical features <b>AA:</b> Manipulating hair styles so as to fit in with societal norms <b>BB:</b> A celebration of one's biracial physical appearance <b>CC:</b> Being revered for having light skin within the black community	
	How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?		Theme 4: 'Othering': Stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity construction	<b>Subtheme 4.1:</b> Discrepancy in how others construct a racial identity for the biracial individual and how the biracial individual self-identifies	<b>DD:</b> Others' ascribing a racial identity to the biracial participants <b>EE:</b> Official documents and census not creating a space to construct a biracial identity
				<b>Subtheme 4.2:</b> Challenges associated	<b>FF:</b> Challenge of feeling 'othered' and different because of their biracial heritage
				What are the strengths and challenges experienced by young adults during the process of their biracial identity construction?	

			with growing up as a biracial individual	<b>GG:</b> Challenge of constructing a biracial identity <b>HH:</b> Challenge of growing up in an interracial home
			<b>Subtheme 4.3:</b> Experiences of racism, discrimination and marginalisation as a biracial individual	<b>II:</b> Participants experiencing racism and discrimination as people of colour <b>JJ:</b> Participants experiencing racism and discrimination in their own intimate interracial relationships <b>KK:</b> Participants experiencing racism and discrimination within the school context
			<b>Subtheme 4.4:</b> Making it through the rain: A celebration of a biracial identity	<b>LL:</b> Feeling unique and having pride in their biracial heritage <b>MM:</b> The joys of experiencing two worlds as a result of a biracial heritage <b>NN:</b> Having an open mind and heart because of a biracial heritage
<b>Table 5.1: Themes , subthemes and categories related to research questions in chapter 5</b>				

**Table 5.2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3**

<b>Theme 3 : Expressions of Multiple Identities in the Construction of Biracial identity</b>		
<i>I wished I was black at times because I had been brought up in a black home and most of my friends were black as well, and other times I wished I was white because my father is white and I also have white friends (N1-Maria:11-12)</i>		
<b>Subtheme 3.1 : Positioning self within cultural, religious and national identities</b>		<b>This subtheme focuses on instances in which the participants identified with cultural, religious and nationalities as part of their identity construction.</b>
<b>Subthemes and categories</b>	<b>Inclusion indicators</b>	<b>Exclusion indicators</b>
<b>Category O: Positioning self within cultural identities</b>	This category includes data where participants discussed constructing a cultural identity.	This category excludes data that does not refer to participants' constructing a religious, national or a racial identity.
<b>Category P: Positioning self within religious identities</b>	This category includes data where participants discussed constructing a religious identity.	This category excludes data that does not refer to participants' constructing a cultural, national or a racial identity.
<b>Category Q: Positioning self within national identities</b>	This category includes data where participants discussed constructing a national identity.	This category excludes data that does not refer to participants constructing a religious, cultural or a racial identity.
<b>Subtheme 3.2: Positioning self within racial identities (singular and biracial)</b>	<b>This subtheme focuses on the participants' different choices of racial/ethnic identities in their biracial identity construction.</b>	
<b>Category R: Positioning self with a white identity</b>	This category includes data related to instances where participants chose to identify with a white identity at some point in their biracial identity development. This also includes certain contexts and relationships that influenced participants to identify with a white identity	This category excludes data where participants identify with other racial/ethnic identities, such as a biracial identity, black identity and coloured identity
<b>Category S: Positioning self with a black identity</b>	This category includes data related to instances where participants chose to identify with a black identity at some point in their biracial identity development. This also includes certain contexts and relationships	This category excludes data where participants identify with other racial/ethnic identities, such as a biracial identity, white identity and coloured identity

	that influenced participants to identify with a black identity	
<b>Category T: Positioning self from a coloured identity</b>	This category includes data where participants discuss a) a strong resistance to being called coloured; b) why they may be mistaken as South African coloureds; c) their own understanding of South African coloureds and d) instances where they claim a coloured identity.	This category excludes data where participants identify with other racial/ethnic identities, such as a biracial identity, white identity and black identity.
	<b>a) Subcategory T1: A strong resistance to being labelled as coloured:</b> This subcategory includes data where participants expressed resistance to being called or identified as a coloured person within the South African context.	This subcategory excludes data where participants do not express why they are mistaken as a coloured person; instances in which they choose to identify with a coloured identity and express their own understanding of who coloured people are.
	<b>b) Subcategory T2: Why biracial individuals may be mistaken as South African coloureds:</b> This subcategory includes data where participants expressed why they are usually mistaken as coloured person within the South African context.	This subcategory excludes data where participants express resistance to being called or identified as a coloured person; express instances in which they choose to identify with a coloured identity and express their own understanding of who coloured people are within a South African context.
	<b>c) Subcategory T3: Participants explaining their own understanding of who the coloured people are within South African context:</b> This subcategory includes data where participants expressed their own understanding of who coloured people are within a South African context.	This subcategory excludes data where participants express resistance to being called or identified as coloured people; express why they are usually mistaken as coloured people and express instances in which they choose to identify with a coloured identity.
	<b>d) Subcategory T4: Situations in which participants claim a coloured identity:</b> This subcategory includes data where participants expressed instances in which they choose to identify with a coloured identity.	This subcategory excludes data where participants do not express resistance to being called or identified as coloured; express their own understanding of who coloured people are and; express why they are usually mistaken as coloured people.
<b>Category U: Positioning of</b>	This category includes data where	This category excludes data where participants identify with other



<b>self with a biracial identity</b>	participants shared narratives related to the construction of their biracial identity.	racial/ethnic identities, such as a coloured identity, white identity and black identity
	<b>a) Subcategory U1: Biracial heritage entails belonging to two worlds:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants gave descriptions of their interracial families as part of their biracial identity.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discuss identifying as biracial or mixed; identifying in non-racial terms, having an awareness of identity through narrative methods and having a biracial heritage as a positive message for society that different racial groups can live in harmony.
	<b>b) Subcategory U2: A strong identification with a biracial or mixed- race identity:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants chose to identify with a biracial or mixed identity. This also included sharing narratives in which their chosen name is part of their biracial identity and their understanding of the term biracial.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discuss belonging to two worlds; identifying in non-racial terms, having an awareness of identity through narrative methods and having a biracial heritage as a positive message for society that different racial groups can live in harmony.
	<b>c) Subcategory U3: Biracial heritage viewed as a symbol of unity:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how having a biracial heritage is a positive message for society that different racial groups can live in harmony.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discuss identifying as biracial or mixed; identifying in non-racial terms and having an awareness of identity through narrative methods.
	<b>d) Subcategory U4: Choosing to identify in non-racial terms:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants chose to identify in non-racial terms. This included	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discuss belonging to two worlds; identifying as biracial or mixed, having an awareness of identity through narrative methods and having a biracial heritage as a positive message for society that different racial groups can live in harmony.

	discussing their personal identity and educational identity.	
	<b>e) Subcategory U5: An awareness of self through written and spoken narratives:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how being engaged with the narrative interviews and written narratives led to an understanding of self.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discuss belonging to two worlds; identifying as biracial or mixed, identifying in non-racial terms and having a biracial heritage as a positive message for society that different racial groups can live in harmony.
<b>Subtheme 3.3: An identity constructed by others</b>	This subtheme explains how family, peers and intimate partners constructed an identity for the biracial individuals.	
<b>Category V: The construction of identity within the family context</b>	This category includes data where participants discussed being identified by their a) mother, b) father, c) family, d) explained their identity to their family and e) explained their family's influence on their identity construction.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed being described or identified by their peers and intimate partners.
	<b>a) Subcategory V1: Through my mother's eyes: How mothers identify their biracial children:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how their mother identifies them.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed how their father and family identify them.
	<b>b) Subcategory V2: Through my father's eyes: How fathers identify their biracial children:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how their father identifies them.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed how their mothers and families identify them.
	<b>c) Subcategory V3: Through my family's eyes: How family identify the biracial individuals:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed how their family identifies them.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed how their fathers and mothers identify them.
	<b>d) Subcategory V4: Parents' influence on the participants' identity development:</b> This subcategory includes data in which	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed how peers or intimate partners influenced their identity.

	participants discussed how their family influenced their identity construction.	
<b>Category W: Biracial siblings constructing similar and different identities to the participants</b>	This category includes data in which participants shared how their siblings constructed their own identities.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed how they construct their own identity.
<b>Category X: Through my friends' eyes: How peers identify the biracial individual</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how their peers identify them.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed how their intimate partners identify them.
<b>Category Y: Through my boyfriend's eyes: How intimate partners identify the biracial individual</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how their intimate partners identify them.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed how their peers identify them.
<b>Subtheme 3.4 : The influence of physical appearance on biracial identity construction</b>		<b>This subtheme focuses on how physical appearance influences biracial identity development</b>
<b>Category Z: Experiencing 'othering' as a result of unique biracial physical features</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how they experienced racism and discrimination as a result of their biracial physical features.	This category excludes data where participants discussed instances where they experienced manipulation of hairstyles to fit in with societal norms, celebrating their biracial physical features and having revered for being light skin within black communities.
<b>Category AA: Manipulating hairstyles so as to fit in with societal norms</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how they manipulated their hairstyles in order to fit in with mainstream ideas of beauty	This category excludes data where participants discussed instances where they experienced discrimination and marginalisation as a result of their biracial physical appearance, celebrating their biracial physical features and being revered for being light skin within black communities.
<b>Category BB: A celebration of one's biracial physical appearance</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how they celebrated their biracial physical features as young adults.	This category excludes data where participants discussed instances where they experienced discrimination and marginalisation as a result of their biracial physical appearance, manipulation of hairstyles to fit in with societal norms and being revered for being light skin within black communities.
<b>Category CC: Being revered for having light skin within the black community</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed how they received preferential treatment in black communities as a result of their light skins complexion.	This category excludes data where participants discussed instances where they experienced discrimination and marginalisation as a result of their biracial physical appearance, manipulation of hairstyles to fit in with societal norms and celebrating their biracial physical features
<b>Table 5.2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3</b>		

## 5.2 THEME 3: EXPRESSIONS OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF BIRACIAL IDENTITY

Participants changed and adapted their identities in different social milieus and relationships. They chose multiple identities as they preferred to identify as biracial (mixed-race identity), to identify in non-racial terms (seeing themselves as human) and they constructed racial, national and cultural identities. Participants first discussed how factors such as their parents' culture, religion and nationality influenced their identity construction, after which they shared how they constructed their racial identities. Finally, participants talked about how they are defined by others, namely family, peers and their intimate partners. The subthemes that support this theme are: 3.1) positioning self within cultural, religious and national identities; 3.2) positioning self within racial identities (singular and biracial); 3.3) an identity constructed by others; and 3.4) the influence of physical appearance on biracial identity construction. Figure 5.1 summarizes the subthemes of Theme 3.

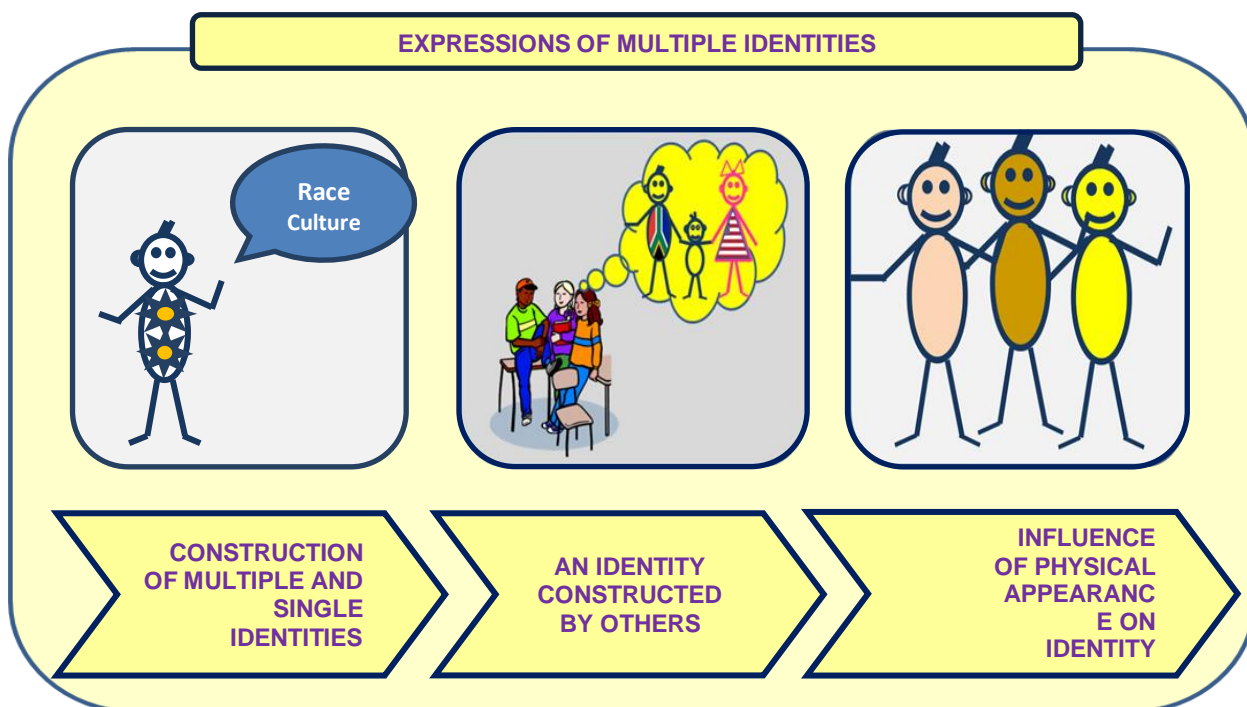


Figure 5.1: Subthemes of Theme 3

### 5.3 SUBTHEME 3.1: POSITIONING SELF WITHIN CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

This subtheme focuses on instances in which the participants identified with a culture, religion and nationality as part of their identity construction. Most of the participants seemed to identify with their mothers' cultures, religions and nationalities. The mothers naturally had a strong influence on their children's upbringing and imparted their values and belief systems to their offspring. As captured in the narratives, mothers made themselves emotionally available, giving their time and communicating their cultural values and beliefs to their children.

In Subtheme 3.1 I discuss the following categories: (i) positioning self within cultural identities; (ii) within religious identities; and (iii) within national identities. The majority of the participants (n= 6, 3 female, 3 male) discussed how they constructed their cultural identities, while the rest (n=4, 1 male, 3 female) said that their parents' religions influenced their identity formation. A few participants (n=2, 1 male, 1 female) identified with their nationalities.

#### 5.3.1 CATEGORY O: POSITIONING SELF WITHIN CULTURAL IDENTITIES

With the exception of Vuyani, all the participants indicated that they were strongly influenced by their mothers' culture in their construction of a cultural identity. The following narratives attest to this:

- Adrianna associated herself with her mother's Nigerian culture: *My mother is definitely the most influential in terms of my identity (W1-Adrianna: 66), and my cultural background consists mainly of my mother's culture in terms of the food we eat at home, the weddings that we attend and the clothes we wear on special occasions. This is because my father travels a lot and so I was raised by my mother and live with my mother (N1-Adrianna: 4-6).*
- Mila identified with her mother's Filipino culture: *I identify with my mom's culture more than my dad's culture (N1-Mila: 493).*
- Lucia indicated identification with the Dutch and Italian culture: *I can't say that the Italian-Dutch side is more prevalent but I would say that maybe yes because I've been raised by my mother (N1-Lucia: 271-272).*
- Hugo discussed how he constructed his cultural identity based on his mother's Dutch culture: *I identify more with my mother's culture (N2-Hugo: 192).*
- Mpho felt more comfortable identifying with his mother's Zulu culture: *I'd say the black culture, the Zulu tradition. That's where I feel comfortable (N1-Mpho: 411-412).*

- Vuyani was the only participant who was influenced by his father's culture in the construction of his cultural identity. He remembered how his father encouraged him to identify as a Xhosa: *If he ever had to tell me to identify with something, I would have to identify with being Xhosa. I see myself as more Xhosa than white American (N1-Vuyani: 622-623).*

### 5.3.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category O: Positioning self within cultural identities

In category O, participants identified primarily with their mothers' cultures and cultural communities (except for Vuyani, who identified with his father's Xhosa identity), as also proposed by Jensen (2003). Consistent with the *bi-dimensional model of acculturation* (Berry, 1990; 2003; LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993), participants chose to select a *separated position*, a term which refers to individuals identifying with the culture of one of the parents. Participants also seemed to identify with the *minority ethnic culture*, with Adrianna, Mila and Vuyani identifying with their African and Asian cultures, while Lucia and Hugo identified with European cultures.

Contrary to other findings in literature (Jackson, 2009), the participants in this study did not construct a multicultural identity that reflected their multicultural pluralism (e.g. 'I am Zulu and Dutch'). Individuals in this study did not express attachment and loyalty to both of their cultural heritages (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010). In contrast to Jackson's (2009) finding that American biracial participants were influenced by their parents to adopt multicultural identities, thereby taking on an *integrated (biculturalism) position* where individuals value and identify with both cultures (Berry, 2003; Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002; Hoerstring & Jenkins, 2011; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010; Yampolsky *et al.*, 2013), participants in this study chose to identify mainly with their mothers' cultures as the mothers promoted their cultural identities, traditions, values, norms and belief systems while their fathers (except in Vuyani's case) did not make an effort to expose them to their own cultural identities and practices (see Chapter 4, Subtheme 1.3).

LaFromboise *et al.*'s theory (1993) identifies six factors necessary for the development of a bicultural identity. I use these factors (discussed in Chapter 2) to theorise why participants in this study did not construct a bicultural identity, but chose a single cultural identity. Firstly, participants in this study probably did not have knowledge of the beliefs and values of both cultures as they were exposed to their mothers' cultures only. Secondly, the participants did not have a positive attitude towards both

cultural groups. Several participants stated that their values and belief systems were in conflict with their African heritage and cultural traditions. Thirdly, the young adults' disapproval of certain African customs (polygamy, lobola, sangomas and traditional gender-defined roles) prevented them from functioning effectively and displaying the appropriate behaviour in the company of their African relatives. Finally, most of the participants were unable to communicate effectively within both cultures due to language barriers, and this prevented them from establishing a social network within each culture and affected family relationships, as also discussed by Stroink and Lalonde (2009).

### 5.3.2 CATEGORY P: POSITIONING SELF WITHIN RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Participants discussed how they constructed religious identities by practising religious beliefs and values as part of their self-construction. The following excerpts from participants' narratives capture their views on how religion has influenced their identity development:

- Adrianna shared how she practised her mother's religion: *My mom is the one that took us to church. I follow my mother's religion (N1-Adrianna: 148). I don't involve myself in things that the Bible says is wrong (N1-Adrianna: 160).*
- Mila highlighted the importance of religion in her life: *I've gone through certain phases to be a proper Catholic person and within those phases I've definitely learned a lot about my relationship with God (N2-Mila: 89-90).*
- Vuyani explained the role of religion as follows: *I think it's helped me to understand myself more (N2-Vuyani: 153).*
- Serena emphasised: *I do believe in the Christian morals and values and I do apply them in my own life (N2-Serena: 51-52).*

#### 5.3.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category P: Positioning self within religious identities

Similar to the findings of South African (Francis, 2008) and American (Jackson, 2009) studies on young biracial adults, participants within this study chose their religion and faith as part of their identity construction (Rocha, 2010). Once again, it was often mothers who introduced the participants to religion (Jackson, 2009); therefore mothers' religions took centre stage (except for Vuyani) in influencing the participants' religious orientation. Within this study, mothers played an influential role in the construction of religious identity by taking their children to church and exposing them to their own faith. Religion thus played a positive role in the participants' lives. Participants claimed that

religion helped them to gain better self-understanding and gave them a sense of belonging to a subculture that shared common beliefs and values.

### 5.3.3 CATEGORY Q: POSITIONING SELF WITHIN NATIONAL IDENTITIES

Although the participants have spent most of their lives in South Africa and each has at least one parent who is South African, only Christopher identified himself as South African. Adrianna identified with her mother's Nigerian nationality. Both of these participants identified themselves as mixed race, but also identified with their national identities:

- Adrianna explained why she identified with her mother's Nigerian identity: *I usually say I'm Nigerian and I choose to say that because I was born there and I was raised there for a couple of years. I was raised by my mother (N2-Adrianna: 193-194).*
- Christopher proudly described his South African background: *I come from a mixed- race family background: A South African family background, a white South African mother of Croatian and German heritage, and a black South African father of Nguni, Tsonga heritage. I feel proud of my family background and heritage (W1-Christopher: 3-6), and I'm a young South African (N1-Christopher: 9).*

#### 5.3.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category Q: Positioning self within national identities

Adrianna and Christopher viewed their nationality as part of their identity construction, which corresponds with the findings of British (Song & Aspinall, 2012) and German (Hubbard, 2010) studies on biracial individuals. This could have been as a result of having been born and raised in South Africa (Christopher) and Nigeria (Adrianna) and being exposed to South African and Nigerian norms and societal practices.

In line with participants in other biracial studies (Bonilla- Silva, 2003; Harris & Sim, 2002; Renn, 2004; 2008; Rollins, 2002; 2009; Sweeney, 2013) participants in this study chose to identify in non-racial terms and chose cultural, national and religious aspects as part of their identity, thus rejecting the restrictiveness of race in favour of their own unique narrative identities. In Subtheme 3.2 the young South African adults also chose to construct racial identities. Franchi and Swart (2003) state that young South African adults may at times move away from the narrow confines of racial categories and choose other aspects of their identity as they desire to align themselves with the ethos of the new democratic South Africa. Therefore, in a post-apartheid South Africa, race may be losing its



salient function in the construction of identity (Franchi & Swart, 2003). Carrim (2000) further suggests that the void of race within identity could also be attributed to a 'silencing of race' in which South Africans may distance themselves from racial identities so as not to lose 'racially constructed' privileges associated with non-white populations in South Africa and not to continue the 'racist' ways of the past (Franchi & Swart, 2003). Finally, South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy may have also influenced the participants to use 'cultural', 'national', 'religious' and 'ethnic' markers to articulate 'racially constructed differences' without reverting to apartheid terminology (Franchi & Swart, 2003).

#### **5.4 SUBTHEME 3.2: POSITIONING SELF WITHIN RACIAL IDENTITIES (SINGULAR AND BIRACIAL)**

Although participants developed a deep connection to both sides of their racial heritages at different times and within different contexts and social relationships, they chose not to identify with a specific racial identity (i.e. sometimes they identified with a white identity and rejected their black identity, other times they chose a black identity and shunned a white identity). Therefore, at different times in their lives they chose to identify with a singular racial identity instead of viewing themselves as biracial. Participants mentioned a number of factors that affected their choice of racial identity, such as the racial composition of their social environment, their families and their physical appearance (specifically their phenotypes). They chose various identities, such as black, white, biracial, no race at all (human), or however else they chose to identify themselves (e.g. own self-identifications, such as Afro-Asian). I discuss this theme in terms of the following categories: (i) positioning self with a white identity; (ii) positioning self with a black identity; (iii) positioning self with a coloured identity; and iv) positioning self with a biracial identity.

##### **5.4.1 CATEGORY R: POSITIONING SELF WITH A WHITE IDENTITY**

Participants<sup>62</sup> (n=4, 1 female, 3 male) described how they constructed a white identity by taking on stereotypical cultural markers associated with 'whiteness' (e.g. listening to rock music) and manipulating their physical characteristics (such as straightening their hair) to downplay their black ancestry. Their perceptions are captured in the extracts below:

- Mpho longed to be white and talked about the rejection he faced from his white peers:  
*Growing up in primary school were a few of the worst years of my life as I attended an*

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<sup>62</sup> In the racial demographics form, six participants indicated that they had white mothers, three have black mothers and one has an Asian mother.

*Afrikaans primary school. I was teased because of my race and all I wished for at that time was to be a white child with wavy, spiky hair (W1-Mpho: 31-34). Mpho subsequently immersed himself in white cultural markers to identify as white. I went through a stage where I just wanted to be white. I listened to rock music and I wanted to spike my hair (N1: Mpho: 156-157). He explained why he wanted to be white: I related to my white side of the family (N1: Mpho: 160). As a result of his predominantly white school context, Mpho stated: I'd be embarrassed of my mom when I was in primary school, I would be embarrassed to walk around with her, I'd be proud to walk with my dad (N2: Mpho: 202-204). He explained why at the time he was embarrassed by his black mother: everyone being Afrikaans makes you want to be Afrikaans (N2: Mpho: 208).*

- Tyler also related his predominantly white neighbourhood to his identification as white: *I went to a predominantly white school, and grew up in a predominantly white neighbourhood in an American household (W1- Tyler: 23-24), and I think at the time even I probably identified more with my white side. My school is white, my teachers are white, and my mom is white. I really didn't see my dad at all so I think it was at that time in my life I considered myself more white (N1-Tyler: 444-446). He wanted to cut his hair: I think that is why I wanted to cut my hair as well, it was like I wanted to be a part of them (N1-Tyler: 449-450). He elaborated on his reasons for identifying as white: I think that my parents' divorce played a negative role on me trying to navigate life as a child but also as a biracial person. I and my father's relationship deteriorated and although I was biracial, for a long time I only identified with my white side (W1-Tyler: 21-23). Because of his absent black father and his ambiguous physical features, many of his peers reportedly assumed Tyler to be white: My dad, especially during that time, he would never come to school for events and kids only saw my white mom. So I think it was maybe 'he is just a little bit more tanned than us' that is why he has a different skin colour (N1-Tyler: 443-445).*
- Maria recollected how, at times, she longed to be white: *Other times I wished I was white because my father is white and I also had white friends (W1-Maria: 13).*
- Hugo felt comfortable with white English-speaking South Africans. He ascribed this to having 'white cultural' markers, such as his accent, and finding acceptance with his white English-speaking South African peers: *I probably fit demographically into a very white South African English speaking category (N1-Hugo: 103). If you're in a very white group you tend to want to fit in (N1-Hugo: 817), and the white liberal kids used to accept me (N2-Hugo: 608).*

#### 5.4.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category R: Positioning self with a white identity

Participants in this study developed a strong connection to their white heritage, predominantly during their early childhood years, and reported rejecting their black heritage and black physical features in favour of a white identity. This corresponds to the findings of a German study on biracial individuals (Hubbard, 2008). In congruence with the results of this study, Edison (2007) and Khanna and Johnson (2010) describe how biracial participants in their studies constructed a white identity by manipulating their physical characteristics (in the current study Tyler shaving off his afro and Mpho spiking his hair) to look white, and downplaying their black ancestry by taking on stereotypical white social cultural markers and symbols (Mpho listening to rock music) to pass as white. While altering their phenotypes was not an option for the participants, Mpho and Tyler seemed to have employed and invoked white cultural symbols in the construction of a white racial identity (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Suyemoto, 2004). As also seen in Suyemoto and Dimas' (2003) study, participants' experienced internal pressure to choose a monoracial identity and exaggerated some behaviours in order to fit in with their white peers. Thus they tried to 'pass as white' in order to decrease difficult feelings of exclusion or difference within predominantly white environments and social networks.

Likewise, authors Harris and Sim (2002) found that biracial individuals of Asian and white heritage would identify as white if they lived in predominantly white neighbourhoods, which was the case with the participants in this study who chose to construct white identities as they lived and were raised by their white parents, attended predominantly white schools and tried to survive and adapt in an all-white environment. However, as also reported in a South African study (Francis, 2006) on young biracial adults, participants later denounced their white identities due to a lack of acceptance in the white community.

In contrast to Root's (1998; 1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework on racial identity, participants did not choose to identify with a *symbolic race*. This term is used to refer to biracial individuals who identify exclusively as white (Root, 1998; 2004; McDowell *et al*, 2005). In contrast to the findings of most similar studies (Brunnsma, 2005; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2001; 2002; Root, 1998; 1998; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004; Twine, 1997; Wijeyesinghe, 1992), participants in this study did not choose to identify exclusively as white. These studies documented biracial individuals who have constructed and identified exclusively with a

white identity. Participants in these studies did not *pass*<sup>63</sup> for white (as the participants in my study did), which implies that they may truly have a black identity, yet pretend to be white. Instead, these studies indicated that their participants constructed a white identity to the extent to which they understood themselves and their social location to be white (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002). Rockquemore and Arend's study (2002) noted that their participants who chose to identify exclusively as white, had their identities validated in their social contexts, expressed discomfort in black environments, did not have close friendships with African Americans and did not experience discrimination from whites. This was not the case in my study, as participants who experienced racism and discrimination from white peers in school (discussed in Theme 4, Chapter 5) later chose to identify as biracial or black (Chapter 4, Theme 3). Participants in this study have therefore opted for other racial identities when they were rejected by a particular racial group.

Reasons why participants may not have chosen a white identity in this study include: (i) participants mentioned several times during data collection that they grew up in homes where their parents celebrated their dual heritage and encouraged them to identify with a biracial identity (Qian, 2004); (ii) participants' phenotypes may have barred them from full inclusion as white individuals in society (Deters, 1997); (in this study, participants may have attempted to verbally assert a white identity, but may have been challenged by others if they looked like people of colour)(Khanna & Johnson, 2012); and (iii) as a result of South Africa's racial past, discourses on whiteness usually include whites as the enemy, especially when references are made to apartheid and the white Nationalist government (Jaynes, 2007). Therefore, because of apartheid, participants in this study may have stigmatised whiteness by equating it with oppression, prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, a white identity may have been viewed as a privileged identity in the past, but in the new political context blacks and people of colour are enjoying privileges linked to their identities. In South Africa, a white identity may therefore be thought of as a devalued and stigmatised identity, resulting in participants distancing themselves from a perceived stigmatised white identity (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Finally, (iv) as a

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<sup>63</sup> Passing refers to an act, a person of colour performs in order to be categorised as white by others, however, a person of colour could only pass if they had white skin (light phenotype) and fine features (Korgen, 1998). Furthermore, passing as white today is temporary and situational, and not the continuous type of passing that marked the Jim Crow era in the United States of America (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). In the South African context, racial identity cases were heard by the Race Classification Appeal Board and the South African Supreme Court. Physical anthropologists and geneticists were often called to stand as expert witnesses. Majority of the appeals were by coloured people who wanted to be considered white, and the rest from natives who wanted to claim the coloured label (Posel 2001; Laster, 2007). During the apartheid era, coloured individuals would sometimes pass for white in order to avoid prejudice and discrimination that people of colour faced, whilst black people would pass as coloured to claim the privileges and resources that a coloured identity received during apartheid.

result of the country's past, passing as white may have been viewed with disdain by people of colour (Edison, 2007).

#### 5.4.2 CATEGORY S: POSITIONING SELF WITH A BLACK IDENTITY

Several participants (n=4, 1 female, 3 male) explained their reasons for identifying with their black identity, as evident in the following excerpts:

- Mila chose a black identity when questioned about her race when she did not feel like explaining her biracial heritage: *I always tell them that I am black, when people ask me what I am (N1-Mila: 13), and when I say 'oh no... I am part Asian or whatever', then they ask questions and then I have to explain my whole life story (N1-Mila: 15-17).*
- Hugo described how certain contexts influenced his decision to identify as black, particularly in environments with a predominantly white population: *It was a private and an extremely white school (I was one of seven non-white students out of almost 400). Because of my cultural background and social make-up I was accepted there, but at the same time I was encouraged to suppress the black part of my personality. Being always the contrarian this encouraged me to rather build on that part of my identity. I suppose that I felt that a part of me was under threat and that I needed to express it more, to keep it from being forgotten (W1-Hugo: 59-64).* Hugo mentioned the importance of his African name as part of his black identity: *It's a very important part of who I am (N1-Hugo: 500).*
- Vuyani associated his father's Xhosa culture with a black identity: *I think because that's seen as a black culture, that's why I sort of see myself as black (N2-Vuyani: 469-470).*
- Mpho explained how his negative experiences with white peers influenced him to identify as black: *As time went by, around grade 10 and grade 11, I started chilling with black people. I found their company better, I felt comfortable with them. I wasn't accepted as a white person but when I went to the blacks, my race wasn't really questioned (N1: Mpho: 255-257), and I wasn't really teased. I was just one of the guys (N1: Mpho: 259). Now I am at peace with myself and I accept everything that I am. Although I would see myself as more 'black' (W1-Mpho: 38-40).*

In my field notes I noted the following regarding Hugo's decision to identify with his black heritage in a predominantly white school:

*After interviewing Hugo, I realised that his heritages, black (South African) and white (Dutch) are both important to him and how he identifies. However, it seems that within his school context which was a majority white population, Hugo decided to identify with his black heritage because he was in a white context and did not want to lose his connection with his black heritage. Hugo spending more time with his black peers, playing soccer (stereotypically known as a 'black' sport in S.A) and learning African languages was him making sure that he did not lose his black identity within a mainly white context. I feel that it was also a way for Hugo to express his black heritage in a school which wanted him to assimilate into a 'white culture' (FN: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

#### **5.4.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category S: Positioning self with a black identity**

As also mentioned in Chapman-Huls's (2009) study, negative experiences and rejection from white people influenced some of the participants' decisions to identify as black. Participants gave several reasons for identifying as black, such as feeling comfortable and accepted by black people, being in contexts that brought out their affinity with their black heritage, associating themselves with their black culture, and finally identifying as black to avoid having to explain their biracial heritage. This correlates with Hubbard's (2010) findings and shows that biracial participants will express a black identity as they typically experience black people as more welcoming and warmer towards them than white people. As discussed in relevant existing literature, and specifically Cooley's (1902) looking-glass theory, the identity construction of the biracial participants in this study was influenced by how their peers perceived them. The young biracial adults developed positive self-concepts when their black peers perceived them favourably and developed negative self-concepts when they were viewed unfavourably by their white peers. The latter caused participants to experience feelings of shame and consequently they chose black identities, which allowed them to feel proud of themselves and not feeling that they were being marginalised or treated as different ('othered').

In this study, participants chose black and white identities according to the contexts they were in. Renn (2000; 2003; 2004) refers to this as *situational identity*, in which biracial individuals switch racial identities according to the context. Hugo, in a predominantly white environment, became more aware of his affinity with his black identity. Earlier, in Category R, participants' white identity construction was influenced by socio-contextual factors (school, home and neighbourhood environments), thus

they also shifted racial identities in diverse social and environmental contexts (Jackson, 2010; Hitlin *et al.*, 2006; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2001; 2002; Tashiro, 2002).

Despite this similarity between the results of the current study and existing literature, a discrepancy was found with regard to the influence of contexts on racial identity construction. Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) state that the likelihood of biracial individuals identifying as black increases when individuals come from predominantly black contexts and have predominantly black social networks. Hugo's self-identification as black could be ascribed to feelings of powerlessness and choosing to identify with an identity that was regarded as less privileged in his school environment so as to celebrate both his heritages. This may provide some new insight within this study. As a reaction to acculturation, in which Hugo was expected to assimilate and reject his biracial and especially his black identity in a particular context, instead he asserted his black identity (the minority culture in the school culture) and rejected the dominant white identity in his school environment.

#### **5.4.3 CATEGORY T: POSITIONING SELF FROM A COLOURED IDENTITY**

In the current study, participants also expressed strong resistance to identifying with coloured people in the South African context. They explained how and why they are different from South African coloureds and why they did not want to be associated with coloured people in general. The following subcategories emerged: (a) a strong resistance to being labelled coloured; (b) why biracial individuals may be mistaken as South African coloureds; (c) participants explaining their own understanding of South African coloureds; and (d) situations in which participants claimed a coloured identity. The majority of the participants (N=9, 4 female, 5 male) explained their understanding of what being coloured means in a South African context, while the rest (n=5, 3 female, 2 male) expressed a strong dissonance to being called coloured. Four of the participants (n=4, 3 female, 1 male) explained why they may be mistaken as coloureds within the South African context and a few (n=3, 2 female, 1 male) shared identifying as coloured in different contexts.

##### **a) Subcategory T1: A strong resistance to being labelled as coloured**

The following extracts support the participants' tendency to dissociate themselves from being called or identified as coloured within the South African context:

- *I don't identify as coloured! (N1-Hugo: 390).*
- *I mean a lot of the times people will be like "are you coloured?" and I will be like 'no I am a mixture!' (N1-Tyler: 625-626).*

- *I really didn't like it, when people called me coloured but I have gotten used to it. I correct people. I tell them I am bi-racial or mixed (N1-Serena: 267-268).*
- *I correct them. Because, they usually think I am coloured and I do not identify with them (N1- Maria: 302).*
- *I would often correct people who called me coloured. I'd say no I'm biracial, I'm of two races. It's not that I have a problem with any race, but why call a German Afrikaans ... it's kind of the same thing (W1-Lucia: 282-284).*

Participants in this category verbally asserted their preferred identities. They favoured a biracial identity rather than a coloured identity.

**b) Subcategory T2: Why biracial individuals may be mistaken as South African coloureds**

Participants explained why they are often mistaken as coloured in the South African context. They indicated that their physical characteristics are similar to those of coloured people, but that they differ in terms of culture, language and social experiences. The following verbatim quotations attest to this view:

- *It is because of the complexion of my skin. I mean if you put me next to an actual girl or boy who is born from both coloured parents. You would see that I am exactly the same colour or a bit lighter or a bit darker. The main reason people would call me coloured is because of my hair, because it is kind of like a coloured person's hair (N1-Serena: 286-289).*
- *I think it's not unfair for them, I mean I do look coloured from a distance (N1-Hugo: 410).*
- *I think people label me as coloured, because of my appearance (N2-Lucia: 604), and it's the pigment of my skin, maybe my facial features, my hair... that would make them think I'm coloured (N2-Lucia: 606-608).*
- *My hair is completely different when it's in an afro and when it's straightened. So when it's straightened it looks like coloured hair, and so because of my light skin, they'll just automatically assume or their minds won't go to biracial they'll just think South African coloured. But when my hair is in an afro then they'll be like "coloured people don't have hair like this. Are you mixed race?", then I'll be like yes I am (N2-Adrianna: 277-280).*

In the South African context, racial identity has been closely linked to an individual's physical appearance (e.g. skin colour, hair texture and facial features) (Rockquemore & Brunisma, 2002). Hence, in South Africa, people with a darker skin tone and afro hair are generally stereotypically



categorised by others as black, whereas individuals with straight hair and a lighter skin tone may be stereotypically identified as coloured. Although participants did not like to be mistaken as coloured people, they realised that, because of phenotypes, such as a lighter skin tone, being associated with coloured people in South Africa, they could be identified as coloured by others. The identity options of the biracial individuals may be restricted in South African society as their appearance and biracial identity may be incompatible due to their general psychical appearance.

**c) Subcategory T3: Participants explaining their own understanding of who the coloured people are in the South African context**

Participants expressed their understanding of coloured people in the South African context. They described coloured people as having parents who are both coloured, whereas biracial individuals have parents from two different races and therefore being the children born from interracial relationships. They discussed this as follows:

- *A coloured person has both parents who are coloured, whereas I have parents from two different races and who come from two different cultures and backgrounds (W1-Serena: 12-14).*
- *Two parents of colour that are coloured (N1-Mpho: 558).*
- *Coloured is in my opinion if you have a coloured mother and a coloured father, you are coloured (N1-Lucia: 297-298).*
- *We don't have the same background, I see a coloured person as being the son, the daughter, the child of two coloured parents (N2-Hugo: 598-599).*
- *First generation (is biracial) and then, you start mixing and then you get the coloureds (N1-Maria: 478).*
- *That's why I explain to them and I say no, I'm not coloured, I tell them the history of coloured people (N1-Christopher: 490-491). Christopher offered a brief history of coloured people in South Africa: Most of them are the descendants of some of the largely Xhosa and Khoisan people that were in South Africa. Some of them were used as slaves or servants and the white European settlers that settled here, conceived children with their servants (N1-Christopher: 496-498), so they as a group have their own culture and identity today (N1-Christopher: 503).*

I reflected on my observations while I was busy with data analysis following the first round of narrative interviews:

*It was interesting to note that during or after my interviews with most of the participants, they would give me an historical account of the coloured people in South Africa, to further distance themselves from coloured people. Many stories from the participants begun with narratives of the first interracial relationships in South Africa beginning with the arrival of the Dutch EAST India Company (DEIC) in the cape and various settlers having relations with non-white women, resulting in biracial children but emphasising that coloureds are descendants from past interracial relationships and that through apartheid laws, such as the group areas act, this group multiplied and created a separate racial group, according to the participants. Many participants admitted in our conversations that they learnt about South Africa's racial relations and specifically coloured people's history, so that they could be able to explain to others why they did not identify as coloured but instead identified as biracial and to have an explanation to give individuals as to why they were different to coloured people and why they should be seen as biracial individuals instead. The need of the participants to not be identified as coloured was so strong, that they chose to educate themselves on South Africa's history (FN: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013).*

Furthermore, participants referred to their perceptions of the stereotypical descriptions of coloured individuals (such as being able to speak Afrikaans, being aggressive and having a violent nature) in differentiating themselves from being labelled coloured people:

- Vuyani mentioned language: *If you speak Afrikaans, you are culturally coloured (N1-Vuyani: 825).*
- Hugo shared his perceptions: *I mean coloured people have their own culture, their own language and I don't fit into that (N1-Hugo: 393-394). People see a coloured as very belligerent (N2-Hugo: 576), and very aggressive and violent (N2-Hugo: 580).*
- Tyler added humour to deal with his stereotypical description: *I always jokingly say that I am scared of them (Laughs). It seems like a very violent culture (N1-Tyler: 622-623).*
- Mpho explained: *I don't like the way they are looked upon because of a few things a few of them do. So I don't like it if someone had to look at me and say he's a coloured from Cape Town. I would not like that because I'm not, that's not who I am culturally. Some of my best friends are coloured but I don't like to be perceived as one (N2-Mpho: 372-375). I wouldn't generalise and say that all of them do this but the coloured thing that we experience would be them drinking excessively, and fighting. They love fighting and they are very dangerous (N2-Mpho: 383-385).*

- Mila referred to coloured people as being loud and prone to swearing: *I think they can be very loud but in a scary way (N1-Mila: 471-472), and the way they speak, like their language, there is a lot of swearing (N1-Mila: 474-475).*

In Subcategory 3.3, participants verbalised their prejudices against coloured people to distance themselves from a coloured identity.

#### **d) Subcategory T4: Situations in which participants claim a coloured identity**

Participants did however mention some instances in which they chose to identify as coloured, for example when they were not in the mood to explain their biracial heritage. This is evident in the following verbatim reports:

- Mila and Adrianna expressed their thoughts and feelings on the matter: *When you're not in the mood of explaining your whole family history you say you're coloured (N1-Mila: 462-464), and sometimes I just say yes because I don't feel like getting into the details because they may want to know who are my parents and all those things (N2-Adrianna: 268-269).*
- Mpho classified himself as coloured because he did not know which other race to identify with at a younger age: *I'd say "I'm coloured" (N1-Mpho: 290) because I didn't want to be black and I couldn't say I was white (N1-Mpho: 292), and so I'd have to compromise, in a way (N1-Mpho: 294).*

#### **5.4.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category T: Positioning self from a coloured identity**

Francis (2006) states that all the participants in his study on biracial individuals (Indian and white biracial South African young adults) chose not to identify as coloured, reacted strongly to being labelled coloured and racially discriminated against coloured people. Participants in this study described coloured people in ways that reflected the racist stereotypes of the dominant culture, such as being violent citizens, drinking excessively, swearing and being aggressive (Laster, 2007). Furthermore, participants tended to reject a coloured identity as it did not reflect the racial and cultural heritages of their parents. I consider this section on coloured identity as providing new insight on the topic. In this study, participants offered many examples of how they differed from South African coloured people. Participants focused mainly on negative stereotypes as a way to distance themselves from a coloured identity. They also mentioned that coloured individuals had their own different culture and language (predominantly Afrikaans-speaking) with which they did not identify.

This relates to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) comments on an individual's social identity, and the fact that individuals will identify with a specific identity if it contributes positively to their social identity. In this study, the young biracial adults did not view a coloured identity positively and thus rejected it (Francis, 2006).

In this regard I therefore posit that the participants in this study distanced themselves from a coloured identity for the following reasons: (i) Within the South African historical context (colonisation and apartheid), children from interracial relationships or individuals with mixed-race ancestry were often required to identify as coloured. Hence biracial individuals with a black ancestry had fewer choices in their racial identity construction. I further posit that in the current democratic South Africa, more racial options are available for biracial individuals than in previous decades. Therefore (ii) biracial individuals may feel that they do not have to choose identities (coloured identity) that were forced on them in previous generations because such identities do not represent who they are. The biracial participants may have felt that a post-apartheid South Africa provides them with a greater range of racial identity options. Next, (iii) distancing themselves from a coloured identity can also be viewed as choosing an anti-colonial identity, thus asserting their preferred identities and rejecting oppressive identities imposed on them by colonisers and agents of apartheid and taking back their power by choosing privileged identities that celebrate their biracial heritage. Finally, (iv) participants may distance themselves from a coloured identity because, during apartheid, coloured people were often relegated to second-class status and notions of being superior to black people were constructed by the apartheid government to keep individuals from forming a collective African identity against the government. As a result of this second-class status, coloured people in South Africa enjoyed certain privileges that were not afforded to other people of colour. I believe that by giving privileges to certain groups, the apartheid government may have created distrust and divisions between people of colour in South Africa. Identifying as coloured may have been viewed as a betrayal of other people of colour. The biracial participants may therefore have felt that by choosing a coloured identity they would betray other people of colour in South Africa. This is, however, a mere hypothesis that requires further exploration.

#### **5.4.4 CATEGORY U: POSITIONING OF SELF WITH A BIRACIAL IDENTITY**

All the participants seemed proud to identify themselves as biracial individuals. When asked to discuss their biracial identity, they gave descriptions of their parents' racial, cultural and national heritage as part of their self-identification. They shared narratives about how their names were

representations of their biracial heritage and explained the term biracial. This category is discussed in terms of the following subcategories: (a) biracial heritage entails belonging to two worlds; (b) a strong identification with a biracial or mixed race identity; (c) identifying in non-racial terms; (d) gaining an awareness of self through written and spoken narratives; and (e) a biracial heritage viewed as a symbol of unity. Most of the participants (n=6, 3 female, 3 male) said that they identified as mixed or biracial. Many (n=6, 3 female, 3 male) felt that they belonged to two worlds as a result of their biracial identity and a few (n=2, 1 male, 1 female) viewed their biracial heritage as a symbol of unity. Some participants (n=4, 2 female, 2 male) shared how they had constructed their identities in non-racial terms, and only two (n=2, 2 male) talked about how they had gained an awareness of themselves by engaging in the narrative activities included in the data-collection process of this study.

#### **a) Subcategory U1: Biracial heritage entails belonging to two worlds**

Not wanting to deny any part of their heritage, participants gave descriptions of their parents' heritages as part of their biracial identity. This is reflected in the following verbatim extracts:

- *My mother is a black woman from Swaziland and my father is a white Portuguese man (W1- Maria: 2-3).*
- *My mother is from the Philippines and my father is from Zimbabwe (W1-Mila: 2).*
- *My father is born and raised in South Africa; my mother is born from the USA (W1-Vuyani: 3-4).*
- *There's the black side of my family, and the white side of the family (N1-Mpho: 23).*
- *My mother is a white American woman and my father is a South African Pedi man (W1-Tyler: 5).*
- *My mother is a black Nigerian woman and my father, is a white Italian man (W1-Adrianna: 3).*

#### **b) Subcategory U2: A strong identification with a biracial or mixed-race identity**

Participants chose to identify as biracial or mixed<sup>64</sup>. The following extracts attest to this choice:

- *I don't classify myself in just one race; if people do ask what race I am, I would say "I'm biracial" or "I'm mixed" (W1-Serena: 11-12).*
- *I identify myself with being biracial (N1-Maria: 5)*

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<sup>64</sup> Although the term biracial is used widely in North American and European literature, it is still relatively unknown in the South African context. Participants said that they had to use the term mixed-race to explain their dual heritage to people who were not familiar with the term biracial.

- *I would say “I am mixed race” (N2-Vuyani: 258).*
- *My parents chose these names to help me navigate life as a biracial person. It is a constant reminder that I am of two different cultures. It’s a reminder to me as well as everyone else that I am neither black nor white. I am both (W1-Tyler: 89-91).*
- *I am Afro-Asian. That is how I identify myself and this is who I am (W1-Mila: 89-90).*

Participants explained their understanding of the terms biracial and mixed race as follows:

- *Biracial means being a part of two sides (two races) (W1-Serena: 3), and ‘mixed’ means that I come from two different heritages (N2-Serena: 256).*
- *Two people of a different colour (N1-Lucia: 313).*
- *Being half black and half white (N1-Maria: 13).*
- *Biracial to me would be a mixture between exclusively black and white (N1-Vuyani: 832).*
- *Biracial means two people of opposite colour who come together and make a child (N1-Mpho: 526).*
- *It means when people from two different races come together. Not necessarily black and white.... Indian and black or black and Asian (N2-Adrianna: 218-219).*
- *It means I have a white mother and a black father (N1-Christopher: 411).*

### **c) Subcategory U3: Biracial heritage viewed as a symbol of unity**

Tyler and Adrianna viewed biracial people as symbols of unity in a racially polarised society. They believed that biracial people and interracial families represent the possibility that different racial groups can live together in harmony. This is evident in their written narratives:

- *I believe that being biracial in South Africa at the moment is a blessing. In a society that is still so race orientated biracial people can be the bridge that brings together the divided (W1-Tyler: 112-115). I realised that my ability to move through these racial groups means that I have the power to bring them together (W1-Tyler: 74-75).*
- *I am a physical representation that black people and white people can coexist and can live together. I do show people that a white man and a black woman may get married and that this joining shouldn’t be frowned upon in society and that people should allow their family members and their friends to be with who they want to be with and love who they want to love (W1-Adrianna: 78-82).*

#### d) Subcategory U4: Choosing to identify in non-racial terms

Some participants rejected the idea of choosing a racial identity and instead chose to identify in non-racial terms, as can be seen in the following extracts:

- Lucia talked about race not being a factor in how she identifies: *In terms of my identity I'm comfortable with who I am, the people that matter know who I am too. Race is no longer a factor when considering my identity (W1-Lucia: 318-320).*
- Although there are various terms to describe children from interracial relationships, Mpho stated that he did not have a label to describe himself: *When people ask me what my race classification is, I cannot give them a definition of my own. There might be a dictionary definition to what I am but there is no real definition to what I am (W1-Mpho: 2-5).*
- Serena chose to share personal descriptions as part of her identity: *Serena is a loving, a funny character who tends to overdo piercings, and who really loves animals. (N1-Serena: 384-385).*
- Tyler revealed how education formed part of his identity construction: *I think my education at school defines who I am as a person. I think it has been my education outside of school that has defined me more. My mom sends me on a lot of courses. I think it is through the courses that that I have really been able to find who I am and what I want to do with my life (N1-Tyler: 263-265).*

#### e) Subcategory U5: An awareness of self through written and spoken narratives

Participants shared how their involvement in the narrative interviews and written narratives led to a better understanding of themselves and to them reflecting on how they constructed their biracial identity. Two participants shared this experience:

- *It was very informative because I've never really thought about a lot of these things. So I guess it kind of increases your awareness of who you are (N1-Vuyani: 878-879).*
- *I actually really enjoyed writing my essay. I thought about a lot of things that I haven't really thought about before. It was like going over my whole life and you can learn from that. I never really even thought about the fact that I used to cut my hair because I wanted to be white. I feel like even that taught me a lot about myself (N1-Tyler: 700-703).*

#### 5.4.4.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category U: Positioning of self with a biracial identity

Numerous studies (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Franklin & Madge, 2000; Francis, 2008; Hubbard, 2008; Song & Aspinall, 2012; Tizard, & Phoenix, 1993) show similarities to the way in which the participants in the current study chose to identify. The above studies indicate that biracial individuals construct a biracial identity, thus recognising both sides of their heritages and classifying themselves as being members of two racial groups (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Constantine & So-Llyod, 2005; Quian, 2004). These studies have also found that biracial individuals will construct hybrid identifications, as in the case of Mila who chose to identify as Afro-Asian. As also discussed by Song (2010) and Hubbard (2010), participants described their parents' racial and cultural heritages as part of their biracial identity. They challenged the social construction of race by using terms such as mixed race and biracial, which demonstrates the efforts of the young biracial adults to self-define and dismantle socially accepted classifications of what it means to have parents belonging to more than one racial and/or ethnic group (Walker, 2011). The various ways participants chose to identify in the study is reflected in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Fluid nature of participants' identity construction**

Participants	Cultural identity	National identity	Religious identity	Black identity	White identity	Not identifying with a coloured identity	Biracial / mixed-race identity	Non-racial terms
Adrianna	Nigerian	Nigerian	<i>Pentecostal</i>			√	Biracial	
Mila	Filipino		Catholic	√		√	Afro-Asian	
Lucia	Dutch & Italian					√	Biracial	Human
Hugo	Dutch			√	√	√	I am both black and white	
Mpho	Zulu			√	√	√	Biracial	Human
Vuyani	Xhosa		Christian	√		√	Mixed	Human
Serena			Christian			√	Biracial	Personality
Christopher		South African				√	Interracial	



Tyler					√	√	Biracial	Education
Maria					√	√	Biracial	

Based on the discussion in the preceding sections, results from this study support current literature. As also seen in existing literature (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Francis, 2006; Gaskins, 2003; Harris & Sim, 2002; Herman, 2004; Hyman, 2010; Hitlin *et al.*, 2006; Johnson, 1992; Newsome, 2001; Miville *et al.*, 2005; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007; Root, 2002; 2004; Sanchez *et al.*, 2009; Tashiro, 2002), the identities of the biracial participants did not follow a clear linear progression. Instead, their identity construction constantly changed and evolved, with their self-identification varying across individual, time and social context. Participants chose different identities, influenced by complex and interacting factors, such as intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors, as evident in Subthemes 3.1 and 3.2. Exposure to different racial groups, cultures, religions, nationalities, milieus and relationships in their lives seemingly affected the identity construction of the participants. Participants chose multiple identities with which they felt comfortable and that suited them, thereby constructing their own unique and individual identities.

To conclude Subtheme 3.2, in line with global and national studies (Chong, 2012; Choi-Misailidis, 2004; Francis, 2006; Rockquemore & Lazloffy, 2005; Suyemoto, 2004; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004), the biracial participants identified with *monoracial identities* such as black, white or biracial (which in this study included labels such as mixed race or Afro-Asian). Other participants *rejected racial classifications*, preferring to be viewed as human beings, thus choosing no racial membership (Renn, 2004; 2008; Rollins, 2002; 2009). The racial identities that emerged in this study are consistent with several biracial identity models (Harris & Sim, 2002; Renn, 2000; 2008; Root, 2002; 2003a; 2003b), more specifically as participants chose to identify in three of the five ways in which biracial individuals may identify, according to Root's (1992; 1996) ecological framework of multiracial identity. In line with Root's (1999; 2003a) theory, participants in this study **actively chose a monoracial identity**. They chose a white and black racial identity. Furthermore, during their early childhood years, some of these young biracial adults rejected their black heritage in favour of a white identity, choosing to exhibit cultural markers of whiteness so as to be accepted by their white peers (McDowell *et al.*, 2005; Root, 1998; 2004). When the biracial participants faced rejection from their white peers, this led them to identify as black, while those who **identified with both racial groups**, chose to identify as mixed race and biracial. Participants thus identified with both components of their particular background and took equal pride in all their heritages (Harris & Sim, 2002). Some

participants **chose to identify in non-racial terms** by distancing themselves from racial categories and preferring to identify with cultural, national, religious and personal characteristics, and selecting to be viewed as human (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Hariss & Sim, 2002; Sweeney, 2013).

Therefore it would appear that there is no single identity label that may be applied to all biracial individuals (Hyman, 2010; Schwartz, 1998; Shih & Shih, 2005) and that the fluidity of race within the life of a multiracial individual is both a practised and a lived concept. In fact, social constructionists '*argue that racial classifications can differ not only among nations and historical periods, but also in the day-to-day lives of individuals*' (Harris & Sim, 2002:615). In support of several research studies (Harris & Sims, 2002; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Wilton *et al.*, 2013) the biracial individuals in this study varied in their racial identification. Furthermore, as also seen in existing literature (Gaskins, 2003; Jackson, 2010), I found that although participants seemed to have been conflicted and confused about their identity construction at a younger age, they eventually chose identities that they were comfortable with. As they grew older, identity shifts occurred less frequently.

I found that the *problem approach* (which highlights the 'marginal man hypothesis') and the *variant approach* (which highlights biracial identity stage models) to biracial identity development, do not accurately reflect the experiences of the biracial participants in this study (both approaches are discussed in Chapter 2). This is contradictory to existing literature (Doyle & Kao, 2007b; Pedrotti, Edwards & Lopez, 2008; Stonequist, 1937). The marginal man hypothesis posits that individuals with biracial heritage are never fully accepted by other racial groups in society and are destined to have marginalized identities (Doyle & Kao, 2007b; Stonequist, 1937). However, in this study participants reported being accepted by peer groups of different races, including black, white and Indian (Theme 2, Chapter 4). Furthermore, participants proudly chose various identities throughout their lifetime, including biracial and mixed-race identities. Next, the stage models found in the *variant approach* propose that biracial individuals will pass through a series of stages with the assumption that an integrated biracial identity is the desired end state. When participants in the current study chose a biracial identity, it was not seen as a final positive outcome to their identity construction, since throughout the data-collection process they constantly revised their identity construction and chose different identities at different times. Therefore, according to the findings of this study, there may be many roads towards healthy identity development (Pedrotti, Edwards & Lopez, 2008).

Furthermore, monoracial identity theories do not correlate with how individuals with a biracial heritage constructed an identity within this study. According to racial identity theories, such as Cross's (1971) theory of black identity development, individuals are not allowed to integrate more than one group identity and must choose one racial heritage over another (Chong, 2012). In this study, this was not the case as the participants chose to identify with a biracial identity at certain times during their life, thus choosing to identify with their biracial heritage. I captured the fluid nature of the identity construction of the participants in the study in my field notes:

*I have realised that many of the participants rejected the colour lines or categories that have been defined in South Africa and instead have chosen to favour a more fluid sense of identity. Thus some participants in the study during different times and circumstances chose to identify in various ways. For example the young adults' identified as black, white, sometimes with their biracial heritage. Whilst others did not want to be labeled but appreciated and valued for their personal characteristics and others identified in non-racial terms, preferring to be identified as human. More importantly participants wanted both of their racial heritages to be acknowledged. It seems freedom to identify as they choose is so important to them and empowering as well. (FN: 27<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

#### **Think box 5.1: Identity Chameleon**

*I am such an 'identity chameleon'. In a 24-hour-day I can change my racial and cultural identities several times. Sometimes I suffer from 'racial sluggishness' and on such days I am lazy and do not challenge identities that others ascribe and construct for me. On such days, I do not feel like sharing my narrative with others and prefer to remain silent on my racial background and heritage. Sometimes, I also feel that not everybody around me deserves to be told my story. It really does not matter what label I am given time and time again, because when I am with my family, friends and all the people that matter, I am just Wendy, a human being. To them I am Wendy a multicultural person of the world. ....*

*However, I do identify myself as biracial, I am proud that I have two racial and cultural heritages. Similarly, in a post-apartheid South Africa, identifying as black has also given me benefits in certain sectors of society, such as my career as a result of Employment Equity and Affirmative Action policies. I am biracial! The product of a multicultural environment and I feel like I am a Rubik's cube, as a different colour comes up every time I scramble the cube, and I feel as colorful as the cube itself 😊.*

## 5.5 SUBTHEME 3.3: AN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTED BY OTHERS

Subtheme 3.3 deals with how parents, family members, peers and intimate partners identify the participants. I will discuss this theme in terms of four categories: i) the construction of identity within the family context; ii) how biracial siblings construct identities that are similar to or different from the participants' identity construction; iii) how peers identify the biracial individual; and iv) how intimate partners identify the biracial individual.

### 5.5.1 CATEGORY V: THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY WITHIN THE FAMILY CONTEXT

Family members reportedly chose to socialise their children towards various identities. The following subcategories apply: how participants are viewed through (a) their mothers' eyes; (b) their fathers' eyes; (c) their families' eyes; and (d) how parents influenced the participants' identity construction. The majority of the participants (n=6, 5 female, 1 male) shared how their mothers influenced their identity formation, while three participants (n=3, 1 female, 2 male) referred to how their fathers labelled them. Four participants (n=4, 3 female, 1 male) talked about how family members identify them, and four (n=4, 3 male, 1 female) referred to family members who played a central role in their identity construction.

#### a) Subcategory V1: Through my mother's eyes: how mothers identify their biracial children

The following verbatim quotations provide examples of how the participants' mothers chose to identify their biracial children, as perceived by the participants:

- Serena indicated that her mother used the word 'mixed' to describe her: *She doesn't really like to use race, but she will call me mixed (N1-Serena: 337-338). She introduced me and she is like this is my daughter, and the person is like 'this is not your daughter, this is your friend' and she is like no this is my mixed daughter and that is how she explained it to her friend (N1-Serena: 340-342).* Serena remembered how her mother wanted her to embrace her biracial identity: *If I just tell people I was black or I was white, she never wanted me to stick with one. She wanted me to tell people I was both. Now I have accepted the fact that I am both (N1-Serena: 484-486).*
- Mila's mother identified her as South African: *My mom would just say I'm South African. She wouldn't want to put a label on whether I'm Zimbabwean or Filipino but, since I do have citizenship in this country then I will just be South African (N2-Mila: 199-201).* Mila's mother

- encouraged her to construct her own identity and be proud of it: *My mom is the one who let me know it's okay to describe myself in any way that I want (N2-Mila: 403-404).*
- Maria's mother labelled her biracial: *She'd probably say biracial (N2-Maria: 277).*
  - Tyler's mother supported the development of a biracial identity by exposing Tyler and his sister to storybooks from both African and American cultures: *She also says I'm mixed race, being part of two races (N1-Tyler: 142). You know she didn't want me to just forget about my black side. She always had a lot of story books that were like different African stories instead of just reading Baa-baa Black Sheep and stuff like that. My mom always made sure that I didn't forget about my black side and my white side (N1-Tyler: 494-497).*
  - Lucia's mother was against racial labels: *Since I was a small child, she's avoided labels completely (N2-Lucia: 219).* However, when having to fill out forms at school: *I would come home, and say 'But I'm not any of those,' and she'd say 'Ja, but you're biracial' (N2-Lucia: 225-227).*
  - Adrianna's mother identified her as biracial: *In passing she'll be like 'I can't believe the child is biracial' (N1-Adrianna: 222-223).*

It is evident from the above narratives that most of the participants' mothers focused on socialising their children to develop a positive and well-adjusted identity. Most mothers seemed to encourage their children to embrace a biracial identity including both heritages, yet at times mothers refused to use racial labels to identify their children. Participants' mothers also encouraged their children to take pride in whatever identity they chose to identify with.

#### **b) Subcategory V2: Through my father's eyes: how fathers identify their biracial children**

Only three participants shared narratives on how their fathers identified them. All the participants explained that their fathers did not use any racial labels when identifying them. Mpho's father chose a colour-blind approach as he believed that racial differences are irrelevant and thus identified his son as human. The following verbatim quotations apply:

- *My dad is so stubborn. He'll say "He's human" (N1-Mpho: 469), and he doesn't believe in race. He believes we're all humans (N1-Mpho: 456-457).*
- *I have never heard my dad refer to us, or me and my brother as anything. He just says these are my kids (N1-Serena: 346-347).*
- *My parents always said, we don't really see a black child or a white child... it's my child (N2-Hugo: 232-233).*

**c) Subcategory V3: Through my family's eyes: how family identify the biracial individuals**

Extended families also seem to have played an important role in influencing the participants' identity development. Two participants mentioned that their extended families just accepted them for who they are and did not label them:

- *They don't really classify me as anything (N2-Serena: 79), and I'm just like one of the grandchildren (N2-Serena: 82).*
- *I get along with my family in the Netherlands absolutely fine, they never questioned who I am or what I am (N1-Hugo: 82-83).*
- Mila in particular stated that she was viewed as a Filipino girl, with her family constructing a national identity for her: *My grandmother would call me Filipino, because when we are there we do everything Filipino. We're eating the food, we're going to church and we do understand a bit of the language (N2-Mila: 190-192).*
- Adrianna's family saw her as a biracial individual: *My mom's sisters are very like 'Oh, you have a mixed-race child!' but for them it's exciting because it's different (N2-Adrianna: 136-137).*

In this subcategory, grandparents chose to label the biracial participants simply as their 'grandchildren', with only Mila reporting that her grandparents constructed a Filipino national identity for her.

**d) Subcategory V4: Parents' influence on the participants' identity development**

Participants shared narratives on how their parents played a role in their identity development, as is evident in the following extracts:

- Vuyani explained: *My identity was largely influenced by my parents (W1-Vuyani: 109).* Vuyani's mother emphasised the importance of choosing however he wants to identify: *I just have a picture in my head of my mom just telling me "you choose who you want to be and you just be that" (N1-Vuyani: 558-559),* while his father emphasised a Xhosa identity: *So he would be like, 'listen, this is your culture, this is who you are and in the Xhosa culture, who you are has a lot to do also with who your family is and your ancestors. So you need to know who your family is and you need to respect their values' (N1-Vuyani: 622-625).*
- Adrianna said that her parents' beliefs and values influenced who she is: *My family has shaped me in many ways that I cannot even begin to explain; my morals, my way of*

*thinking, my lifestyle, my beliefs, obvious things like my cultural background and my sense of taste when it comes to music, fashion and art (W1-Adrianna: 61-64).*

- Tyler's parents emphasised a biracial identity: *I would have to say it is my mom and my dad. I think they have both made an effort to make sure that I know that I am not just a single race. I was in a household with an American culture and a household with an African culture and because of that I was able to learn from both of them (N1-Tyler: 659-660).*
- Christopher's parents discussed the importance of his dual heritage: *My parents have been very influential, but so has every other element of my environment, my country and its beautiful people (W1-Christopher: 36-37). They explained to me their heritage and how I came to be made and what I am (N1-Christopher: 543-544).*

#### **5.5.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category V: The construction of identity within the family context**

According to Tomishima (2003), family plays a pivotal role in helping to shape children's identity. According to the young biracial South African adults who participated in this study, their parents laid a strong foundation for them to include all their racial heritages into their biracial identity from the earliest stages of their development and were also instrumental in communicating to them that being biracial is special and unique in a desirable way. This is in agreement with the findings of other studies (Hubbard, 2010; Patel, 2012; Nakazawa, 2003). The parents of the participants thus played an important role in assisting their biracial children to understand their dual heritages and racial backgrounds, and made significant contributions to the development of their children's racial identities and the formulation of what it means to be biracial (Sechrest-Ehrhardt, 2012).

As was also reported in Rollin's (2009) study, the young biracial South African adults in this study stated that their mothers used socialisation messages to promote a positive self-concept and confidence in themselves and their abilities, and encouraged self-acceptance and self-respect in their children. Their fathers refrained from using racial labels, preferring to identify them as human or 'silenced race'. This approach can be referred to as a *colour-blind approach*, where an individual believes that race should not be used to identify people and that race is viewed as increasingly less significant, emphasising the importance of the individual (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Frankenberg, 1993; Hubbard, 2010; Sweeney, 2013; Rollins, 2009; Root, 2001). According to Guiner and Torres (2002), the assumption is conflict can be avoided if race is ignored. However, many argue that a colour-blind ideology is problematic because it ignores, even disguises, the power and privilege that characterise

race relations in a racialised country like South Africa (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2003; Childs, 2002). Dalmage (2003) further states that the problem with invoking a colour-blind approach is that children may struggle to construct a racial identity if they do not receive guidance from parents on how to navigate a racialised society.

As also seen in other similar studies, parents were viewed as the primary sources of support, validation and assurance when it came to choosing an identity for the biracial participants (Brunsma, 2005; Crawford & Alaggia, 2008; Patel, 2012). According to the participants, their parents supported a biracial identity by encouraging them to embrace an identity that reflects both heritages (Frasch & Brooks, 2003; Jackson, 2009; Williams, 2011). The young biracial South African adults also mentioned that their parents taught them to take pride in their biracial background (Wardle & Cruz-Janzen, 2004). As South Africa is still racially divided, the participants' parents may have elected to identify their children as biracial in an effort to distance them from the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Choosing to assign a biracial identity to their children may stem from parents' thinking that, in doing so, their children will be allowed greater power and privilege in society, and also possibly that they could thereby minimise the barriers to the assignment of resources based on racial discrimination (Gaventa, 2003; 2006; Brunsma, 2005). It is evident that parents tried to socialise their biracial children to accept and celebrate their biracial heritage to ensure healthy identity development (Bowlby, 1969).

#### **5.5.2 CATEGORY W: BIRACIAL SIBLINGS CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES THAT ARE SIMILAR TO AND DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTICIPANTS' IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**

Seven participants (n= 7, 3 female, 4 male) described how their biracial siblings constructed their own identities, with most of them constructing monoracial (specifically black) identities. When talking about their biracial siblings, some participants reflected on how they shared similar identities with their siblings. Other participants expressed how their biracial siblings chose a different identity even though they grew up in the same home environment. The various experiences are captured in the extracts below:

- A black identity was allegedly constructed by Mila's brother: *My brother was used to being surrounded by black children when he went to school, the park and the church (W1-Mila: 8-9). He never felt confused or embarrassed about his ethnicity, his identity was always clear to him (W1-Mila: 52-53). He calls himself black as he can speak the language a bit so he fits in quite well (N1-Mila: 310-311).*



- Hugo's sister also adopted a black identity: *I don't think she's ever been in a relationship with a white person. I think she's a lot more on the black side of things. I think when she was in varsity all of her friends were mostly black (N1-Hugo: 1096-1098)* The same applies to Mpho's older brother: *I think he'd see himself as black (N1-Mpho: 819), and his mom is Tswana and that's how he was brought up. He's more Tswana than anything (N1-Mpho: 824-825).* Mpho's younger sister identified as white: *She wants to look like her white friends. She is going through what I went through but at least I am balancing it out for her. I'm showing her the black side and that the African side is fun (N2-Mpho: 267-269). She must accept who she is, she mustn't be not proud like I was. I wasn't proud of myself but I want her to be proud of who she is (N2-Mpho: 479-481).*
- Lucia's sister changed her identity according to her context: *She adopts a different type of persona when she's around different races. I think it's kind of an adaptive strategy. If she's around black people, she'll act differently. If she's around coloured people, she'll act differently (N2-Lucia: 304-306).*
- Serena and Tyler's siblings celebrated their biracial identity: *He also refers to himself as mixed (N1-Serena: 394), and she's also very proud to be mixed race (N2-Tyler: 517).*
- Finally, Vuyani's brothers apparently repelled against a racial label: *They believe there's different races, but they don't see why that should have an effect on anything (N2-Vuyani: 191-192).*

In my field notes I reflected as follows on the differences and similarities in the way in which the participants and their siblings constructed their identities:

*Siblings within this study chose similar and different identities to the young biracial participants. It seems most siblings constructed a black identity as they grew up in predominantly black neighborhoods, attended predominantly black schools and had a majority of black peers in their social networks (FN: 27<sup>th</sup> December 2012).*

### **5.5.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category W: Biracial siblings constructing that are similar to or different from those constructed by the participants**

As also seen in several other biracial studies (Basu, 2007; Root, 1998; Song, 2010b; Tomishima, 2003), participants in this study revealed that some of their siblings' racial identifications differed from their own, while others chose similar identities. Although the participants and their siblings grew up in the same households, they reported that most of their biracial siblings constructed monoracial identities (specifically black identities). According to Mpho, Mila and Hugo, their siblings chose a black identity as they attended predominantly black schools and socialised with black peers. Their siblings' ability to speak an African language was reportedly also a precursor to identifying as black. Having experienced rejection by his white peers when he was younger, Mpho expressed concern for his sister who had adopted a white identity. Lucia said that her older sister adapted her racial identity according to her context, and Serena and Tyler's siblings had chosen to identify as mixed race. Vuyani's siblings refused to be identified by race.

This finding correlates with Root's (2003a; 2003b) ecological framework of racial identity development, which posits that the biracial experience will be different from generation to generation. In the American context, the one drop rule prevented older generations from publically declaring a mixed-race identity. In South Africa, individuals with a biracial heritage were often identified as coloured in the past. In the post-apartheid setting, the biracial participants could choose to identify as biracial as they have more power with regard to their choice of identity (Gaventa, 2003; 2006; Root, 2004). Furthermore, difference in identity construction amongst siblings could be attributed to the born-free generation, i.e. individuals born in South Africa in 1994, which was the year in which apartheid ended and the country became a democracy. Except for Hugo, all the participants in this study are born frees. I posit that the young biracial adults who took part in this study were born within a democratic South Africa and may have had more opportunities to construct their own identities, while their older siblings would have been influenced by the apartheid system and had fewer racial identities to choose from while growing up. Racial identities might also have been imposed on them by the apartheid government and apartheid laws. These findings merit further research into how biracial siblings in the same family, but from different generations, construct racial identities and experience being biracial individuals.

### 5.5.3 CATEGORY X: THROUGH MY FRIENDS' EYES: HOW PEERS IDENTIFY THE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL

Participants' (n= 7, 4 female, 3 male) peers apparently identified them in various ways:

- Serena was labelled coloured by her coloured peers and mixed by other peers: *My coloured friends will call me coloured because they like the fact that I am the same skin colour. But the rest of my friends just see me as Serena, they don't see the colour (N1-Serena: 379-381)*. Her friends ensured that she was identified as biracial: *My friend, Cara, she especially watches my back, so if someone asks her behind my back, what am I? She makes sure that people know I'm mixed, instead of referring to me as coloured (N2-Serena: 282-284)*.
- Mila's friends apparently loved her personality: *They actually call me the black Chinese girl (N2-Mila: 285), and other than, they just love my personality (N2-Mila: 287)*.
- Maria was admired for her biracial heritage. She explained that her friends labelled her biracial: *Because I always say it and they embrace who I am. They love it (N2-Maria: 247-248)*.
- Mpho's colour-blind perspective allowed him not to take cognisance of how he was identified by others: *They call me coloured (N1-Mpho: 751), it doesn't really bother me (N1-Mpho: 754), and I'm trying to get over the stage of classifying people according to race (N1-Mpho: 756)*.
- According to Vuyani: *They would say I'm the funny guy (N1-Vuyani: 725)*.
- Adrianna's friends explained her mixed heritage as follows: *They would definitely say she's mixed race. That's the first thing that would come out of their mouths. Even when somebody comes to me and they like 'Oh, are you coloured?' They will be like 'No she's mixed race' quickly before I can even say anything (N2-Adrianna: 178-180)*.
- Finally, Hugo's friends seem to accept him for who he is: *I think they've never really questioned it or they never really think about my racial identity (N1-Hugo: 950-951)*.

#### 5.5.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category X: Through my friends' eyes: how peers identify the biracial individual

Subcategory 3.3.3 provides insight into how young biracial South African adults think they are identified by their friends. It was evident from the narratives that the young adults felt that their peers respected their preferred identities, which in most cases were biracial. Furthermore, in the participants' opinions, their peers also 'actively campaigned' to encourage outsiders to respect their identity constructions by referring to them as biracial, even when they were not present and when others might assume that they were coloured. I posit that this could be the result of a post-apartheid

era in which young adults are respecting the way in which their fellow South Africans choose to identify. Hence, the biracial individuals seemed to have developed a social network comprised of individuals who value them and support their biracial heritage and identity (Gibbs, 2003; Patel, 2012).

#### **5.5.4 CATEGORY Y: THROUGH MY BOYFRIEND'S EYES: HOW INTIMATE PARTNERS IDENTIFY THE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL**

Some of the participants (n= 3, 3 female) discussed how their intimate partners identify them. They explained:

- *He doesn't really see my colour, he just sees me (N1-Serena: 442).*
- *He would just say South African, because there's no like 'she's not black, she's not white, she's not coloured'. I think he wouldn't put a label to it (N2- Mila: 327-328).*
- *He just jokes about it. His not very serious about it because we've come to the conclusion that race is pretty much futile (N1-Lucia: 293-294). Lucia's boyfriend teases her: So he just laughs at me, and teases me 'Ja you just a pavement special' (N1-Lucia: 615-616), Well, coming from my boyfriend, it would just mean an exotic person (N2-Lucia: 550-551), and someone who's of different cultures, different races, all mixed up into one (N2-Lucia: 553).*

##### **5.5.4.1 Interpretations and discussions of Category Y: Through my boyfriend's eyes: how intimate partners identify the biracial individual**

In this study, the young South African biracial adults expressed how their intimate partners chose to identify them. According to the participants, their intimate partners chose not to place any racial labels on them and to rather identify them as their romantic partners.

#### **5.6 SUBTHEME 3.4: THE INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**

According to Walker, (2011) physical appearance provides a means for self-expression, as well as information that assists in the identity development. Several authors (Herman, 2007; Tatum, 1997) believe that the identity development of biracial individuals, especially part-black individuals, is heavily influenced by their physical appearance. Furthermore, an individual's physical cues may play a role in racial categorisation because phenotype characteristics (e.g. skin tone, hair texture and facial features) can reveal an individuals' identity to others. These physical cues often create the 'first impression' for how individuals will be able to negotiate their racial identity with others. Physical

features in particular (i.e. skin tone, hair texture and facial features) are socially conditioned and understood markers of group membership (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). In the South African society, race is intertwined with phenotype and individuals are often racially labelled by their physical appearance. Hence biracial individuals' identities may either be disputed or validated according to how their appearance informs society of who they are (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunnsma; 2002; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Walker, 2011).

According to the participants, their physical appearance influenced their biracial identity development. I discuss this theme in terms of five categories: (i) experiencing 'othering' as a result of unique biracial physical features; (ii) manipulating hair styles so as to fit in with societal norms; (iii) a celebration of biracial physical features; and (iv) being admired for having light skin in the black community.

#### **5.6.1 CATEGORY Z: EXPERIENCING 'OTHERING' AS A RESULT OF UNIQUE BIRACIAL PHYSICAL FEATURES**

Several biracial participants (n= 6, 4 female, 2 male) shared their experiences of discrimination and racism as a result of their biracial physical characteristics. More specifically, they experienced verbal bullying on account of their different hair texture and physical characteristics (when compared to their white and black peers). The following examples were provided:

- Serena experienced negativity concerning her appearance: *I personally have experienced very negative situations regarding my race and skin colour (W1-Serena: 22-23), and it was more verbal bullying (N1-Serena: 170).* She experienced verbal bullying: *They made fun of my hair and they called me 'SpongeBob' (N1-Serena: 179), referring to her afro, rather than the standard straight hair that her peers expected her to have: They stopped calling me that after I started straightening my hair (N1-Serena: 301).*
- Mila was bullied by black girls because of her light skin complexion and biracial physical features: *Once I got to primary school things started going downhill. That's when people noticed a difference in me as opposed to most black girls in my school. And this triggered a lot of bullying against my appearance, from my complexion to my hair to my eyes. Children in my class used to call me 'China', Bushy hair' and 'Mila Ugly-hair-a'. That stage in my life was very hurtful because they used to tease me a lot (N1-Mila: 57-61).* Mila mentioned a specific example: *This one boy bought a toy hairdryer and then I asked him what it was for and he said 'for you to use it so that you can look normal' (N1-Mila: 190-191).*

- Lucia's physical features were apparently also criticised by her peers at school: *They would just say like, "Your nose is so big and you have no rhythm, you can't sing, your boobs are too big for your bum" (N1-Lucia: 426-428)*. She felt that her peers treated her differently because they did not understand her biracial heritage: *They don't understand me so they don't like me. I think race is a thing because people don't like what they don't understand (N1-Lucia: 432-434)*. Lucia reported how her peers would deliberately mix up her name and other biracial girls' names at school. She felt that her individuality was not respected: *All three of us, they would always say that we are sisters (N1-Lucia: 439), and they would always confuse us with one another (N1-Lucia: 441)*.
- Tyler also experienced bullying because of his afro: *It was stuff like 'mop', and 'feather duster' (N1-Tyler: 430)*. As a result, Tyler used to cut his hair: *Everyone else had straight blonde hair and then there was me with my huge afro and it was different. So I would cut my hair a lot then (N1-Tyler: 382-383)*.
- Adrianna experienced discrimination: *They called me into the vice-principal's office. She sat me down and she was like 'Listen my darling'. She tried to sugar-coat it as much as she could, 'your hair is lovely but it doesn't correlate with the rules'. I was a bit upset because I didn't understand why my natural hair was looked down upon and why it wasn't part of the school uniform? I really didn't understand why my hair had to be tied up or why I couldn't have my afro when a typical white girl could have red hair or purple hair (N1-Adrianna: 319-324)*.
- Hugo talked about being overly cautious and pleasant because of his physical appearance as he was living in a predominantly Afrikaans community: *They act scared of me, I walk into a shop and people will follow me around because they think I'm going to rob the place. When I'm in a shop I always act overly nice (N1-Hugo: 417-419), and always say 'please, thank you, pardon and specifically have a big smile on my face, just so that I don't seem threatening to people (N1-Hugo: 425-426)*.

These experiences of the participants are supported by my field notes in which I captured my reflections on the participants' experiences of bullying, racism and discrimination due to their physical appearance and hair:

*The participants' feelings of discrimination and racism seem to be based a lot on their physical appearance. Their hair in particular caused the participants to experience bullying during their school years. I think that the reason for this could be the ambiguous features that biracial individuals usually have that prevents others from being able to categorise the participants into specific South African racial categories and with regards to the hair, biracial individuals usually have a curly texture, which is not straight like white hair and less afro-textured than typical African hair, again making the biracial individual even more ambiguous (FN: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).*

#### **5.6.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category Z: Experiencing 'othering' as a result of unique biracial physical features**

Participants in this study experienced racial discrimination, prejudice and bullying as they were identified by their peers as 'different'. A similar situation is described by Patel (2012). The participants' biracial physical characteristic led to them being identified as not complying with the societal 'norm'. More specifically, both male and female participants experienced discrimination on account of their hairstyles and the texture of their hair. Their afros were unacceptable in a society where straight hair was the norm.

#### **5.6.2 Category AA: Manipulating hair styles so as to fit in with societal norms**

Growing up in a society that defines beauty in a specific way led Adrianna and Mila (n=2, 2 female) to straighten their curly afros in an attempt to fit in with their white peers and the perceived mainstream ideas of what 'beauty' is. They reported:

- *In primary school there was predominantly white people, and obviously I also wanted my hair to be straight. I wanted to be able to have a nice pony without the curls coming out. So I ended up relaxing my hair but I regretted this because it damaged my hair (N1-Adrianna: 351-353).*
- *As I started entering my teens, one of my coloured friends suggested that I try straightening my hair. Once I started straightening my hair, my haters became my worshippers. And because of that, I prefer my hair straight (W1-Mila: 36-38). With my generation it's a big deal because of the media. You see Beyoncé with this super long straight hair. People think*

*'Oh that's great hair' and then when they see something different then all of a sudden it's not accepted (N2-Mila: 152-154).*

### **5.6.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category AA: Manipulating hairstyles to fit in with societal norms**

When constructing their female identities, girls with a biracial heritage tend to face unique issues associated with their physical appearance (Edison, 2007; Rockquemore & Laszoffy, 2005). Rockquemore and Laszoffy (2005) ascribe this to a patriarchal ideology that dictates that men are inherently more valuable than women and that a woman's worth is defined in terms of her physical beauty and sexuality. In society men and women are valued for different roles (i.e. men are valued for their intelligence and political influence, and women for their beauty) (Edison, 2007). A white standard of beauty has been adopted in society according to which women with light skin, straight hair and European features are regarded as more beautiful than women with darker skin and ethnic features (Edison, 2007; Korgen, 1998; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992; Walker, 2011).

Participants experienced internalised oppression as a result of internalising Eurocentric ideas of beauty. Consequently they tend to show preference for the cultural markers of the dominant group while developing prejudice towards their own in-group, stigmatising themselves and the in-group in the process. Adrianna and Mila internalised the view that straight hair is beautiful and held value-laden beliefs that their own form of beauty was stigmatised (Merrell- James, 2006; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007; Patel, 2012; Wallace, 2003).

As was also found in other biracial studies (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Pyke, 2010; Root, 2003; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008), the biracial women expressed feeling dissatisfied with their physical appearance, especially their hair. Mila and Adrianna described adolescence as a time when they desired more 'white' features, such as longer and softer hair. They wanted physical features that would help them 'blend in' rather than stand out (Buckley & Carter, 2004). Mila and Adrianna tried to manipulate their physical appearance, specifically their hair, to manage their identity (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). The young women may have internalised European standards of beauty that made them feel 'othered' as women of colour, experiencing their attractiveness as devalued or ignored because of their naturally curly hair. This response was also noted in other studies. Thus



straightening their hair was their way of trying to create a more 'white' appearance (Pyke, 2010; Root, 2003; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

#### Think box 5.2: Hair

*HAIR is always such a big issue with women! My hair was always a challenge for me growing up. My mom, although I love her too bits, did not have a clue on how to handle my Afro-textured hair. She tried various ways to hide her inadequacies when it came to my sisters' and my hair. Sometimes to hide the hair knots she would put flowers in my hair and I walked around with an uneven afro for most of my childhood. At times, my mom would ask our African neighbors or friends to do my hair. Depending on my hairstyle, I may be mistaken for a certain racial group within the South African context. If my hair is braided, people think I am black, if my hair is straightened I am thought of as a coloured individual. Growing up, I disliked my unruly curls and spent many hours straightening them....but I now appreciate my curls and have cut my hair short. I love that my curly afro represents my biracial heritage.*

#### 5.6.3 CATEGORY BB: A CELEBRATION OF ONE'S BIRACIAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

At a young age most of the participants experienced difficulty in accepting their physical appearance. They manipulated physical characteristics, specifically their hair, in an attempt to fit in at school and in society. However, as they grew older, some participants (n=3, 1 male, 2 female) started appreciating their unique biracial physical features and embraced both 'white' and 'black' physical features as part of their identity. This tendency is evident from the following narrative accounts:

- When he was younger, Tyler used to cut his afro in an attempt to fit in with his white peers. However, he has not cut his curly hair since childhood, as it is now part of his biracial identity: *I can proudly say that this 'Rainbow Child' hasn't stepped foot in a hairdresser since age 10 (W1-Tyler: 112-113).*
- Maria recalled that before she embraced her physical appearance she continuously manipulated her features to appease white and black peers. At times she would have straight hair to appear 'more white', or would braid her hair to appear 'more black': *I just figured I should embrace the mix that I am and stop trying to be more on the white side or the black side (N2-Maria: 198-199), and I'm very happy with who I am and the way I look (N2-Maria: 425).*
- A younger Adrianna wanted straight hair like her white peers, but later she started loving her naturally curly afro: *I cut my hair in about grade seven and then ever since then it's been growing naturally and I'm more open to my natural hair. I am beginning to find products that*

*will deal with my natural hair. My friends are very encouraging about my natural hair, they like 'no your natural hair is beautiful' (N1-Adrianna: 351-354).*

Several participants (n=4, 1 female, 3 male) mentioned appreciating their physical features associated with their biracial heritage. They were pleased that both their heritages were reflected in their physical appearance, as is evident from the following excerpts:

- Mpho liked the fact that his physical features represented his biracial heritage: *I have black features and I have white features, so that's how some people are like this boy is not coloured he must be mixed (N2-Mpho: 362-364).* He associated being biracial with being good looking: *People really love multiracial relationships, they think multiracial, biracial people are beautiful, they are good-looking and they are different (N2-Mpho: 354-357).*
- Mila appreciated it when people recognised her Asian heritage through her physical features: *I think people see that we are half Chinese because we have Asian eyes (N1-Mila: 430-431).* She explained how her physical appearance often led to conversations that led to friendships: *Now people are really interested in my race, so if I walk past and somebody would say 'oh, is that your real hair?' Then I'll say 'yes it is'. Then they ask, 'are you coloured or are you black?' I'm like 'no I'm half or whatever'. Then all of a sudden the conversation starts. That is actually how I made a lot of my friends here (N1-Mila: 443-447).* She also attracted attention from the opposite sex: *The fact that people are interested in my race, and also there is that myth that all biracial people are pretty. So you know, I do walk past and a boy would be like hmmm! (N1-Mila: 552-554).*
- Tyler recalled reading an article with his sister on how 'biracial people are the most beautiful in the world', which resulted in him being proud of his appearance: *She was reading the Cosmopolitan the other day and there was an article that said mixed race people are the most beautiful people in the world (Laughs)! (N1-Tyler: 507-508).* *So I think in general we are even a little bit arrogant (laughs) about the mixture (N1-Tyler: 519-520), and we are very proud of it (N1-Tyler: 522).*
- Hugo enjoyed having an ambiguous appearance: *My physical appearance has been mostly helpful (N2-Hugo: 559).* *I'm sort of what we usually call ambiguously brown so it's easy to fit in because of that (N2-Hugo: 566-567).*

### 5.6.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category BB: A celebration of biracial physical appearance

Although the participants may have experienced *internalised oppression* in their early lives, during which they internalised Eurocentric (dominant group in society) standards of beauty as the universal norm, they seemed to embrace their biracial physical characteristics as they grew older. This is parallel to the findings of other biracial studies (Patel, 2012; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007).

Participants in related studies (Merrell-James, 2006; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007) as well as in the current study were pleased to be associated with the prevalent and mostly positive stereotypes of biracial individuals, such as being beautiful and good looking. Accepting their biracial physical features was the result of their mixed race heritage being overtly sexualised, as participants were praised and validated for their exotic looks (Wallace, 2003). Hence participants capitalised on the fact that they were biracial and took advantage of this stereotype.

### 5.6.4 CATEGORY CC: BEING REVERED FOR HAVING LIGHT SKIN WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Two participants (n=2, 1 male, 1 female) explained how having a light complexion (specifically in black communities) was favoured over a dark complexion and how they received preferential treatment from family members and in intimate relationships:

- Adrianna expressed her feelings: *I'm not a big fan of being put on a pedestal because you're light skinned. I feel like an object sometimes. They just see me for my light skin (N2-Adrianna: 150-151)*. She stated that at times this hampered the dating process as some men only want to be with her because of her light skin and biracial status. This made it hard to tell what their intentions were: *It is hard to tell when a person is interested in me simply because I am biracial or because of who I am and what I represent as a human-being (W1-Adrianna: 44-45)*.
- Christopher loved being light-skinned and mentioned some advantages: *I think South African society in general, is quite racial and even racist, and light-skinned people are thought to be especially attractive (N2-Christopher: 394-395)*. *Being light-skinned or yellow-boned (N1-Christopher: 815) means I have an unnecessary advantage (N1-Christopher: 824)*. Because of his light skin: *black girls will be more receiving of me (N1-Christopher: 802)*. His sister showed him off to her friends because of his light complexion: *So my sister loves to show me off to her friends (N2-Christopher: 387)*. He also received preferential

treatment in his family: *She would boast to her friends, 'I have a grandchild who's half white!' (N1-Christopher: 969) and I was like the trophy (N1-Christopher: 974).*

#### **5.6.4.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations on Category CC: Being admired for having light skin within the black community**

Two participants (n=2, 1 male, 1 female) talked about how a light complexion was favoured over a dark complexion (especially in black communities). Participants explained how they received preferential treatment and favouritism within their families and intimate relationships as a result of their light skin. This is in agreement with the findings of other studies (Pyke, 2010; Root, 2003). Colorism<sup>65</sup> was an important factor in how participants chose to identify as they seemed aware that being viewed as light-skinned individuals meant experiencing better treatment and being viewed as more beautiful and attractive than dark-skinned individuals.

### **5.7 THEME 4: 'OTHERING': STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION, STEREOTYPING AND DOMINANT DISCOURSES ASSOCIATED WITH BIRACIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**

The fourth theme focuses on the racism, discrimination, marginalisation and stereotyping the young biracial adults experienced in various contexts and social relationships. In this theme the participants reflected on the challenges they experienced while growing up as biracial individuals and the challenges they faced coming from interracial families. They explained why they loved being biracial and appreciated having been raised in multicultural and multiracial family settings. The following subthemes were identified: 4.1) a discrepancy in how others construct a racial identity for the biracial individual and how the biracial individual self-identifies; 4.2); challenges associated with growing up as a biracial individual; 4.3) experiences of racism, discrimination and marginalisation as a biracial individual; and 4.4) making it through the rain: a celebration of a biracial identity.

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<sup>65</sup> Colorism is a term coined by the well-known author Alice Walker (1982) and refers to a form of discrimination based on an individual's skin colour. According to Hunter (2005), colorism is the process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned over dark-skinned individuals. It is important to note that colorism is practiced within all racial groups and not only in black communities. Colorism results in individuals being treated differently as a result of the social meaning and social status attached to their phenotype. Colorism is rooted in slavery in the Americas and European colonisation in which '*white supremacy was established on the notion that dark skin represents savagery, irrationality, ugliness and inferiority, and white skin and "whiteness" itself is defined by the opposite such as civility, rationality, beauty, and superiority*' (Hunter, 2007:238-239).

Figure 5.2 provides an overview of the subthemes of Theme 4. Table 5.4 captures the related subthemes, categories and subcategories, as well as the relevant inclusion and exclusion indicators.

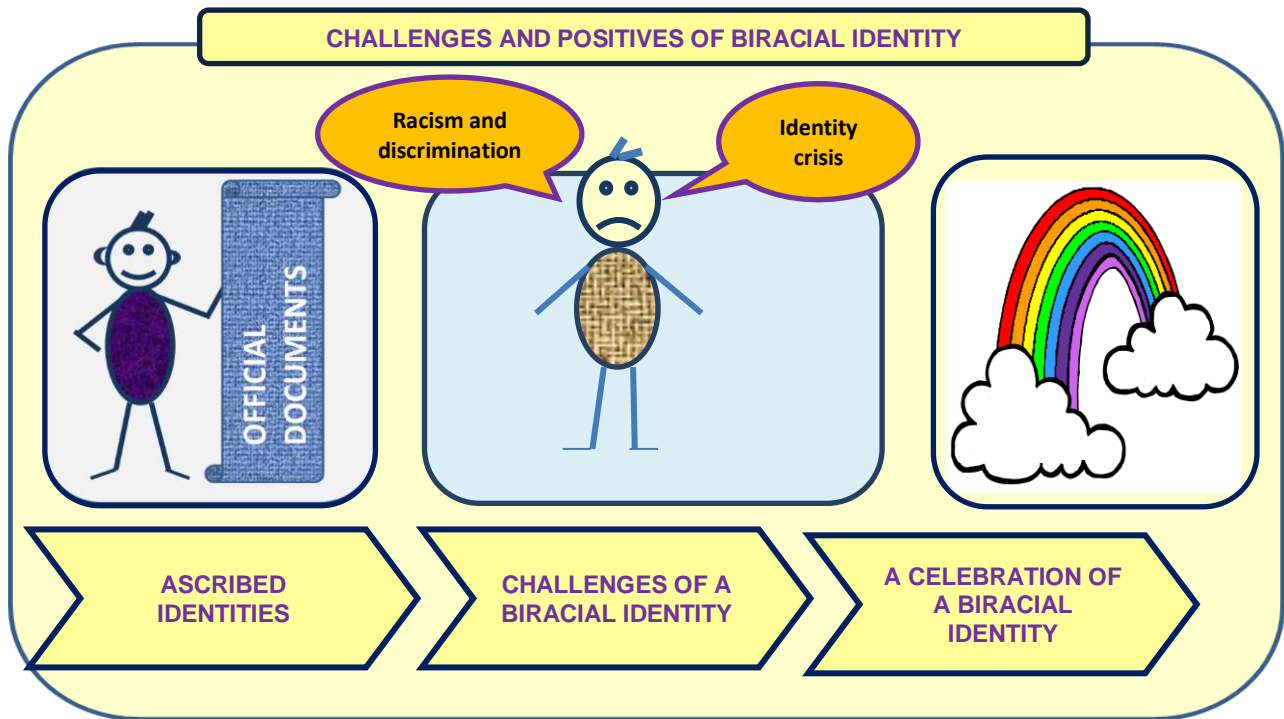


Figure 5.2: Subthemes of Theme 4

**Table 5.4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 4**

<b>Theme 4: Othering: Stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity construction</b> <i>There was one circumstance where I accidentally bumped this Afrikaans girl, it was by accident of course and then she called me a “kaffir” (N1-Serena: 229-230).</i>		
		<b>This subtheme focuses on the participants’ experiences of challenges and positives faced while growing up as biracial individual</b>
Subthemes and categories	Inclusion indicators	Exclusion indicators
<b>Subtheme 4.1: Discrepancies in how others construct a racial identity for the biracial individual and how the biracial individual self-identifies</b>	<b>This subtheme discusses participants being ascribed racial identities by others and how official documents and census do not accommodate their biracial heritage.</b>	
<b>Category DD: ‘Others’ ascribing a racial identity to the biracial participants</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed a discrepancy between how they identify themselves and how others label or categorise them according to South Africa’s racial categories.	This category excludes data in which participants’ discussed how individuals identify them according to their chosen identity in a specific context. This category excludes data in which participants’ discussed individuals respecting their chosen racial identity.
<b>Category EE: Official documents and census not creating a space to construct a biracial identity</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed the difficulty they face when having to construct a biracial identity in official South African documents.	This category excludes data in which participants’ discussed feeling that their chosen identities are represented in South African official forms.
	<b>a) Subcategory EE1: Ticking ‘other’ on official forms:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed having to choose ‘other’ on official forms so as not to deny their biracial heritage.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed ticking ‘coloured’ and ‘black’ on official forms.
	<b>b) Subcategory EE2: Ticking ‘coloured’ on official forms:</b> This subcategory includes data in which	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed ticking ‘other’ and ‘black’ on official forms.

	<p>participants discussed ticking 'coloured' on official forms as a result of sharing similar physical characteristics with coloured people.</p>	
	<p><b>c) Subcategory EE3: Ticking 'black' on official forms:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed ticking 'black' on official forms for BEE advantages and a black identity being reflected in their identification documents.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed ticking 'other' and 'coloured' on official forms.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 4.2: Challenges associated with growing up as a biracial individual</b></p>	<p><b>This subtheme includes data in which participants discussed the challenges they faced growing up as biracial individuals, such as a) being 'othered'; b) not fitting in with mainstream peers; c) difficulty constructing an identity; and d) challenges faced while growing up in an interracial home.</b></p>	
<p><b>Category FF: Challenge of feeling 'othered' and different because of their biracial heritage</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed feeling 'othered' as a result of their biracial heritage.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed difficulty constructing an identity and challenges faced in an interracial home.</p>
<p><b>Category GG: Challenge of constructing a biracial identity</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed having difficulty constructing a biracial identity.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed being 'othered' as biracial individuals and challenges faced in an interracial home.</p>
<p><b>Category HH: Challenge of growing up in an interracial home</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed challenges they experienced in an interracial home.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed being 'othered' as biracial individuals and difficulty constructing an identity.</p>
	<p><b>a) Subcategory HH1: Realising that their complexion differs from that of their parents:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared feeling different because of not having the same complexion as their parents and other family members.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed challenges associated with different parenting styles, different religious views, discrimination and social stigma attached to an interracial family, prejudice and discrimination within the family and prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities.</p>
	<p><b>b) Subcategory HH2: The challenge of different parenting styles:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared how different parenting styles in the home caused conflict.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed challenges associated with their skin colour being different from that of family members, different religious views, discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family, prejudice and discrimination within the family and prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities.</p>

	<p><b>c) Subcategory HH3: The challenge of different religious views:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants' shared different religious views in the home causing conflict.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed challenges associated with their skin colour being different from that of family members, different parenting styles, discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family, prejudice and discrimination within the family and prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities.</p>
	<p><b>d) Subcategory HH4: The challenge of discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared facing difficult encounters in which their family was discriminated against as interracial families were against the norm in society.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed challenges associated with their skin colour being different from that of family members, different parenting styles, different religious views, prejudice and discrimination within the family and prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities.</p>
	<p><b>e) Subcategory HH5: The challenge of prejudice and discrimination within the family:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared facing discrimination from siblings at home.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed challenges associated with their skin colour being different to that of family members, different parenting styles, different religious views, discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family and prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities.</p>
	<p><b>f) Subcategory HH6: The challenge of prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants shared facing discrimination and being stereotyped on account of their parents' culture and nationality.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed challenges associated with their skin colour being different from that of family members, different parenting styles, different religious views, prejudice and discrimination within the family and discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 4.3: Experiences of racism , discrimination and marginalisation as a biracial individual</b></p>		<p><b>This subtheme focuses on the participants' experiences of racism, discrimination and marginalisation</b></p>
<p><b>Category II: Participants experiencing racism and discrimination as people of colour</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed experiencing racism and discrimination as people of colour even though they associated themselves with a biracial identity.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed not experiencing any forms of racism and discrimination as a biracial individual.</p>
<p><b>Category JJ: Participants experiencing racism and</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discuss experiences of</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed experiences of racism and discrimination related to their parents'</p>



<b>discrimination in their own intimate interracial relationship</b>	racism and discrimination as a result of being with a partner from another racial group. This includes a) partner's parents and friends opposing the interracial relationship, and b) expectations to date someone from a specific race.	interracial relationship.
	<b>a) Subcategory JJ1: Participants facing opposition to their own interracial relationship from their partners' friends and parents:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed opposition to their own interracial relationship from their partners' friends and parents.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed expectations to date people from a specific race.
	<b>b) Subcategory JJ2: Expectations to date within a specific racial group:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed feeling pressure to date a black partner.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed partners' parents and friends opposing the interracial relationship
<b>Category KK: Participants experiencing racism and discrimination within the school context</b>	This category includes data in which participants discussed experiences of racism and discrimination from peers in the school context and entails a) indirect racism; b) direct racism; c) conversations of race and racism with parents; and d) reflections on experiences of racism.	This category excludes data in which participants discussed experiencing racism and discrimination in other contexts.
	<b>a) Subcategory KK1: Experiences of indirect racism at school:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discussed indirect racism (i.e. racial insults and emotional bullying) faced in the school context	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed experiencing direct racism, conversations with parents on racism and reflections on experiences of racism.
	<b>b) Subcategory KK2: Experiences of direct racism at school:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants discuss experiences of direct racism (i.e. physical assault) faced in the school context.	This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed experiencing indirect racism, conversations with parents on racism and reflections on experiences of racism.

	<p><b>c) Subcategory KK3: Conversations on race and racism with parents:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants' shared instances in which they discussed how to deal with racism and discrimination with their parents.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed experiencing direct racism, indirect racism and reflections on experiences of racism.</p>
	<p><b>d) Subcategory KK4: Participants reflect on their experiences of racism and discrimination:</b> This subcategory includes data in which participants reflected on their racial and discriminatory encounters.</p>	<p>This subcategory excludes data in which participants discussed experiencing direct racism, indirect racism and conversations with parents on racism.</p>
<p><b>Subtheme 4.4: Making it through the rain: A celebration of biracial identity</b></p>	<p><b>This subtheme includes data in which participants discussed celebrating their biracial heritage.</b></p>	
<p><b>Category LL: Feeling unique and having pride in their biracial heritage</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed feeling special because of their biracial heritage and also feeling proud of their biracial heritage.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed experiencing two worlds and being open and understanding towards diversity.</p>
<p><b>Category MM: The joys of experiencing two worlds as a result of a biracial heritage</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed appreciating growing up in an interracial family, thus experiencing two different racial and cultural worlds.</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed feeling unique and being open and understanding towards diversity.</p>
<p><b>Category NN: Having an open mind and heart because of a biracial heritage:</b></p>	<p>This category includes data in which participants discussed being accepting of others despite differences and embracing diversity</p>	<p>This category excludes data in which participants discussed feeling unique and experiencing two worlds.</p>

## 5.8 SUBTHEME 4.1: DISCREPANCY IN HOW OTHERS CONSTRUCT A RACIAL IDENTITY FOR THE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL AND HOW THE BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL SELF-IDENTIFIES

Although South Africa's constitution celebrates the country's human diversity, identities in the country are still restricted to the racial classifications that were used in the past, during colonisation and the apartheid era. At times, biracial individuals' may feel marginalised as the various self-identifications that they choose to identify with are not catered for in official and other forms, e.g. census forms. When filling in such forms, the young biracial adults in this study were reportedly forced to choose one race over another, thus denying their biracial heritage. Many of the participants first experienced the requirement to choose a race in the school context. For a biracial child, having to choose which race he/she belongs to poses a very real dilemma. The participants therefore had to negotiate their racial identities within the context of other people's assumptions and imposed racial identifications.

This subtheme therefore discusses how official documents and census forms do not accommodate the participants' biracial heritage and forces them to identify with a monoracial identity. Subtheme 4.1 is discussed in terms of: (i) 'others' ascribing a racial identity to the biracial participants and (ii) official documents and census forms not providing a space to construct a biracial identity. All participants (n=10, 5 female, 5 male) shared experiences of their chosen identities not being represented in official documents and census forms. The majority (n=7, 4 female, 3 male) also mentioned that discrepancies exist in how they are identified by others, specifically when being categorised according to South African racial categories.

### 5.8.1 CATEGORY DD: 'OTHERS' ASCRIBING A RACIAL IDENTITY TO THE BIRACIAL PARTICIPANTS

Participants highlighted a discrepancy between how they self-identify and how others label or categorise them according to South Africa's racial categories. This led to the participants asserting their preferred racial identities and having to justify their chosen identities to others, as evident in the following verbatim quotations:

- Maria was forced to choose a black identity: *People always tell me 'no you are black' (N1-Maria: 626-627), and 'no you are not white' (N1-Maria: 629).* She would answer: *But I am biracial (N1-Maria: 661), yet felt irritated: It irritates me, because I know what I am (N1-Maria: 670).* Maria wanted to embrace both her cultures: *I should embrace both my cultures, my mom and my dad (N2-Maria: 236).*

- Mila disliked people who made assumptions about her racial identity: *I feel like I need to correct you because that is not who I am. I don't like to assign myself as someone that is black because that's not me* (N1-Mila: 161-165).
- Lucia liked emphasising the different ways people of colour identified: *I don't have a problem with black people, but I'm not black and I don't appreciate that people still associate all people of colour as black* (N1-Lucia: 674-675).
- In a village context, Tyler was ascribed a black identity: *In the villages they like 'no but you are more black'* (N2-Tyler: 382). Amongst his peers he was ascribed a white identity: *With my friends they would be like 'no but I see you as white'* (N2-Tyler: 434-435). Tyler responded: *'I'm mixed race!'* (N2-Tyler: 450).
- While Serena's peers regarded her as coloured: *My coloured friends would tell me 'Listen, you're coloured'* (N2-Serena: 274), she refused to change her identity for them: *So then I just left it because I will never change for other people* (N2-Serena: 335-336).
- Hugo experienced being pushed and pulled between a black and a white identity: *When I was younger, I was always getting pulled towards one sort of culture, or one race rather than the other* (N2-Hugo: 303-304). *You do get the feeling that there's a pressure to make a choice* (N2-Hugo: 306-307). However, he realised that he could not choose one racial identity over the other: *You know sometimes you sort of try to make a choice, but later on in your life you learn, you can't and you are both black and white* (N2-Hugo: 312-314).
- Vuyani emphasised his mixed identity as follows: *"Ja you black" and I think no, I'm mixed, I'm biracial* (N1-Vuyani: 804-805). He allegedly did not pay too much attention to it: *Yes, that's happened a lot and I haven't really paid too much attention to it* (N1-Vuyani: 807).

#### **5.8.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category DD: 'Others' ascribing a racial identity to the biracial participants**

Racial categorisation in South Africa is still one of the salient identity constructs used to assign people into group membership (Diako, 2012; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 2000). In support of the findings of others studies (Butler-Sweet, 2011; Campbell & Troyer, 2007), the biracial participants in this study expressed the view that race was central to an outsider's assessment of them. According to the participants, this process often involved racial misclassification and assumptions by outsiders that the biracial individuals would regularly have to correct. This

phenomenon, referred to as *ascribed racial group membership*, occurs when an individual is placed into a particular racial group by other people and social institutions on the basis of factors such as physical appearance, racial ancestry and social construction of race at any given point in society. This ascribed racial group may or may not be consistent with the racial group with which the individual actually identifies (Wijeyesinghe, 2001).

As was reported on in other global studies (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003; Salahuddin, 2008), the participants in this study experienced *social invalidation*. Social invalidation refers to the regular invalidation of racial identity that many biracial individuals encounter. Social invalidation can take on many forms, as shown in the current study as well as global literature. Firstly, participants experienced others challenging their racial self-identification (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). This study confirms that the biracial individuals *felt pressure from others to choose a single racial group* (participants were usually identified as black as opposed to mixed race) when constructing a racial identity, even though they identified with two or more racial groups (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Buckley & Carter, 2004; Herman, 2004; Khanna, 2004; Miville et al., 2005; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003; Salahuddin, 2008). Secondly, like biracial individual involved in other studies (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Song & Aspinall, 2012), the participants in this study felt that their biracial identities were not being validated by others owing to *a lack of recognition of the existence of biracial people* in the South African society.

According to existing literature (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), the issue of validation is very important. Without validation of one's own racial identity by others, one cannot easily assert and 'own' that identity. Hence, if biracial people are given racial labels that do not match their own sense of self, this can take an emotional and psychological toll. Identity denial by others can be not only distressing, but can involve persistent efforts to assert a desired (and validated) identity in the wider society (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Participants in this study refused to be deconstructed by others, constructed their own ideas about their identities and freely voiced their identities (Rollins, 2009; Root, 1992; 1996; Williams, 1992). As also found in other studies (Carrim, 2000; Khanna 2004), the young adults in this study named their own identities, which empowered them to define themselves and to centre relevant issues that may have been marginalised previously. The biracial participants in this and other studies chose to voice their own identities as opposed to allowing 'others' to do so on their behalf.

## 5.8.2 CATEGORY EE: OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND CENSUS NOT CREATING A SPACE TO CONSTRUCT A BIRACIAL IDENTITY

Participants described the difficulty they faced when having to construct a biracial identity in official South African documents. They felt that they were not represented in official documents and usually had to tick a box on official forms that did not match their self-identification. The following subcategories apply: (a) ticking 'other' on official forms; (b) ticking 'coloured' on official forms; and (c) ticking 'black' on official forms.

### a) Subcategory EE1: Ticking 'other' on official forms

As a result of the limited options for self-identification, participants (n=4, 3 female, 1 male) would choose 'other' on official documents so as not to deny any part of their biracial heritage. Participants shared their experiences and views:

- Serena wished to have the following choices on forms: *If they could put it in documents, 'biracial' or 'mixed' but for now, I'll just tick 'other' (N2-Serena: 158-159). If she had a choice she would choose African: I would tick 'African' (N2-Serena: 149).*
- Maria said that she ticked the 'other' option: *There is black, white, Indian and coloured. I just tick 'other' (N1-Maria: 605).*
- Mila recalled the difficulty she faced when having to tick a box: *When I fill out legal documents I tick the 'black' box or the 'other' box. I was confused and talking about it with others made me feel uncomfortable because I never wanted people to judge me for not knowing who I was (WI-Mila: 87-89).*
- Tyler felt that the term 'other' was quite meaningless: *It is confusing because there is always like 'other' and it's like okay I am 'other'. I don't know what 'other' is (N1-Tyler: 639-640). He indicated his preference: I wouldn't mind 'mixture' I think it is better than 'other' (N1-Tyler: 649).*

### b) Subcategory EE2: Ticking coloured on official forms

Lucia and Adrianna (n=2, 2 female) chose a coloured identity on official forms. They reported:

- *I'm always forced to sign coloured, they don't have any other options (N1-Lucia: 634).*
- *I think I just choose coloured because in my ID it shows who I am (N2-Adrianna: 300).*

### c) Subcategory EE3: Ticking 'black' on official forms

Mpho and Christopher (n=3, 1 female, 2 male) used the South African racial classification to their advantage. They chose to tick 'black' on official forms to qualify for the benefits associated with Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programmes in South Africa:

- Mpho stated: *Because of that BEE status now, I want that BEE, so I was thinking I am going to start ticking 'black' (N2-Mpho: 399). If he had the option, Mpho would choose: Black or biracial (N1-Mpho: 490).*
- Christopher chose the 'black' option: *So it depends on the BEE points, if I can see I'll be advantaged (giggles) I'll say black (N1-Christopher: 387-388). He identified differently on a census form: On a census I might say 'other' (N1-Christopher: 406), or I will say mixed race (N1-Christopher: 408).*
- If she had the choice, Maria would choose 'black': *I will write black (N1-Maria: 612), because I feel more black than white (N1-Maria: 616).*

Hugo and Vuyani (n=2, 2 male) both indicated that they self-identify with a monoracial designation. More specifically, they both chose a black identity when filling out official forms as Hugo's identification document indicates that he is black and Vuyani identifies more with his black African culture. This decision is reflected in the way they completed official forms:

- Hugo's identification document (ID) reflected a black identity: *I'll generally put black, that's what my ID says as well, that I'm black (N1-Hugo: 399-400). He said that he sometimes ticked black and white: Sometimes I will tick both, black and white (N1-Hugo: 515). What he wished he could tick instead: Well, not to sound like an idealist, but ideally I wouldn't tick anything at all (N1-Hugo: 1374-1375). Ideally I'd want that not to be an issue at all. I think the whole thing of fitting people into blocks, into specific categories doesn't make sense (N1-Hugo: 1377-1379).*
- Vuyani saved himself a lot of explaining by ticking 'black': *I tick the black box, not because I see myself as a colour but because it saves a lot of explaining (W1-Vuyani: 105-106). He recounted how he experienced identity confusion at school and referred to his strong affiliation with black African cultures: I remember when I was still in primary school I'd be like, okay I'm not black, I'm not really white but what am I? I just started ticking off black because it's easier to explain and I grew up in a black culture, so I identify a lot with black cultures (N1-Vuyani: 196-198).*

### **5.8.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category EE: Official documents and census not creating a space to construct a biracial identity**

Today's society expects individuals to classify themselves according to their racial heritage. Most official forms, including driver's license applications, voter registration cards and school registrations require individuals to classify themselves according to race. Thus selecting an appropriate label on a form or in society as a whole seems to be a challenge for biracial individuals (McClurg, 2004; Milan & Keiley, 2000). Filling in official forms was a dilemma for most of the participants as the South African racial classification system (i.e. black, white, Indian, coloured and sometimes 'other') forces people to choose one racial category when asked to self-identify.

Echoing the findings of Jackson's (2009) study, school was identified as the setting where biracial individuals usually first experienced what they described as the humiliating process of choosing a race on an institutional form. As a result of the limited racial identification options, compared to those mentioned in other studies (Buckley & Cater, 2004; Jackson, 2009; Khanna & Johnson, 2010), participants chose 'other' when they completed official forms. Participants may have chosen 'other' on official documents so as not to deny any part of their biracial heritage (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Participants also chose to identify with monoracial identities, such as black and coloured so as fit into society. However, if they were given a chance to add their own self-identification on official forms, participants said that they would choose either a biracial identity or a monoracial designation (i.e. black). The choice of an African or black identity could be attributed to the fact that most of the participants felt welcomed and accepted in their black communities (black families and peers) and also knew that their physical appearances influenced how others construct identities for them.

Comparing my findings to those of other studies (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Wilson, 2001), I argue that selecting just one identity will force biracial individuals to deny other parts of themselves and will not accurately reflect the nation's true racial make-up. As also reported on by Khanna and Johnson's (2010) and Chapman-Huls' (2009) study, participants manipulated their identities according to the privilege and power associated with specific identities (Gaventa, 2006). Participants chose a monoracial identity for official purposes as they realised that it was advantageous to sometimes identify as black. In the apartheid past, South African whites enjoyed many privileges while blacks were subjected to oppression and discrimination. In a democratic South Africa, the biracial participants in this study could



manipulate their biracial heritage according to the privileges they would gain in society, therefore they could privately construct a biracial identity, but publically they could identify as black so as to be able to access the privileges, power and resources available to blacks.

## **5.9 SUBTHEME 4.2: CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH GROWING UP AS A BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL**

Subtheme 4.2 is the result of a question I asked the participants during the spoken narratives and pertains to the main challenges they faced as biracial individuals. From an early age, they faced various hardships related to their biracial identities and their interracial families. Although they have seemingly dealt with numerous challenges, the participants did not want to be viewed as marginalized individuals, but as strong and resilient individuals who have grown up learning how to cope and deal with various trials and tribulations related to their colourful multiracial lives. These challenges are discussed in terms of the following categories: (i) challenge of feeling 'othered' and different because of their biracial heritage; (ii) challenge of constructing a biracial identity; and (iii) challenge of growing up in an interracial home.

### **5.9.1 CATEGORY FF: CHALLENGE OF FEELING 'OTHERED' AND DIFFERENT BECAUSE OF THEIR BIRACIAL HERITAGE**

In this category, half of the participants (n= 5, 3 female, 2 male) discussed feeling 'othered' as a result of being the only individuals with a biracial heritage in their social environments and consequently being considered different. Their experiences are captured in the following extracts:

- Serena recalled people not being open to an interracial family and not being able to understand her family heritage: *people not understanding or not grasping the concept that you have two different houses, two different races in your life or grasping the fact that you are a mixture between two different races (N1-Serena: 473-475).*
- Mila felt that she was not accepted due to her biracial heritage: *I feel the most challenging thing is being accepted as someone who is biracial in South Africa (N2-Mila: 367-368).* Although South Africa is diverse, she seemed not to have experienced a welcoming atmosphere: *My belief is that South Africa has diversity but only to a certain degree. We all understand black, white, coloured, Indian, and Chinese. But we don't know half Filipino-half Zimbabwean, or half Brazilian-half Kenyan. Anything that's out of the ordinary 'border' is too complex to understand or too complicated to respect (W1-Mila: 77-80).*

- Peers found Adrianna's family background different to deal with: *They were shocked that an Italian and a Nigerian got together. I'm just like its normal for me. It's not a big deal you know. But they like 'wow that is weird' (N1-Adrianna: 241-243).*
- Mpho and Tyler occasionally experienced the world as a lonely place because of being the only biracial individuals in their neighbourhoods: *There's not a lot of biracial people like me (N1-Mpho: 638).* Tyler explained: *So I think in primary school especially trying to figure out who you are and how you fit into the world and there was really no one like me (N2-Tyler: 530-531).*

As adolescents, many participants wanted to blend in with their peers and not stand out in the crowd. However, these biracial individuals who came from interracial families and had biracial heritages were considered as being different by their peers.

#### **5.9.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category FF: Challenge of feeling 'othered' and different because of their biracial heritage**

Similar to what was found in other studies (Benton, 2009; Hubbard, 2010; Jayne's, 2007), the young biracial adults who participated in this study felt 'othered' as a result of their biracial heritage. The marginalisation that participants experienced was in part as a result of a lack of representation and visibility of a biracial population in their communities and social networks.

Although South Africa is portrayed as a Rainbow Nation<sup>66</sup>, devoid of remnants of the past, the young biracial individuals felt that the current South African is by no means a multicultural utopia. They felt that South African society does not acknowledge them, leaving them feeling different, excluded and 'othered' in society.

#### **5.9.2 CATEGORY GG: CHALLENGE OF CONSTRUCTING A BIRACIAL IDENTITY**

Many participants (n=6, 3 female, 3 male) reflected on their internal struggles they experienced as a result of having to construct an identity in a racially segregated world. This is evident in the following contributions:

- Christopher explained his experience of this challenge: *I think the biggest one was first coming to understand my identity and becoming proud just for who you are (N2-Christopher: 667-668).* He described the construction of his identity by using an

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<sup>66</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined the term Rainbow Nation to refer to the newly democratic South Africa in 1994.

- analogy of a food platter: *I came from different plates and many different restaurants that I had to organise myself (N2-Christopher: 681-682).*
- Mila recalled the challenge as a hurtful experience: *It was a really hurtful experience but in high school you don't really know how you identify. I didn't like or care about myself, I was very shy, I was embarrassed you know (N1-Mila: 70-72), and there were times when I wasn't sure what race I was. Was I black? Was I coloured? Was I Afro-Asian? (W1-Mila: 86-87).*
  - Maria felt ashamed: *I used to be ashamed of it (N1-Maria: 150), because I didn't know whether I was black or white (N2-Maria: 370).*
  - Compared to his peers, Hugo recalled taking long to construct his identity: *Finding out who I was took a lot longer for me than it did for anyone else. I think people racially speaking know who they are at a very young age. It took me until I was about eighteen before I fully decided who I was (N1-Hugo: 1173-1175).*
  - Vuyani also struggled with his racial identity: *I'd have to say identifying what race you actually are (N2-Vuyani: 532). There's going to come a time when you decide whether you see yourself as black, or whether you see yourself as white, or whether you see yourself as biracial (N2-Vuyani: 535-537), and then there'll come a time when you have to make that decision (N2-Vuyani: 539-540).*
  - Lucia referred to her experience as an identity crisis: *I think it's just an identity crisis (N2-Lucia: 695), That's the biggest thing is finding yourself amongst all the societal descriptions that have been given to you, that have been ascribed to you (N2-Lucia: 697-699), and it's just accepting who you are, without having everyone else kind of tell you what is okay (N2-Lucia: 718-719).*

In reflecting on the difficulty participants experienced in constructing a biracial identity, I noted:

*Constructing a biracial identity seems to have been a challenge for most participants and it seems to be a task that is ongoing. The participants seemed to change how they identify in both narrative interviews and even the written interviews. Their identities are not fixed and are constantly changing and fluid. I don't see this as confusion in not knowing how to identify but instead see it as participants' continuously constructing their biracial identities within different contexts and relationships (FN: 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2013).*

### 5.9.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category GG: Challenge of constructing a biracial identity

Expressing a mixed-race identity during adolescence does not signal the completion of an identity process (Doyle & Kao, 2007b). Findings of other global studies (Butler-Sweet, 2011; Collins, 2000; Gaskins, 2003; Gillem *et al.*, 2001; Patel, 2012) were echoed by the participants in this study when they talked about the internal struggles, identity confusion and conflict that they experienced during the construction of their identity.

However, I agree with Chan (2013), that individuals who live in a society that has undergone colonisation and political transition, in the case of South Africa, are expected to experience a certain level of identity crisis and confusion. Furthermore, I concur with Francis (2008) that issues of identity crisis are not uncommon for individuals of their age, as literature (Arnett, 2010; Berman, Erikson, 1959; Kennerley & Kennerley, 2008; Fadjukof, 2007; Kroger, 2007) has shown that identity construction is not resolved once and for all, but continues to be re-explored and re-defined by individuals over their lifetime, and not just in relation to race.

### 5.9.3 CATEGORY HH: CHALLENGE OF GROWING UP IN AN INTERRACIAL HOME

Participants identified some challenges related to them growing up within interracial homes and being marginalised due to them being part of interracial families. The following subcategories support this category: (a) the realisation of a different skin complexion to parents, (b) the challenge of different parenting styles, (c) the challenge of different religious views, (d) the challenge of discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family, (e) the challenge of prejudice and discrimination within the family and (f) the challenge of prejudice and stereotypes associated with parent's cultures and nationalities.

#### a) Subcategory HH1: The realisation of a different skin complexion to parents

Three participants (n=3, 2 female, 1 male) indicated that they felt different because their skin complexions differed from those of parents or other family members. These feelings are evident in the following examples:

- Maria felt uneasy to be seen with her black family as she did not look like any of them: *Everyone in my family is African, they are black, so I honestly dreaded going anywhere with all of them because I felt like I just stood out and I really hated that (N1-Maria: 407-409).*

- Christopher stated that he was shocked when he realised as a young boy that his skin complexion differed from the complexions of both his white and black families: *When I was with some of my mom's friends, I would say hey, 'I'm the only one in the room with dark skin' (N1-Christopher: 496-498), and I'm a little bit different. When I was with my father's family, I'd say hey, 'I'm the only one that's a little bit light'. I mean it was quite a shock to me (N1-Christopher: 500-502).*
- Lucia reflected on being raised by her white mother: *So I knew that it was a bit different, my grandma was white, my mom was white. I felt weird because I was being raised by white people, we weren't white (N1-Lucia: 735-737).* Because of Lucia's darker skin, people often mistook her white friend as her mother's daughter: *I think the main challenge is when you stand with your grandmother, and when you stand with your mother, and you've got a white friend and then people say 'Is that your daughter?' and they look at my white friend, and it's not me. That hurt me a lot when I was small (N2-Lucia: 687-690).* At school, teachers apparently thought Lucia was adopted because of the different phenotypes in her interracial family: *And when your Mom comes to visit for teacher's parent evening and the reaction of the teachers (N2-Lucia: 726-727), and the reaction in front of everybody, just whispering to each other and saying things, 'Oh, are you adopted?' (N2-Lucia: 729-730).*

#### **b) Subcategory HH2: The challenge of different parenting styles**

Mpho and Adrianna (n=2, 1 female, 1 male) experienced different parenting styles within their homes. Their parents' different views on how discipline was to be applied in the home caused conflict in the family. This is evident in the following narrative excerpts:

- Mpho mentioned family disagreements as a result of the different parenting styles: *I got academic suspension. So my dad said okay, 'Let's sit down... let's talk about this' (N1-Mpho: 586-587), whereas my mother would go straight to the belt and hit me (N1-Mpho: 591-592), causing conflict in the home: My mom, dad and I would fight because we have different opinions and views over things and we couldn't come to an agreement (N1-Mpho: 571-572).*
- Adrianna's father understood her social nature and was less strict than her mother: *In my younger years from age fifteen or sixteen she wasn't used to me going out so much (N1-Adrianna: 130). My dad was very social when he was younger so he understood (N1-Adrianna: 137).*

### c) Subcategory HH3: The challenge of different religious views

Only Adrianna (n=1, 1 female) experienced conflict within the home as a result of her parents' different religious views. Her mother practised the Christian religion and her father was a Catholic. She explained: *Because my father is a Catholic and my mother a Pentecostal, the religion was the biggest challenge when my parents were together because they would argue a lot about that (N1-Adrianna: 554-556).*

### d) Subcategory HH4: The challenge of discrimination and social stigma related to an interracial family

Many participants (n=7, 3 female, 4 male) explained how they came to realise that interracial families were not the norm in their societies as they grew up. They reflected on the discrimination and social stigma that their families experienced:

- Mila disliked the stares: *Getting stared at a lot was a problem for me. You know I am always getting stared at, always and it is annoying (N1-Mila: 362-363), and when my mom and I would go shopping, people would turn heads. I don't know why but it was really fascinating for them to see two different race groups who look alike (N1-Mila: 336-338).*
- Mpho felt uncomfortable: *The main challenges would be how people look at you and how they judge you from a distance. I was walking in the mall with my mother and father by my side, we would get stared at a lot by nearly everyone we were passing by and it would make me feel very uncomfortable and that is why I never liked to be in public with both my parents, either my mom or my dad (N2-Mpho: 497-500). He would distance himself from his family in public: I'd walk a bit in front, or at the back, so that no one would really see (N1-Mpho: 321-322), and it would make me feel uneasy, walking in the mall and having people look at you (N1-Mpho: 325-326).*
- Vuyani found the stares frustrating: *Growing up in a family with a black father and a white mother can be tough at times, frustrating at times, and god-sent at times (W1-Vuyani: 38-39). The reason why I found it tough is because whenever we walked through a mall or restaurants people would stare at us (W1-Vuyani: 40-41).*
- Serena reported: *While growing up, people would always look at my family strangely when we would go out for dinner or just to the mall (W1-Serena: 14-15). Her family was exposed to racist comments: My family has received a lot of negative feedback from people whether it's racist comments or unnecessary questions (W1-Serena: 18-19). People would think that her father was her boyfriend: People would assume I went*

*out with my father and that he is my boyfriend (W1-Serena: 19-20). Serena also experienced discrimination from her peers at school because of her parents' interracial relationship: Kids would make fun of me because I had two different colour parents. I didn't give much attention to it, because I don't see anything wrong with it (W1-Serena: 22-24).*

- Like Mpho, Adrianna felt uncomfortable when people stared at her family: *Obviously a lot of people would stare and so it was very like 'wow biracial kids, a mixed couple' I felt uncomfortable (N1-Adrianna: 527-528).*

Tyler and Hugo talked about incidents where their black fathers were not recognised as their fathers, but were mistaken for the driver or the gardener (in Hugo's case), and an intruder (in Tyler's case). They described their experiences:

- Hugo gave an example where his father was mistaken for the driver during a family vacation in the Kruger National Park: *My father was driving the car and we had to pay to get in (N2-Hugo: 280), and the person said, 'No the driver doesn't have to pay' (N2-Hugo: 282). Another example relates to his father experiencing discrimination within a predominantly Afrikaans neighbourhood: The neighbourhood we moved into was completely white. My mother was extremely well received there being white, blonde and Dutch. My father was usually regarded at a glance as simply being a gardener. However when my mother introduced him as her husband reactions ranged from astonishment to actual violence. I recall one incident when noises on our roof prompted us to call the police. Upon their arrival they immediately arrested my father, only begrudgingly releasing him after my mother explained several times that he was her husband (W1-Hugo:28-33).*
- Tyler also recalled an incident when a visiting friend mistook his father for a trespasser: *Once one of my friends was over and we were inside watching a movie and my dad walked past the window and he was like 'Tyler, there's a black man in your yard.' I was like you know that's my dad (N2-Tyler: 350-353).*

**e) Subcategory HH5: The challenge of prejudice and discrimination within the family**

Two participants, namely Maria and Lucia (n=2, 2 female), shared narratives indicating discrimination within their own homes, more specifically prejudice from their siblings belonging to other racial groups. Their explanations are captured below:

- Lucia's step-siblings allegedly made fun of her physical appearance and especially her hair texture: *My sisters were a bit weird towards me when I was younger, they called me bushman (N1-Lucia: 774-775), and potato nose (N1-Lucia: 777). It made me feel like I was more black because they would make fun of my hair because my hair is a lot wilder than theirs because their dad is Indian-Swazi and their hair was soft and long and curly. My hair was all crus and afro and hard to brush (N1-Lucia: 795-797).* Lucia's mother did not know how to manage her afro-textured hair: *My mom left me with my hair and my sisters were just really good with their hair and they just couldn't understand it (N1-Lucia: 818-820), and my mom doesn't know anything (N1-Lucia: 835).*
- Maria, whose sister apparently felt that Maria got more attention in the family because of her light skin, elaborated: *My sister and I had problems because she told me she always thought I was prettier than her and she wondered why my hair was different (N2-Maria: 44-46).* Maria talked about colourism and how it affected her relationship with her sister: *I genuinely think it's just the complexion because most black people think, when you light you're prettier (N2-Maria: 52-53), and we didn't get along at all and she always thought I was my mom's favourite (N2-Maria: 57-58).*

**f) Subcategory HH6: The challenge of prejudice and stereotypes associated with parents' cultures and nationalities**

Several participants (n=4, 3 female, 1 male) recalled being exposed to stereotypical comments made by peers about their parents' cultures and nationalities. This resulted in the participants having to explain their parents' cultures and feeling hurt as a result of the ignorant comments made by their peers. The verbatim statements below provide supportive evidence:

- Mila had to deal with the stereotype that all Asians are Chinese and eat 'weird' foods: *People usually ask about the food we eat like sometimes they ask 'do we eat lizards or do I have to wear those Chinese dresses with the wooden heels?' (N2-Mila: 490-492), I guess they just assume that every Asian person is Chinese (N2-Mila: 498-499), I would just laugh and answer the question properly but inside I will be like that was not necessary (N2-Mila: 495-496), and they would even pretend to speak in Mandarin, very annoying and it hurt sometimes (N1-Mila: 52-53).*
- Adrianna had to deal with stereotypes associated with Nigerian people: *A lot of people think that Nigerians are very dramatic and very loud and very crazy. They think that they are drug dealers (N2-Adrianna: 252-253), and my close friends they ask me "is your mom this way ...like we see in the movies?", and I like having them know that*



*sometimes she can be dramatic but otherwise she's very calm, she's not like what you see on the movies. The movies are obviously exaggerated (N2-Adrianna: 380-383).*

- Since wealth is typically associated with white people, Mpho shared the stereotypes his black mother had to face: *People would be like 'You have this nice car, this nice house because of this white man' (N1-Mpho: 451-452), and not knowing that she's earned the stuff herself (N1-Mpho: 454).*
- As Lucia's father had passed away when she was younger, some people just assumed that he had left them and spread the stereotyped idea that black fathers are not involved in their children's lives: *If I was just walking with my mom, 'Oh ja so your dad's not around' (N1-Lucia: 507).*

### **5.9.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category HH: Challenge of growing up in an interracial home**

According to Sullivan (2005), interracial relationships challenge people's perceptions of family as such relationships violate racial norms and deviates from the norm in society. Participants found that interracial families were being stigmatised and stereotyped (Hubbard, 2010). The participants' self-concepts were challenged by the fact that they realised that others see them and their families as unusual.

Participants' interracial families were exposed to unkind stares and negative comments made by others in public, and also by outright racism. This reflects the findings of several global studies (Buckley & Carter, 2004; Butler-Sweet, 2011; Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Milan & Keiley, 2000; Wang, Kao & Joyner, 2006). The interracial families thus experienced societal disapproval of their interracial union and of the biracial children born of the union. Interracial families usually have to learn how to manage public harassment, such as hostile and discriminatory actions from strangers in the public. Participants in this study ignored such situations or distanced themselves from their interracial families so as not to be associated with them (Wang, Kao & Joyner, 2006).

Like participants in the studies conducted by Patel (2012) and James and Tucker (2003), participants in this study expressed how they felt different because they did not look like either one of their parents. Furthermore, since each of their parents adopted parenting strategies that reflected their different backgrounds and approached the teaching of values and principles from

very different perspectives, participants experienced conflict within the interracial home (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

As a result of the internalisation of the Eurocentric standards of beauty according to which biracial physical characteristics are viewed as more desirable than those of darker-skinned women, as also discussed by other researchers (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008), Maria experienced a difficult relationship with her black sister who was allegedly envious of her biracial physical features and light complexion (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). Lucia felt that her own biracial siblings of black and Indian heritage discriminated against her because she did not have straight hair like theirs, again emphasising that Eurocentric views of beauty tend to 'other' women of colour (Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002).

**Think box 5.3: Facing discrimination in my life**

*One of my pet hates was the way people would stare at us when we would go to public places as an interracial family. Growing up, I did not appreciate the stares, it was like the circus had come to town and the whole village came to the main road to look at the exotic animals. Certain individuals would publically shake their heads in disgust towards our interracial family or make rude comments towards us. My mother usually stared back at people until they themselves got unsettled and walked away or she usually laughed at this behavior and she would tell us to ignore them and that they are just not used to seeing people of different racial groups in social settings together in public.*

*Till this day when we go out as a family, people wonder what my mom is doing with these four people of colour. When I was younger I used to get irritated and embarrassed by the stares but now I am proud of who I am and proud to walk with my mom and family by my side.*

## **5.10 SUBTHEME 4.3: EXPERIENCES OF RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND MARGINALISATION AS A BIRACIAL INDIVIDUAL**

Another challenge that Subtheme 4.3 focuses on relates to the participants' experiences of racism, discrimination and marginalisation within intimate and peer relations in the school context. Although the participants had grown up in families where different races were celebrated, they experienced the world as people of colour, regardless of their biracial heritage. Participants shared examples of situations in which they experienced racism and discrimination,

and were treated differently because of the colour of their skin. They experienced not being treated as individuals and humans due to their skin colour as hurtful, and also felt that this affected many aspects of their life. I discuss this subtheme in terms of the following categories: (i) participants experiencing racism and discrimination as people of colour; (ii) participants experiencing racism and discrimination in their own intimate interracial relationships; and (iii) participants experiencing racism and discrimination within the school context.

### **5.10.1 CATEGORY II: PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION AS PEOPLE OF COLOUR**

Within this category, three biracial participants (n=3, 3 male) discussed being categorised as people of colour in society, and subsequently experiencing racism, prejudice and discrimination as a result of the stereotypes and perceptions associated with a black racial group (and people of colour). This is evident in the following verbatim extracts:

- Christopher talked about the prejudice he experienced as a person of colour: *Society, especially South African society, given its legacy of racial oppression struggles to deal with racial issues. One of the challenges of being an interracial child is overcoming stereotypes, dealing with categorisation and prejudice (W1-Christopher: 15-17).*
- Vuyani agreed that people of colour are subjected to racism: *Being biracial or being coloured in South Africa, you are always considered black. So, if you are considered black then there is a lot of racism towards that (N1-Vuyani: 841-845).*
- Hugo underwent a difficult transition when he came from the Netherlands to South Africa, where issues of race were encountered daily: *That was also a bit of an issue adapting to South Africa and the tension that was there (N2-Hugo: 526-527). You know sort of being from a place where you are very naïve (N2-Hugo: 529), about race, about cultural issues to a place where it's suddenly big (N2-Hugo: 531), and it's in your face, it's unavoidable (N2-Hugo: 533).*

#### **5.10.1.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category II: Participants experiencing racism and discrimination as people of colour**

Like participants in other studies (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Song & Aspinall, 2012), participants in this study experienced the world as black people. Subsequently, the negative social value attached to being black in society was experienced in the form of societal racism (such as name calling and racist remarks) (Francis, 2008; McClurg, 2008).

### 5.10.2 CATEGORY JJ: PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN THEIR OWN INTIMATE INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Participants provided examples of how they experienced opposition to their interracial relationships from their own friends who wanted them to date only certain races (specifically black), as well as opposition from their partners' friends and parents. Although participants did have problems with colour, the people around them allegedly did and then judged the biracial participants for choosing and loving a person from a different racial group. In this section, the following subcategories emerged: (a) participants facing opposition to their own interracial relationship from their partners' friends and parents and (b) expectations to date within a specific racial group.

#### a) Subcategory JJ1: Participants facing opposition to their own interracial relationship from their partners' friends and parents

Several participants (n=6, 3 female, 3 male) indicated that they experienced negative and strong opposition to their own interracial relationships from their partners' family and friends. The following extracts attest to this:

- In her previous relationships with white men, Serena mentioned the following: *Most of the times, he would end the relationship, because his parents didn't approve and most of the time I would, because I don't want that kind of conflict in someone else's family (N2-Serena: 391-393)*. Serena explained how her partner's mother ordered her to end the relationship because she was not white: *I was head over heels in love, 12 months into the relationship his mother had not known he was dating someone from another race (He was white). She came to my house and ordered me to end the relationship, she didn't like the fact that I was from a different race (W1-Serena: 27-30)*. Serena was therefore discriminated against by her partner's family when they found out that she was of mixed race. Her partner was ordered to end the relationship, but refused; *She had a problem with it at first and then she told him 'he mustn't date me anymore' and then he told her 'that is not happening' and he got very angry and he is like 'I will move out of the house if you don't let me date her'. So then she told him alright let me meet her, then when I met her everything got resolved and she told me she is sorry (N1-Serena: 438-441)*. Her partner's white mother explained the root of the racism to Serena: *She explained to me that because they are from the old apartheid generation it was kind of conflicting (N1-Serena: 442-443)*. Serena has also faced discrimination

from a black family when dating a black male: *His parents didn't really like the fact that he was dating someone who wasn't black (N2-Serena: 371-372).*

- In her narrative, Adrianna reported on her dating a white boy who ended their relationship because his friends were against the interracial relationship: *The relationship (if I can call it that) eventually faded because I wasn't a white girl and he was a blonde, masculine, English boy with a lot of Afrikaner friends who didn't appreciate the fact that I was not a blonde hair and blue-eyed girl with long legs (W1-Adrianna: 32-34), and his friends were like "no, you can't get involved with a girl if she's not white". He didn't understand it either but he didn't want to be judged by his friends. He didn't want his friends to isolate him so he just cut it off (N1-Adrianna: 447-449).*
- Lucia experienced similar challenges when dating a white guy: *He was such a cool person and I liked him so much but you know after eight months, he was like 'you know I really like you but I'm sorry, it will never work out cos of my colour' and that happened to me numerous times (N1-Lucia: 586-588).* Lucia felt inferior when white men rejected her because of the colour of her skin and wanted to date her in secret: *I just had a bitter feeling towards men (N1-Lucia: 593), and I can't date you because you're coloured but we can date in secret (N2-Lucia: 513).* She valued herself too much to be involved in a secret relationship: *I was never interested in that. I valued myself more than that (N2-Lucia: 515), But it did make me feel inferior (N2-Lucia: 517), and I felt as though I wasn't good enough, constantly feeling like what can I do to make myself better? (N2-Lucia: 521-522).* In her current relationship with a white man, Lucia stated that she initially experienced discrimination from his friends, but that that ended when her partner's friends accepted her: *It was in the beginning stages but after a while his friends like respect him a lot and his close friends never had a problem with me and they like live with me now (N1-Lucia: 697-699).* However, her boyfriend's grandmother still seemed to have a problem with the relationship: *The only person who has ever had a problem with us is his great grandmother (N1-Lucia: 685-686), and she just told him that if he got with me his winkie would fall off because it's like mixing a cat and a dog (N1-Lucia: 689-690).*
- Vuyani ended his interracial relationship as his girlfriend's parents did not approve of it: *One small incident with a white girl, she was Afrikaans (N2-Vuyani: 395), and they didn't agree with it at all, so they were very against it (N2-Vuyani: 404).*
- Hugo ended his relationship as his girlfriend's father did not approve of it: *I was with an Afrikaans girl for a while (N2-Hugo: 434). When he found out what my full name was*

*and that I was Xhosa, he was very upset (N2-Hugo: 442-443), and it ended rather soon thereafter (N2-Hugo: 451).*

- Tyler reported that he was physically attacked by his girlfriend's father and that the relationship ended soon afterwards: *I was dating a beautiful girl, who happened to be white, and I cared for her deeply. It was young innocent love. When I introduced myself to her father for the first time as her boyfriend, he threw me against a fence and attacked me. Luckily I was unharmed physically, but emotionally this was very hard for me. This was the first time that I was actually physically attacked because of the colour of my skin (W1-Tyler: 80-84).*

#### **b) Subcategory JJ2: Expectations to date within a specific racial group**

Two participants (n=2, 1 male, 1 female) narrated how they felt frustrated when they were expected to date people only of colour because of their biracial heritage. Participants specifically discussed the pressure exerted by peers, both black and white, to date a person of colour. The following examples apply:

- Vuyani reported: *"Why are you hooking with a white girl?" "You should stick to your own race" (N2-Vuyani: 423), and afterwards, I went back and I thought about it and it upset me (N2-Vuyani: 433).*
- Lucia was constantly pushed towards dating a black boy at school: *I was constantly steered towards the black or coloured guy in the group. This angered me, because why should they assume I would only have a chance with someone of colour? (W1-Lucia: 241-243). Who were they to decide who I was attracted to? (W1-Lucia: 246) and I can't look at anyone else because I'm not good enough for them. That's the way they made me feel, it was horrible (N1-Lucia: 446-447).*

#### **5.10.2.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category JJ: Participants experiencing racism and discrimination in their own intimate interracial relationships**

Interracial relationships are still uncommon in society (Suyemoto & Dimas, 2003). According to Sechrest-Ehrhardt (2012), dating during adolescence brings racial issues and racial identity to the forefront. Dating is not particularly a problem for the young biracial adult, but the choice of who a biracial individual chooses to date may be a problem for others and can prompt unwanted reactions from others, particularly the parents of dating partners (Kerwin & Ponerotto, 1995). Child (2002) reiterates that family and friends may create racial boundaries by controlling

who their members may and may not be involved with (Childs, 2002). Hence the participants' friends in this study controlled who they were allowed to date. In this study, peers preferred black partners for the participants. Female participants in this study understood the impact of their identity on the dating world at a young age, as they were rejected by white men due to their race and by black men as they were not viewed as people of colour (Henriksen & Trusty's, 2004; Patel, 2012; Roberts-Clarke, Roberts & Morokoff, 2004).

As was also found in other biracial studies (Basu, 2007; Jackson, 2009), participants had to deal with racism and discrimination in their own interracial relationships. Their encounters with discrimination often paralleled the experiences of discrimination their parents had to endure upon entering into an interracial partnership. Participants realised that opposition to relationships between blacks and whites is still based on the belief that these unions violate the greatest taboo, which is the mixing of races (Childs, 2002; Dalmage, 2000; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2001). Several participants reported being less committed to their interracial relationships owing to society's strong disapproval of interracial dating and to avoid eventual dissolution, and stated that even friends and family members who were against interracial relationships might urge them to end such relationships. Thus it may be assumed that individuals involved in interracial relationships may exhibit less structural commitment to their relationships as they perceive less social pressure to remain in them (Wang, Kao & Joyner, 2006). Participants may thus have felt stigmatised in interracial relationships and might have deliberately avoided such relationships to avoid the criticism they expected to get from people around them (Hubbard, 2010).

**Think box 5.4: Learning to love across racial lines**

*As early as primary school I would always get the following statement from white South African boys, "you are such a great person but you're black...I can't go out with you, but if you were white I would definitely go out with you". I think these boys meant it as a compliment, but I didn't see it that way. I have realised that my skin colour has and will continue to affect a lot of aspects in my life. It took me a long time to realise that if a man cannot date me because of my skin pigment, then he is not good enough for me as a partner and as a friend. Another argument that I heard time and again is the following statement: "it's not the colour... it's the culture... you blacks have a totally different culture from us whites, and it is like mixing vinegar with olive oil". But I felt that it was not about my culture and about my skin pigment, the cultural issue was just an excuse. I arrived in South Africa as a teenager and these were hurtful experiences as I grew up believing that you can date anyone but I quickly learnt that others did not grow up with the same values.*

### 5.10.3 Category KK: Participants experiencing racism and discrimination within the school context

Participants also discussed direct (e.g. racial insults) and indirect (e.g. being physically assaulted) racism and discrimination at school. These incidents apparently influenced their relationships with peers as the racist attitude of one group (e.g. the white group) steered participants towards having friends mainly from another group (e.g. blacks). The following subcategories apply: (a) experiences of indirect racism at school; (b) experiences of direct racism at school; (c) conversations on race and racism with parents; and (d) participants reflect on their experiences of racism and discrimination.

#### a) Subcategory KK1: Experiences of indirect racism at school

Most of the participants (n=8, 4 female, 4 male) experienced indirect racism and discrimination from their peers, and in Lucia's case from her teachers at school. The following narratives provide supportive evidence:

- Lucia described the challenge of being treated differently and her teacher having lower academic expectations of her because of her race. She expressed how she felt ignored and that her opinion and voice did not matter in the classroom because of her race: *In the classroom a lot of the times you'd feel your teacher's racist (N2-Lucia: 723-724), and how do you let them know you are also intelligent? How do you let them know that you also have an opinion and how do you let people know that you also matter? I felt at school that my opportunities were not as vast as they could be because of my race (N1-Lucia: 847-849).* Lucia gave examples of the prejudice she experienced: *I'm late for class and the white girl is also late for class but I get shouted at more (N2-Lucia: 799-800).*
- Serena was called a kaffir<sup>67</sup>: *There was one circumstance where I accidentally bumped this Afrikaans girl, it was by accident of course and then she called me a 'kaffir'. It was quite terrible (N1-Serena: 229-231).*
- Maria experienced name-calling and taunting during break: *I actually remember being bullied from pre-school and all throughout high school. I never understood why I was treated this way because I was always so friendly to all my peers, whether they were black, white or Asian. Yet it was always the black girls that would pick on me (W1-Maria: 17-20), and in Grade 4 they called me out during break time, they put me in a*

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<sup>67</sup> Kaffir is an extremely racially offensive word which was used during apartheid to refer to South African people of colour (i.e. black people).



*circle and they just said the meanest things (N2-Maria: 298-299). She felt bullied because she was different: Because I was different and I was the only one in school that was biracial (N1-Maria: 206-207).*

- Hugo was discriminated against because of his exceptional academic performance. After Hugo had achieved the highest marks in class, his white peers began to call him by his English name instead of using his African name: *The first term when I scored top of the class, then suddenly he was not okay and that's when the small racist things started, he refused to call me by my name anymore (N1-Hugo: 605-607).*
- Vuyani shared his experience of racism and being called a kaffir outside of the school context: *So I went to Loftus to watch a match. On our way out this old Afrikaans guy with the horns, and he is like "Jy f\*k off hierso, jou kaffer, dis nie fokken soccer match"<sup>68</sup> (N1-Vuyani: 292-294). Vuyani also shared his hurt in finding out that his own friends held racist views. An extract taken from his written narrative indicates this: *My best friend from high school always used to host braais and I would always go, but found myself being the only 'black' guy there, I didn't mind it or notice it, until one day after two years out of school I invited this guy to my place for a braai but also invited a lot of black guys, on the phone he asked me if any white guys were there, when he found out that he would be the only one he said he doesn't want to go if he was going to be the only white guy there. That really hit me hard that I had never noticed that he was racist or didn't feel comfortable being around black people, he wasn't even Afrikaans. My school years and experiences with friends have made me aware that racism is still prevalent in most people's subconscious (W1-Vuyani: 108-115). It upset him when his white peers called other black people kaffirs: *After practice one day a mate (Afrikaans guy) was driving me to campus, and called a black guy 'kaffir in front of me (W1-Vuyani: 65-67). They don't consider financially privileged or westernised black people as 'kaffirs' and that really upset me. My white friends would always say; "but you're different, you're not a black" (W1-Vuyani: 92-94), and I'm still friends with them now but I think they are more conscious of what they say now and what they do around me (N1-Vuyani: 346-347).***
- Mpho stated that he was teased because of his biracial heritage and was called a kaffir a few times at school: *Basic teasing like "your dad's white and your mom's black", something silly like that. It's not really offensive but it offended me at the time. I was called a Kaffir a few times (N2-Mpho: 216-218), and a lot of Afrikaans kids they learn it from home (N2-Mpho: 222).*

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<sup>68</sup> You f \*\* k off , you kaffir, this is not a f\*\*king soccer match (Translation from Afrikaans)

- Tyler spoke about an event when he felt that his black peers were being discriminated against because of their accents. He refused to return to class and staged a 'sit out' for his black friends whom he felt that they had been discriminated against: *I got a gold certificate and I was very proud and couldn't wait to get home to tell my mom. As the poetry contest progressed I realised that all my friends with British accents were getting gold's and double gold's, while my friends with black South African accents were getting bronzes. This upset me immensely, so I staged a sit out. Even at a young age, although I identified with my white American side more, I still had a connection with my South African side and stood up for my black friends (W1-Tyler: 32-37).*
- Adrianna also discussed feeling prejudiced from her white peers in school: *I didn't understand why white people looked down on black people. Even in the school grounds white people didn't like associating themselves with black people (N2-Adrianna: 338-339).*

#### **b) Subcategory KK2: Experiences of direct racism at school**

One participant (n=1, 1 female) talked about how she had been physically attacked because of her biracial heritage. Maria said that she had been emotionally and physically abused at school:

- *She was just always rude to me and mean, and she'd bully me but emotionally. We met up break time and I threw the first punch because they told me if you throw the first punch you win the fight. People were sitting there with cameras on and she was like a rough coloured girl (N2-Maria: 319-321), and I wanted to run away, and I even told my cousin to go get the teacher. Like go get the teacher as soon as this starts to get heated because I don't want to die. I was so scared! (N2-Maria: 327-329).*

#### **c) Subcategory KK3: Conversations on race and racism with parents**

Four participants (n=4, 2 female, 2 male) explained how their parents offered support when they faced racism and discrimination in the outside world. The following statements reflect their perception:

- Mila's mother supported her during difficult times: *If I have a problem with anything, with my race or fitting in, she was always there and she did help a lot (N1-Mila: 187-188). She was telling me about how the world will not always be nice to you, you have to be strong enough to take it because it will happen (N1-Mila: 208-209), and we are all the same, though we look different, we all have feelings, you have to be careful what you say to other people and always be proud of who you are (N1-Mila: 212-214).*

- Serena's mother constantly asked how she was doing at school: *Like my mom always asked me if I have any problems, especially in primary school because I had a lot of kids bullying me because they didn't understand how I had two different colour parents and from two different races (N1-Serena: 148-150).*
- Mpho's parents spoke to him about racial issues: *When I was in Grade 9/10 we'd speak a lot about race like how it is and my parents used to ask me what do the kids at school say about you and what race do they refer to you as (N2-Mpho: 262-264).*
- Hugo's parents tried to teach him that people from different backgrounds may have different perceptions about race: *They taught us the history and they taught us that you know these children are like this because their parents have taught them to be like this (N2-Hugo: 227-228).*

**d) Subcategory KK4: Participants reflect on their experiences of racism and discrimination**

Several participants (n=5, 3 female, 2 male) described how they felt about their encounters with racism and discrimination. They seemed to accept racism as part of their everyday lives, making a conscious decision to not let racist encounters affect their self-concept and their relationships with others. They provided the following views:

- Serena saw it as a potential growing experience: *Negative things such as racism, you should just learn and grow from it (W1-Serena: 32-33).*
- Tyler indicated that he is not quick to judge others for their racist beliefs: *With my friends it is just something that has been passed down to them by their parents. In a situation like that I don't react like 'oh my gosh you are racist' I will just say I don't exactly agree with you and I will give my reasons (N1-Tyler: 558-560).*
- Christopher seemed to focus on similarities rather than differences between people: *Growing up in an interracial family, I have learnt that race is not a defining characteristic of human nature. I believe in the principles of non-racialism having learnt from the history of racial oppression and how bad it is. I believe that we are all people before anything else (W1-Christopher: 7-9), and I think when you understand, and when you appreciate each other's differences, that you begin to understand how you're still both so much alike (N2-Christopher: 694-696).*
- According to Lucia, there are still racial divides and the so-called Rainbow Nation does not exist: *I don't believe race should exist in the society we live in. It only stands to separate us and create divides of class, culture and religion. We shouldn't base our opinion on humans on the pigment of their skin (W1-Lucia: 299-301), and*

*unfortunately we say we are the rainbow nation, and we can window dress as much as we like but the fact of the matter is that people still have racial boundaries (N1-Lucia:886-887).*

- Adrianna advocated for more interracial families and for people to love across racial lines: *I do wish society didn't look down upon biracial kids because then there would be more biracial kids. So I just wish that people could see that it's not a train smash to be with somebody from another race (N2-Adrianna: 389-390).*

### **5.10.3.1 Integrated discussions and interpretations of Category KK: Participants experiencing racism and discrimination within the school context**

As also discussed in Jackson's (2009) study, participants' experiences could be looked at on a continuum, from indirect experiences of racism/discrimination, such as overhearing a racist comment, to direct experiences of racism/discrimination, such as being racially insulted. The participants in this study had one or more direct encounters with racism. These ranged from being racially insulted to being physically attacked. It should be noted that all of these experiences were considered to be significant by participants, whether direct or indirect (Collins, 2000; Henriksen & Trusty, 2004; Jackson, 2009; Salahuddin, 2008).

The parents of participants in this study engaged in racial socialisation in which they transmitted messages to their children that fostered an understanding and awareness of race, racism and cross-race relationships (Hughes *et al.*, 2006; Rollins, 2009). Parents used egalitarian socialisation messages in which they encouraged their children to interact with people of other races, educated their children about racism in society and stressed the importance of respect for all people. Parents also emphasised that all people are equal and that one should thus not be prejudiced or assume that everyone else is prejudiced (Rollins, 2009). As also found in other studies (Hubbard, 2010; Chapman-Huls, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Newsome, 2001; Miville *et al.*, 2005; Rollins, 2009; Sechrest-Ehrhardt 2012), the participants' parents helped them to understand the realities of race through conversations, by educating them about race and racism in general, and by preparing them to deal with discrimination and racism from the outside world. Parents also supported their biracial children in times of conflict or when they had to deal with racial discrimination.

Following traumatic experiences, the biracial participants described how, in order to protect themselves, they became more attuned to the racial attitudes of their peers and by avoiding 'friends' who discriminated against them personally, or covertly by telling racist jokes about a certain race groups. Generally, after experiencing a racist act from a peer, the young adults tended to end their relationship with that person (Jackson, 2009). Participants consciously did not allow acts of racism to damage their self-concept or self-esteem. It appears as if they have come to expect certain acts of racism to occur in their everyday lives, but have made a decision not to let these encounters harm their self-esteem and self-concept or disrupt their lives (Hubbard, 2010).

#### **5.11 SUBTHEME 4.4: MAKING IT THROUGH THE RAIN: A CELEBRATION OF A BIRACIAL IDENTITY**

Although the participants experienced several challenges growing up as biracial individuals in a racialised society, this in no way overshadowed their apparent general positive outlook regarding their biracial heritages and identities (Francis, 2008). Participants indicated that their multi-coloured experience would make it impossible for them to imagine a life as black or white. Once they had gone through their trials and tribulations, they realised how their biracial status could be advantageous in bridging racial divides in society. The following categories apply to Subtheme 4.4: (i) feeling unique and having pride in their biracial heritage; (ii) the joys of experiencing two worlds as a result of a biracial heritage; and (iii) having an open mind and heart because of a biracial heritage.

##### **5.11.1 CATEGORY LL: FEELING UNIQUE AND HAVING PRIDE IN THEIR BIRACIAL HERITAGE**

The majority of the participants (n=8, 5 male, 3 female) reported that they felt unique due to people finding their biracial heritage interesting and different, which made them proud of their biracial identities. These feelings are evident in the following verbatim quotations:

- *Throughout my life I have always drawn great pride from the fact that I as a biracial person was born in the year that South Africa became a 'Rainbow Nation' and find it funny that I am in fact a 'Rainbow Child' (W1-Tyler: 11-13).*
- *When I got to South Africa I became really proud of who I am (N1-Maria: 182). Being here made me proud of it because people find it interesting (N1-Maria: 188-189).*
- *So they're like okay so your Mom is part Asian so what is that like? People got interested and that made me feel a lot better (N1-Mila: 105-106), and the fact that you're different you have something different to tell about your story (N1-Mila: 154-155).*

- *People want to know what it's like to live in a home with a Nigerian mom and Italian dad especially teachers in high school, they were the most interested in my cultural background (N2-Adrianna: 239-240).*
- *I'm the only person in my family, my entire lineage who is the race that I am (N2-Hugo: 671), That's something that's special to me (N2-Hugo: 674), and so you've got that, "that's Hugo" there's only one of me (N2-Hugo: 696).*
- *I feel like I am unique in terms of classification of a race and my values and traits (N2-Mpho: 540).*
- *I enjoy having a unique and interesting story, I'm proud of it (N1-Christopher: 911).*
- *I wouldn't change being biracial for anything, I think I got the lotto (N2-Vuyani: 603).*

#### **5.11.2 CATEGORY MM: THE JOYS OF EXPERIENCING TWO WORLDS AS A RESULT OF A BIRACIAL HERITAGE**

Several participants (n=6, 4 female, 2 male) said that they appreciated growing up in interracial families. They appreciated the diversity of their interracial families and enjoyed the experience of growing up in two different cultures and racial groups, thus experiencing two different worlds.

The following extracts attest to this:

- *Serena indicated that she has learnt from both her families: I think the family is the best part of being biracial (N1-Serena: 462), and I have always enjoyed having two different families, it is always interesting when I spend time with both sides, I learn so much from all of them (W1-Serena: 17-19).*
- *Mila enjoyed living in two different worlds: What I love is that there is two different sides of families you know, the black side is more cultural and the Filipino side is more religious and very family-oriented so that's really cool, it's almost two different worlds (N2-Mila: 380-382).*
- *Adrianna appreciated the diversity in her family: I'm the product of a Nigerian and an Italian, something different. I just like how my mom is very traditional and my dad is quite cultural. So I do like having that diversity in my family (W1-Adrianna: 561-563).*
- *Like Serena, Vuyani emphasised that he has learnt from both his cultures: I know that my family background is very diverse and I believe I draw all choices I make from a wealth of experience that I have encountered through many different situations. I am happy with my family background. I feel it's so diverse (W1-Vuyani: 35-37), and I get to learn from two different cultures (N2-Vuyani: 576).*

- Lucia expressed an overall positive experience: *It's awesome growing up and seeing different cultures all the time (N2-Lucia: 894-895).*
- Hugo valued being exposed to two cultures: *This thing of having the white wedding and the black wedding, it shows an exposure to both sides, to both cultures and I think that is the best side of it. You've experienced the European side and the African side, the fact that you are made of, or composed of both is a big positive (N2-Hugo: 662-664).*

### 5.11.3 CATEGORY NN: HAVING AN OPEN MIND AND HEART BECAUSE OF A BIRACIAL HERITAGE

All but one participant (n=9, 3 female, 6 male) expressed a greater understanding of people and their differences as a result of their biracial heritage. According to them, growing up in interracial families and being biracial have resulted in them being open-minded about different racial and cultural groups in society and respecting various kinds of diversity. Participants explained this approach as follows:

- Mpho noted that he can relate well to others: *I can relate to everyone, I don't just relate to one part of society. I relate to black and white, I know what they do, how they live and how they are (N2-Mpho: 542-544).*
- Adrianna also related well to different racial groups: *I do like the fact that I can relate to white people and I can relate to black people (W1-Adrianna: 565-566).*
- Lucia indicated that she experienced the world in a different way: *I think that the positives are actually having to look at the world through different eyes (N1-Lucia: 949-950), You are trained to accept people for who they are (N2-Lucia: 836), and I think that being biracial forces you to challenge yourself and view things and to learn about perspectives and peoples and their emotions and why they say the things they do and why they do the things they do (N1-Lucia: 952-954).*
- Maria grew up learning to accept others regardless of race: *The best part about being biracial is the fact that I do not see colour, I see people. I have great relationships with all races, be it friendships or relationships. I feel I can relate to any race and I am not judgmental, I am accepting (W1-Maria: 23-25).*
- Christopher also shared being able to understand people from diverse communities: *Many people embrace me, because I am able to interact, relate and understand different people from very diverse backgrounds. Being interracial has helped me to see past superficial characteristics and prejudice (W1-Christopher: 17-19). I feel*

- privileged that I've been able to understand so many different communities (N2-Christopher: 712-713), and that I can interact with everybody (N1-Christopher: 893).*
- Tyler seemed comfortable engaging with various racial groups: *I think I am just really easy to get along with. I think it also has got to do with the fact that I am a mix of both (N1-Tyler: 541-543). I feel like I can move around in different groups. I feel comfortable in each group (N1-Tyler: 680), and I feel like I can be part of the white crowd and the black crowd (N2-Tyler: 579).*
  - Vuyani said that his family taught him to accept all races: *I find it very easy to associate with all cultures and races, mostly because of the acceptance of my family of all the races (W1-Vuyani: 106-107).*
  - Hugo felt positive about his background: *There's the advantage of having that background from both sides and understanding the world from both sides. (N1-Hugo: 1124-1125).*
  - Mpho summarised his experience of growing up in multicultural contexts: *I've been to the slums in the ghettos and I've been to very nice larney places. I've experienced a lot of life. I can basically relate to everyone (N1-Mpho: 675-676), and I have a piece of everyone. Like I have a piece of white person, black and so forth (N1-Mpho: 681-682).*

**Think box 5.5: Loving my multicultural heritage**

*I am so grateful for my background...it has made me who I am today... I love the fact that I am able to relate to many racial and cultural groups in the world. I feel that I am also more open and welcoming to differences amongst people and that different people feel comfortable with me because of my biracial heritage. I love my multicultural and multiracial story; it makes my life experiences colorful.*

**5.11.4 INTEGRATED DISCUSSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF SUBTHEME 4.4: MAKING IT THROUGH THE RAIN: A CELEBRATION OF A BIRACIAL IDENTITY**

As noted in several other studies (Basu, 2007; Hubbard, 20008; Oikawa & Yoshida, 2007), this study found that a number of positive aspects were connected to being biracial. Aspects such as feeling unique and having pride in their biracial heritage were highlighted by the young South African biracial adults. This also entailed celebrating their difference and 'otherness'. Participants' were content with growing up in diverse family environments and experiencing two racial and cultural worlds (Garbarini-Philippe, 2010; Hubbard, 2008). Finally, participants articulated their ability to accept people for who they are and to not use race to discriminate or make judgments. It was evident that the young biracial adults were more open to people from



other cultures, fitting in with multiple racial groups, being comfortable with people from diverse racial groups and valuing cultures different from their own. Hence the biracial individuals in this study drew strength from their diverse backgrounds and heritage (Binning, Unzueta, Huo & Molina, 2009; Edwards & Pedrotti, 2004; Garbarini-Philippe, 2010; Hubbard, 2010; Korgen, 1998; Miville *et al.*, 2005; Roberts- Clarke, Roberts & Morokoff, 2004; Shih & Sanchez, 2009; Walker, 2011).

## **5.12 SUMMARY OF SIMILARITIES IN THEMES 3 AND 4, CHAPTER 5**

In this section I discuss findings that are supported by existing knowledge on biracial identity development.

### **5.12.1 FINDINGS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO EXISTING KNOWLEDGE ON BIRACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

- As also discussed in existing literature (Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Francis, 2006; Gaskins, 2003; Harris & Sim, 2002; Herman, 2004; Hyman, 2010), the identity construction of the young biracial South Africans who participated in this study did not follow a clear linear progression. Instead, identity construction was constantly changing and evolving during their life course, resulting in the construction of racial and non-racial identities.
- As seen in other studies (Edison, 2007; Hubbard, 2008; Harris & Sim, 2002; Hitlin *et al.*, 2006; Jackson, 2010; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2001; 2002; Song, 2010; Suyemoto, 2004; Tashiro, 2002) the young South African biracial adults constructed several racial identities: predominantly white during their earlier years, followed by a progressively more black identity and in later years a biracial identity (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Franklin & Madge, 2000; Francis, 2008; Hubbard, 2008; Song & Aspinall, 2012; Tizard, & Phoenix, 1993).
- The young South African biracial adults opted for non-racial qualifiers of identity, including cultural, religious and national identities and by being just 'human'. This same trend was evident in other studies (Bonilla- Silva, 2003; Francis, 2008; Haris & Sim, 2002; Jackson, 2009; Rocha, 2010; Song & Aspinall, 2012; Rollins, 2002; 2009; Renn, 2004; 2008; Sweeney, 2013).
- Like the young biracial adults in Francis' (2006) study, their South African counterparts who participated in my study distanced themselves from a South African coloured identity as they had negative perceptions of the stereotype 'coloured' South Africans.

These findings merit further research into the relationship between the socio-political context of a country, racial identity construction and stereotyping.

- Agreeing with findings in other studies (Brunsma, 2005; Crawford & Alaggia, 2008; Patel, 2012), young biracial South African adults said that their parents had been influential in their choice to identify with their biracial identity/heritage.

### **5.13 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I discussed the results of the study pertaining to Themes 3 and 4. I made use of participants' verbatim quotations, written narratives and extracts from my field notes to enrich the discussions. I interpreted the results and presented the findings of this study in terms of existing literature, as presented in Chapter 2, and expanded on congruent and contradictory findings in the current study and existing literature.



## CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 4 and 5, I reported on the findings that emerged from Themes 1 to 4 following thematic inductive data analysis. I interpreted the results and presented the findings in terms of existing literature throughout. I highlighted congruent and contradictory findings in the current study and existing literature.

In this chapter, I provide a summary of Chapters 1 to 5, followed by a final synopsis of my findings and conclusions in terms of the research questions, as formulated in Chapter 1. I discuss possible contributions made by this study, as well as potential limitations. Finally, I make recommendations for future research and practice, and for training and development.

### 6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

In *Chapter 1*, I introduced my area of interest and explained my rationale for undertaking the study. I related my decision to my own biracial heritage, which resulted in my initial interest in this topic. Furthermore, I highlighted the relevance and need for on-going research on multiracial individuals due to a dearth of literature on this topic, globally and locally. Based on the introductory orientation and discussion of the rationale for my study, I stated the purpose of the study and formulated research questions.

To account for the broad social context of the young South African biracial adults who participated in this study, I provided a brief overview of apartheid and its effects on interracial relationships and biracial individuals and discussed how racial identities have been prescribed to South Africans over the years, leaving individuals no choice in selecting their own preferred identities. I introduced the theoretical framework, based on Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework for multiracial identity development and Gaventa's (2003; 2006) power cube theory, which I used to guide this study, and clarified the following significant concepts: identity and identity construction, race and ethnicity, racial and ethnic identity, biracial, interracial relationships, monoracial, young adults, narration and the South African context. I

provided a brief overview of my research design, methodological choices, ethical considerations and quality criteria. I concluded Chapter 1 with an overview of the thesis as a whole.

In *Chapter 2*, I explored relevant existing literature as a background to my study. I started by examining the existing literature on identity. I then discussed the historical evolution of identity and provided a multidisciplinary perspective on identity, focusing on psychological and sociological perspectives. Current thinking on identity construction was highlighted and recent developments in research on identity construction were discussed. From this I concluded that I needed to remain cognisant of how various contexts (home and school) and social relationships (family and peers) may influence the identity construction of the biracial participants in this study. Subsequently, I explored literature on the role of socialisation on identity construction.

In discussing the importance of individuals constructing personal and social identities, I explored social identity theory and how certain social and personal identities may experience privilege or oppression depending on their status in society. I highlighted prominent racial and ethnic identity models to understand how marginalised populations typically construct racial and ethnic identities. Finally, I discussed prominent models and theories on biracial identity development and summarised current thinking on biracial identity construction from global and local studies.

In *Chapter 3*, I explained and justified the selected epistemology, research design and methodological strategies that I employed. I was guided by a postcolonial feminist epistemology and a qualitative methodological approach. I employed a narrative research design and utilised narrative interviews, written narratives, field notes and a researcher's journal as data-collection and documentation procedures. Throughout my discussions, I referred to both the advantages offered by the selected methodology and the challenges that it presented, and discussed the strategies I employed in an attempt to address the latter. I concluded Chapter 3 with detailed discussions on the ethical guidelines I followed and the manner in which I strived to enhance the quality of my research in terms of quality criteria. I emphasised the centrality of reflexivity as I strongly relied on this strategy in undertaking this study.

In *Chapter 4*, I presented the results of the study covering Theme 1 (The influence of family on biracial identity construction) and Theme 2 (Participants negotiating their identity within social milieu and relationships). Themes were discussed in terms of the subthemes identified during data analysis. I substantiated the themes by using direct quotations from the participants' narrative interviews, excerpts from participants' written narratives and my field notes in order to

enrich the results. I highlighted similarities and contradictions when comparing the results of this study to findings discussed in existing literature.

In *Chapter 5*, I presented the rest of the results, covering Theme 3 (Expressions of multiple identities in the construction of biracial identity) and Theme 4 ('Othering': Stigma, discrimination, stereotyping and dominant discourses associated with biracial identity construction). As in Chapter 4, I interpreted the results against the backdrop of existing literature, and discussed similarities and contradictions. In addition, I identified some new insights stemming from this study in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **6.3 SITUATING THE RESULTS WITHIN ROOT'S ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY**

With regard Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework of multiracial identity development, similar trends were expressed by the young South African biracial adults who participated in this study. In line with the above-mentioned framework, the young biracial adults' identity formation did not follow an orderly linear progression. Instead, their identity construction was fluid and continuously evolved in various social interactions and milieus, as also seen in various other studies (Chapman-Huls, 2009; Renn, 2003; Root, 1996; 2003a; 2003b). Furthermore, the young biracial adults' identity development was influenced by multiple and intersecting factors, such as parents, extended family, peers, school environments, the media, fluency in African languages and socio-political contexts (Root, 1999; 2003a; 2003b).

The following *macro lenses* influenced the participants' identity construction: (i) *regional history of race relations in a country* and (ii) *generation factors*. As the young South African participants identified as biracial and mixed-race, they moved away from the rigid racial categories from South Africa's past. In this regard, I posit that young adults of the current (post-apartheid) generation have more freedom and power to construct an identity that celebrates their biracial heritage in a white and black binary society. As such the race relations of the country may not exert that much influence on their identity construction anymore (Root, 2003a; 2004). However, this possibility requires follow-up research.

The *middle lenses*, which influenced the participants' identity, were *inherited influences*. Inherited influences can be related to the family discord that participants mentioned in their narratives, such as divorce and separation, which affected their identity development. As a result of family dissonance, the young participants were strongly influenced to identify with their mother's cultural identities, national identities and religious identities as they primarily resided with their mothers. Based on this finding, I conclude that the absence or lack of emotional connection with fathers may have influenced the young adults to strongly identify with their mothers' various social identities. Furthermore, the ability (or inability) to speak a particular language used by the family resulted in the young participants feeling either excluded or included in the family identity (Root, 2003a; 2003b).

The participants' *individual traits* also influenced their identity construction as they constructed certain racial identities when they received validation from peers and family members, or when they perceived positive attitudes towards a particular racial identity. Furthermore, the young participants continually asserted their preferred identities amongst different social relations and contexts (Schwartz *et al.*, 2012). The biracial individuals' *physical appearance* also influenced their choice of racial identity. In this regard I posit that most participants chose black and biracial identities as they experienced rejection when they constructed white identities. The participants' phenotype may therefore have barred them from full inclusion as white individuals in society (Deters, 1997). The participants' skin colour, hair texture and facial features also influenced how others defined and labelled them, and they were generally identified as coloured owing to the fact that these two groups share similar physical characteristics within the South African context (Hall, 1992; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Wijeyesinghe, 2001; Root, 2003a; 2003b).

Corresponding with Root's (1999; 2003a) theory, the biracial participants in this study *actively constructed monoracial identities*, choosing to identify either as white or as black. During their early childhood years, some of the young South African biracial adults rejected their black heritage in favour of a white identity (Root, 1998; 2004; McDowell *et al.*, 2005). Following rejection from their white peers, they subsequently adopted a black identity. However, some of the participants in this study did *identify with both racial groups*, choosing to identify as mixed race and biracial, i.e. to identify with both components of their background and heritage (Harris & Sim, 2002). Participants furthermore *chose to identify in non-racial terms* by distancing themselves from racial categories and preferring to identify with cultural, national and religious aspects, and to rather be viewed as human (Harriss & Sim, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Sweeney, 2013).

In contrast to Root's (1999; 2003a; 2003b) ecological framework on multiracial identity, participants in this study, however, did not choose to identify with a *symbolic race*. Participants did not identify exclusively as white, as they did not have their white identity validated in their social contexts. In contrast to other studies (Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Root, 1998; 2004; McDowell et al., 2005) participants did not express discomfort in black environments or not having close friendships with black peers. Furthermore, in contrast with several existing studies (Brunsma, 2005; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2001; 2002; Khanna & Johnson, 2010; Root, 1998; Twine, 1997; Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004; Wijeyesinghe, 1992) participants experienced discrimination from white people, which led to them distancing themselves from a white identity.

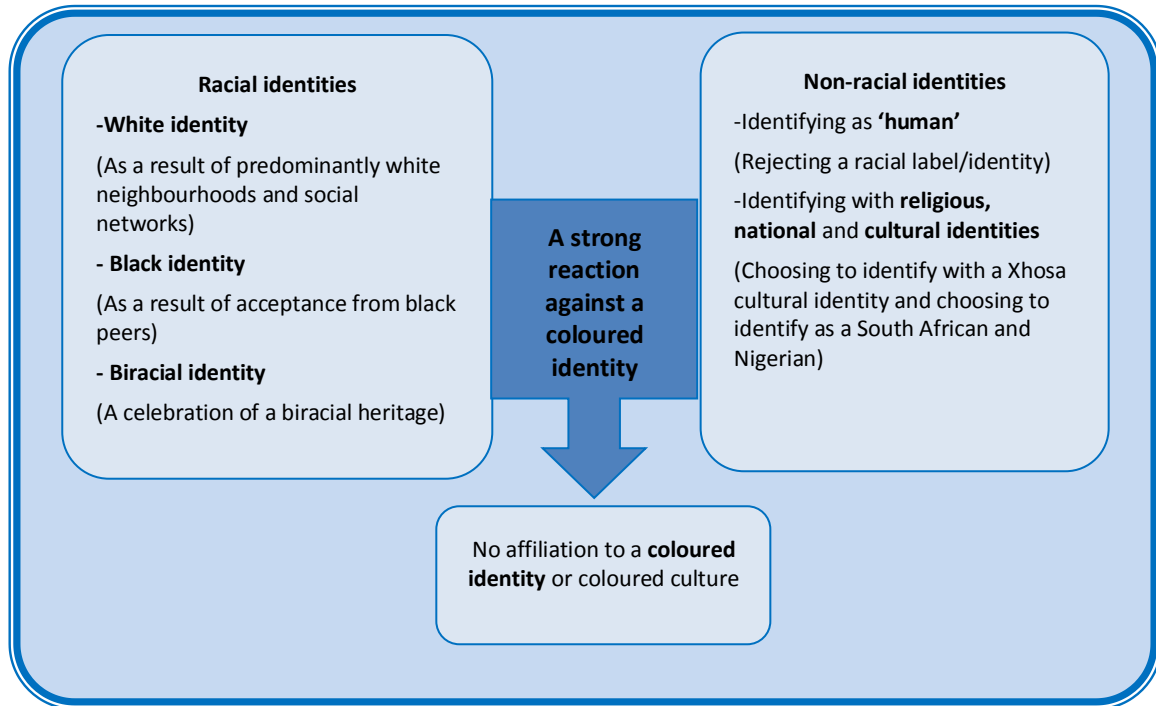
## **6.4 CONCLUSIONS IN TERMS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In this section I address the secondary research questions (Sections 6.4.1 to 6.4.4) and the primary research question (Sections 6.4.5) in terms of my findings. I indicate the possible contributions of this study to existing literature and theory on racial identity development.

### **6.4.1 SECONDARY QUESTION 1:**

**How do young biracial adults racially identify in a multicultural democratic South Africa?**

Figure 6.1 captures the multiple racial and non-racial identities that the young biracial South African adults who participated in this study chose to construct.



**Figure 6.1: Racial and non-racial identities chosen by the young biracial adults**

In this study, a number of the young biracial adults identified with a white identity at a younger age. It emerged from the study that they felt a stronger connection towards their white heritage during their early childhood as a result of various factors, such as living in predominantly white neighbourhoods, attending primarily white schools, being heavily influenced by their white parents, and as a result of trying to adapt in an all-white apartheid-driven environment. I found that the young adults constructed their white identity during early childhood by taking on stereotypical cultural white markers associated with 'whiteness' and manipulating their physical characteristics in order to downplay their black ancestry.

During pre-adolescence, the South African participants chose to construct black identities in response to experiencing rejection from their white peers during this developmental phase. The participants chose to identify with their black heritage as adolescents for the following reasons: feeling comfortable and accepted by their black peers, experiencing a greater affinity to their black identity as a result of a closer connection to their African culture, not wanting to explain their biracial heritage to outsiders, and being in environments that brought out a desire to identify with their black heritage.



All the young adult participants were strongly opposed to being labelled coloured and chose not to construct coloured identities in the South African context. They provided several examples of ways in which they distanced themselves from a coloured identity, which included expressing negative feelings about coloured stereotypes and not identifying with the culture and Afrikaans language associated with coloured people. The current study contributes to existing knowledge on biracial identity development by highlighting that young adults in this study chose an anti-colonial identity and thus rejected the identities<sup>69</sup> imposed on them by colonisers and agents of apartheid. They took back their power and chose privileged identities that would allow them to celebrate their biracial heritage and identity. Hence the young biracial South African adults in this study constructed post-colonial social identities that have positively contributed to their sense of self in the current political climate.

Regarding identity transitions, I found that from their adolescent years and onwards, biracial participants expressed pride in their biracial identity. The young adults saw their parents' heritages as part of their biracial identity and identified as biracial or mixed race. I also found that the biracial participants sometimes chose to identify in non-racial terms, preferring cultural, national, religious and personal characteristics to name their identity. In this regard, I theorise that the young adults transitioned across racial identities throughout their life course, with political power impacting on their choice of identity. I posit that the young participants in this study challenged the rigid racial categories in the current political context by identifying themselves with biracial markers and describing their experiences as biracial individuals. Participants continually expressed the need for their biracial heritage and identity to be acknowledged and included in mainstream South African society.

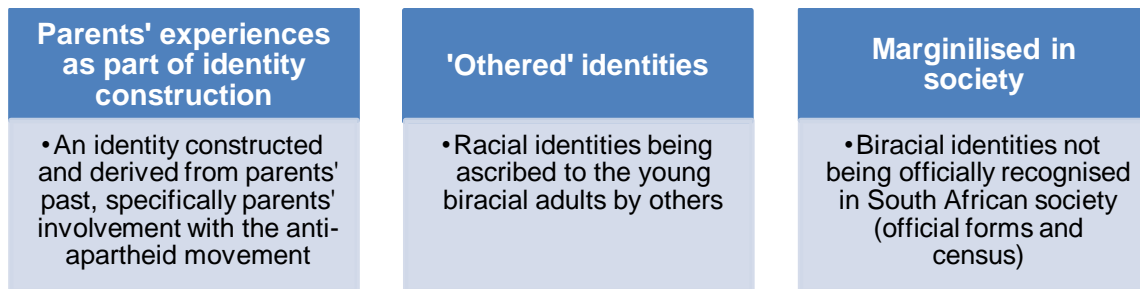
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<sup>69</sup> In the past, children from interracial relationships were automatically ascribed coloured identities by colonisers and the apartheid government.

#### 6.4.2 SECONDARY QUESTION 2:

### How do young biracial adults experience and understand their identity construction?

Figure 6.2 captures how the young South African biracial adults who participated in this study experienced and understood their biracial identity construction.



**Figure 6.2: How young adults experience and understand their biracial identity construction**

I found that the participating young biracial South African adults experienced their biracial identity as 'othered' and different. Young adults in this study felt 'othered' as a result of their biracial heritage not being recognised and accepted by society. Even in a post-apartheid context, their identity remained marginalised. One such silence is evident in the absence of a recognised policy assignment. In specific terms, official documentation (e.g. school registration, university application, etc.) and the population census forms do not make provision for the identity of biracial individuals. Completing official documents posed a dilemma for the young biracial adults as South African racial classification allows people to choose only one racial category when asked to self-identify. This added to their feelings of marginalisation. Generally, the young adults chose 'other' on official forms, or selected monoracial identities. Some of them chose a coloured identity and others a black identity. When they selected a black identity, they did so assuming that in post-apartheid South Africa certain privileges and power might be attached to it. Although participants valued their biracial heritage, they chose an identity which, in the current dispensation, could give them access to resources not previously available to people of colour.

It was evident that the young biracial South African adults often felt that a racial identity was ascribed to them according to South Africa's racial categories. At times the participants perceived their chosen biracial identity to be rendered invalid as it was constantly being

challenged in society. Furthermore, although the young biracial adults experienced pressure to choose a single racial group when constructing a racial identity, their identity transition indicates that they continuously asserted their preferred racial identities in interactions with others.

From a postcolonial point of view, the metanarrative that is dominant in the South African context is that the construction of a monoracial identity is the norm. Consequently, differences in identity construction are overlooked within groups and biracial individuals may typically experience their self-representations in society as marginalised and silenced. On the basis of the results I obtained, I posit that participants understood that, although South Africa claims to be a 'Rainbow Nation', society does not yet celebrate or formally acknowledge their biracial identity and that they had to continually resist fixed racial categories and hegemony in constructing their biracial identities.

In my study I found that whiteness (or lightness) remains a privileged trait in a black community. Owing to society's preconceived ideas about skin colour in communities of colour, the participants acknowledged that their light skin tone (phenotype) gave them privilege over individuals with a darker skin tone. I established that they received preferential treatment from both family members and peers, and also when dating, as a result of having a light phenotype among people of colour.

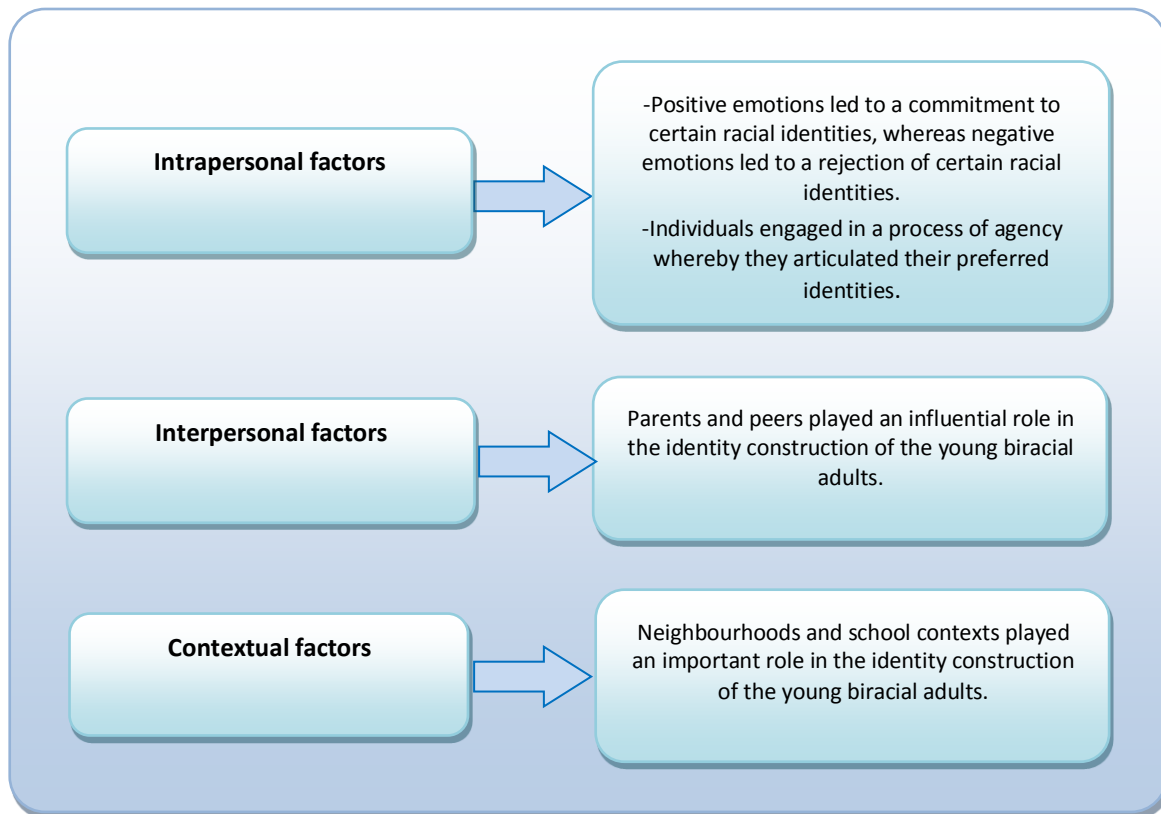
Finally, the findings of this study highlight the role of the media in biracial identity construction. Young biracial women realised that they could identify as biracial and could be proud of their heritage as a result of prominent biracial people in the media. I propose that, if biracial people are presented in a positive light in the media, biracial individuals will realise that they are not alone and that others like them also struggle to construct an identity in a racialised world.

#### **6.4.3 SECONDARY QUESTION 3:**

**How do intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influence and shape the identity construction of young biracial adults?**

The identity construction of the young biracial South African adults was influenced by intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors, especially with regard to the power ascribed to race. Maturation led to identity transitions for the young biracial adults who explored and committed to various preferred identities during their life course. Figure 6.3 provides an

overview on how the participants in this study were influenced by intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors in the construction of their identity.



**Figure 6.3: Intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors influencing the identity construction of young biracial adults**

On an *intrapersonal level*, I posit that a link exists between positive affect and associated identity. When the young biracial adults experienced positive emotions associated with a particular racial identity, they committed to that racial identity and felt pride in the way they chose to identify. Intrapersonally, the young biracial adults thus engaged in a process of taking agency to assert their identity construction to the world by continually verbalising and articulating their preferred identities.

At an *interpersonal level*, mothers played an influential role in the participants' identity construction. The majority of the young adults in this study formed identities within the ambit of their mothers' cultures and identified mainly with their mothers' cultures and religions. They also indicated that their mothers had been influential in the socialisation of their positive identities and encouraged them to identify with both their heritages and take pride in whichever identity

they chose to identify with. Maternal presence thus appears to be a significant variable in the identity construction of biracial children. It should be noted, however, that maternal presence may have been so significant due to most of the young adults living with their mothers after separation or divorce. In the absence of father figures they probably did not identify with their paternal cultures.

Participants' reported that their parents chose to identify them in different ways. The young biracial South African adults indicated that their fathers preferred non-racial labels and instead chose to identify them as 'human', whereas their mothers encouraged them to identify with their biracial heritage. The majority of participants chose a biracial identity and celebrated their biracial heritage. I posit that mothers validating a biracial identity and attributing positive qualities to their biracial heritage led to the participants choosing a biracial identity. However, within the family context, participants reported that their biracial siblings chose to identify with a monoracial identity, specifically choosing to identify as black. I posit that their siblings may have identified exclusively with a black identity as they were fluent in African languages, grew up in predominantly African cultural environments and socialised mainly with black peers.

Peers also played an influential role in the validation of the participants' chosen identities. In this study, when a white constructed identity was challenged by the participants' white peers, they rejected the white identity. When black and biracial identities were validated by diverse peers, the participants proudly constructed these identities with others; therefore peers reinforced the participants' chosen identities by acknowledging them. The participants expressed having social networks comprising individuals who affirmed their chosen identities and valued their biracial heritage. Furthermore, participants reported that their peers constructed biracial identities for them in their absence, affirming their chosen identities with others in their social environments. Finally, participants described feeling comfortable with peers from diverse backgrounds, which reflects how the young biracial adults appreciated multiculturalism and multiracialism as a part of their identity.

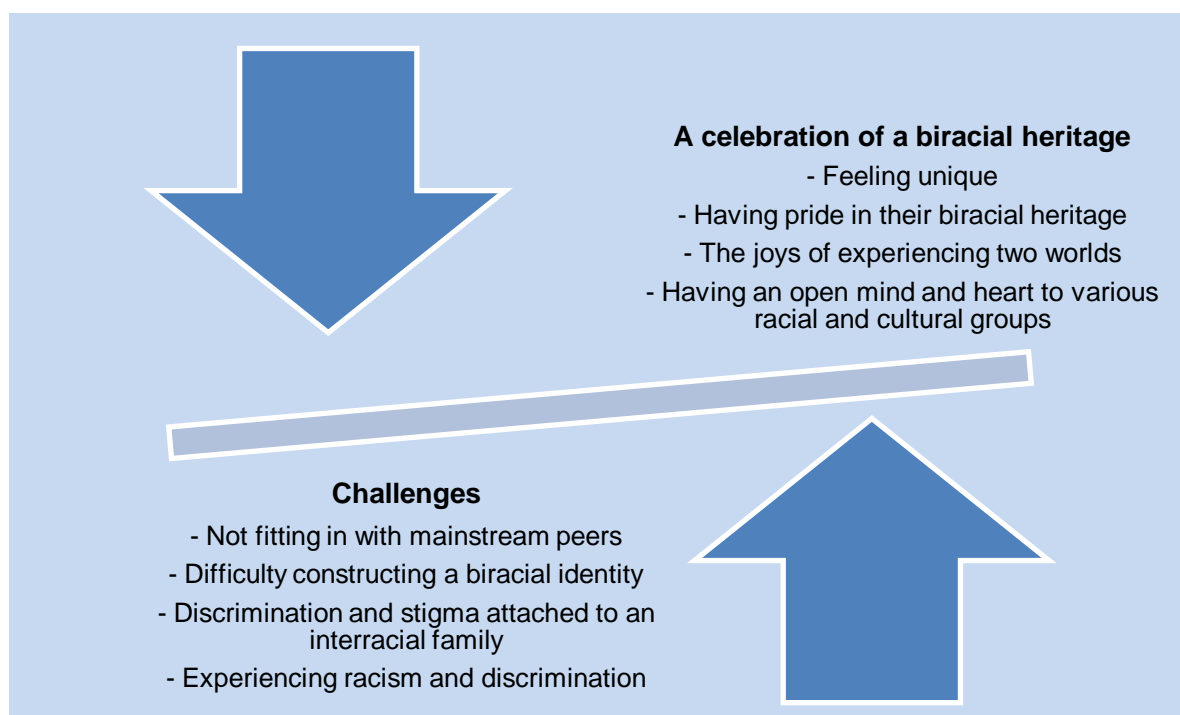
At a *contextual level*, the environment apparently played a role in the construction of a biracial identity. The young adults naturally identified with the characteristics of the majority of others in their immediate environment. Predictably, when they lived in predominantly white neighbourhoods with predominantly white schools and social networks, the young adults indicated that they chose to identify as white, whereas those who lived in diverse environments chose a biracial identity. Some also switched identities across contexts: in a predominantly

black home environment biracial youth would, for example, give preference to a black identity, while in a predominantly white home environment they would choose to identify as white.

#### 6.4.4 SECONDARY QUESTION 4:

**What are the strengths and challenges experienced by young biracial adults during the process of their identity construction?**

Figure 6.4 shows how the young biracial South African adults experienced challenges when constructing an identity, and also how they positively celebrated aspects of their biracial heritage.



**Figure 6.4: Strengths and challenges experienced by the young biracial adults**

From the study it emerged that while growing up, the young biracial adults who participated in this study experienced being discriminated against because of their physical features. In an attempt to manage their identities, the girls manipulated their appearance by straightening their curly afros to conform to the internalised European standards for female beauty that portrayed women with long straight hair as the norm. The young men shaved off their afros or applied gel to make their hair appear straight. It is therefore clear that during childhood the young biracial adults experienced 'otherness' on account of their physical appearance and tried to manipulate

their looks to conform to Eurocentric norms. However, as young adults they had come to appreciate their biracial physical appearance and embraced their natural hair.

I also found that the young adults felt 'othered' as a result of being the only biracial individuals in their social environments and networks. They did not fit in with their mainstream peers as at times felt that they did not belong with either their white or their black peers. During such times they felt like outsiders within their social networks.

Other challenges inferred in my studies relate to the young adults' families. A number of participants mentioned that their interracial families went against societal norms and thus experienced discrimination and social stigma in the form of racial slurs and unkind stares in public. It further emerged that participants had to explain their parents' cultures in response to stereotypical and ignorant comments made by their peers about their parents' nationalities and cultures.

My findings revealed that the young biracial adults struggled to construct identities in a racially segregated world. It seems that it took time for them to take pride in their biracial heritage and that at a young age they felt ashamed of their inability to choose an identity. They explained how difficult it was for them to construct an identity in a black and white binary in society.

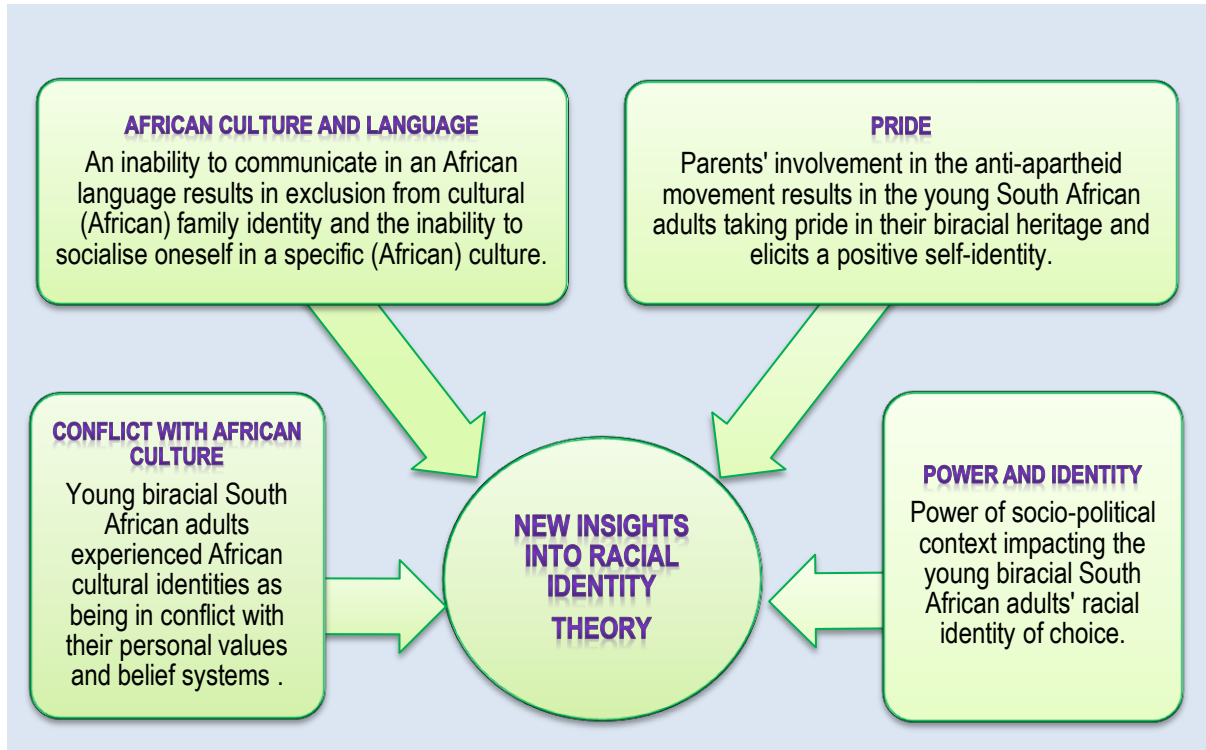
Racism and discrimination was experienced mainly in the school context. I established that the young biracial adults experienced indirect and direct racism. In cases of indirect racism, they experienced racial slurs and were discriminated against on account of their biracial physical features. I established that the reason for said discrimination may have been the young adults' ambiguous biracial physical features, which made it difficult for society to place them in any of the familiar racial categories. Cases of direct racism include such extreme actions as physical attacks. The young biracial adults also experienced racism and discrimination in their interracial relationships when they experienced opposition to their relationships from their partners' friends and parents, and also from their peers who pressured them to date people of colour, rather than date across colour lines. My findings indicate that experiences of this nature left the young adults feeling hurt, but also resulted in them making a conscious decision not to allow such incidents to affect their self-concepts and their relationships with others. I posit that the young biracial South African adults become resilient towards these negative experiences and chose not to allow adverse experiences to influence their attitudes towards others.

Although the participants experienced many challenges associated with their heritage, the young biracial adults also emphasised positive experiences. I found that they were proud of their biracial heritage and felt unique as they had different and interesting narratives to share with others. It also emerged that they appreciated growing up in interracial families and enjoyed being exposed to two different racial and cultural groups. Their backgrounds also enabled them to relate to different racial groups in society and to be more accepting and open to ‘otherness’.

#### 6.4.5 PRIMARY QUESTION:

**How can insight into the way young biracial adults narrate their identity construction in South Africa broaden knowledge on racial identity theory?**

In conducting this study, I wanted to contribute to the knowledge base on racial identity theory as the existing relevant literature is limited primarily to biracial identity studies conducted in North America and Europe. This study therefore adds to the existing literature by specifically discussing biracial identity construction within a changing socio-political global south context (more specifically, South African). In the following section I will structure my thoughts on the contribution made by this study to the existing knowledge base on racial identity theory. Figure 6.5 provides a representation of the new insights derived from this study.



**Figure 6.5: A representation of the new insights derived from this study**



#### **6.4.5.1 Eliciting pride within a socio-political context to construct a positive biracial identity**

Tracy and Robins (2007) state that pride is elicited by individuals to direct attention to the self (identity) in a positive way. I contend that the parents' legacy of fighting for a democratic South Africa during the apartheid era gave rise to a sense of pride in the young biracial South African adults. The current study contributes to the existing knowledge base on racial identity theory by highlighting the importance of how the anti-apartheid movement has influenced the identity construction of biracial individuals in the past. The participants namely included their parents' experiences as anti-apartheid activists as part of their identity construction development. More specifically, the participants reported that their parents' experiences of being social activists (their background and history) against the apartheid government instilled a sense of pride in them with regard to their biracial heritage and identity. Participants shared narratives on their parents' involvement in the anti-apartheid movement as a way to elicit a positive self-representation and to position themselves within the current political context as having a privileged social status and identity to the world.

#### **6.4.5.2 The influence of African culture and language on biracial identity construction**

According to Hubbard (2010), a specific group of biracial individuals of African descent have been overlooked in the racial identity literature. Some new insight that this study provides within the racial identity development literature, is knowledge on biracial individuals of African descent. More specifically, the young biracial South African adults expressed not experiencing a sense of belonging with their African families due to a lacuna of African culture and language. Their inability to express themselves in an African language resulted in the participants not identifying with African family members and being excluded from a cultural (African) family identity. In this manner the (in)ability to speak especially an African language impacted on biracial identity construction. The ability to speak or understand an African language namely increased or reduced connectedness to a black heritage. In the absence of comfortable language use, young adults preferred opting for a biracial rather than a black identity. It was also evident that the ability to speak and understand a language spoken by the extended family influenced the participants' identification with family members and peers. As such, language played an important role in identity construction and belonging, as the young biracial adults were either excluded or included in social identity groups based on their ability to speak and understand a

specific language. Consequently, the young biracial adults related more effectively to family members and peers with whom they shared languages. I therefore posit that the inability to converse in an African language may have denied the participants the possibility to self-define as African, and even as black, in the South African society.

Another new insight regarding biracial individuals of African descent relates to how participants viewed African cultural identities as being in conflict with their own values and belief systems. Specifically, some of the participants distanced themselves from an African cultural identity as they disagreed with the way in which patriarchy was advocated and gender roles were constructed. The young biracial adults in this study did not approve of polygamy, lobola and the traditional gender-defined roles of women and therefore constructed identities that did not comply with African cultural expectations.

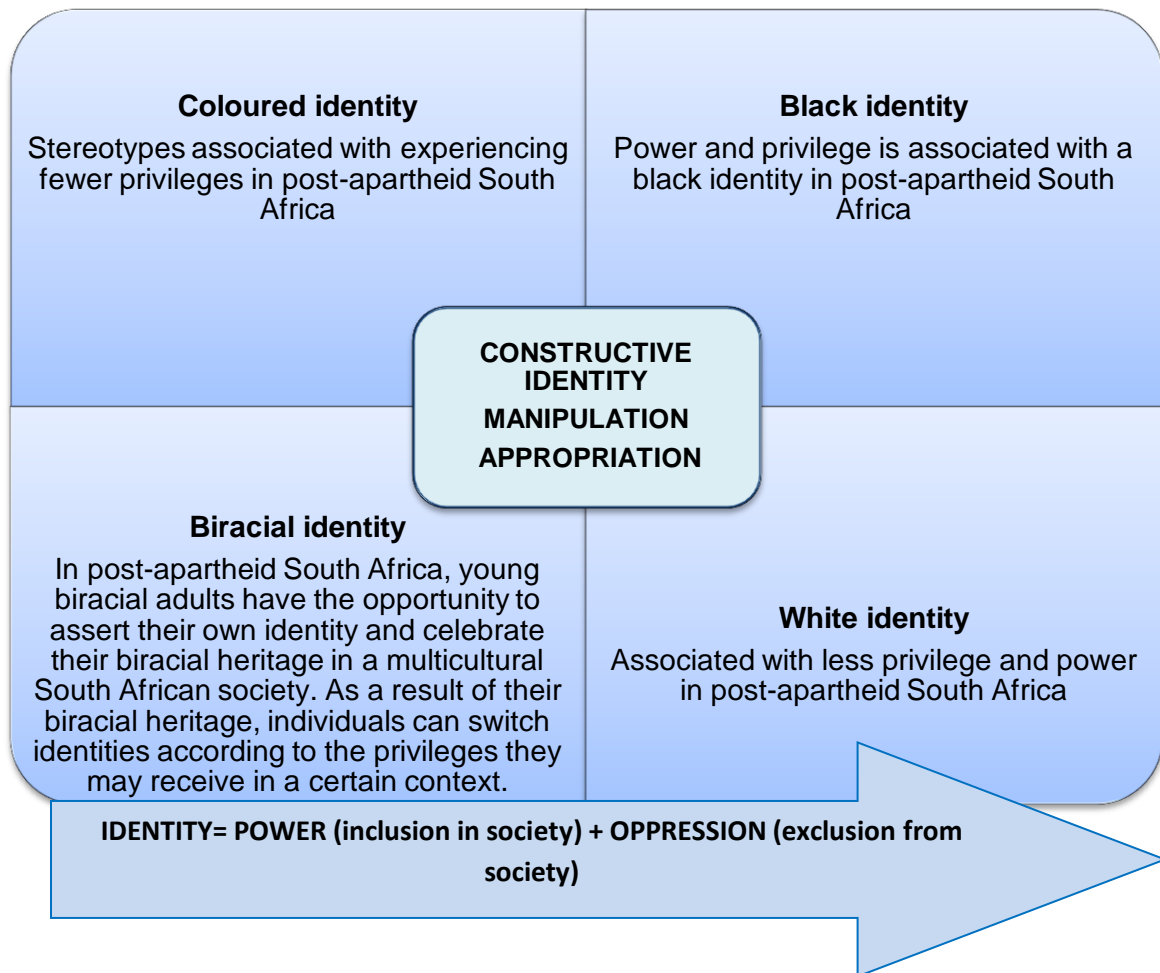
Another new insight that emerged concerning the participants' African descent (heritage) correlates with how their mothers gained acceptance by their fathers' African families. Participants talked about how their white and Asian mothers were rejected by their African families owing to their ignorance about cultural traditions. The young biracial adults reported that their mothers were only accepted when they adapted and participated in prescribed African customary practices by performing specific gender-defined roles as women. I found that participants did not experience an African identity as privileged or as an identity to be proud of as the traditional gender-constructed roles were in conflict with their own values and belief system.

#### **6.4.5.3 Power and privilege in the construction of identity: Gaventa's power cube theory**

In answering this subsection of the primary question, I chose to utilise Gaventa's (2003; 2006) power cube theory (discussed in Chapter 1) as power was such a dominant issue and theme in the young biracial South African adults' narratives.

Based on the findings of this study and the perspectives of the participants, power and identity can be regarded as being fluid. I posit that *constructive identity manipulation appropriation* can explain how young biracial South African adults may purposefully construct racial identities according to the privilege and power associated with a specific racial identity in a particular society (South African). The young adults in this study experienced *power 'to'*, which Gaventa (2006) defines as the capacity of an individual to act, exercise agency and realise the potential of rights, citizenship or voice. The participants in this study voiced and exercised their choice of

identity in terms of inclusion in society and the power associated with specific racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa. I theorise that identity construction entails a sense of power and privilege, depending on the socio-political and temporal context in society, and that multiple identities (such as gender, race, ethnicity and class) exist simultaneously in all individuals. Figure 6.6 shows how the young biracial South African adults chose to construct their identities based on the power and privilege experienced in their social contexts and relationships.



**Figure 6.6: The influence of power and oppression on choice of identity**

### Think Box 6.1: Power and identity

*An ecological framework allowed me to interpret and understand the identity construction of the young adults in this study. However, I also engaged with literature on power, identity, privilege and oppression. Power emerged as a central driver of identity as participants used identity to appropriate power. I did this to understand how the participants constructed an identity within a post-apartheid South Africa. I plan on undertaking future research whereby I study biracial identity construction in relation to theories of power, to expand on current racial identity development theory and literature.*

A *closed space* was evident in how the participants in this study experienced their biracial identity as being disenfranchised and excluded from official documentation in the South African context. This is the result of current South African institutions engaging in *hidden power*, whereby powerful groups have been influencing the agenda of racial identity construction (specifically, the colonisation and apartheid eras influenced the current monoracial identities presented in official documentation and census forms) to the detriment and exclusion of less powerful groups like the young adults in this study who have a biracial heritage.

Another element in this study, apart from power, was belonging. Participants' identity construction was influenced by whether they belonged to the majority in-group, or were excluded as the out-group and seen as outsiders in their social settings. In this study, friends and family created *invited spaces* in which the participants' choice of identity was respected and their biracial heritage was valued in social relationships. *Power 'within'* refers to gaining a sense of confidence, awareness and self-identity, and refers to the synergy that may emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others, or through processes of collective action and alliance building (Gaventa, 2006). Thus, within this study, *power 'within'* entailed having supportive relationships with family and friends who promoted confidence in the young adults to construct a biracial identity.

*Claimed spaces* were evident in a post-apartheid context, as the young adults took power by voicing their chosen identities in instances where their racial identities were challenged by society. Power could also be seen in the young adults' ability to change their identities during their life course by choosing to identify differently in different settings and in different social interactions. The ability to decide and choose how they wanted to identify can be seen as a form of individualised power in a transforming post-apartheid South Africa. I propose that the young adults chose to identify as biracial as they saw this act of self-identifying as taking back

their power in a racialised society. Although it is marginalised, ‘othered’ and silenced in current society, participants advocated their biracial identity and heritage by verbally asserting it and choosing to construct identities that are likely to provide the most benefits in the current socio-political context. Power within this study thus entailed the young adults voicing their preferred choice of racial identity in South African society and moving away from the prescribed racial categories to choosing new racial identities, such as biracial and mixed race.

The participants’ choice of cultural identities can also be attributed to power. Most of the participants distanced themselves from their father’s African cultures, as they experienced African cultures as patriarchal and the distribution of power amongst men and women as unbalanced, with men in African cultures typically occupying positions of power and women taking on submissive roles. These patriarchal issues came into conflict with the young biracial adults’ personal values. The role that power plays in the construction of identity, influenced the young biracial adults as they were drawn more to the mothers’ cultures and detached themselves from their fathers’ African cultures. Power and privilege appear to have played an important role in the identity construction of the young adults in this study.

Furthermore, I believe that when they were younger the participants experienced their biracial heritage as marginalised and oppressed, but that they later used their biracial heritage to access certain privileges within the South African society as they consciously chose racial identities that would help them attain privileges in their social milieus. For example, participants who chose to identify as black on official forms often did so to obtain the BEE privileges that were available to them in post-apartheid South Africa. Similarly, I believe that their decision to distance themselves from a coloured identity was also related to the privileges and power associated with that group. During apartheid, coloured people received more privileges than black people, which resulted in some black people trying to pass as coloured. In the current South Africa, a coloured identity no longer offers such privileges. I thus posit that the young adults in this study chose to distance themselves from a coloured identity as blacks now enjoy more privileges. This finding reveals that the participants valued the role of agency in relation to power and identity.

The young adults in this study chose to challenge the *invisible power* in society as they challenged dominant discourses on racial identity, dispelled stereotypes of interracial families and biracial individuals in their narratives, and chose racial identities that allowed them to experience power and privilege, rather than oppression. Currently, at the *local and national levels*, the biracial experience has been silenced and marginalised in local and indigenous

literature. More research on biracial individuals and their experiences need to be undertaken in order to afford visible power to this group in South African society and to give them the opportunity to influence institutions, procedures and policy processes with perspectives and knowledge on interracial, multiracial and multicultural groups to promote transformation in race relations in post-apartheid South Africa.

## **6.5 REFLECTING ON POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

In this section, I discuss the limitations of the study, which might be related to certain general challenges I faced while conducting the study. One limitation relates to the small number of young biracial adults who participated in the study. Furthermore, all biracial participants had a black and white biracial heritage, with only one participant having a black and Asian heritage, thus the study did not include other groups of biracial individuals. Despite the small number of participants, I am confident that the depth of the narrative interviews and the written narratives, in conjunction with additional data-generation strategies, ensured quality data sets. I also provided rich descriptions of the participants and data to the readers, which may assist with transferability to other similar contexts (Patton, 2002; Seale, 2000).

Sampling bias also arose in the study as a limitation. This was the result of the sampling of participants with one South African and one foreign parent in the study. Only two participants in the study have parents who were both South Africans. Through reflection, I realised that my data was not analysed for the effects of multi-nationality on identity formation. Naively, my analytical tools for analysing and interpreting the identity construction of the young adults focused on race and did not include the important criteria of multi-nationality. Through reflection, I have realised that in future work I will need to revisit data to study how parents' multi-national backgrounds and foreign racial ecologies may have influenced the socialisation and identity construction of the young adults in the study. Furthermore, sampling bias resulted in a lack of diversity in terms of privilege and class as most participants in this study resided in suburban or residential areas and were raised in upper socio-economic families. Future research is thus needed to ascertain how young biracial adults from less privileged socio-economic contexts construct identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

Another limitation is the risk of potential bias from me as the primary researcher, since I identify as biracial. To help ensure the quality of the study, I engaged in reflexivity in my researcher journal, implemented think boxes throughout the thesis to make my thoughts and bias available to the readers, engaged in continuous reflective discussions with my supervisors and completed member checking with the biracial participants. Although I am part of the biracial culture under study, I was fully aware that I might not understand the subculture of the participants, have intimate familiarity and understanding of the particular experiences of all biracial individuals or that generalisations and assumptions can be made about my own knowledge of my own culture (Asselin, 2003; Kanuha, 2001; Dwyer & Buckel, 2009).

As an Educational Psychologist, I have been trained to be attuned to people's emotions and to provide counselling. During the study, I faced the challenge of conducting interviews as a researcher and not as a counsellor, particularly when the young biracial South African adults talked about challenges relating to their biracial experiences during the narrative interviews. I addressed this challenge by way of self-awareness, self-reflection and debriefing sessions with my supervisors, as well as debriefing sessions with the participants.

In terms of the literature I studied and relied upon in planning my study and interpreting the results that were obtained, a more extensive literature review on power theory and identity construction might have added value to my analysis and interpretation of the data. Literature on power processes and identity construction might, for instance, have provided better insight into the dynamics of socio-political power relations in South Africa and its influence on the identity construction of individuals with a biracial heritage. An exploration of power dynamics between the young biracial adults in social relationships might also have explained why the participants constructed specific racial identities. Insight might therefore have been gained regarding the influence of power processes on identity construction in a post-apartheid context.

Another limitation in this study relates to the language used. I personally chose to focus on the biracial individual. By using the word 'biracial', I am participating in the perpetuation of racial discourse. However, I do not feel that there is another mainstream word that would be accessible to the reader (De Soto, 2010). In this study, I viewed race as a social construct and do not use racial categories as proper nouns as this would imply a singular definition, which is exactly the kind of essentialisation I want to avoid (Greene, 2010; Soudien, 2001). Throughout, I

used the racial terminology that is recognisable to South Africans and acknowledge that all these categories are socially constructed and are historical products of the socio-historical context of South Africa (Hammett, 2009; Puttergill, 2008).

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, I make recommendations for future research, for practice and for future training of health professionals.

### **6.6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The results of this study suggest that future research may include the following:

- An investigation into the differences and similarities within various biracial groups of shared heritage (i.e. only black and Chinese combinations)
- Exploration into how gender may influence the construction of identity among biracial individuals and how gender influences the experiences of biracial individuals
- Investigating how biracial individuals in other provinces in South Africa construct an identity
- Exploring how biracial children construct an identity
- Longitudinal research on the identity construction of biracial South Africans
- Further research, in the South African context, on how to guide parents and care-givers in supporting biracial children during their identity construction journey
- Further research on how family and peers identify biracial individuals
- An exploration on biracial individuals' experiences of dating
- An investigation into how biracial siblings living within the same family construct an identity
- Exploring how young biracial adults from less privileged contexts and class construct identities in post-apartheid South Africa
- Investigating how parents' national backgrounds and foreign racial ecologies influence the socialisation and identity construction of biracial individuals
- Further research in terms of the relationship between the socio-political context of South Africa and the construction of a positive and resilient identity by biracial individuals
- An exploration of the influence of extended family members on biracial identity construction



- Investigating how African cultures in South Africa influence young biracial adults in their construction of a cultural and racial identity
- Additional research on how proficiency in an African language influences young biracial South African adults' identification with an African culture

### **6.6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Based on the outcomes of my study, I firstly recommend that the findings of this study be utilised during the training and practice of future helping professionals. Training could firstly include exposure to diverse populations, such as multiracial and multicultural families (Stone, 2009). Health professionals could also benefit from being knowledgeable in the areas of race, the dynamics of racism and discrimination, and the significance of race in identity development. Essentially, health professionals should be encouraged to examine their own biases with regard to interracial families and biracial individuals.

Secondly, the following considerations related to individuals with biracial heritage may be of benefit to health professionals in training and practice:

- (i) Health professionals should take care to not to make assumptions about clients' racial identities on the basis of their phenotypes, as biracial individuals will choose various identities in different contexts and relationships in their life course. As identity construction is fluid, I urge health professionals to not view identity construction among individuals with a biracial heritage as pathological or as being marginalised in practice. It is important to respect biracial individuals' decision to label themselves in their own way.
- (ii) In our racialised society, psychologists should take into consideration the complexity and conflict that may arise within the biracial individual when constructing an identity, and specifically a racial identity.
- (iii) Since not all biracial individuals will construct identities in the way the participants reported in this study, it is important to be considerate and without prejudice when listening to each biracial individual's identity narrative. Psychologists should make an effort to understand the journey undertaken by biracial, multicultural and multiracial individuals in constructing an identity.
- (iv) Literature has shown that families play an important role in supporting the identity construction of biracial individuals. For this reason, it is important to understand the additional dynamics present in an interracial family in order to understand biracial

individuals and their identity construction process. Furthermore, psychologists could also collaborate with family members during interventions (Stone, 2009; Walker, 2011; Suyemoto, 2004; Patel, 2012).

At a national level, South Africans and policy makers should be made aware of this study in order to prevent a false sense of progress regarding race relations in this country (Hubbard, 2010). Administrators and policy makers in government and education institutions need to be informed of the unique experiences of biracial individuals and need to work towards a multiracial movement in post-apartheid South Africa in which individuals with a biracial heritage may choose more than one race on the census form and official documents so that biracial individuals can be made visible and legitimised. By forcing biracial individuals to choose a single racial identity, they are being forced to deny one racial identity and also one parent, which leads to the devaluation of interracial families in South Africa (DaCosta, 2007; Stone, 2009).

## 6.7 FINAL REFLECTION

Against a burgeoning worldwide discourse on how individuals from interracial parentage construct an identity in a racialised society, the current study attempted to understand how ten young biracial South African adults constructed and negotiated an identity in a multicultural and democratic South Africa. By sharing their multifaceted experiences, the participants in this study gave a voice to a diverse and sometime voiceless group of people. After having faced many challenges and having overcome many barriers during this research study, I end my journey by including a reflective note from my final think box.

### Think box 6.2: The final curtain

*This thesis is an important milestone in my journey of self-discovery as it has shown me the purpose of my work life. Through my research I aimed to give the participants in this study a voice to articulate their experiences as biracial individuals and to explain how they construct identities against the backdrop of their biracial heritage. I hope that this research study enables me to honour them, my siblings and my own biracial peers, and that it will make a contribution to society and its citizens' understanding of the challenges faced by biracial individuals, as well as to the training of future health professionals in South Africa.*



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**Faculty of Education**

## **Participant consent form**

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**Research title: Racial identity as narrated by young South African adults with parents from different racial and national heritages**

### **I. Background**

Dear participant

My name is Wendy Carvalho-Malekane and I am a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Educational Psychology. As part of my PhD (Thesis) research study, I am interested in the way in which young biracial adults racially self-identify, experience their biracial identity and construct their biracial identity. Accordingly, I am inviting young biracial adults to participate in my research study. I hope to gain a better understanding of what it is like to grow up in a South African context with biological parents from different racial backgrounds and interested in learning about those experiences that have influenced the individual's understandings of his/her biracial identity. By participating in this research study, you will contribute important information that may further current understandings of biracial and multi-cultural identity in South Africa.

### **II. PROCEDURES**

If you agree to participate in this study, I will set a mutually convenient time to hold an in-depth interview with you. I will conduct the narrative interview either in your home or in another mutually agreed-upon location. You will participate in the following:

- A 60 minute narrative interview – which will be audio taped and transcribed
- A life story – in which you will write a story of your experiences and understanding of your biracial identity
- Member checking via email and a second narrative interview to verify the individual interview transcript, data analysis and interpretation of the interviews and life stories.

### **III. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

### **IV. CONFIDENTIALITY**

The research collected through this study, will be used for publication and presentation, in an attempt to share the new knowledge that I have gained from this research with others. However, respecting your privacy is extremely important to me as a researcher. Your name and personal information will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. Your name will not be included in any documents as I will assign a pseudonym to be used in place of your real name. No one besides my academic supervisory or myself, will have access to the audio-taped narrative interview and personal document. The audio taped interview and life story will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a secure room in the Faculty of Education. All of the information collected through the interviews and life stories will also be kept in secured computer files. All information collected will be kept confidential. My supervisors and I will not share any of the information you provide with anyone outside of the study.

### **V. CONTACT PERSONS**

- If you have any questions or concerns about this study; or if any problems arise, please feel free to contact me through email at [wendy.malekane@up.ac.za](mailto:wendy.malekane@up.ac.za) or phone 012 420 5757
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant please contact my supervisor:  
Prof. Dr. Liesel Ebersöhn  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0002

[Liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za](mailto:Liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za)

+ 27 124202337

Your signature that indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to participate to take part in this research study.

Participant's name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**

EP 11/11/01

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

PhD

Racial identity as narrated by young South African adults with parents from different racial and national heritages

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Wendy Carvalho-Malekane

**DEPARTMENT**

Educational Psychology

**DATE CONSIDERED**

4 February 2015

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

DATE

4 February 2015

CC

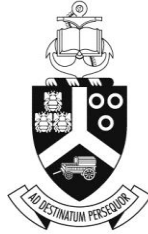
Jeannie Beukes  
Liesel Ebersöhn  
Prof R. Ferreira  
Prof S. Vandeyar

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following condition:

1. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.





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Faculty of Education

## CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

**Title: *Racial identity as narrated by young South African adults with parents from different racial and national heritages* by Wendy M Carvalho-Malekane (researcher)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to all audiotapes and documentation received from the researcher related to her doctoral study on '*Racial identity as narrated by young South African adults with parents from different racial and national heritages*'. I agree, to store all audiotapes and research materials in a safe and secure location; to not make copies of any audiotapes or transcribed narrative interview texts; to hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews; and to delete all electronic files containing research-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices after completion of the study.

As the transcriptionist, I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and transcribed documents to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Demographics form to be completed by Research Participant

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION	
Name	
Surname	
Age	
Date of Birth	
Gender	
Cell number	
E-mail address	
Country of birth	
Gauteng Province: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Tshwane or Johannesburg</li> </ul>	
What region of the country did you live in for most of your childhood and adolescence? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Western Cape</li> <li>➤ Eastern Cape</li> <li>➤ Northern Cape</li> <li>➤ Free state</li> <li>➤ Kwazulu-Natal</li> <li>➤ Mpumalanga</li> <li>➤ Gauteng</li> <li>➤ Limpopo Province (Northern Province)</li> <li>➤ North West</li> <li>➤ Outside of South Africa .....</li> </ul>	
Marital Status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Single</li> <li>➤ Divorced</li> <li>➤ Separated</li> <li>➤ In a relationship</li> </ul>	

<p>What is your employment status?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Full time employed</li> <li>➤ Part time employed</li> <li>➤ Unemployed</li> <li>➤ Self employed</li> <li>➤ Other.....</li> </ul>	
<p>What is your highest level of education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Less than high school</li> <li>➤ High school</li> <li>➤ University degree</li> </ul> <p>If University degree.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What are you studying?</li> <li>➤ Number of years registered with the university or college?</li> </ul>	
<p>Where do you currently reside?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Parents home</li> <li>➤ Renting flat</li> <li>➤ Boarding house</li> <li>➤ Varsity residence</li> <li>➤ Own place</li> <li>➤ Other.....</li> </ul>	
<p>What is your main source of financial income?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Family supports me financially</li> <li>➤ Bursary/scholarship</li> <li>➤ Have a job</li> <li>➤ Other.....</li> </ul>	
<p>What is your religious affiliation?</p>	
<p>What language(s) can you speak?</p>	

<b>SECTION B: FAMILY INFORMATION</b>	
<p>➤ Language(s) spoken at family home</p>	
<p>➤ How many siblings do you have?</p>	
<p>➤ How many people in the house earn an income?</p>	
<p>➤ Information about biological father:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the racial/ethnic heritage of your father?</li> <li>2. What is your father's current career/employment?</li> <li>3. What is your father's highest level of education?</li> <li>4. What is the marital status of your father?</li> <li>5. What language (s) does your father speak?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ....</li> <li>2. ....</li> <li>3. ....</li> <li>4. ....</li> <li>5. ....</li> </ol>
<p>➤ Information about biological mother:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the racial/ethnic heritage of your mother?</li> <li>2. What is your mother's current career/employment?</li> <li>3. What is your mother's highest level of education?</li> <li>4. What is the marital status of your mother?</li> <li>5. What language (s) does your mother speak?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ....</li> <li>2. ....</li> <li>3. ....</li> <li>4. ....</li> <li>5. ....</li> </ol>
<p>➤ Are you parents still married?</p> <p>- If they are still married, for how many years?</p>	
<b>C. INFORMATION RELATED TO YOUR BIRACIAL IDENTITY</b>	
<p>How do you identify?</p>	
<p>How do you racially identify?</p>	

How do your friends identify you?	
How does your family identify you?	
How do you think society identifies you?	
Describe the racial demographics of your primary school	
Describe the racial demographics of your high school	
Describe the racial demographics of your neighbourhood home	
Describe the racial/ ethnic heritage of your closest friends	
Describe the racial/ ethnic heritage of your personal relationships / intimate relationships	

## Extracts from transcriptions

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### Lucia Narrative Interview 1

- R *Ja so what do you say to that because people have their own different versions. I've been talking to so many biracial people now, some call themselves black, some say they biracial, some say they mixed and another girl I was interviewing said she was Afro-Asian. So what do you say to those people when they ask you what are you?*
- P *I tell them that, when I was younger it was very simple, I just say my Mom is white and my Dad's black. That's what I always used to say but I tell them no I'm biracial and if they tell me well what is biracial, aren't you just coloured? Which is pretty insulting for me cause that always, always comes about...*
- R *Yes me too.*
- P *I'm like no coloured is different, coloured is in my opinion if you have a coloured mother and a coloured father, you coloured.*
- R *Ja.*
- P *That's what you are because the cultural difference between say versus a colour person and someone like myself. We have the same skin pigment; I think that race is in itself futile because of that.*
- R *Ja.*
- P *But we not the same culture, we not the same person, it's like say a German and an Afrikaans person are the same. Ja their culture's different, you can't say that. So for me it's more b-racial*
- R *What is bi-racial then for you?*
- P *Biracial means that you of, biracial isn't even a good enough example, way of saying it because you have more than one race.*
- R *Okay.*
- P *In essence but biracial means more than one.*
- R *Okay.*
- P *In my opinion. Two usually but maybe two people of a different colour.*
- R *Ja two people of a different colour and then coloured people are when your mom and dad are both coloured. Alright and it's also means containing a different culture like you were saying. What type of culture do you think coloured people have that is different from you?*
- P *Their language, you know, they speak Afrikaans as a first language it's not and not all of them do either but still it's just, their music is different, food is different, just even our general sense of like. It goes as far as even interests in the way we would like to have fun or...*

R *Okay I understand what you mean.*

P *My sister can interact with her coloured friends so well, but I'm not like that. You know coloured girls have always been kind of rude to me.*

### **Tyler-Narrative Interview 2**

R *Okay and we talked about it last time, how do you think she identifies? You say you are mixed how do you think she responds to that question?*

P *She does to and, I think she's also very, very proud to be mixed race I mean she was the one that sort of started the whole demi god thing, so I don't think she is not ashamed of it I don't think, I think both of us, me and her both throughout our lives have seen it as a blessing.*

R *Yeah.*

P *I think it has even made us arrogant at times rather than feeling ashamed or yeah.*

R *Yeah, okay and then also just finally what were the main challenges growing up? As a biracial person in South Africa?*

P *I think probably the younger years, I mean over time it was something that like I said I learnt to love and be proud of but I think, especially when you are younger you want to fit in and I think no matter where we went, or no matter where I went, I can't speak for my sister but no matter where I went I always, I always (UNCLEAR) that caught me out like I always felt like I was, I was different. So I think that would be probably be that trying to find your place because I think throughout my schooling career there has never been another mixed race person inside my school with me, actually there was [unclear] but that was when I was in high school almost, so I think primary school especially trying to figure out who you are and how you fit into the world and there was really no one like me ....you know?*

### **MILA-NARRATIVE INTERVIEW 1**

R : *Hi Mila is it alright to begin the interview? So why don't we start with you just telling me about yourself?*

P : *Okay. I have a biracial background, my mother's father is from the Philippines and my father's father is from Zimbabwe okay, but my father passed away in 1996 so it's just my Mom, and my older brother and I. Yes and I live here in Pretoria at the  
\*\*\*\*\*.*

R : *If someone asks you to describe yourself and they couldn't see you, they just ask you, okay Mila just describe yourself, what would you say to them?*

P : *I always tell them that I am black, when people ask me what I am, you know.*

R : *Okay?*

P : *When I say oh no I am part Asian or whatever you know, then they ask questions and then it is a whole conversation and then I have to explain my whole life story all the time. If people ask I just say I am black but I only speak English.*

R : *All right. So when you say you only speak English, so what does that mean? So when you say you're black do they expect you to speak an African language?*

- P : *They do, and then if I say no I'm black and then they're okay. I only speak English and then they ask why, but then I have to explain because my mother is from another country.*
- R : *So if I want to ask you then how do you identify, what would you say?*
- P : *I'd say I identify myself as an Afro-Asian person.*
- R : *Okay Afro-Asian.*
- P : *Yeah. It is as simple as that really now that I've discovered the term.*
- R : *All right, so if someone asks you what you are, you would say Afro-Asian.*
- P : *Yes.*
- R : *And what is that to you, what does that mean to you?*
- P : *Ah, someone's who obviously got two different types of ethnicity*
- R : *Okay, and have you always identified this way as Afro-Asian?*
- P : *Yeah I have. But I only discovered that word when I was in about grade eight.*
- R : *Oh in grade eight?*
- P : *Yeah.*
- R : *So when people used to ask before, let's say, let's go back to Primary School, what did you think you were, back then?*
- P : *I was so lost I didn't know what I was. I didn't know at all.*
- R : *When you say lost, what do you mean?*
- P : *When people asked me what are you? I used to just say I don't know. Because I didn't know if I should say I'm black or if I'm Asian because even though I look black I don't have any connection to our black family because you know, being that my father passed away and we don't really see each other that often. And because I grew up with an Asian mother I don't know that I should say to that.*
- R : *Can you perhaps give me some experiences or some stories about your life during that time?*
- P : *People used to, like a lot of my classmates used to ask me if I had, like steaks for dinner or if we eat fish for breakfast and stuff, and they even speak to me in Mandarin or pretending to speak in Mandarin, very annoying and it hurt sometimes.*
- R : *All right.*
- P : *There is a specific girl who used to call me Mila Aguilera because of my hair it looks so frizzy. That stage in my life, it was a very hurtful stage because they used to tease me a lot.*



## **Maria- Narrative Interview 1**

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- R *Alright Maria thanks so much for being here today. As I told you before in the car, we just going to talk about your life, and how you experience being a bi-racial individual in South Africa. All right, so let us start off with how do you identify?*
- P *I identify myself with being bi-racial*
- R *okay*
- P *Yeah I do, like today actually somebody asked me, what are you?*
- R *Okay.*
- P *Ja because we were in RAG and I said, I am bi-racial.*
- R *And what does bi-racial mean to you?*
- P *What does bi-racial mean?*
- R *Uhuh.*
- P *I do not know, being half black and half white.*
- R *Being half black and half white, okay. Okay you have mentioned that someone asked you today in RAG about being bi-racial. Do you get a lot of questions from people asking you, what are you?*
- P *What I am? Yes, I do.*
- R *Okay.*
- P *I do not think I look coloured and I do not look black, so they do get confused, that is why everybody always asks me. It happens all the time.*
- R *It happens all the time?*
- P *Ja, ja.*
- R *From what age do you think, can you remember?*
- P *Only when I got to Pretoria, actually.*
- R *Really?*
- P *Ja.*
- R *Okay. Where did you stay before?*
- P *Swaziland.*
- R *Oh yes.*
- P *Ja.*
- R *And how was it in Swaziland?*
- P *It was actually normal to be bi-racial.*

R            *Okay.*

P            *Nobody really asked.*

R            *Because were there a lot of inter-racial relationships?*

P            *Ja, ja.*

**Mpho-Narrative Interview 1**

R            *Okay. What do you think made you want to be white?*

P            *I think it's, it's the people you associate yourself with.*

R            *Okay.*

P            *As a bi-racial person, you're not, you don't, you're not really race aware type of thing. Like you're not always racially aware of what's around you, and stuff. So you adapt to the situation that you're in.*

R            *So you were in a mostly Afrikaans school?*

P            *Yes.*

R            *was it mostly white?*

P            *Ja, mostly, it was ...*

R            *Okay.*

P            *Eighty percent white.*

R            *So you were adapting to your environment?*

P            *Yes. I wanted to be the white people. I wanted to be white. I really wanted to be white.*

R            *Okay.*

P            *Hated everything about like, black.*

\*\*\*\*\*

R            *And, just going back to primary school, how did you experience primary school, besides wanting to be white, listening to rock music, as you put it?*

P            *it was very hard, I'd say.*

R            *Okay.*

P            *Because like, you're not, I wasn't accepted as like one of the white guys, because I wasn't white.*

R            *Can you give me some examples?*

P            *Like, let's say if I would, if we would be talking about something, and then if we would be talking about families, or parents, or something ...*

- R *Ja, ja.*
- P *Then if I were like, if they would mention their moms and dads and this, and they're talking about this and then I would mention something, they'd be like "but you're not, you're not white" you know, like "You don't belong here", type of thing.*
- R *Really? Would they say that to you?*
- P *Ja. Because I mean, as kids, you don't really care. You don't care about people's feelings.*
- R *Ja, ja.*
- R *And how did that make you feel?*
- P *I used to feel bad, like I resented being any like, black. I didn't want black anything, at all.*

### Adrianna -Narrative Interview 2

- R *Ja, okay. And just talking about your physical appearance, has it affected your life in any way outside the family setting?*
- P *I would say that I don't necessarily get a lot of male attention but people do approach me and stuff like that, but I don't know if it's because of my features or because of my skin colour. Like I said a lot of people especially nowadays guys, they go crazy for girls who are light and whatever. They don't want dark skinned girls, but I don't like that. So I can see when a guy is interested in me because of my light, because of my complexion, or whatever. So then I can just turn that off. And with regards to my friends and the people that I attract I don't think that they are attracted to me because of my, my cultural background or because of my complexion. I think it's just a case of "you cool let's hang out". They you know you build a friendship from there but sometimes they do make fun of me because I'm the lightest in the group. So they will call me a fluorescent light sometimes, silly stuff like that but it's all fun and games, it's nothing personal, they never attack me or anything. So, ja.*
- R *And you were talking now about your peers and everything, how do they identify you? If I had to go to your friends now and ask them "tell me about Adrianna", what would they say?*
- P *They would definitely say she's mixed race. That's the first thing that would come out of their mouths. Even when somebody comes to me and they like "oh, are you coloured?" They will like "no she's mixed race" quickly before I can even say anything. They will definitely identify me as biracial. They'll even throw, and you know Nigerians or like when we meet a foreigner then they'll be like "oh you know she's Nigerian" or something like that. So, ja even I was having lunch with a friend yesterday and I asked the waiter if he was a foreigner because his eyebrows were unnaturally very, very bushy, so I was like "you not South African are you?" and he's like "no I'm from....." or whatever and ..... "oh, ja she's from Nigeria". I don't know why people do that, but ja.*
- R *And when people ask you what are you, how do you react? And what do you say?*

P *I usually say I'm Nigerian.*

R *Okay.*

P *I choose to say that because I was born there and I was raised there for a couple of years. I was raised by my mother and I don't really mention the Italian part unless the person asks me, because I feel as though they would think that I'm trying to show off or I don't know. Especially since I can't speak the language, I don't want to be like "I'm Italian" and they like oh can you speak then I say no, I can't, and then they get disappointed. So I'd rather just say I'm Nigerian. I'm from Nigeria. Then if they delve deeper into the conversation then they'll ask what is the other part, because they've seen Nigerians light before, so ja.*

R *Ja. And you say that sometimes you don't tell them that you Italian because you don't want to show off, what does that mean?*

P *Sometimes I feel like it looks like I'm going out of my way to say I'm Italian or I have, I'm not sure how to explain it but I just don't want it to be a thing where I'm like "yes I'm Italian" because you know a lot of people think Italians are these beautiful people. I'm not sure I just only felt a bit weird mentioning that part. I'd rather just say or maybe it's because my dad was never around. So I can't associate myself with anything from his side, so you know I don't want to say that because if they ask me to show characteristics or they want to see things that an Italian would do they can't. I'm not, I'm not too sure I just.*

R *It's like you will have to prove yourself.*

P *Yes I feel like I'd have to prove myself somehow either by speaking the language or showing them something, or something like that.*

R *Alright, fine. And you already mentioned that your friends call you mixed or biracial. How do you define biracial? What does that term mean to you?*

P *For me, it means when people from two different races come together. Not necessarily black and white, Indian black or black and Asian, something like that. It's not just black white, so ja.*

### **Serena-Narrative Interview 2**

R *Because you were in that situation in primary school, do you remember how you identified at the time? If someone asked you "Serena, what are you?" What was your response to the person?*

P *I remember when I was in primary school, I didn't really get the just of mixed or biracial yet.*

R *Ja.*

P *So I'd normally just refer to myself as "I'm black and white."*

R *Okay.*

P *And then people would always ask me what, to explain it and I'd always tell them that my Mom was black and my Dad was white ...*

R *Okay.*

P ... and then they'd get the idea of it.

### **Christopher-Narrative Interview 2**

R And now Christopher, just to round you off, because I said it would be short, what do you think were your main challenges growing up as a biracial person? The main challenges?

P I think the biggest one ...

R Ja?

P ... was first coming to understand my identity, ...

R Okay.

P ... and becoming proud just for who you are.

R Mm.

P So I think it's easier for human beings to feel like you belong to a group.

R Ja.

P And I think it's not, it's reassuring to feel like you're a part of something.

R Ja.

P And often as a biracial person, you can feel lost, ...

R True.

P ... at times. So that can also maybe be why some of my love for history comes, to try and find out, ...

R Ja.

P ... because if some things are really given to you on a platter, it's a lot easier ...

R Ja.

P ... to jump onto it. But unfortunately, my culture and background wasn't given to me ...

R Ja.

P ... on such a platter.

R Ja.

P It came from different plates and many different restaurants

### **Vuyani-Narrative Interview 1**

P *Well for example, like, I don't know you know I think I also in a way, I see, I've experienced a lot of racism, like recently you know.*

R *Can you use some examples?*

P

*An example. Okay, I went to Loftus one day and mostly in Pretoria that's where I would experience racism. So I went to Loftus to watch a match. This was when I was fifteen. So it was me and two other friends and so now we watch the game, whatever you know, it's a bit awkward you know. There is not a lot of black guys around but whatever you know, we are enjoying the game. On our way out this old, old Afrikaans guy, with the horns everything. He looks a bit drunk you know and his family actually and this guy looks at me and he is like "Jy f\*\*\*k off hierso, jou kaffir, dis nie fokken soccer match' and I'm fifteen years old you know. I'm like you can say anything, you know, you kind of just have walk and okay that's what they did you know. So I think that brought up a lot of hate for me and then I started talking to my friends about it you know and you know, in high school you know, you always get, there is a lot of black guys that are that you know that say, "No you have to remember the past you know, this and this and this and you guys were racist to us and that's why you guys have all have this stuff you know because that's when the conversation started coming up. That's when black youngsters in a way were able to kind of comprehend those things, if you talk about them and you were educating them you know and then the white guys would start talking from their point of view you know and then there I am you know. Now I can't really say white people are racist because then they would ask me okay what about your mother then, you know and I would like you know I can't not agree with the black people because I know that my dad, told my mother actually told me that my dad, it was really tough for his family because they used to go to our house and beat up my grandmother and my dad's brothers you know asking where my dad is, you know. Where's this guy and why is he not here because he was trying to leave the country then, you know. So and I know he is very strong when it comes to people understanding that look, these people are racist you know and just because 1994 came doesn't mean that peoples mindsets changed fully you know. It a subconscious thing, it's something that's been going on for long. So expect it to take time you know. So with conversations like that in a way I kind of was also like, no man you know but Afrikaans people are racist you know and you know but white people and they are also you know. I would ask them you know, okay would you ever hook up with a black girl you know and they would be like no and would be like why not? No, I just wouldn't want to you know but you know. I never really took notice of it until quite recently when... I always, in high school you know, there is a minority of black people in hostels. So I always use to go out with my friends and we would go clubbing and we would always go to the white places you know or to a white braai and I didn't have a problem at all you know. I was actually one of the popular people you know. So it was never a problem for me and I never it as, okay we are going to a white club or we going to you know, unless it was an Afrikaans club then obviously you kind of see the way people look at you that okay you are not too welcomed here you know. So it was cool and I enjoyed it you know and then the one day I had a braai at my place and I invited this white friend of mine over and he was like who's there? So I just start saying these names but it was all black guys and I said okay are you going to come and he is like, no you know what I going to be the only white guy there. I'm not going to come. I was like what do you mean bro? It was just hanging you know and that's when I started realizing that the way people saw things was different, you know and another thing was, you know my friends, this one white friend of mine would always say, ah that the f\*\*\*n kaffirs, what not, what not, you know.*

R

*In front of you?*

P *Ja and I'd be like what are you talking about bro? Like, what are talking about? So are you talking to me and he is like, no not you, you know or to some of my other black friends who hang a lot around with a lot of whites and they would be like, "no, not you guys, you guys are different" you know, you not really... And I'm like but what are you talking about dude? You know, so I had a long argument and fight with them and it really upset me. I'm still friends with them now you know but I think they are more conscious of what they say now and what they do around me you know. So ja, with race you know, I've experienced a lot with that you know.*

### **Hugo-Narrative Interview 1**

P *Well I don't really know, I've never really been asked what are you. Or but I can tell you one thing, I don't identify as coloured.*

R *Okay.*

P *That's definitely, I mean coloured people have their own culture, their own language and I don't, I don't fit into that. I mean if I go into a coloured group, they'll immediately reject me because the way I speak, I don't have the same, and I speak Afrikaans fluently but not in the same dialect as they do and basically I just don't fit in there.*

R *Okay. Do you often get confused as being coloured? Do you often people say, think you?*

P *Well a lot of people will assume that I'm, I am, ja but whenever, for instance if I fill in a form, I'll generally put on black, that's what my ID says as well, that I'm black, but I think both aspects are always there and I think if somebody asks me what I am, I tell them I'm half black, half white.*

R *Okay.*

P *Specifically every time make a point of saying both because both are important parts, so ja you take one part away and it's not me anymore, it's someone else.*

R *Okay I really like that you put, you're putting things very nicely. When you mention coloured people and people assume that you're coloured, how does, how do you react to that sometimes and?*

P *Well I think, I think it's not, it's not unfair for them, I mean I do look coloured, I do, from a distance the first glance I mean if I saw a black person I would also immediately assume that they're black, if it turns out that they're actually just a white person with dark skin, it's very, it's not unreasonable to make that assumption, it's when people treat you a certain way because of that, that's obviously not ideal.*

R *How do some people treat you when they assume that you are coloured?*

P *Well I mean for instance now, I'm living well I'm working in Secunda and I'm living there during the week and that's a very Afrikaans neighbourhood and Afrikaans like I said I always said you know if you speak about white English people that I get along with well, Afrikaners, not so much. They act scared of me I mean the day I walk into a shop and people will follow me around because they think I'm going to rob the place, when I'm in that place when I'm in a shop I always act overly nice,*

R *Okay.*

P *You know always say please, thank you, pardon and specifically have a big smile on my face, just so that I don't seem threatening to people.*

R *Okay because they assume because of the colour of your skin that you might steal something.*

P *Well I'm also quite big, so I think it's very daunting in that sense, but I think the combination of the two for a lot of people makes it very bad. I don't really experience racism that side a lot*

R *Okay.*

P *But once in a while it does happen.*



## **EXTRACTS FROM WRITTEN NARRATIVES**

### **1. Adrianna-Written narrative**

*When I got to high school I had moved to a co-ed school and that is where I started to notice cliques according to race and this was because people felt comfortable hanging out with people of their own kind and I understood this very well despite the fact that I was raised never to discriminate against another person on the basis of their skin colour. White girls were more comfortable and could relate more to other white girls and the same went for boys. Black girls could also relate to other black girls and that was the norm – there were however exceptions, a white girl hanging out with a predominantly black girl group or vice versa and those people were sometimes judged. My group of friends were predominantly black and I found it easier to relate to these black girls in the sense that our hair problems were the same, our family issues were dealt with in a parallel sort of manner and I began to prefer the attributes that came with being black. This became apparent because as above mentioned all my friends are/were black and also the boys I dated are/were black too. I have been involved with a white guy before but the relationship (if I can call it that) eventually faded because I wasn't a white girl and he was a blonde, masculine, English boy with a lot of Afrikaner friends who didn't appreciate the fact that I too was not a blonde hair and blue-eyed girl with long legs. That was when I came to realisation that not everyone was raised in the same manner as I was, not everybody was taught not to look at colour when it boiled down to deciding whether or not that person would qualify to be a suitable partner for you and I understood. I did not try to mesh where I did not belong and it was never a problem for me and never will be because I am comfortable in my own skin.*

*Back to the point; there came a time in my life, and it still seems to be very present, where being a biracial girl or being light skinned became the “fashion”. Everyone (specifically within the black community) wants to be associated with a biracial girl because they're considered to be “prettier” than the rest. I personally think this is another way of society trying to further oppress the mind of a girl. This time period is when it was basically slapped in my face that I am a biracial child. My father is white and my mother is black and the product of that is a light skinned girl and this seems to be something that it is extremely fascinating to people in my generation. I on the other hand don't see how I am any different from the next girl who might be a shade darker than me or a shade lighter than me. This aspect is a shallow-perspective of a challenge in the sense that it is hard to tell when a person is interested in me simply because I am biracial or because of who I am and what I represent as a human-being and also when this trend “fades” like most trends do, what new look will society brew for us girls to torment ourselves over?*

*My cultural background consists mainly of my mother's culture in terms of the food we eat at home, the weddings that we attend and the clothes we wear on special occasions. This is because my father travels a lot and so I was raised by my mother and live with my mother. I think that's why it is easier for me to relate to black people. My mother is definitely the most influential in terms of my identity, I follow her form of Christianity and religion plays a big role in my family and shaping us to be who we are. That comes to another challenge that I faced – conflicting religious stances – because my father is a Catholic and my mother a Pentecostal. I was never forced into choosing a specific type of Christianity but my mother is the more religious partner. It was seen as a challenge to me because my parents did not always agree when it came to matters that concerned religion.*

*A positive I do face is that I am a physical representation that black people and white people can coexist and can live together without the generalisations and without the pretense. I obviously do not force this opinion on people because it all boils down to preference but I do show people that a white man and a black woman may get married and that this joining shouldn't be frowned upon in society and that people should allow their family members and their friends to be with who they want to be with and love who they want to love. - Adrianna*

## **2. Christopher-Written narrative**

*I come from a mixed race family background: A South African family background, a white South African mother of Croatian and German heritage, and a black South African father of Nguni, Tsonga heritage. I feel proud of my family background and heritage. Growing up in an interracial family, I have learnt that race is not a defining characteristic of human nature. I believe in the principles of non-racialism having learnt from the history of racial oppression and how bad it is. I believe that we are all people before anything else, that said I value culture and heritage and believe that it is very important. This has influenced me to be a good human being before anything else, a good patriotic and proud South African citizen.*

*Society, especially South African society, given its legacy of racial oppression struggles to deal with racial issues. One of the challenges of being an interracial child is overcoming stereotypes, dealing with categorization and prejudice. Positively, many people embrace me, because I am able to interact, relate and understand different people from very diverse backgrounds. Being interracial has helped me to see past superficial characteristics and prejudice.*

## **3. Hugo-Written narrative**

*I suppose that, in order to describe who I am, I should firstly endeavour to explain how I came to be. My father came from Mount Frere, in the Eastern Cape. He grew up, as most did, with a stoic acceptance of the conditions of apartheid. He intended, at the end of his high school days, to ignore the political turmoil and start a career as a barrister. However as his teens came to an end and his university years started he was introduced to the underground resistance movements, including the BCM. Although he initially tried to get involved he later on learnt, through tragic circumstances, that the struggle would affect him; whether he was involved or not. It is for this reason that one day, without informing any of his friends or relatives, he simply left the country. He originally escaped to Mozambique and joined uMkhonto we Sizwe. The MK sent him around to many countries for training and assignments, and eventually sent him to the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (Somasco), a school created by the ANC in Tanzania to accommodate some of the youths that fled the country following the 1976 uprisings.*

*My mother came from the Netherlands. The daughter of farmers, she was the first in her family to obtain a university qualification. However, during her studies she became involved with various groups who were sympathetic to the plight of the South African Freedom Fighters. She wanted a way to contribute to the effort, but had limited options with her mathematics degree. Eventually, she was offered an opportunity to be a volunteer teacher in Botswana for a year. This she completed, and upon her return she immediately applied to play a similar role in Somasco. She was accepted, and a year later she moved to Tanzania where she met my father. Due to political pressure, they were forced to move to the Netherlands before my sister and I were born. I tell this in such detail because I find that every part of it is important in understanding the way my parents are, and how they raised us as children. I can honestly say that I feel very proud of this family history.*

## **4. Lucia-Written narrative**

*Let's begin with my Mother. She grew up loving dance, dance and most importantly singing. At 17 she fell in love with my Step Dad \*\*\*\*\* only problem was that he was non-white (half Swazi, half Indian (Muslim)) he was 19 at the time. My Mother gave birth to her first child my sister \*\*\*\*\* she was 21 at the time. The time surrounding the birth of my sister was quiet turbulent for my Mother. Her family arranged a meeting and formerly disowned her; they had told my Mother that if she wanted to have a coloured baby she would have to reclassify her race and abandon the family name and marry my step dad \*\*\*\*\*; they did however offer to pay for my Mother to flee the country and start over. Pregnant and scared of the apartheid system she then tried to flee to England where she*

would qualify as a beautician and raise my sister, however someone had reported my Mother's position to the authorities in London and my Mother was stopped and sent back upon arrival.

Growing up I saw no colour in the confines of my house I just knew we were all family regardless of the pigment in our skin colour. The first time I realized race may be an issue was in pre-school when everyone around me thought that my nanny was my Mom and when I told them no and showed them who my Mom really was they just assumed I was adopted, this hurt me. In my immature mind this made me feel detached from my Mother almost as though she had betrayed me in some way. She then assured me that she did in fact give birth to me and that when a brown person and a white person made a baby we would come out caramel, I distinctly remember this explanation as I had to repeat it to all people who were confused about how I came to be me. Still children are cruel and only some people believed me when I said that this was my Mother. I became embarrassed about my race at a stage especially because I realized how much of an issue it really was, the 'popular' people in school that appealed to me were all white and the people I was generally told to hang out with, the other people of color always felt as though I was a 'drifter' they thought that I thought that I was better because of the way I articulated myself they found my vast vocabulary offensive. I didn't fit in anywhere I felt a bit lost in terms of who and what I was racially.

I don't believe race should exist in the society we live in. It only stands to separate us and create divides of class, culture and religion. We shouldn't base our opinion on humans on the pigment of their skin, it's futile. That's what I've come to learn. When people ask me what I am I tell them where my family comes from, and if I must be defined as a race it would be bi-racial: I resent the fact that this is not an option on most forms and census referring to race, as my culture is different to that of a coloured person.

#### **5. Maria-Written narrative**

Well my mother is a black woman from Swaziland and my father is a white Portuguese man. My family background is pretty basic, as basic as any average biracial individual. My identity was never an issue growing up in Swaziland, no one really questioned my race as it was very normal to people, which influenced the way that I grew up as I rarely felt different as a child. In my family I am the only biracial; my parents split up and are both re-married. My mom married a black man and she now has two other children with him and my dad also married a black woman whom he now also has two other biracial children with. However I was raised by my mom in a black home. As a child I never felt different and never saw any difference between my sister and myself, it was only when I got to Primary School that other children highlighted the fact that I was different, however this only became obvious in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I wished I was black at times because I had been brought up in a black home and most of my friends were black as well, and other times I wished I was white because my father is white and I also had white friends.

The best part about being biracial is the fact that I do not see colour, I see people. I have great relationships with all races, be it friendships or relationships. I am also not fussy about the men I date, the race does not matter to me, because I feel I can relate to any race and I am not judgmental, I am accepting.

#### **6. Mila-Written narrative**

My name is Mila. I am currently 20 years old and I live in Pretoria, South Africa. I have been living here for the past 19 years. My mother is from the Philippines and my father is from Zimbabwe. My father passed away in 1996 so I grew up with my mother and my older brother, \*\*\*\*\*. Growing up in South Africa was an interesting experience but \*\*\*\*\* and I had completely different experiences.

Once I started school in\*\*\*\*\*, all my friends were white because that's what I was used to when I was growing up in South Africa. The only difference was that now I was speaking English instead of

*Afrikaans. Junior school was a good phase in my life because nobody asked me about my ethnicity and I always figured that it was because they didn't notice, but now I realise that maybe they didn't think I'd answer them properly.*

*Once I got to primary school things started going downhill. That's when people noticed a difference in me as opposed to most black girls in my school. And this triggered a lot of bullying against my appearance, from my complexion to my hair to my eyes. Children in my class used to call me "China", "bushy hair" and "Mila Ugly-hair-a". Because of this I hated primary school and all the kids in it. Even a complaint to the principle wasn't enough to stop them from teasing me.*

*Another thing that seemed to make things better was the media. For some odd reason, biracial women are considered extremely attractive. And I guess me being half Asian was a bonus. Boys would walk passed me and say lines from famous rap songs about Asian eyes. And obviously being a teenager, getting attention from boys was never something that bothered me. Another problem is explaining why I don't know any of the official languages. I'm always considered arrogant because I've been living here for 19 years and I haven't bothered to learn any language besides Afrikaans. Even though I understand how that can come across as being arrogant, I never thought I had to learn any language because everybody knows how to speak English. Another reason is that I've always had the dream of leaving south Africa once I graduate from university and moving to a country where English is the main, if not, only language spoken. I just want to be in a situation where I don't have to ask waiters to repeat what they said in English or where I would never have to explain to strangers my reason for speaking English. A situation where people accept and respect your identity.*

*There were times when I wasn't sure what race I was. Was I black? Was I coloured? Was I Afro-Asian? When I fill out legal documents do I tick the "black" box or the "other" box? I was confused and at the same time, talking about it with others made me feel uncomfortable because I never wanted people to judge me for not knowing who I was. So this was an issue I learnt to deal with by myself, and now I've accepted it...I am Afro-Asian. That is how I identify myself. And this is who I am.*

## **7. Serena-Written narrative**

*I'm very proud of my family back ground, the diversity is amazing. My mother's side of the family and my father's side both get along well with each other. They keep in contact with each other even though my parents are divorce. On both sides my parents family me and my brother are treated equally amongst our other family members who are white or black. My mother has always taught me and my brother basic principles and values that we still appreciate and use today. I don't classify myself in just one race; if people do ask what race I am I would say "I'm Biracial" of "I'm mixed". I dislike it when people classify me as a "coloured", because a coloured person has both parents who are coloured where as I have parents from two different races and who come from two different cultures and backgrounds. While growing up, people would always look at my family strangely when we would go out for dinner or just to the mall. They would always ask my parents strange questions or make odd comments; we never thought much of it because people will always have something to say. I have always enjoyed having two different families, it is always interesting when I spend time with both sides, I learn so much from all of them. Throughout the past my family has received a lot of negative feedback from people whether it's racist comments or unnecessary questions. People would assume then when I went out with my father that he is my boyfriend or a friend especially at restaurants but those kinds of things wouldn't bother me because it was never any of their business. I personally have experienced very negative situations regarding my race and skin colour. When I was in primary school, kids would make fun of me because I had two different colour parents. I didn't give much attention to it, because I didn't and I still don't see anything wrong with it. I am Serena, I am 19 years old, I was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> February and I am proud to be a biracial woman.*

## **8. Tyler-Written narrative**

*My mother is a White American woman and my father is a South African Pedi man. My parents met in Zimbabwe in 1984. This was during the days of apartheid and so my father, who was in the ANC underground since the age of 18, was in exile. My mom who was working for Tecnica, anti-apartheid movement in Zimbabwe. It was here that my parents met and got married.*

*Throughout my life I have always drawn great pride from the fact that I as a biracial person was born in the year that South Africa became a "Rainbow Nation" and find it funny that I am in fact am a Rainbow Child.*

*When we returned to South Africa, me being 4 years old, we started off living in a small one bedroom flat in \*\*\*\*\*. During this same year my sister \*\*\*\*\*was born. When I turned 7 my parents got a divorce and for a long time this wounded me deeply. My mom, my sister and I stayed in Pretoria while my dad moved to Limpopo and started his political career there.*

*I think that my parents' divorce played, for a very long time, a negative role on me trying to navigate life as a child but also as a biracial person. I and my Fathers relationship deteriorated and although I was Biracial, for a long time, I only identified with my white side. I went to a predominantly white school, and grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood in an American household. At the present moment I have the most beautiful afro. I pride myself in my hair and for me it is one of the ways I show the world that I am proud of the fact that I am a biracial person. During those years though, till about the age of 10, before me and my father's relationship started to improve, I would shave my hair. My reason was that I wanted my hair to be straight like the white children's and in hindsight it could be said that I myself wanted to be white and my hair represented me not being white, but nothing can control this amazing hair, so sadly I would shave it off. Both my parents believe in social justice and fight for it in their own ways and so they have been the biggest influence on how I became the person I am today.*

*I believe that being biracial in South Africa at the moment is a blessing. In a society that is still so race orientated biracial people can be the bridge that brings together the divided. I have come to love and accept who I am and can proudly say that this Rainbow Child hasn't stepped foot in a hairdresser since age 10.*

## **9. Vuyani-Written narrative**

*My name is Vuyani, I am the 3<sup>rd</sup> born of our brothers. My father is born and raised in South Africa; my mother is born from the USA. My mother and father met in Boston while my father was studying abroad a long time ago.*

*The positive part is that besides being able to associate with any race, I have always been able to fit in with white people be it English, foreign or Afrikaners not as frequent as the two. Black people I find more accepting, I don't really mix much with culturally coloured people but wouldn't have a problem with that either. From primary school up I have had a balance or mix of all ethnicities in my friendships. I have never felt awkward around any of them unless it's all black or all white, then it gets a bit awkward but nothing I can't handle. I once visited a friend of mine in \*\*\*\*\* (a small community outside Polokwane), and there it was all white, but I never had a problem with anyone and they seemed to enjoy my company, ended up getting a 'sokkie' dance with an Afrikaans girl, I did think there would be objections but there was nothing. I won't even get started about all the experiences I have shared with black people. I must say that I do find it easier from my side to engage and be accepted by black people compared to Afrikaans people.*

*I played rugby for the \*\*\*\*\* until the end of \*\*\*\*\* levels. That place is filled with a lot of racism or division. After practice one day a mate (Afrikaans guy) was driving me to campus, and called a black guy “kaffir” in front of me. I didn’t approach him about it. At \*\*\*\*\* (the \*\*\*\*\* stadium or training centre) the team never chilled together. Apparently to black youth, Pretoria and Bloemfontein are associated as being the still apartheid areas of South Africa. I agree with that slightly. Once as a school we use to tour to Grey Bloem each year on bus. The team would then at 5am get hosted by a player from the opposite side that afternoon; they would approach a player and host them. I remember the black guys from our school, including me at times, would not get approached and would have to stay in the hostel, and take care of ourselves the whole day. The thing that struck me the most was that as black people we laughed about and didn’t really take offence to it. I felt sorrier for them than for us.*

*From all the situations I have experienced I can say that I am grateful for being in an interracial family, I feel like I have an identity when it comes to culture, I consider myself Xhosa. I feel that I have also been able to experience different cultures to their full without being judged or frequently discriminated against. I believe my views on cultures and societies is not only diverse but helps me choose who I want to be. I try to take positives from black people and white people, there are certain cultures I dislike but feel like I cannot be racist unless I am blinded by that thought. I do feel that I can identify with black people more than white people because interracial people in South Africa are considered black. Although I definitely enjoy my white friends. Biracial to me is not a culture but a genetic difference, some people have curly hair, some straight , some people get receding hairlines much earlier in life and others not so early, I feel race is just a variant of who we are. As much as my race has played a larger part of who I am, I would not want to be judged on my race.*

#### **10. Mpho-Written narrative**

*Being biracial in this day and age is quite fascinating. When people ask me what my race classification is I cannot give them a definition of my own, I can tell them that I am referred to as biracial, interracial or coloured. There might be a dictionary definition to what I am but there is no real definition to what I am. During the time of my up-bring I was unaware of what was happening around me in a so called unstable political environment. I was born and raised in the city of Johannesburg until I reached the age of ten. My mom was a Zulu/Shanghai woman that was born in Kwazulu-Natal - KwaMashu that was highly involved in the struggle and played an active role as an MK Umkhonto we Sizwe member. My father on the other hand was born and raised in Pietermaritzburg. My parents were both involved in performing arts, specifically music and that is how they met. They met in Japan as both of them were involved in the political struggle. As a child I did not find having parents of opposite races odd. I did not see colour as a child up until I had reached primary school Grade 3 when I got confronted about my parents being opposite races.*

*Growing up in Primary School were a few of the worst years of my life as I attended an Afrikaans primary school, I was teased because of my race and all I wished for at that time was to be a completely white child with wavy spiky hair. As I grew older and entered the gates of High School I was scared of what to expect. At first people were shocked of what I was, but then as time went and thing changed I went from being different and weird to uniquely beautiful. In High School I changed from wanting to be white to completely accepting myself as I am. I leaned more on the “black” side and became physically attracted to black and coloured women. Now I am at peace with myself and I accept everything that I am. Although I would see myself as more “black” I still can’t classify myself as anything yet. I enjoy my life and live to the fullest.*

## **RESEARCHER FIELD NOTES AND JOURNAL**

**Researcher journal: 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2012:** *I have decided to do my thesis on something close to my heart. I have decided to research biracial experiences and identity within a South African context. As a researcher, I am seeking more knowledge on the topic and I also want to gain an understanding of other biracial individuals whose life experiences may be similar to mine. As a scholar, I sought to comprehend the research topic by engaging with theoretical and conceptual frameworks related to biracial identity and identity in general. And finally, as an educational psychologist researcher I wanted to make a contribution to the literature on multicultural/multiracial counseling so as to enhance the provision of services for interracial families and multiracial/biracial individuals in S.A.*

**Researcher journal: 6th July, 2012:** *Before I begun data collection, I was concerned that I would have difficulty in finding biracial participants in the 18-25 age group, as I only know biracial individuals in my own age group. However, Shaun and Flika (my younger siblings) have assisted me in finding biracial participants and those biracial participants have introduced me to other biracial individuals. So I am happy that I have been able to find 5 girls and boys willing to participate and to share their narratives for the study.*

**Researcher journal: 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2012:** *I am excited to meet Maria and Mpho today for the first interviews. I am also nervous and uncertain of how the narrative interviews will proceed. I have gone through the literature and compiled some questions that I would like to use as follow-up questions, once they have told me their narratives. However, I keep reminding myself to not disturb their narratives and to listen to their stories related to their identity construction as a biracial individual. Although, I am aware that my participants and I may share similar life experiences related to being biracial, I am also mindful to the uniqueness of each participant whom I will interact with during this research journey. I am aware that although there may be similarities in our experiences, there will also be differences. I look forward to listening to their narratives and reading their written narratives as well.*

**Researcher journal: 6th September, 2012:** *After most interviews, participants' expressed how comfortable they felt sharing their stories with me as they found it easier opening up about their biracial experiences because of my biracial status. They were also interested to know my viewpoints on similar experiences we had shared. As a feminist researcher, I was able to share my own experiences with the participants. However, I had to debrief with my supervisors because at times I felt that I played up my biracial identity during data collection, as I realised that I did probably act differently with the participants because of our shared identity. Thus, through debriefing, I had to learn how to find a balance between my researcher role identity and my biracial identity, so as to be aware of my behaviour and self-narratives influencing the participants. Thus, it has been a constant negotiation of these two roles during the research process, which I constantly had to reflect on and be mindful of.*

**Researcher journal: 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2012:** *Because we share an identity, that of being biracial... I am concerned that I may be missing valuable information during the interviews from the participants. I have realised listening to the audio-tapes and reading the transcripts simultaneously, at times the participants leave certain statements unsaid or incomplete, as a result of our shared identity. I need*

*to ensure that in the second interviews, I ask for further explanation and more examples to ensure that their narratives are heard and not silenced.*

**Field notes: 23rd December 2012:** *I think because biracial individuals growing up don't have many biracial role models in the South African media and feel alone and different from their friends. I think the media and specifically American biracial celebrities played an important role in the construction of a positive biracial identity. Talking to participants after the interview, most girls shared that watching or reading interviews where biracial celebrities discussed their own difficulties constructing their own identities, helped them to feel that they were not alone in their biracial struggles.*

**Field notes: 27th December 2012:** *I have realised that many of the participants rejected the colour lines or categories that have been defined in South Africa and instead have chosen to favour a more fluid sense of identity, thus some participants in the study during different times and circumstances chose to identify as black, others as white, sometimes biracial, others not wanting to be labeled but to be appreciated and valued just for being themselves....for being a person....others wanting to identify in non-racial terms and to be seen instead as human and more importantly wanting both of their racial heritages to be acknowledged. It seems freedom to identify as they choose, is so important to them and empowering as well....I love the diversity of identities within the narratives ☺.*

*It's interesting to note that although some siblings have chosen a similar identity as some participants, some siblings constructed a different identity to the participants. The choice in peers has a big influence on how biracial individuals construct their identity.*

**Researcher journal: 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2013:** *The research journal is assisting me in writing my feelings and thoughts about my experiences during my research journey. I am constantly aware of the different roles (educational psychologist, sharing a biracial identity and researcher) that I play during the research process. As an educational psychologist, self-reflection has always been something that I have engaged in and it has assisted me to be aware of my own subjectivity and biases during the research process and specifically during data collection. Talking to my supervisors of issues that have arisen and writing in the researcher journal has also helped me to bracket certain prejudices that I bring into the research process and assisted me to maintain objectivity. Sharing a biracial identity has made the participants more open to sharing their biracial experiences, however during data collection I also have to be cognisant of undertaking my researcher role. Keeping a researcher diary is helping me to be cognisant of the different roles I play and helping me to constantly juggle those roles and also adapt according to the situation during the research process.*

**Field notes: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013:** *It was interesting to note that during or after my interviews with most of the participants, they would give me an historical account of the coloured people in South Africa, to further distance themselves from coloured people. Many stories from the participants begun with narratives of the first interracial relationships in South Africa beginning with the arrival of the Dutch EAST India Company (DEIC) in the cape and various settlers having relations with non-white women, resulting in biracial children but emphasizing that coloureds are descendants from past interracial relationship and that through apartheid laws, such as the group areas act, this group multiplied and created a separate racial group, according to the participants. Many participants admitted in our conversations that they learnt about South Africa's racial relations and specifically coloured people's history, so that they could be able to explain to others why they did not identify as*



coloured but instead identified as biracial and to have an explanation to give individuals as why they were different to coloured people and why they should be seen as biracial individuals instead. The need of the participants to not be identified as coloured was so strong, that they chose to educate themselves about the S.A history.

**Researcher journal: 22nd March 2013:** My researcher journal is also assisting me with my literature chapter, as I get to reflect on my thoughts and my reactions to the literature (academic articles and books). Reflecting on the literature is helping me to interact with my readings, which enhances my understanding of the literature being read.

**Field notes: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2013:** Listening to the interviews, it seems that the parents' families mainly experienced shock more than a total rejection of the interracial relationship. Several factors seem to make families hesitant about the interracial relationship, such as culture. Some parents, specifically the mothers were not accepted as they either did not conform to their husband's culture nor had knowledge of their role as a woman in the African culture of the father. I also find it interesting that Tyler's grandparents were concerned about how the biracial children would fair in a society that is racially segregated. As people usually think that biracial children will face their whole lives rejected and lonely because of being from two racial groups in society. Although the participants in this study reflected and recalled having faced challenges, this does not seem to be the case within this study.

**Field notes: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2013:** Acceptance seems to be followed by their mothers adapting to the cultural traditions of the fathers' African culture or in the case of the father, finding common ground with their in-laws. It is interesting to note a patriarchal thread weaving in their narratives. Their fathers were accepted because of their knowledge on some topic, thus being revered for their intellect whereas their mothers had to perform a specific gender role such as cooking and serving the family. Men are being valued for their intellect and women valued for being able to undertake female roles in the family.

Participants have shared how proud they are that their parents fought against apartheid. Hearing their stories, makes me realize how much sacrifice their parents made by being part of the struggle, not only did they put their lives in danger, but also their families as well. It seems most participants' parents lived in exile and also met their partners in exile.

**Field notes: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013:** Divorce seems to have a negative impact on the participant's relationships' with their fathers. The long-distance that some participants share with their extended families also seems to impact the relationship. Some participants only seem to visit their family once a year and some haven't visited them in years. I sensed a longing at times by participants to have shared a closer relationship with their extended families. Language keeps coming up as an important factor in identity construction. Talking to the participants made me realize that language is a crucial factor when participants constructed their multiple identities. Specifically, one participant felt closer to one part of their family because of language and they tended to identify with that family's heritage (be it racial or cultural). Also participants who experienced language barriers seemed to experience barriers with bonding with their extended family members. Language is as important to the construction of identity as it's a way for families to transmit their beliefs, values, traditions, heritage and culture to their biracial children.

*When asked to tell me about their parents, participants automatically jumped to their parents' culture and a few mentioned their parents' religious views. Participants also shared certain aspects of their parents' culture that they did not agree with. It seems a few of the girls did not want to engage with lobola and also mentioned difficulty adapting to the gender roles in the African cultures.*

**Researcher journal: 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2013:** *Many of the participants whom I have interviewed told me that they found the narrative interviews and written narratives quite therapeutic and that it enabled them to reflect on and re-evaluate their life experiences and their biracial identity.*

*In a way it, was also therapeutic for me; when people now ask me: "what are you?" I no longer get confused and perplexed, the answer is simple: I am a proudly bi-racial South African..... As an adult I do feel a sense of pride in my biracial identity. When I looked back at my journey of self-discovery I know that all the experiences both positive and negative, made me stronger and helped to shape into the person I am today. I have come full circle and this study is part of my healing process. I want people out there to know that biracial people do exist and that we count and that our voices matter. That we shouldn't be forced to choose between either of our parents' race or culture and that we are becoming more and more a feature in the South African landscape. I dream of a society that is open and accepts, respects and treasure our cultural and racial differences so all children despite their backgrounds feel that they belong and matter.*

*I am grateful to be a bi-racial woman because it has opened my heart to understand and accept people from different races, and cultural backgrounds. Sometimes I hear people describing mixed families, as very complex units, with serious cultural issues and clashes, that is not my experience, our family, is just like any other family we laugh, argue and love, the clashes at home are over the TV remote control and who will wash the dishes?. The racial hang ups and confusion are only in other people heads, not ours. In my veins runs European rivers and in my eyes I see African sunsets. I belong to both places.....I am beautifully me..... I am a citizen of the world.*

**Researcher journal- 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2014:** *As my research journey draws to an end, I have realised this research process has changed me in many ways. During these four years in which I experienced highs and lows, I learnt the following: (i) learnt to create a balance between work, my studies, family and friends- this is an ongoing process for me still, (ii) the support of family and friends is invaluable!, (iii) knowing when I am stressed and overworked and when to stop to relax and have fun, (iv) following your interests in research- I started off with a completely different topic which I had no passion for, (v) planning ahead, being disciplined and having a routine when working on research, (vi) asking for help during research- reaching out to my supervisors, friends and family kept me sane, (vii) learning to think of the PhD process as a journey and not a destination....!!*

## Research study schedule

**2012/2013**

	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Initial meeting or contact</b>	<b>Participant consent form signed</b>	<b>Demographics of research participants</b>	<b>Personal narrative</b>	<b>First narrative interview</b>	<b>Second narrative interview</b>	<b>Member checking</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Tyler</b>	1/03/2013	Handed in on the 12/06/2013	Handed in on the 12/06/2013	Handed in on the 22/03/2013	22/03/2013 11:00-12:00	12/06/2013 14:30-15:00	05/07/2013 10:00 – 10:30
<b>2</b>	<b>Serena</b>	11/03/2013	Handed in on 18/03/2013	Handed in on 18/03/2013	Handed in on 18/03/2013	18/03/2013 14:00-14:30	10/06/2013 11:00-11:30	8/8/ 2013 Email
<b>3</b>	<b>Lucia</b>	07/08/2012	Handed in on 07/08/2012	Handed in on 07/08/2012	Handed in on 07/08/2012	07/08/2012 12:20-13:30	07/06/2013 10:30-11:30	26/06/2013 11:00-11:30
<b>4</b>	<b>Christopher</b>	Contact through Face Book emails on the following dates : 8/11/2012 12/11/2012 28/11/2012 30/11/2012 3/12/2012 13/12/2012 14/12/2012 16/12/2012	Handed in on 15/12/2012	Handed in on 15/12/2012	Handed in on 15/12/2012	15/12/2012 14:30-16:00	13/06/2013 14:00-15:00	Sent via email on the 09/07/2013 9:30
<b>5</b>	<b>Maria</b>	26/07/2012 14:00-14:30	Handed in on 26 /07/2012	Handed in on 17/08/2012	Handed in on 17/08/2012	17/08/2012 16:00-16:30	11/06/2013 12:00-12:30	09/07/2013 11:00-11:15

<b>6</b>	<b>Mpho</b>	17/08/2012 16:35-17:30	Handed in on 17/08/2012	Handed in on 17/08/2012	Handed in on 17/08/2012	17/08/2012 16:35-17:30	12/06/2013 9:00-10:00	8/8/ 2013 Email
<b>7</b>	<b>Adrianna</b>	19/06/2013 14:00-14:30	Handed in on 10/07/2013	Handed in on 10/07/2013	Handed in on 04/07/2013	08/07/2013 12:00-13:00	10/07/2013 12:00-13:00	8/8/ 2013 Email
<b>8</b>	<b>Vuyani</b>	03/08/2012 13:20-13:40	Handed in on 3/08/2012	Handed in on 21/08/2012	Handed in on 21/08/2012	21/08/2012 17:00-18:00	11/06/2013 10:30-11:00	26/06/2013 11:30-11:45
<b>9</b>	<b>Hugo</b>	Contacted me through email on the following dates: 20/10/2012 6/11/2012 10/12/2012 14/12/2012	Handed in on 14/12/2012	Handed in on 14/12/2012	Handed in on 14/12/2012	14/12/2013 9:30-10:30	09/06/2013 9:30-10:00	06/07/2013 9:30-10:00
<b>10</b>	<b>Mila</b>	27/ 07/2012 12:00- 12:30	Handed in on 27/07/2012	Handed in on 3/08/2012	Handed in on 3/08/2012	3/08/2012 10:00-11:00	05/06/2013 10:30-11:00	26/06/2013 10:30-10:45

## Biracial Identity Models

Models	Description of model	Stages
<b>Jacob (1978, 1992)</b>	<p>Jacobs proposed three distinct stages of development in biracial identity formation. Utilizing data from interviews and doll –play instrument methodology with biracial children of Black and White heritage ranging in age from 3 to 8, he hypothesized, the first two stages and projected a third stage that occurs beyond the age of 8. His three main stages state that a biracial individual moves from noticing racial differences, to understanding what meaning these have in his or her life, to being an individual of combined heritage (Pedrotti, Edwards &amp; Lopez, 2008; Kerwin &amp; Ponterotto, 1995).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Precolor constancy- (0-4 ½ years old) <b>play and experimentation with colour</b> in which the child acquires the understanding that one’s skin colour is an enduring characteristic.</li> <li>2. Post-color constancy- (4 ½ years and older) – <b>biracial label and racial ambivalence</b>, in which the child become ambivalent about his or her colour, often rejecting one group and then the other.</li> <li>3. Biracial identity- (8 to 12 years of age) – <b>biracial identity</b>, in which the child recognizes that racial group membership is determined by parentage, but is correlated with skin colour (Jacob, 192Miville, Constantine, Baysden &amp; So-Lloyd, 2005; Kerwin &amp; Ponterotto, 1995; Gillem, Cohn &amp; Throne, 2001; Herman, 2008).</li> </ol>
<b>Kich (1992)</b>	<p>Kich (1992) developed his model on the basis of his findings of his dissertation a qualitative study involving adults from Japanese and white heritage. In this theory, the progress of biracial individuals was delineated from being aware of differentness, to struggling for acceptance, to eventually accepting a biracial identity (Pedrotti, Edwards &amp; Lopez, 2008; Kerwin &amp; Ponterotto,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ages 3 to 10- there is <b>an initial awareness of differences and dissonance between self-perceptions and others’ perceptions</b>. All biracial individuals during this stage, regardless of their racial heritage, experience a sense of being different.</li> <li>2. Ages 8 through to late adolescence - <b>a struggle for self-acceptance and acceptance from others</b>. In this stage, biracial individuals interact with friends, peers and the wider community. These interactions and experiences increase feelings that others perceive them and their families as different</li> </ol>

	1995).	<p><b>3. Late adolescence or young adulthood- acceptance of self and the individual asserts a valued biracial identity and bicultural identity.</b> The biracial individual gains the ability to create a congruent self-definition in which the way they see themselves is not determined by others' definitions and stereotypes (Kich, 1992; Miville, Constantine, Baysden &amp; So-Lloyd, 2005; Kerwin &amp; Ponterotto, 1995; Gillem et al., 2001; Herman, 2008).</p>
<p><b>Poston (1990)</b></p>	<p>In 1990, Poston proposed a “new and positive” biracial identity development model with five stages (Poston, 1990:15), steering away from the idea that deficits alone define the biracial experience. According Poston’s model, the process moves from a stage in which identity is defined on a personal level, to stages in which choices to connect with various races are made, and finally an integration stage in which the individuals accepts and values their biracial identity. Poston states that this developmental process entails a biracial experience which can have positive attributes; however, biracial individuals may also experience conflict and struggles during their identity formation (Pedrotti, Edwards &amp; Lopez, 2008; Renn, 2008; Hud-Aleem &amp; Countryman, 2008).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Personal identity-</b> usually occurs in childhood, in which the child will tend to have a sense of self that is independent of his or her racial background and their membership in an ethnic group is just becoming salient.</li> <li><b>2. Choice of group categorization-</b> the young individuals perceives him or her as compelled to choose an identity, usually of just one ethnic or racial group. This can be a time of crisis and alienation for the individual.</li> <li><b>3. Enmeshment/denial-</b> this stage is characterized by the individual having feelings of guilt and confusion at having to choose one identity that is not fully expressive of one’s background. In addition, the individual may be experiencing rejection from one or more groups due to their identity choice. Guilt at not being able to identify with all aspects of his or her heritage may lead to anger, shame, or self-hatred; resolving the guilt and anger is necessary to move beyond this level.</li> <li><b>4. Appreciation-</b> individuals appreciate their biracial identity and broaden their racial reference group through learning about all aspects of their racial and ethnic heritage and cultures, but they still tend to identify with one group more than with others.</li> <li><b>5. Integration-</b> This stage occurs when the individual values and appreciates their biracial identity. The individual continues to acquire</li> </ol>

		<p>knowledge regarding their racial and ethnic identities and experience a sense of wholeness and integration (Poston, 1990; Renn, 2008; Garbarini-Philippe, 2010; Miville , Constantine, Baysden &amp; So-Lloyd, 2005; Herman, 2008; Kerwin &amp; Ponterotto, 1995).</p>
<p><b>Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995)</b></p>	<p>Kerwin and Ponterotto’s (1995) model of biracial identity development uses age-based developmental markers to illustrate progression in racial awareness and biracial acceptance as a factor of social expectations and individual processes. The model attempts to move away from the ‘labelling’ associated with the marginal man model, and the idea of “necessary conflict” in “choosing” one parental heritage over the other as in Poston’s (1990) model. There is also an attempt within this model to publicise the fact that biracial individuals are willing and able to discuss their experiences in holding a dual identity (Kerwin, et al., 1993; Awai, 2004; Miville et al., 2005)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In the <b>preschool stage</b>, (up to 5 years of age), racial awareness emerges, whereby biracial children recognize similarities and differences in physical appearance amongst their parents. This awareness might be a function of the degree of parental sensitivity to and willingness to address race-related issues.</li> <li>2. In the <b>entry to school stage</b>, the sense of self developed by the child through interactions with family and friends is challenged upon entry to school and questions such as “what are you?” are asked more frequently to biracial children. Self-identification with a given group or social category begins to become a factor in the biracial child’s development and the child begins to use descriptive terms and labels provided by family to define self.</li> <li>3. In the <b>preadolescence stage</b>, there is an increased awareness of social meanings ascribed to social groups as characterized by skin colour, physical appearance, language ethnicity, and religion. There is also an increased recognition of one’s own and others’ group membership being related to factors such as skin colour, physical appearance, language and culture. Children in this stage tend to use labels representative of social groups by race, ethnicity and/or religious background rather than terms that are simply physical descriptors.</li> <li>4. The <b>adolescence stage</b> is the most challenging stage for biracial youngsters due to both developmental factors characteristic of this age</li> </ol>

		<p>group and societal pressures. The biracial individual faces pressure to identify with one social group and is often expected to identify with the racial group of a parent of colour. The pressure of dating is also another factor that is especially important to the biracial adolescent as issues of interracial dating may bring race issues to the forefront due to the reaction of others (especially parents of potential dating partners)</p> <p>5. In the <b>college/young adulthood stage</b>, there may be a continued immersion in a monoracial group with a resultant rejection of the other. Although rejection of societal limits and an acceptance of the dual nature of biraciality is more likely. This is due to increased self-efficacy accompanying this stage of life generally. The advantages of a biracial heritage become clearer at this stage, as do the disadvantages (Kerwin &amp; Ponterotto, 1995).</p> <p>6. <b>The adulthood stage</b>- the development of a biracial identity is viewed as a lifelong process and is seen as a continuing integration throughout adulthood of the different facets making up one's racial identity. Kerwin and Ponterotto (1995) state that "...with the successful resolution of earlier stages there will be a continuing exploration and interest in different cultures, including one's own" (p. 213). The individuals may be much more flexible in terms of their individual identity as a result of their experience and be able to accept a wider range of interpersonal relations (Miville, Constantine, Baysden &amp; So-Lloyd, 2005; Kerwin and Ponterotto, 1995; Awai, 2004; Gillem et al, 2001).</p>
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