

**A JOURNEY OF MIXED-RACE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: AN
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

by

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My deepest appreciation and thanks go to my brother and my father. It has been a long, challenging journey and we have had to drastically transform our lives without Mum by our side. I could not have done it without your strength and support through our time of loss.

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I am thankful for you all!

DECLARATION

I, Alexa Leigh Berlein, declare that this Masters dissertation is my original work and all sources have been quoted and acknowledged by references where appropriate. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted before at any university for any other degree.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to contribute to the limited literature on Mixed-Race identity development in the post-apartheid context while providing a personal, evocative, and critical exploration of Mixed-Race identity. The objectives were to use self-reflection as a tool to think critically about how close relationships and other systemic factors (such as friendships, school environment and broader societal factors) that contributed to my Mixed-Race identity development, played a significant role.

The autoethnographic methodology was used to harness the quality of evocative and personal writing in the process of knowledge creation and establishing a voice for the Mixed-Race experience through the narration of my personal experiences. Autoethnography is a methodology that situates the researcher as the 'data' by using first-person accounts of their experiences to analyse and discuss particular social and cultural phenomena. Root's ecological model for multiracial identity development was used as a framework to explore and analyse how systemic factors influenced and shaped my Mixed-Race identity development. Additionally, Worthman's bio-ecocultural model was used to explore the influence of my bond with my parents on my racial identity formation in childhood.

Data collection involved me engaging in a reflexive journaling process. Thematic analysis was used to develop themes from my reflexive journal. Three main themes were found, namely my bond with my parents and their socialisation practices, my experience of being 'the other' and an outsider in social settings, and my close friendships. While I discuss the themes separately, there was considerable overlap between the themes and the factors involved in the discussion which suggests a complex relationship between multiple systemic factors (i.e. gender, skin tone, familial relationships, and social settings) that influenced my racial identity development. In conclusion, my racial identity development was (and still is) a lifelong process of self-discovery as I continue to be confronted with my dual-racial heritage in a predominantly monoracial South Africa. Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the limitations and potential recommendations for future research has also been discussed.

Keywords: Mixed-Race, racial identity development, ecological model, developmental microniche, autoethnography, South Africa.

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Glossary of Terms

1. **Autoethnography** - Methodology whereby the researcher uses their personal narrative as 'data' to explore, critique, and discuss a particular culture or context.
2. **Developmental Microniche** - the site where knowledge transmission occurs between parent and child with outcomes for the child's development.
3. **Dual-racial** - also refers to a person who has parents from two different race groups.
4. **Mixed-Race** - a racial identity label that refers to a person whose parents are from two different racial categories (e.g. Black, White, Indian, Coloured).
5. **Monoracial** - refers to a person whose parents are from the same racial category/group.
6. **Moderate Autoethnography** - Use of both an evocative and analytical approach to writing an autoethnography. The researcher uses emotive and evocative means of writing while being analytical of their experiences as a way of generating knowledge.
7. **Nanima** - Maternal Grandmother in a variety of Indian languages, including Hindi, whereas dadima refers to the paternal grandmother.
8. **Sari** - a lightweight, lengthy silk cloth that is draped over the shoulder and around the body to form the shape of a dress. Traditionally worn by South Asian women.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

“Look at us; we are such a rainbow nation tonight ... We have a Black one, a few Whites, an Italian, and goodness knows what”. His gaze paused on me, for a split second before he laughed at his own joke. All around, there was awkwardness in the atmosphere. “Was this actually a joke?”, I wondered, feeling shocked, and suddenly exposed. I thought that we were enjoying a chilly Winter’s evening around a braai with a group of high school friends, but somehow this comment threw me off guard as I looked around at the now apparent divide in all our uncomfortable grins. I receded, because there I was. I was the ‘what’ ... the ‘weird’ one ...or at least that is how I felt because I was not one race. I was mixed: Half Indian Half White, from a family where my parents were not the same race. My mother was Indian and my father, White. I wished to speak up, but what answer should I have given? There was safety in silence, so silent I remained; but those words, ‘Goodness knows what’ ... ‘goodness knows what’ stuck with me.

This study is about my identity development as a Mixed-Race female living in South Africa. The excerpt above, extracted from a personal journal, illustrates an experience of being confronted with my Mixed-Race identity, and my difficulty with finding my voice amongst friends who all identified with a single race. The experience of Mixed-Race individuals in South Africa has been sparsely explored, yet such individuals’ lived experiences, particularly of their racial identity, may be different to that of monoracial individuals (Francis, 2008; Pang, 2018). In South Africa, one’s racial identity is conventionally viewed as a single, fixed category (Francis, 2008). However, as my journal extract illustrates, I was confronted regularly with the reality of not fitting into a single race group like my other friends, contradicting the normative notions of single-race identification and classification. This resulted in me feeling different, left out, or ‘othered’ for being labelled “goodness knows what”. My experiences and identity of being a

Mixed-Race person illustrates how engaging in social contexts that view racial identity as a singular, fixed category raises issues of belonging and fitting into this world (Pang, 2018).

Extracts from my reflexive journal, such as the above, have been included in a later chapter to facilitate in-depth exploration of my Mixed-Race identity, utilising an autoethnographic methodology. Autoethnography is a methodology that challenges traditional scientific research inquiry by relying on the researcher's personal experiences to examine, critique, and explore social and cultural beliefs, norms, and practices in a particular context (Adams et al., 2015). It also provides a platform from which marginalised individuals can develop a voice and authentically express their experiences. I used an autoethnographic approach to blend my personal experience in an emotive manner whilst being analytical and critical of the sociocultural context in which I was confronted with my 'mixedness'. Further detail is provided in Chapter 3 of what autoethnography is and how I used it to illustrate and discuss my Mixed-Race identity development.

1.2 Research problem

The literature on Mixed-Race identity development within the South African context is sparse, particularly regarding personal accounts of how Mixed-Race individuals interpret and make sense of their lived experience and racial identity (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Francis, 2008). Historically, South Africans were not permitted, by law, to identify with more than one race simultaneously under the apartheid system. These now-repealed laws constrained individuals to singular, fixed racial categories namely, Black, White, Indian, and Coloured (Posel, 2010). As such, during apartheid, a category for Mixed-Racial individuals did not exist, formally denying the possibility of a Mixed-Race population in a society that was predominantly organised according to race. An underlying pattern of exclusion and denial of a Mixed-Race identity/people can be traced from apartheid to the present day with earlier manifestations including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and Immorality Amendment Act which criminalised intermarriage and sexual relations between racial groups (Noah, 2015). Thus, with this legal apparatus, the apartheid system attempted to prevent racial mixing and interracial families and, by extension, Mixed-Race children (Noah, 2015).

In contemporary South Africa, apartheid-era racial categories continue to be used, which perpetuates the culture of racial labelling in this context. Such categories are used for official purposes (e.g. the national Census), but also unofficially between individuals and groups as a socio-political remnant embedded within social interactions (Posel, 2010). Although the label ‘Coloured’ is used in the South African context as a singular/monoracial term to refer to a population group in South Africa that has multiracial ancestry, it is different to the label ‘Mixed-Race’. This is because the term ‘Mixed-Race’ refers to an individual whose parents are of *two* different race groups. Therefore, the label ‘Coloured’ does not adequately account for the Mixed-Race population as it does not account for the dual-racial reality and history that such individuals hold. There remains no formal recognition of a Mixed-Race group in South Africa. Instead, an ‘Unspecified/Other’ category provides the space amongst the formally recognised race groups as an attempt to include those that do not fit the existing socially designated categories. However, this implies exclusion and that an individual’s qualities and characteristics that do not conform to the norm, are not valued (Turner, 2016). Arguably, the use of ‘Other’ is a problematic term because it brings to the forefront the notion of the ‘the other’—a population or group that is marginalised, unrecognised, and considered inferior to a dominant population group (Johnson & Coleman, 2012; Susser, 2018). By virtue of being ‘Unspecified/Other’, those who identify as Mixed-Race are delegitimised by this lack of acknowledgement and recognition of their mixedness as a bona fide racial identity alongside others. It continues to perpetuate the denial and silencing of a Mixed-Race identity and population group living in contemporary South Africa. Thus, this denies such individuals as legitimate members of society, and their choice to reflect their dual-racial experiences and identities (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Noah, 2015; Turner, 2016).

1.3 Justification

As mentioned previously, research on Mixed-Race identity development in South Africa remains scarce with some exceptions reflected in the work of Francis (2008) and Carvalho-Malekane (2015). An even greater rarity in the literature is autoethnographic accounts of the lived experiences of racially mixed individuals. This is surprising, given that the purpose of autoethnography is to provide the platform that is currently lacking for such marginalised voices to be heard, accentuated, and emphasised. This paper aims to contribute to correcting this

deficit. Unlike other methodologies where external researchers produce their view of a particular population group or phenomena of study, autoethnography allows for the first-person voice to be heard. This is particularly important for marginalised groups whose personal experiences and voices are minimized and oppressed through an act of silencing and ‘othering’ (Herzog, 2018). By using my personal story of being Mixed-Race, I provide first-person insight into Mixed-Race identity development and experiences. Moreover, Ellis et al. (2011) emphasised that knowledge is created through the reader’s engagement with the author’s story and their ability to empathise or relate to the given text. Knowledge is, therefore, created through the reader’s interpretation of the autoethnographic piece.

In my study, I aimed to utilise moderate autoethnography as described by Wall (2016), in which I provide a personal, evocative, yet analytical approach to my Mixed-Race identity development. In doing so, my study adds to the existing literature and research by a) providing an academic and qualitative analysis of Mixed-Race identity development, where limited studies on the topic exist within the South African context, and b) generating knowledge, empathy, and compassion through sharing my personal narrative. The information that I provide through autoethnography is useful in its attempt to address and challenge traditional forms of scientific enquiry. Ellis et al. (2011) further suggest that other methodologies do not adequately invite an empathic and compassionate engagement with a particular population of study; other methodologies are passive and distant third-person engagements with the population group concerned. Therefore, by using autoethnography, I hope to add to the literature in a way that attempts to draw an intimate and compassionate connection between the reader and my research, while providing a voice to the experience of being Mixed-Race. Mixed-Race individuals constitute one of the fastest growing populations within and outside the United States of America (USA), Canada, and the United Kingdom (UK) (Kim, 2016). As such, there has been much interest in their experiences of racial identity and how their mixed heritage influences, and is influenced by, daily interactions with their environments and social settings (Kim, 2016). Current research of the lived experiences of Mixed-Race individuals has been conducted predominantly in the USA, and to a lesser degree in Korea and the UK (Kim, 2016). Research in these contexts indicated that the journey of Mixed-Race identity development was complex and different to those of monoracial individuals’ identity development, calling for separate attention and focus to the Mixed-Race experience (Kim, 2016). However, research in the South African

context has been very limited. Therefore, I explored my personal journey and experience of being Mixed-Race to provide a context-relevant understanding of the process of Mixed-Race identity development within South Africa. This is important given that little is known about this racial identity in a South African context.

Furthermore, this paper is an autoethnographic account of *my* story. This calls for a context-specific exploration into my own racial identity development, as Mixed-Race individuals' identity developments are often individually and uniquely impacted by a variety of factors related to personal context (Kim, 2016;). It has also been documented that a Mixed-Race individuals' identity development is significantly shaped by context specific factors such as family identity, school environment, and personality traits (Hubbard & Utsey, 2015; Root, 1998). Root (1998) also indicated that one's racial identity development is shaped by a region's specific race relations and history. Therefore, in justification of this study, the limited literature of Mixed-Race identity in South Africa calls for a deeper understanding into this phenomenon and subsequent studies, such as mine, to be conducted.

1.4 Aims of the study

In utilising my personal narrative, my work aimed to provide insight for the reader into the lived experience of being Mixed-Race in a South African society that subscribes to fixed and monoracial notions of race. The overall aim of this study was to explore how social and environmental factors, such as my close personal relationships, home, and school environment influenced and contributed to my Mixed-Racial identity development.

1.5 Research question

How did my close personal relationships as well as my social and physical environments shape and influence my racial identity development as a Mixed-Race South African?

1.6 Objectives

In order to achieve the abovementioned aim and answer the posed research question, the following objectives were addressed:

- a) I drew on my experiences using an autoethnographic approach, with self-reflection as a tool, to discuss issues of racial identity and how the culture of racial labelling influenced my racial identity development.
- b) I explored how my closest relationships (family and friends), and my environment, influenced my view of myself as a person of Mixed-Racial heritage.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 (Introduction): The topic is briefly introduced and an overview of the justification and aims of the study are provided.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review): This chapter provides a review of the relevant national and international literature to provide a contextual background this study. A discussion of the theoretical framework that was used to guide the analysis was also included.

Chapter 3 (Methodology): This chapter describes the autoethnographic methodology in detail, the reflexive journaling process, and steps followed in the data analysis.

Chapter 4 (Findings and Discussion): This chapter includes the descriptions and interpretation of the key themes that emerged from the analysis of the reflexive journal, as well as a discussion of the results in the context of the existing literature.

Chapter 5 (Conclusion): The final chapter of this study briefly discusses the concluding points of the research, the strengths and limitations of the study, and provides a brief reflexive account of the process of writing an autoethnography.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief introduction to the issue of Mixed-Race identity in the South African context. The research problem, research question, justification for the study, aims, and objectives were discussed, concluding with a brief outline of the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature related to Mixed-Race identity development in South Africa, as well as internationally. Two main areas are discussed in this chapter. Firstly, the literature review focuses on racial identity; it begins with a short history of South Africa to provide context for the study, followed by a brief discussion on ‘othering’ as well as on the distinction between the Mixed-Race and Coloured populations of South Africa. A section on identity development is included with a focus on various theories of Mixed-Race identity development. Relevant influential factors are also explored and autoethnographic works on Mixed-Race identity are reviewed. Secondly, the theoretical standpoint utilised in this study is outlined and discussed.

2.2 South Africa: Historical Overview

South Africa’s racial history has firm roots in colonialism starting in the 17th Century, popularly credited to the landing of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape in 1652, which saw the enslavement of the indigenous people and appropriation of their land by Dutch settlers. Colonialism may be defined as the forceful intrusion of a foreign state with the deliberate intention to strip the local people from their cultural and traditional means in order to acquire and gain control over resources (Burawoy, 1974). To establish dominance and order over the colonised by the colonisers, racism was used as a tool of social dominance by defining the Black and Brown colonized group as inferior and subordinate and the White coloniser as superior (Burawoy, 1974). The long history of colonial conflict, and the enforcement of power and control through coercion was achieved through the further weaponisation of race, and institutionalisation of racism, during the apartheid regime which had a significant impact on racial identity in South Africa.

Although colonisation laid the foundation for the racialised organisation of South African society, it was following the commencement of apartheid rule that racial classification and segregation was formalised, classifying the population according to four main legally-ratified racial categories—Black African, Indian, Coloured, and White (Burawoy, 1974). Some prominent apartheid laws that impacted race relations and racial identity were the Group Areas Act (1950), Populations Registration Act (1950), Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), and Immorality Act (1950). Racial segregation based on residential area was enforced through the Group Areas Act, which—by way of forced removals—ensured the geographical and spatial separation of race groups, the remnants of which continue to persist in contemporary South Africa. So-called group areas were designated such that the most desirable land was reserved for White people, relegating the movement of people of colour to progressively less desirable geographical locations based on racial category, with Black people at the bottom of the racial hierarchy (Binns et al., 2000; South African History Online [SHO], n.d.).

The Population Registration Act (1950) made it compulsory for people to be classified based on their skin colour and appearance into three main categories—Black, White, or Coloured, with Indian being people being classified as Coloured until 1961 when the category of Indian was formally recognised as one of South Africa’s race groups. Moreover, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act criminalised interracial unions out of concern that the White minority group was being threatened by growing numbers in other population groups (Binns et al., 2000; SHO, n.d.). In addition, the Immorality Act criminalised any form of sexual or intimate relations between Whites and other people of colour. During apartheid, this legal apparatus—enforced through violence—ensured strict divisions between race groups which sought to prevent not only interracial interaction, but interracial relationships and—by extension—Mixed-Race children. Despite the formal repeal of these laws, the effects thereof continue to be evident in the social and geographical landscape of present-day South Africa (Pillay, 2019; Posel, 2010), whereby the Mixed-Race population continues to be designated as “Unspecified/Other”, and thus denied recognition as a member of a contemporary South African society.

2.3 Mixed-Race South Africans

The term ‘Mixed-Race’ in South Africa refers to an individual whose heritage and parentage is composed of two distinct and clearly marked and defined racial groups, as recognised in South Africa (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015). During apartheid, racial categories were strictly divided and limited people to identifying as one race based on essential phenotypic characteristics, such as skin colour and hair texture, thus delegitimising the Mixed-Race individual as a member of society (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Morrall, 1994). Despite prohibitive laws during apartheid, interracial couples persisted and continued to have Mixed-Race children. Given these laws, however, a ‘Mixed-Race’ category was not recognised under apartheid rule, and individuals from interracial unions and of mixed-racial heritage remained invisible to the apartheid government and were indeed criminalised (Morrall, 1994). Furthermore, Mixed-Race individuals have been distinguished from the Coloured population, who were grouped into a single category with a variety of subgroupings during apartheid. Although the subgroupings have been abolished, the ‘Coloured’ population continues to be recognised as such in present-day South African society. It is classified as one racial group with a shared culture, whereas the Mixed-Race population is a group of people whose racial, cultural, and social realities are, by definition, diverse within the individual (Francis, 2008). Therefore, in comparison to the Coloured category which defines people under this category as monoracial—despite the multiracial ancestry—the term Mixed-Race refers to individuals who have experiences and an identity that crosses two distinct race groups (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015). This means that a Mixed-Race person in South Africa is considered to be the combination of any two of the official South African race groups (e.g. Black-White, Coloured-White, Black-Coloured, Indian-Black, Coloured-Indian etc.) and their development and experiences are informed by the two racial identities/categories that constitute their racial mix (Francis, 2008).

Following the advent of democracy in 1994, racial mixing and interracial relations in South Africa were decriminalised through the repealing of apartheid-era legislation. However, the persistent effects of decades of apartheid-era social engineering continue to result in the invisibilisation of Mixed-Race people. One example of this invisibility is the continued absence of formal recognition or accommodation for Mixed-Race heritage (Laster, 2007). Essentially, given that the Mixed-Race individual was considered an impure and unwanted member of

apartheid society (Morrall, 1994), the Mixed-Race population group remains an ‘othered’ and voiceless member of contemporary South African Society.

2.3.1 Othering

The category ‘Unspecified/Other’ provides the space amongst the formally recognised racial groups as an attempt to include those that do not fit the existing socially designated race groups that have persisted since the apartheid era. While the ‘Other’ tick-box may be viewed as nothing more than just a category for a person to fill in, the term ‘other’ is often associated with difference and deficiency (Turner, 2016) and may serve as a literal manifestation of social othering. Theories of ‘the other’ illuminate how individual identities, groups, populations, or civilisations come to define themselves (often as superior) in contrast to ‘the other’ which is often viewed as inadequate, inferior, and harbouring undesirable traits (Johnson & Coleman, 2012; Susser, 2018). Against the backdrop of apartheid-era classification of fixed racial categories, the Mixed-Race individual may be viewed as the unwanted and impure member of South African society (Morrall, 1994).

Furthermore, ‘othering’ may effectively cause an individual to feel like an outcast left to cope with the pain of being different by remaining silent and overpowered by the dominant group (Turner, 2016). Therefore, it may be argued that the act of ticking race boxes for Mixed-Race individuals is an exercise that confirms their ‘otherness’ and invisibility in society. The category of ‘Other’ does not accentuate the unique existence of a Mixed-Race population, despite the growing number of interracial unions and Mixed-Race individuals (King-O’Riain et al., 2014). Instead, it reifies the invisible status Mixed-Race people held during apartheid by not acknowledging the reality of a racial identity that crosses racial boundaries. As such, the ‘Other’ category continues to deny Mixed-Race South Africans an equal, recognised position alongside the existing designated racial groups. Thus, it perpetuates the notion of ‘the other’.

2.4 Racial Identity

Racial identity is a complex construct that may be loosely defined as the perception of a shared racial history whereby people are categorised in terms of their phenotypic traits (Kolbert,

2018). Theorists such as Helms (1995) attempted to define the construct of racial identity as a collective identity whereby members of a particular race group perceive themselves to share a common heritage. Carter (1995) included a definition of racial identity that focuses on the developmental processes, emphasising that racial identity development occurs across one's lifespan (Leong, 2008). Therefore, no single definition for racial identity exists; however, the following illustrates the construct's multifaceted nature: a) racial identity refers to the meaning that one assigns to one's racial group; b) the meaning one assigns to other racial groups; c) one's sense of identification and belonging to a race group; d) the importance of race in the definition of one's self-concept; and e) the perspectives of race over time (Leong, 2008).

Although physical features such as skin colour have been used to signify and classify an individual's racial identity and membership, differently classified racial groups are assigned psychological characteristics, access to power and privileges, and experience oppression, differentially (Esprey, 2013; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). As a concept, racial identity appears to represent a material reality that is manifested in a person's physical appearance which represents their "first communication in the world" (Esprey, 2013, p. 35), yet it is also a social construct whereby culturally and historically informed meanings are associated with the visible characteristics of an individual (Esprey, 2013). Pillay (2019) adds that, during apartheid, racial classification was based on the social convention of difference. Therefore, each race group was considered biologically and culturally distinguishable from each other in the service of promoting White supremacy (Pillay, 2019). Thus, an individual's social and—by extension—personal value under the apartheid regime was defined by racial classification, with Whiteness being privileged over other racial groups (Esprey, 2013).

In contemporary South Africa, race continues to be an important aspect of identity as an individual is defined by race at all levels of civil society and governance (Laster, 2007). One's racial identity, therefore, continues to have a powerful impact on daily life. This is because the racial identity with which one identifies communicates to the external world, the level of education, place of residence (geographic location), culture, social status, language, and history a person embodies based on the social meanings associated with that particular race (Esprey, 2013). In addition, a person's racial identity offers a sense of group membership and has implications for psychological health (Esprey, 2013). It is therefore a salient feature in the formation of identity in both a social and personal context, as it underlies the dynamics by

which an individual interacts with others on a social level and how a person is perceived by others. In turn, this informs how the individual views themselves and the world around them, impacting on their self-esteem and self-worth.

According to Wakefield and Hudley (2007), having a positive and sound understanding of one's racial identity is related to higher levels of self-esteem and resilience against discrimination in adolescents of colour. In their study, adolescents also reported lower levels of depression and anxiety associated with negative experiences of race, only when they have achieved a more wholly developed racial identity. Given that racial identity and membership of a particular race group is demonstrated to have a significant impact on one's development and lived experience, theories of racial identity aid in exploring and understanding the importance of racial identity in an individual's life. The following section outlines two theories of racial identity development, namely 1) Cross's model of psychological nigrescence and 2) Helms's theory of White racial identity development.

2.4.1 Theories of racial identity development

A key figure in the field of racial identity development is William Cross, who is widely known for providing a foundational understanding in the trajectories of racial identity development. Often captured by the question "Who am I?", the process of identity development is of salience during adolescence and, for individuals of colour, issues around racial identity also begin emerging during this period (Ergün, 2020). Cross's (1971) model of psychological nigrescence—the process of becoming Black (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007)—consists of five stages through which the Black individual progresses in order to come into a Black racial identity. The stages, namely pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, internalisation, and internalisation-commitment, involve certain developmental tasks and realisations for an individual about their racial identity against their social backdrop (Harrison et al., 2002).

These stages see the Black individual move from the pre-encounter stage, characterised by adopting the dominant White culture's behaviours and traditions, to a gradual internalisation and acceptance of Black cultural norms as part of their racial identity (Harrison et al., 2002). These stages also entail the individual being confronted with racism, and their navigation around

racism in structural and social settings. As the individual moves through these stages, Cross (1971) defines the individual's attempts at reaching an authentic Black identity through first adopting stereotypes of Black American identity, to increasingly becoming engaged and actively avoiding symbols of Whiteness in favour of Black history and identity. In essence, this model provides an understanding of a Black individual's transition from an identity based on their skin colour, to a deeper understanding and appreciation for being Black and the meanings associated with this identity (Harrison et al., 2002; Walker, 2011). Moreover, the final achievement of a Black racial identity lies in attaining a positive sense of group membership (Harrison et al., 2004).

In terms of White racial identity development, Helms —based on Cross's (1971) model—proposed a two-stage process (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007). The first stage views racial consciousness from a lack of awareness of racism, to acquiring an anti-racist White racial identity (Ponterotto, & Park-Taylor, 2007). Through this process, the White individual engages with culture firstly from a dominant perspective, possibly using racist behaviours when interacting with others of colour, while being relatively unaware of the impact of their behaviour. A shift into the second stage entails adopting an autonomous commitment to engaging with issues of race, forming inter-racial friendships, anti-racist views, and confronting aspects of privilege that are aligned with White race identity (Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007). Although neither Cross's nor Helms's model considers the Mixed-Race identity development experience, they provided a conceptual map from which to envision the process of Mixed-Race identification, which may be viewed as an evolutionary process over time in response to various contextual and relational challenges. For example, Cross's model of nigrescence was commonly used to understand the racial identity development of Black-White biracial individuals. Others such as Poston (1990) have, however, gone further by expanding on Cross's model, adapting it to a five-stage process that is specific to Mixed-Race identity. This is, as outlined in the section below.

2.5 Mixed-Race identity development

This section includes a brief overview and discussion of approaches to understanding Mixed-Race identity development. The various approaches are grouped as 1) the problem approach; 2) the equivalent approach; 3) the variant approach; and 4) the ecological approach to understanding Mixed-Race identity development (Rockquemore et al., 2009).

2.5.1. Problem Approach to Mixed-Race Identity

This approach considers Mixed-Race individuals' development to be characterised by a problematic and troublesome life-course in the endeavour to find belonging in a racially divided world (Rockquemore et al., 2009). It emerged in the late 1800s during the Jim Crow era in the United States of America (USA) which enforced racial segregation in the country's southern states. Furthermore, this approach focused on the negative aspects associated with Mixed-Race identity, suggesting that Mixed-Race individuals would experience stigma, isolation, and rejection for their position as being between racial groups (Francis, 2008; Rockquemore et al., 2009). Models that reflect this approach include Robert Park's and Stonequist's Marginal Man Theory which proposed that Mixed-Race individuals would experience a lifetime crisis of not fitting in and "their mental state [would be] marked by turmoil ... reflect[ing] a deeply racist...world" (Rockquemore et al., 2009, p.16).

2.5.2 Equivalent Approach to Mixed-Race Identity

The equivalent approach viewed healthy Mixed-Race identity development as resulting from a strong bond and identification with the Black/minority race (Rockquemore et al., 2009). In other words, a Mixed-Race individual's identity was viewed as equivalent to his/her minority racial identity, particularly when considering Black-White individuals during the 1960s in the USA. This approach emerged during the Civil Rights movement, which considered any person with Black heritage to 'be Black'. Individuals of Black-White Mixed-Racial heritage during the Civil Rights Movement were also "expected to develop a positive sense of Black identity just like any other Black person" (Rockquemore et al., 2009, p. 17). Therefore, proponents of the equivalent approach considered mixed Black/White individuals to be no different to monoracial

Black Americans in their identity formation because the majority of Black Americans were racially mixed throughout generations (Rockquemore et al., 2009).

2.5.3 Variant Approach to Mixed-Race Identity

The variant approach emerged in the 1980s with researchers distinguishing the Mixed-Race population from any particular monoracial group. It focused on how Mixed-Race individuals could develop a healthy, integrated multiracial identity by acknowledging the entirety of their Mixed-Race identity through claiming membership to both categories flexibly (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Poston's (1990) biracial identity development model (BIDM) is a widely cited example of a model that falls within the variant approach (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Poston's model proposed a five-stage developmental process in which a Mixed-Race person comes to choose to identify as Mixed-Race or multiracial. This model emphasised that an individual arrives at a sense of integration of their Mixed-Race status in the world and generally feels content with this (Rockquemore et al., 2009).

2.5.4 Ecological perspective and approach to Mixed-Race Identity

While theories such as Poston's focused on achieving the outcome of a healthy multiracial identity, the ecological approach to Mixed-Race identity development focuses on the context rather than a particular outcome of racial identity (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory is often used as a template to develop ecological theories of Mixed-Race identity development such as Root's (1998) and Renn's (2008) models. Bronfenbrenner's model conceptualises human development through a set of interacting systems across an individual's lifespan, namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystem. Although it was originally proposed as a framework for understanding human development, it has been utilised in studies of identity development as it considers multiple levels of social influence that may impact an individual's process of identity formation (Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2013). Furthermore, this theory focuses on how an individual's unique characteristics and interactions with immediate and broader systems, play a crucial role in development and growth over time. It also does not propose any order or predictable pathway in which development occurs, thereby differing from other models such as Erikson's theory of

psychosocial development, which perceives development in terms of fixed stages across the lifespan (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Ergün, 2020; Ragelienė, 2016).

The systems in Bronfenbrenner's model are organised in a set of concentric circles that move from an inner circle—the microsystem—to a broader outermost circle—the macrosystem—with the meso- and ecosystems interleaved. The developing individual is situated at the core of the microsystem (Nomnian, 2018) which consists of the individual's direct contact with their immediate environment such as family, school, and neighbourhood. The mesosystem reflects the patterns and connections between the microsystems as they unfold to influence one's development. Therefore, the degree of harmony between such systems (e.g., school and home environment) will influence a person's development within these interacting systems (Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2013). The exosystem exists within the indirect environment and encompasses a range of sociocultural influences that impact on development, but with which the individual does not have direct contact, for example the parent's workplace (Tobbell & O'Donnell, 2013).

Further, the model consists of the macrosystem which is constituted by the broader cultural and subcultural systems that involve the beliefs, customs, lifestyles, knowledge, and material resources available to the individual. Life transitions and milestones that are significant to the overall psychological health and identity construal of an individual are represented by the chronosystem and may involve, for example, changes in employment, familial structure, and marital status. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model focuses on the effects of social environments and contexts and how they interact to impact human and identity development, as opposed to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development which proposes that identity development occurs in adolescence when an individual is faced with the task to master certain skills in order to arrive at a healthy level of psychological and social well-being (Dien, 2000). Bronfenbrenner's theory places greater emphasis on the bidirectional interaction between the individual and their intimate, as well as broader, environment. This also differs from Erikson's theory where greater emphasis is placed on the individual's capacity to achieve the task of developing a sound identity.

Ecological perspectives on Mixed-Race identity development follow Bronfenbrenner's model by viewing Mixed-Race identity as a progression with no single developmental pathway or identity outcome, thereby rejecting the notion that Mixed-Race identity development occurs in

fixed stages. An ecological model also appreciates that a range of racial identity choices are available to a Mixed-Race person in any given context. Mixed-Race people may reject a racial identity altogether, opting for other labels such as ‘human’ to claim their position and beliefs about racial categorisation (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Moreover, Root’s model of Mixed-Race identity development was the first model to adapt Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of development for conceptualising the process of Mixed-Race identity development (Perkins, 2014). The model includes a range of interdependent factors (such as one’s familial background, personality traits, and the generational, and historical context in which a person is located) that influence the individual’s identity development and choice of racial identity.

The model was also designed as a meta-model for racial identity, in general. Therefore, monoracial identity could also be examined from an ecological perspective using the model. Root believed that while monoracial development models acknowledged the significance of racial identity, they did not adequately explain the development and experience of Mixed-Race identity (Walker, 2011), nor did the stage models of Mixed-Race identity development adequately consider the significant influence of context on Mixed-Race identity development (Pope-Davis et al., 2003). Root’s ecological theory of multi-racial development was chosen to guide my inquiry into my personal racial identity development journey as a Mixed-Race individual. Further discussion of Root’s ecological model and its relevance to the analysis of my Mixed-Race identity development, will be discussed in section 2.8 of the literature review. Given that an ecological approach has been selected to explore my racial identity development, review of the factors that might be influential in Mixed-Race identity development is further discussed.

2.6 Factors Influencing Mixed-Race Identity Development

2.6.1 Appearance

According to Waring (2013, p. 305) “Phenotype, or physical features that have become racialised, such as skin colour [*sic*], hair texture and eye colour [*sic*], classify people into racial categories that are infused with assumptions and stereotypes that guide thoughts, emotions and behaviour [*sic*]”. Physical appearance is regarded as a significant factor in Mixed-Race

individuals' choices of identity because the physical traits that an individual possesses, often determines how they are perceived and fit into a particular racial group (Khanna, 2007; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002). Skin colour is considered to be an important feature of appearance in Mixed-Race individuals' choice of identity. For example, Rockquemore and Brunnsma (2002) found that darker skinned Black-White individuals were more likely to identify with a monoracial Black identity, whereas Black-White individuals with lighter skin tones were more likely to identify as biracial or White based on their more Eurocentric phenotypic expression (Harrison-Kahan, 2005). Reportedly, facial features and hair texture have also been found to play a role in influencing a Mixed-Race individual's identity construction, as well as how others perceive their racial identity in social settings (Citrin et al., 2014; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Renn, 2008). However, contrasting research in Mixed-Race studies have also indicated that there is no clear association between one's physical appearance and racial identity decision-making (Allen et al., 2013; Francis, 2008; Hall, 1980; Khanna, 2007). These conflicting findings suggest that while physical appearance may be influential in Mixed-Race identity development, there may be a variety of other factors that also influence the racial identity choices available to Mixed-Race individuals (Allen et al., 2013). Francis (2008) demonstrated that while appearance played a role in Mixed-Race identity development, other factors or social identities, such as religion, class, gender, and sexuality, influenced their sample of White-Indian South Africans' identities. This is also consistent with the findings of studies conducted internationally (Davenport, 2016; Renn, 2008; Root, 1998).

2.6.2 Gender

Distinct values are attributed to men and women; men are valued for their intelligence and physical strength, while women are often valued for their physical beauty (Davenport, 2016). Thus, the differential value attached to each gender informs an individual's treatment of, and by, others. Research has also shown that gender is highly correlated with racial identity (Davenport, 2016) and when gender and race intersect, men and women from monoracial minority groups have been found to experience distinct challenges in relation to their race (Crenshaw, 2012). For example, in the USA, monoracial men of colour are more likely to report acts of discrimination and to be treated unfairly by law enforcement, while women of colour may experience increased vulnerability to gender-based violence (Britton, 2006; Crenshaw, 2012). Mixed-Race women have also been found to be perceived as the more attractive and 'palatable' version of their

minority racial heritage (Waring, 2013). This may afford them greater social mobility within White dominated spaces as compared to darker skinned monoracial men and women, thereby influencing their choice to use the label 'Mixed-Race'. However, it has been found that although Mixed-Race women may have greater social mobility and may be considered 'more attractive' for their lighter skinned features (particularly partial-White individuals), they also may experience being 'othered' for their appearance (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). In addition, studies by Root (1998, 2004) found that Mixed-Race women were more likely to be scrutinized and questioned for their ambiguous physical features compared to men, reported being sexualised and exoticised, or made to feel uncomfortable about their appearance, based on being questioned. These findings applied to Mixed-Race women from a variety of racial heritages (Basu, 2010).

When making racial identity choices, Mixed-Race women are also found to be more likely to identify as multiracial or Mixed-Race compared to males who generally tend to identify with a singular minority race (Davenport, 2016). This could be because it may be more socially acceptable for women—in comparison to men—to exist within multiracial settings, or to express multiple racial identities through their appearance and attire because of the value attached to women's physical attractiveness (Davenport, 2016; Waring, 2013). Furthermore, systems of power such as capitalism and patriarchy have historically fetishised Mixed-Race women and women of colour and portrayed them as exotic (Boylorn, -2014). Arguably, asserting a Mixed-Race identity, along with emphasising exoticness through potential ambiguous/Eurocentric features, may enable a Mixed-Race woman to acquire greater social mobility and appeal (Root, 2004; Waring, 2013), particularly if she has partial White heritage. For example, Waring (2013) found that some women experienced their ambiguous features as positive and powerful in social settings. They harnessed the appeal of their unique appearance as a tool to relate and interact with others in a variety of settings (Paz-Galupo et al., 2019; Waring, 2013). However, while gender appears to have an influence on racial identity choices, examining gender alone in understanding a person's racial identity and positionality in society would risk missing the complex realities of an individual's experience based on multiple intersections of their identity (Crenshaw, 2012). This study will therefore incorporate an exploration of how my own Mixed-racial identity has been informed by various sociocultural dynamics operational in the contexts in which I grew up, lived, went to school, and studied.

2.6.3 Socialisation Practices and Family Socioeconomic Status

The first instance where children learn about race and racial identity, is through their parental and familial bonds. Parents' initial choice of racial identity for their Mixed-Race child will inform how they socialise their child to be accepted into the broader community. A parent's worldview, values, attitudes, and awareness of the larger societal cultural dynamics may influence their racial identity choice and inform their racial socialisation practices (Maxwell & Henriksen, 2012). For example, parents may identify their Mixed-Race child as Black in order to increase the likelihood of their acceptance if the family resides in a predominantly Black neighbourhood. Contrastingly, parents who believe in a more racially and ethnically diverse society are more likely to identify their children as Mixed-Race (Maxwell & Hendricksen, 2012). Still, little is known—globally and locally—about how parental socialisation occurs in multiracial or interracial families, as the literature is focussed predominantly on monoracial families (Atkin & Yoo, 2019).

For example, each parent in an interracial family may have vastly different ideas about how to socialise their children based on their respective racial and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, both parents by virtue of their monoracial statuses, may not be adequately equipped to understand the unique perspectives and experiences of their Mixed-Race child (Rockquemore et al., 2009), which may complicate the socialisation process. Nonetheless, parents play a crucial role in how children are socialised with regards to their racial identification. A study by Stone and Dolbin-MacNab (2017) illustrated that Black-White individuals were more likely to identify as 'Mixed-Race' when being exposed, by their parents, to both sides of their racial and cultural heritage. Black-White children have also been found to be more likely to identify as singularly Black if they lived with a single Black parent (Herman, 2004). Moreover, in addition to influencing racial identity choices, parental socialisation practices such as instilling pride in a child's Mixed-Racial heritage may also serve as a protective factor against negative race-related experiences and foster healthy functioning and well-being (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Choi & Reichman, 2019; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). Furthermore, previous research indicates that Mixed-Race identity development may also be influenced by parents' and families' socioeconomic position within society (Davenport, 2016). Socio-economic status (SES) or class refers to an individual's income and educational level or status. Mixed-Race individuals are therefore more likely to choose racial labels such as White, Mixed-Race, or multiracial if they

reside in an economically affluent area where they are more likely to be in contact with White social environments (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001; Davenport, 2016; Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Similarly, Black-White individuals from working-class backgrounds are more likely to identify as singularly Black when they reside and work in minority Black neighbourhoods (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). In line with this, Davenport (2016, p. 74) found that “economic prosperity ha[d] a distinct racial Whitening effect on [a Mixed-Race person’s] self-identification”, particularly for those who were of a White-minority mix. This may be because the racial hierarchy in the USA has historically associated White Americans with a higher social and economic status than Americans of colour, thereby privileging Whiteness (Townsend et al., 2012). The phenomenon of associating Whiteness with economic wealth is not only limited to the USA. In other countries that have a history of oppressing groups of colour, including South Africa, Whiteness is also associated with wealth and economic prosperity (Steyn et al., 2019).

2.6.4 Peer groups

In addition to parental influences, having close social networks and friendships promotes a sense of belonging and contributes to healthy psychological and identity development (Morgan & Korobov, 2012). In terms of Mixed-Race individuals, social group composition and peers serve as important extra-familial socialising agents involved in Mixed-Race identity development (Cheng & Klugman, 2010). Therefore, depending on the racial composition of a particular social group to which the Mixed-Race individual is exposed, identity choices may differ. For example, Cheng and Klugman (2010) found that Mixed-Race adolescents of Hispanic-Black, Asian-Black, and Native American-Black descent developed a greater sense of belonging in their school social groups if the majority of monoracial students were Black American. In terms of influences on racial identity choices, Mixed-Race middle school learners from a variety of racial backgrounds were more likely to identify as monoracial when located in a large monoracial group (Brechtwald & Prinstein, 2011; Herman, 2004; Nishina et al., 2010). In contrast, within diverse schools and social spaces, it was found that Mixed-Race individuals were more likely to use multiracial or Mixed-Race labels as identification (Nishina et al., 2010). Therefore, the racial composition of peer groups and the schooling environment appear to be a contributing factor to the racial identity choices of Mixed-Race individuals. Moreover,

experiences of racism and invalidation of a person's identity in peer groups and social settings, were also found to be influential in Mixed-Race identity development (Nishina et al., 2010). This is attributed to the experiences of subtle or overt racism and invalidation which can impact the way in which a Mixed-Race individual relates to their racial identities, particularly in accordance with the more marginalised components thereof. However, in some cases, experiencing racism may increase an individual's likelihood of exploring their racial and ethnic identities (Gonzales-Backen, 2013), while in others it may cause individuals to pull away, resulting in denial and related feelings of shame, depression, and low self-esteem (Castillo et al., 2020; Choi & Reichman, 2019). Similarly, experiencing invalidation of one's Mixed-Racial heritage may also be a source of psychological distress (Udry et al., 2003; Tran et al., 2016; Franco et al., 2016).

In a study by Franco et al. (2016), Mixed-Race participants felt excluded or invalidated, or experienced anxiety, when confronted about their racial identity, which may have contributed to higher risks in terms of substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour. Aspinall and Song (2012), however, reported a cautious view regarding a Mixed-Race individual's experiences of being questioned about their racial identity as exclusively invalidating. Participants in their study reflected how their racially ambiguous appearance made for good conversations in social settings and that participants generally experienced their ambiguous racial identity positively. Friendships and validating experiences within peer groups were considered to be potential buffers against stressful experiences of racism and racial identity invalidation. Evidently, individuals in Castillo's et al. (2020) study reported that the connection to other multiracial or Mixed-Race individuals or groups fostered a sense of belonging, inclusion, and safety from potential racism. Therefore, multiracial communities and racially diverse environments are seen as protective factors as they provide flexibility around group membership and act as the Mixed-Race person's reference group (Castillo et al., 2020). Mixed-Race individuals' identities may, therefore, be shaped by a variety of factors. Although these factors have been discussed separately, they are often interrelated, resulting in a myriad of pathways of influence that could impact each Mixed-Race individual in unique and personal ways. Thus, autoethnography aims to draw focus to such unique and personal individual experiences. This study therefore offers a detailed and intimate focus on how such factors might have come into play in my own navigation through a personal account of the journey of, and towards, Mixed-Race identification through engaging with these experiences autoethnographically.

2.7 Autoethnographic accounts of Mixed-Race identity development

Autoethnography may be defined as the use of the researcher's personal story to describe and critique the interactions between culture and the individual (Adams et al., 2015). This is achieved through a process of reflexivity, whereby the researcher presents to the reader a deep and thoughtful account of life experiences that relate to a specific area or topic (Adams et al., 2015). The current study made use of an autoethnographic approach to explore my identity as a Mixed-Race South African. No autoethnographic works on Mixed-Race identity development in South Africa could be located, aside from Mawhinney's (2019) autoethnography as an American Mixed-Race woman visiting South Africa. Mawhinney (2019) evocatively described her experiences of rejection by local Black South African women and isolation in a foreign country she had wished would accept her for her African roots. This prompted a deep reflection on the persistence of racialisation within post-apartheid South African society (Mawhinney, 2019). However, the author wrote from the perspective of a foreigner in the South African context, whereas the current study is based on my experiences as a Mixed-Race South African citizen. Furthermore, Mawhinney (2019) focused solely on the experiences of acceptance and rejection as a Mixed-Race woman among Black South Africans, but the research did not address the process of coming to identify as Mixed-Race, which is what the current study hopes to achieve. The contribution of my autoethnography, therefore, lies in its exploration of how certain factors and experiences influenced and shaped my racial identity development over time.

Other autoethnographies such as that by Griffin (2012), a Black-White American author, addressed issues of Mixed-Race identity that involved choices of identification around a particular racial label or category within an American society that had a limited and monoracial view of racial categories. A collaborative autoethnography by Wahab and Gibson (2007) acknowledged the complexities of being Mixed-Race for holding both an oppressed and privileged racial heritage and identity. However, their study focused on both of the authors' experiences as Mixed-Race individuals and lecturers who taught diversity and social justice (Wahab & Gibson, 2007). Their autoethnography is therefore situated within a particular time of teaching and lecturing, and is not focused on Mixed-racial identity development across their lifetime. The current study focuses, rather, on the complexities of holding a Mixed-Race identity

and choosing to identify as Mixed-Race as opposed to other racial labels. Furthermore, this study differs from the abovementioned autoethnographies because, through my personal account, it focuses on issues relating to Mixed-Race identity development from the perspective of being an individual born in South Africa, which has a distinctive racialised history. The history of the country has influenced the way subsequent generations understand and negotiate their own and others' racial identities, thus making context-specific accounts crucial to the research. Furthermore, this study also aims to contribute towards the literature on Mixed-Race identity development in that it focuses on specific racial heritage as Indian-White. I provide insights into the impact of being from both an Indian and White world, considering issues such as colourism and feelings of being 'other' that were linked specifically to my Indian heritage, thus distinguishing my study from those outlined above. While Francis (2008) conducted a study on how a small sample of Indian-White biracial South Africans understood their social realities, the study was not autoethnographic in nature, and therefore does not reach the reader through an evocative first-person narration. In providing insight into my personal experiences, I have attempted to add to the gap in the relevant literature by a) providing my personal story as a first-generation Mixed-Race individual in South Africa and, b) utilising autoethnography to develop and generate a voice for being Mixed-Race in South Africa where only limited literature exists.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

This study utilised Root's ecological model of multiracial identity development (Figure 1) to frame the various contextual influences on my racial identity development. Additionally, Worthman's (2010) bioecocultural model of child development (Figure 2) was used to deepen the analysis of my parents' influence on my identity development, given the important role parental socialisation plays in racial identity development as highlighted by the literature above. Worthman's model is also based on an ecological framework and gives greater focus to how knowledge is acquired and how processes of identity development occur in the micro-systemic interactions between parent and child.

2.8.1 Root's Ecological model of multiracial identity development

In order to guide the exploration of my racial identity development, Root's (1998) ecological framework provided an understanding of multiracial identity development. This model follows from Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development and highlights the surrounding context in which the individual is located as a source for understanding the fluid and shifting nature of multiracial identity development (Perkins, 2014). Root asserted that, while monoracial development models acknowledged the significance of racial identity, they did not adequately explain the development and experience of Mixed-Race identity (Walker, 2011). Additionally, stage models did not recognise the unique influence of environmental context and the multiple ways in which various contextual factors influence Mixed-Race identity development (Coleman et al., 2003).

Therefore, Root acknowledged that a range of systemic forces interacted uniquely with the individual to influence their racial identity choices, and that no singular racial identity outcome could be predicted. Furthermore, Root's (1998) model reflects the interrelatedness of factors, emphasising that there is no predictable stage or set of factors that result in a particular choice of racial identity/category. Root's ecological model was selected for this study because it views Mixed-Race identity as a fluid process which is shaped by numerous factors. Thus, no particular stage, order, or pathway governs the individual's identity development, and some factors may be more influential in driving a Mixed-Race person's understanding and choice of identities than others (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Hubbard & Utsey, 2015). Therefore, this model was appropriate in exploring my Mixed-Race identity development, as it allowed me to articulate my personal narrative while focusing on factors that I have experienced as being most relevant to this process (Coleman et al., 2003). Moreover, contextual factors influencing Mixed-Race identity are organised, according to Root, into middle- and macro-lenses. Middle-lens factors represent those that the individual is in direct contact with and includes individual traits (i.e, temperament, talents, social and coping skills), inherited factors (such as parental and family identity, names, household values and extended family) and social interaction in the community (e.g. friends, home or neighbourhood, new community, and school/work). The middle-lens factors represent what Bronfenbrenner's ecological model delineates as the micro- and meso-systems. Macro-lens factors include the regional histories of race relations, gender, and class which also influence how an individual perceives and makes

sense of their identity, and how others perceive racially mixed individuals (Coleman et al., 2003; Rockquemore et al., 2009; Root, 1998). Root's macro-lens, therefore, aligns with Bronfenbrenner's macrosystemic factors. Emphasis is also placed on the continual dynamic interaction between factors within the middle-lens contexts. For example, how an individual's personal traits guide interactions with friends or school may affect the individual's racial identity outcome (Herman, 2004). In addition to acknowledging the interactions between systems within the middle-lens, the model also acknowledges the reciprocal interactions between the middle-lens and the macro-lens factors and their resultant influence on racial identity choices. Root's (1998) model also accounts for changes across the lifespan by acknowledging generational transitions, which is parallel to Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem. For example, across life transitions, the individual may be exposed to new communities with their own historical and social contextual factors that may cause the individual to renegotiate their racial identity. Furthermore, Root's model proposes that Mixed-Race individuals make a range of identity choices and that such identity choices reflect healthy outcomes for individuals and a sense of resolution within a given situation and context (Maxwell & Hendricksen, 2012). Root further proposed five main or 'core' racial identity outcomes that Mixed-Race individuals may negotiate and renegotiate as a result of the multiple interactions of the abovementioned factors (Coleman et al., 2003). These core identities reflect the complexity and multiplicity facing multiracial individuals in various contexts. No particular order or value is given to these core identities (Coleman et al., 2003; Root, 1998), which are proposed as follows—the Mixed-Race individual: i) accepts a monoracial identity that is assigned by their social setting (Maxwell & Hendricksen, 2012); ii) actively chooses a monoracial identity; iii) identifies with both racial groups, or essentially as 'Mixed-Race'; iv) refuses to identify with any racial labels (Coleman et al., 2003; Root, 1998); and v) adopts a 'symbolic race' in which the individual identifies as White with some attachment to, whilst largely remaining detached from, their heritage of colour/minority race (Coleman et al., 2003). Although a Mixed-Race individual may experience tensions and challenges in the identification process, their choice of racial identity is considered healthy and positive if it causes little or no feelings of distress and isolation in their social and environmental context (Root, 1998). With regards to the current autoethnography, Root's (1998) ecological model addresses two important aspects within the context of this study. Firstly, the model allowed me to examine and critically comment on the sociocultural context in relation to Mixed-Race identity. This is vital to the autoethnographic approach and what differentiates it

from an autobiography. Autoethnographic knowledge production occurs not only through emotional engagement with the text, but also through critically examining the contextual influences on a person's identity (Adams et al., 2015; Holman-Jones & Pruyn, 2018). The factors in Root's model enabled me to engage critically with the sociocultural context implicit in my narrative as the factors within the middle-lens or macro-lens acted as a guide for the discussion of the social and cultural context in which I was located. Secondly, since the model acknowledges that there is no predictable stage progression or pattern of interaction between factors that result in a particular racial identity outcome, I was able to maintain the evocative story-telling quality of autoethnographic inquiry. This is because there was not a prescribed manner in which to explore or discuss my story. I deconstructed my identity development by flexibly engaging with the proposed factors and discussing how they linked together in my narrative to influence my identity development.

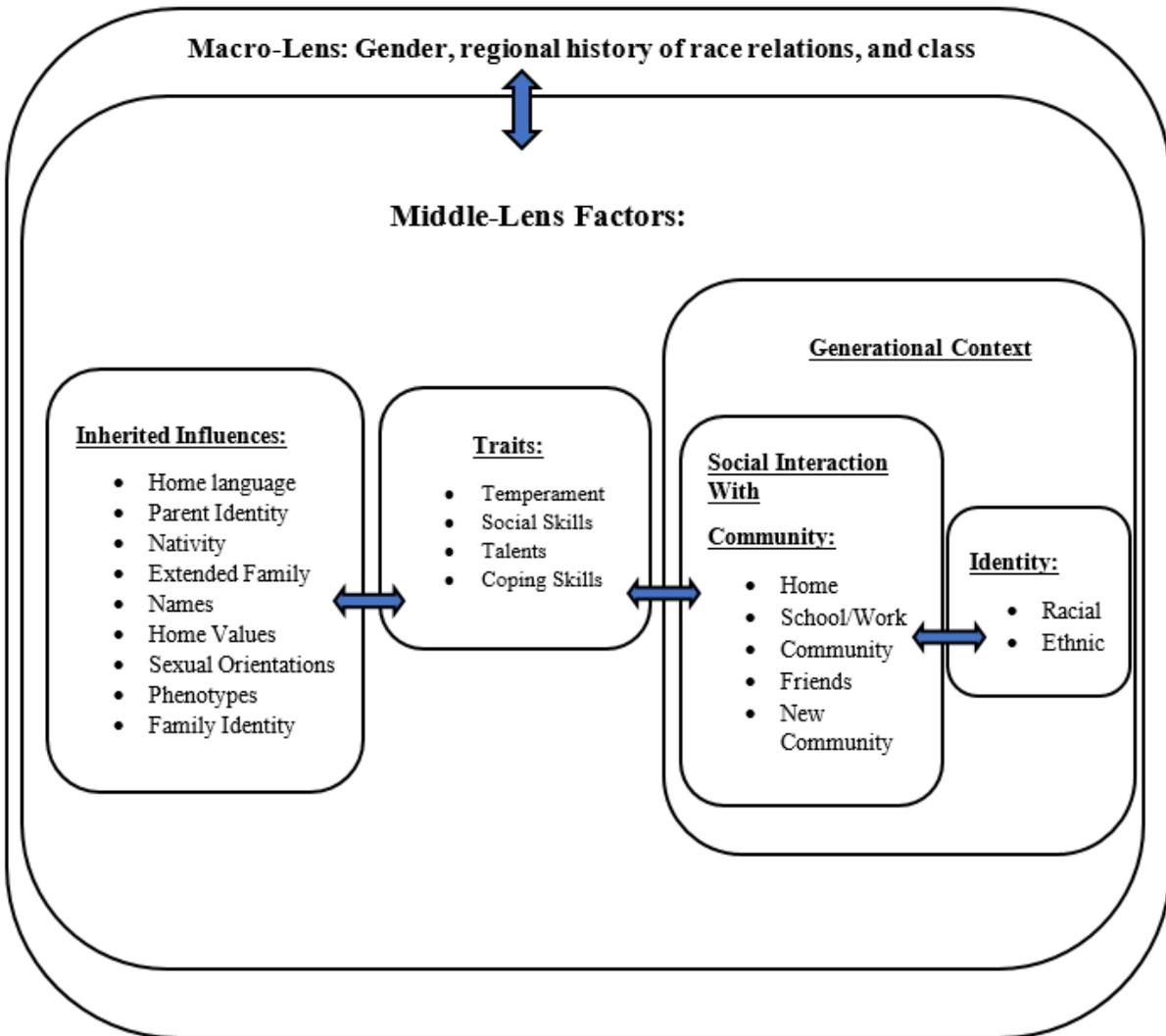
While Root's model recognises the fluidity and unique contextual influences on mixed-racial identity development, the model also has a few notable limitations. For example, it does not differentiate between racial roles performed by Mixed-Race individuals and 'core' racial identity choices (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Coleman et al., 2003). Instead, the five identity outcomes that the model proposes are 'core' racial identities that individuals develop in response to their particular context. Therefore, the model does not account for the racial roles some individuals may adopt in order to cope with not fitting into a particular societal group (Nakashima, 1996). Engaging in a racial role involves how an individual interacts with others based on the group's racial and social characteristics to increase their inclusion into a group (Nakashima, 1996). In other words, a Mixed-Race person may engage in the performance of a racial identity to maintain legitimacy and relevance when in contact with a particular racial group by harnessing their linguistic abilities, phenotypic traits, and cultural knowledge (Campion, 2021; Castillo et al., 2020). A racial role or performance does not necessarily represent their 'core' racial identity choice, but rather the way in which an individual may engage in certain settings in order to fit in.

I used the concept of racial role to elucidate instances where my choice to identify with the label 'Mixed-Race' remained relatively constant in a variety of settings, even though I often shifted my manner of engagement to appropriately fit the racial/ethnic group with which I interacted. Furthermore, while Root's model takes account of a variety of influencing factors,

the model does not examine the nuances of each factor's influence and interrelatedness with other factors. In other words, it proposes several factors which may be important to Mixed-Race identity development, but it does not provide a map or guide on how to analyse each factor and what aspects of each factor to focus on. However, Root (1998) emphasises that not all factors included in the model will necessarily be relevant to every individual. In relation to the current study and my narrative, Root's Inherited Influences, which includes factors such as Parent Identity and Family Identity, were focused on. This is because, based on the literature, parent involvement and socialisation practices are considered vital to racial identity development in general (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). However, the literature focused almost exclusively on monoracial minority families and not on how parents of Mixed-Race children socialise their children (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). Furthermore, no studies on racial socialisation of Mixed-Race children could be located within the South African context. Therefore, I deepened my engagement with the Inherited Influences by turning to Worthman's Bioecocultural theory of child development in addition to Root's model to facilitate a clearer focus on the parent-child microsystem.

Figure 1

Root's (1998) ecological model for multiracial identity development



Note. Adapted from Root (1998, p.239). The macro-lens factors include Gender, Regional History of Race Relations and Class, which all inform the individuals' experiences and interact with the middle-lens factors (inherited influences, personal traits, and the generational context). Blue arrows indicate the interactions between the macro and middle-lens factors of influence. All factors are interrelated with one another with multiple and unpredictable pathways of influence.

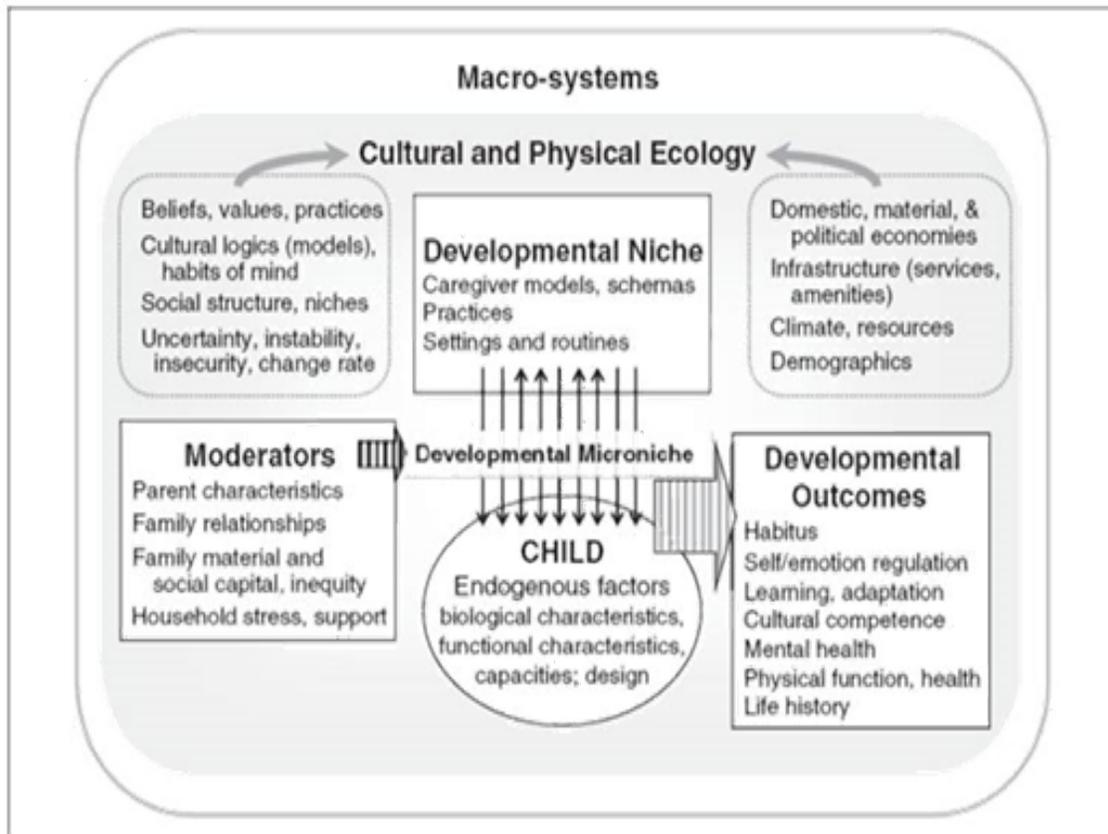
2.8.2 Worthman's bioecocultural model of child development

The rationale for utilising this model is that little is known about the process of racial socialisation that occurs in multiracial/interracial families (Rollins & Hunter, 2013). As discussed, Root's model does not describe the nuances of the variety of factors provided. Therefore, Worthman's model addressed this limitation specifically for the influence of the parental/home system which is labelled under the model's Inherited Traits by providing a nuanced framework and guide from which to explore the parent-child system, and its impact on my racial identity development. Worthman's model also provides a framework from which to understand how macrosystemic influences impact parental characteristics and beliefs, and how these are transmitted to the child. Root's model focuses primarily on how macro-level factors are associated with the Mixed-Race individual concerned and does not account for how macrosystemic forces influence important members, such as parents, to which the individual is related (Root, 1998; Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Worthman, 2010). Moreover, Worthman's model acknowledges the diversity in human psychological development through the daily routines and customs of parental-child and familial relations. The so-called developmental microniche gives increased focus to the parent-child system as the site through which knowledge transmission and learning occurs (Worthman, 2010). The developmental microniche is the domain through which larger dimensions of culture, or macrosystems, are transmitted to the developing child and, in turn, informs the child's psychological functioning and understanding of self, such as identity. In the model, the developmental microniche, which constitutes caregiving models and practices, is situated at the centre (Figure 2) with bidirectional arrows between the developmental niche and the child representing the interactional nature of this relationship. The child is regarded as an active agent in the process of knowledge acquisition in the parent-child bond (Worthman, 2010). Furthermore, Worthman provides greater detail to Bronfenbrenner's parental microsystem by accounting for moderator factors such as parental characteristics and familial relationships that influence the transmission of knowledge and the child's development (Worthman, 2010). Focus is also given to the characteristics of the child that may influence how knowledge is received such as functional characteristics or psychological functioning, and endogenous factors such as age and gender (Worthman, 2010). The child essentially embodies the cultural concepts and aspects that are transmitted from the parental system. Therefore, their psychological and physical development as well as their identity formation occurs through interactions with caregivers and

other significant relationships that communicate the values, practices, beliefs, and the wider macrosystem of a particular culture.

Figure 2

Worthman's bioecocultural model of child development



Note. The arrows in the developmental microniche represent knowledge creation as an active process between parent and child. Moderating factors also influence how information is transmitted and is indicated by a single arrow. Reproduced from Worthman (2010, p. 556).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter focused on contextualising Mixed-Race identity development. It discussed the literature that focused on Mixed-Race identity development within the local and international context, drawing on factors that may influence a Mixed-Race individual's racial identity.

Theoretical perspectives were discussed giving focus to ecological theories of identity development pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss my choice to use autoethnography as a methodology. I also provide a brief history of its emergence as an alternative mode of enquiry in qualitative research by discussing the origins of autoethnography and what it means to use this methodological approach. I then articulate the data generation procedure I used and the method of thematic analysis in determining the themes and making sense of the data. Lastly, this chapter concludes with the ethical considerations from an autoethnographic standpoint (Ellis et al., 2011).

3.2 Qualitative research

The overall purpose of qualitative research is to form an understanding of human experience and phenomena through an individual's personal accounts and narratives in the form of interviews, visual texts or imagery, journals, case studies, or observations of individuals who are of focus in a particular research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research presents a nuanced and detailed understanding of how individuals make meaning of their contexts and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It often takes an approach of exploration into subjective realities instead of resting on the assumption of an objective reality. Qualitative research is, therefore, a collaborative process of researcher-participant engagement and employing methods of data collection such as in-depth interviews and focus groups (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher is involved in obtaining deeply personal information from participants, using methodological underpinnings such as phenomenology or grounded theory in which to understand the personal worlds of their participants.

In this study, I have used autoethnography, a variant of ethnography, to explore my own Mixed-Race identity development. Autoethnography positions the researcher as the subject of their own inquiry, and their personal narrative as the data (Ellis et al., 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, I have made use of my own story in this study to explore my Mixed-Race

identity development. While my research is not a collaborative process between researcher and participant in the traditional sense, the research process has involved a deeply reflexive engagement between myself-as-researcher and myself-as-subject.

3.3 Selecting Autoethnography as methodology

Using autoethnography in this study, I have explored the journey of the development of my identity as a Mixed-Race South African. The aim of using autoethnography was to explore how factors such as my interpersonal relationships and physical environmental contexts influenced and shaped my Mixed-Race identity. In doing so, I asserted my voice to confront the challenges of finding a sense of belonging and identity as a Mixed-Race South African. By documenting my experiences, I hoped to encourage readers to walk on this journey of developing a sense of belonging with me, to contend and grapple with issues around identity formation in a country that readily identifies people based on fixed racial categories. I have chosen to utilise a moderate approach to autoethnography which Wall (2016) and Mayor (2016) define as a form of autoethnographic writing that values both the evocative and analytic elements of the methodology.

3.3.1 Autoethnography: A brief History

Born out of the postmodern era in the 1980s, autoethnography as a qualitative methodology pioneered the art of academic and scholarly writing through the researcher-as-subject. What was known as the ‘crisis of confidence’ or ‘crisis of representation’ was at the heart of postmodernist concern and questioning. Postmodernist thought challenged notions that fixed truths existed in science and representations of others (Ellis et al., 2011). Instead, postmodern scholars began to show that what constituted scientific fact was inextricably linked to the manner in which it was represented through language use, paradigms and vocabularies. This movement inspired the emergence of autoethnographic methodology by borrowing from autobiography and ethnography as a means of allowing individual and personal insights to be documented in an act of self-definition and self-discovery. Moreover, autoethnography was considered a rebellion against ‘sterile’ colonialist research standards. It offered the researcher or member of a particular cultural group, a platform to speak for

themselves rather than to be authoritatively handled by an outside power that sought to study it for its own professional and monetary gains (Ellis et al., 2011).

According to Adams et al., (2015, p. 3), “when we do autoethnography we study and write culture from the perspective of the self”, which reflects that autoethnography is an analysis of personal experience, exploring the cultural conventions, norms, and values that influence the individual’s existence and experience. It branches off ethnography—a methodology whereby the researcher immerses themselves in the subjective realities of a particular culture and people in order to obtain qualitative data. Autoethnography often provides a platform for minority, oppressed or marginalised voices to be accentuated, where commonly they would be silenced or on the periphery under the authoritative influence and voice of external researchers. Autoethnographic research similarly aims to explore subjective cultural experiences but does so by centring the researcher as the subject of study. As Allen-Collinson (2013) states, “it represents a fresh and innovative variation of ethnography where an ethnographic perspective is brought to bear on our personal, lived experience” (p. 282). Therefore, the researcher’s life experiences are examined in relation to their cultural, political, and social contexts in order to make sense of their subjective reality and identity. As much as my study aims to explore my personal story of Mixed-Race identity development, I hope to also use this as a platform to advocate for further use of autoethnographic research within academic spaces.

3.3.2 Advocating for Autoethnography

While criticisms of autoethnography deem it to be a self-indulgent and self-focused genre, its value lies in generating knowledge and discussion around a particular aspect of human experience through the researcher’s personal account (Allen-Collinson, 2013). Autoethnography is also challenged for being “irrational, particularistic, private, [and] subjective” (Allen-Collinson, 2013, p. 284), rather than being generalisable and universal to a population of readers. This criticism highlights the potential for autoethnography to appear as a frivolous showcase of any personal information a researcher reveals to a reader. However, while it may be critiqued for potentially being self-indulgent, autoethnographic accounts are purposeful in the data that is portrayed and revealed to the reader. Being vulnerable to a scholarly audience does not imply that ‘anything goes’. Rather, the exposure of the self must be done with intention and relevance to the argument at hand (Allen-Collinson, 2013). In order to maintain intention and

relevance to the argument, the researcher remains in constant engagement with relevant cultural norms and discourses of power in their context, which have an influential impact on their personal experience (Allen-Collinson, 2013).

Therefore, the ‘self’ engages and challenges these areas as a means of generating knowledge and new insights. Wall (2016) emphasises the need for careful analysis of personal data for knowledge generation to occur. In particular, it is argued that for autoethnography to reach its scholarly potential, a balance between providing “highly personalised accounts” (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21) and academic and qualitative analysis of these accounts, must be achieved. Since autoethnography challenges the traditional norms of scientific research, it situates itself as a challenge against politics and confronting discourses of power. This is enacted particularly with regards to representation of oppressed ‘selves’, or the aspects of an individual’s experiences that have been oppressed. Moreover, autoethnography challenges early conventional means of Western scientific exploration, whereby the voices of populations under study were silenced by Western researchers’ own inferences and power of voice. Allen-Collinson (2013) gives an example of ‘indigenous’ people’s lives and culture under study as represented and voiced by colonial powers whose discourse and knowledge is prioritised over that of the community itself.

Autoethnography, therefore, challenges the norms of scientific research by bringing the personal into the realm of research and scholarship. The intention of autoethnography is to allow researchers and individuals of a particular culture to tell their own story as a means of challenging the bounds of traditional science. It also draws focus to the potential human relational bonds and personal investment that researchers have with their own research topics, emphasising that researchers are not simply objective or passively engaged with their work. Thus, autoethnography values the capacity of researchers to be evocatively influenced by their work and questions the notions of true objectivity (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography is used to discuss and critique the dynamics between one’s identity and cultural norms, to potentially arrive at new self-understandings. For example, an autoethnography by a cancer survivor and psychologist, confronts how their Haitian heritage stigmatised mental illness and psychotherapy, and how this had a significant influence on the author’s personal psychotherapeutic process, as well as those of their clients, and on the author’s cancer diagnosis (Simeus, 2016). Simeus’s

vulnerable account of living with cancer involved a purposeful approach to questioning and critiquing their Haitian identity in their quest to challenge cultural norms. It also afforded Simeus (2016) the platform from which to voice their difficulties with accessing mental health facilities in a culture that stigmatised mental illness and its treatment. Similarly, an example given by Allen-Collinson (2013) describes Antoniu, a lesbian, Cypriot woman who, through autoethnography, challenged their situatedness among two groups (Cypriot and lesbian) at odds with each other. In the process of writing, the author gradually comes to embrace their lesbian identity within being a Cypriot woman, achieving greater self-integration. In doing so, the author also challenges the bounds of the dominant discourse of heterosexual-Cypriotness by exploring and interrogating—through a personal journey—the complexity of embodying seemingly incompatible identities (Allen-Collinson, 2013). These two examples illustrate the ability of autoethnography to emphasise the shifting and context-dependent nature of identity formation and the malleability of categories in a particular culture or setting. It also provides the researcher the platform to integrate incompatibilities between the self and cultural norms as a means of arriving at a new self-understanding within a particular context.

Autoethnography furthermore problematises fixed categorisation in the pursuit of acknowledging the nuances of individual experience within a group membership and culture (Ellis et al., 2011). Following this argument, my study makes a case for the complexities of racial identity development, in general, and Mixed-Race identity development, in particular. In a similar manner to the above examples, my study employs the autoethnographic approach to problematise the fixed racial categories of the apartheid-era that are being used in contemporary South Africa. This is achieved by describing my Mixed-Race identity development within social, cultural, and geographic contexts that view race as a fixed and singular category. Therefore, my exploration and analysis of my seemingly incompatible Mixed-Race identity poses a dilemma to the status quo of fixed and singular race categories in South Africa. Another objective of autoethnographic writing is to invite the reader to actively participate in the researcher's world. This is achieved through first-person narration. Writing in the first person is key to the effectiveness of autoethnographic inquiry as it encourages the reader to engage thoughtfully with their own experiences in relation to the researcher's text (Adams et al., 2015). This method, therefore, tests the boundaries of traditional academic language, which is often passive in nature, requiring a distanced third-person interaction with research findings and observations. It does so

by emphasising the value of first-person narration, and the rich, evocative detail involved in writing a personal story. Furthermore, the emergence of autoethnography as a methodology represented a movement in the social sciences towards communicating in a way that reflects the messy reality of social life (Adams et al., 2015). Through this, the aim is to develop a connection to the stories and contexts of people in a more ‘human’ way, and in doing so attempts to produce a dialogue that may spread in an organic fashion from reader to listener, provoking thoughtfulness and sharing.

According to Adams et al. (2015), autoethnography also encourages an individual to critically examine themselves within a given context, and through personal engagement the reader is encouraged to critically explore and observe their own realities. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) answer the question of why personal narratives matter, by asserting that autoethnographic work creates a chain of dialogues or conversations that allows for a committed immersion into the text being read. The emotional content encourages an indulging in personal interaction with the narrative, which has the potential to elicit empathic responses towards the content being presented (Mendez, 2013). This is where knowledge acquisition and learning occur—through an empathic interaction and engagement between author, text, and reader. In both my reflexive journal and sections of this report, I engaged in first-person writing in order to achieve the aims of autoethnography by expressing my experiences authentically and with vulnerability in an attempt to elicit an emotive response from the reader. Educating and informing others from an autoethnographic perspective occurs through creating a platform for emotional and empathetic engagement.

It also serves as a tool of empowerment for the individual voice, whereby a sense of emancipation is brought about in the author’s ability to speak freely about their story or truths without waiting to be represented by others (Mendez, 2013). In doing so, autoethnography ignites something valuable in the mind of another—their own voice and personal reflections which occur in relationship with the author’s writing. It offers them a process of finding new ways to live and to make sense of their reality by gaining knowledge from another through reading the personal and vulnerable content of the work. In this regard, autoethnography has therapeutic value by sharing with another of a similar background, that they are not alone in their experience (Witkin, 2014). While the argument has been made for autoethnography to be used as

a tool of empowerment for oppressed voices and a platform for empathic engagement, it also has the capacity to provide those in dissimilar situations with a deeper understanding of the contexts of others. In health professional fields, for example, autoethnography has the capacity to provide clinicians and other health providers with insight into the potential experiences and worldviews of individuals/healthcare users (Zora et al., 2020). This is achieved through the autoethnographer's personal accounts which may be representative of a particular individual and collective experience of people from similar identities and backgrounds to the author concerned. This may be valuable in informing the overall conceptualisation of the patient and their treatment needs (Witkin, 2014). It may also engage individuals to connect with their own feelings of oppression or being 'othered', even though their situations may not be directly similar to the autoethnographer's given account (Berry, 2013). In line with Wall (2016), further insights and knowledge may be gained through the analysis and thematisation of the author's personal accounts. By using sound analysis strategies, autoethnography is valuable in its capacity to provide scholars and readers with new information, alternative viewpoints, and foundations for more questions and thoughts on a particular issue of focus (Wall, 2016).

3.3.3 Evocative, Analytical, and Moderate Autoethnography

Autoethnographic work may be presented to the reader as either evocative, analytical, or both (Ellis et al., 2011). In this study, I focused on both evocative and analytical elements of autoethnography in order to achieve knowledge generation through drawing connections between my personal narrative and the reader, as well as through critically analysing my experiences. Evocative autoethnography aims to draw the reader in as close as possible to experiencing the actual event by using evocative and emotional writing (Mayor, 2016). This is often achieved through detailing the author's thoughts and awareness of their environment, providing a tactile description of the scenery. Analytical autoethnography, on the other hand, situates the author's experience within an analysis to contribute to theoretical understandings of a broader population or culture. Therefore, the focus of the analytical autoethnography is not necessarily about emphasising the emotive moments of the author's life as an act of producing human connection and learning through emotional experience. Its focus also lies in documenting experiences to analyse or critique social/cultural norms, and the literary style is therefore subordinate to the analytic task (Mayor, 2016). This is something that evocative

autoethnographers, such as Ellis and Bochner (2006) oppose, as they wish for the reader to use their accounts to learn from reading and engaging with the text, rather than ordering or abstracting the text to arrive at findings.

While there appears to be contention between these two streams of autoethnography, they are both committed to providing a platform for minority populations, through the expression of the author's individual voice. Therefore, Wall (2016) has argued for a moderate autoethnography that embraces both the evocative and creative expression, as well as the analytical strategies of qualitative research to produce knowledge and contribute to scholarly literature. Wall (2016) does not deny the value of learning through engaging with detailed and richly emotive texts but rather argues for the use of analytical steps and strategies that can be employed in order to understand the vulnerable experiences of the author. This ensures that neither the emotive nor analytical appeal is lost when using an autoethnographic framework (Wall, 2016). Furthermore, Mayor (2016) suggests that since evocative and analytic autoethnography exist at two extremes and that no particular rule-set governs autoethnographic writing, it is dependent on the author's writing style, scholarly background, and the resources available to them as to what style of autoethnography will be utilised. In line with Wall (2016) and Mayor (2016), this study followed a moderate approach that values both the evocative and analytical elements of the autoethnography.

3.3.4 Self-reflection and Reflexivity

Autoethnographic exploration is deeply and inherently reflexive in nature. Through self-reflection, the subject uses their own journey as a starting point of exploration, examination, and representation. Often a vulnerable and evocative writing style of personal experiences is used to draw the reader's attention, engagement and contemplation (Adams et al., 2015). In other words, reflexivity requires an inward glance at the vulnerable aspects of the self that relate to the individual's culture or place of belonging (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). For the purposes of this study, I have thereby engaged reflexively in relation to my Mixed-Race identity development by keeping a reflexive journal. I engaged with memories and experiences related to my Mixed-Race identity development through my journaling process. I was aware that through the act of journaling, I could not produce an exact depiction of the events that occurred, but rather my current interpretation and understanding of previous events (Allen-Collinson, 2013).

Nonetheless, I engaged with memories, depicting vulnerable moments to provide the reader with emotive insights into my individual experiences. I have further discussed how I achieved this in the data generation section of this chapter, below.

Reflexivity, in essence, is the act of examining one's own thoughts and feelings in relation to a particular situation or circumstance and forms part of the process of self-reflection (Allen-Collinson, 2013). In traditional qualitative research it is used to counteract the researcher's biases by holding them accountable with regards to their interaction and responses to participants in their research, as well as to their interpretations of the data. It also seeks to keep the researcher accountable for his/her motives for engaging with the research topic and acknowledges the subjective experience of individuals who conduct qualitative research and its influences on their data collection and analysis (Ellis et al., 2011). However, in autoethnographic practice, the role of reflexivity in the writing process is to maintain the writer's awareness of choice of representation and manner of self-disclosure. As referred to earlier, autoethnography encourages the author to reveal vulnerable information that is tailored to the focus question for research (Berry, 2013). Being reflexive, therefore, involves a process whereby a personal transformation or change occurs. The researcher-as-participant is, therefore, actively engaged in a process of re-defining and developing insights to produce a body of work that is palatable and appropriate for the reader (Ellis et al., 2011). However, there is often much debate regarding what is considered appropriate sharing of information. Some scholars, such as Wall (2016), believe that some autoethnographic works share too much personal and vulnerable information in pursuit of providing evocative material. However, despite this concern, according to Berry (2013, p. 210), "reflexivity enables the transformation of selves", through a negotiation of identities and cultural conventions by engaging with them from new perspectives, and through accessing important memories of events that occurred in relation to these identities and selves. Berry (2013) expresses that reflexivity means getting as close to the experience as possible as a means of developing voice and understanding of the examined experience.

Following Berry (2013), my reflexive journal has involved me actively taking time to think about pivotal and salient experiences in relation to my racial identity development. An example of this is revisiting a distant memory from when I was in Grade 9 where I was pulled aside by my teacher to fill out a school census form. She was confused and unsure which race

box to tick. So was I. I felt flimsy and embarrassed because I was forced to give an answer that I did not have because I did not fit the predetermined racial categories. All I wanted to do was fit in. Berry (2013) calls for an examination of such experiences as opportunities for transformation. As an adult, reflecting on this memory through the process of reflexive journaling, I began to see the transformation of myself, for I no longer felt as flimsy in defining my racial identity. I felt most comfortable with describing myself as Mixed-Race and began to protest census box-ticking by drawing my own box or leaving it blank altogether. Therefore, this is an example of how reflexive engagement reaffirmed my current identity choice, further developing my voice as a minority Mixed-Race individual.

Furthermore, Berry (2013) states that through the act of using reflexivity, the author's voice also acts as a voice for others who are yet to engage with identity negotiations and self-assertion in areas where they may feel oppressed or 'othered'. In this way, a transference of knowledge and understanding occurs. The author shows the reader that selves have the potential to shift and change. They do not exist in a fixed state of definition and way of being (Berry, 2013). Therefore, this study also aims to demonstrate the shifting nature of racial identities where they are otherwise viewed as fixed categories. My narrative of living in-between races articulates what has not been thoroughly explored in the academic literature in this way and adds voice to the Mixed-Race experience for others, of a similar background, so that they can engage in a process of developing their own voice.

3.4 Participant: Self as Data

Autoethnography as methodology "uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 1). Therefore, I, as the researcher, am also the sole participant of this study. I have used my personal experiences to draw upon themes within my Mixed-Race identity to examine the influences of my immediate social environment (e.g., school and home) and relationships that have shaped my racial identity. Unlike traditional means of qualitative enquiry, in which the researcher observes and explores the realities of a group of participants (Adams et al., 2015), I have focused on my personal experiences, thereby making myself and my story the unit of analysis.

My personal exploration occurs within the South African context. Therefore, my focus has been on understanding and critiquing my Mixed-Race identity development against the historical backdrop and influence of apartheid-era racial divisions and discrimination that continue to echo through democratic South Africa. For example, since I was born two years before the abolishment of apartheid, Mixed-Race families were not common and this impacted my view of myself. I knew my family was different in relation to other families, and while the apartheid laws no longer governed the people of South Africa, I was still subject to discriminatory and categorical beliefs about ‘what’ race I was. Documenting and reflecting on my personal stories such as this forms the corpus of data that was interrogated and is reflected on in Chapter 4. Given that many of my experiences and stories involve salient relational and interpersonal moments in my life, they necessarily involve other people. My experiences of my Mixed-Race identity involve strangers, important people, and vital relationships and bonds that inevitably formed a part of my Mixed-Race identity development. Autoethnography involves others through the recollection and storytelling of the researcher’s experiences (Tullis, 2013). Therefore, in this study, I have only accounted for people who are specific to my Mixed-Race identity development, and always from my own experience of the given situation or scenario rather than from the perspective of anyone else involved.

By virtue of autoethnography centring the researcher as participant, I will introduce myself here to contextualise my narrative in forthcoming chapters. My name is Alexa and I am currently a master’s student in clinical psychology at the University of Pretoria. I was, however, born in KwaZulu Natal (KZN), and grew up on a farm outside Durban where I spent most of my childhood. After completing matric, I moved to Stellenbosch in the Western Cape to complete my undergraduate studies in English and Psychology at Stellenbosch University, after which I moved to Cape Town to pursue my honours in Psychology at the University of Cape Town. After numerous attempts to gain entry into a clinical psychology programme, I was selected into a programme at the University of Pretoria in 2018. As such, I spent a year in Pretoria completing my first year of the Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology. I am ‘half’ Indian, ‘half’ White. I mostly look Indian, as I am brown skinned and I have predominantly Indian features, but my racial ambiguity shines through.

Growing up, I was exposed to both sides of my family's traditions. I celebrated Christmas and Diwali, and went to Hindu and Christian weddings, but I was also exposed to art and nature as both my parents were artists. I was schooled at a relatively racially diverse school, but there were only three other Indian-White Mixed-Race students like me at my school; my brother, another girl in my grade, and one other female student a few grades below me. We were few and far between, and the community we grew up in was quite racially divided in social spaces. Mixed-Race families were not common in my area. It felt like the world wanted to know exactly what a Mixed-Race person was all about, and what they looked like, which often resulted in awkward questions and judgements based on the racial composition of my family. In Chapter 4, I discuss my experiences of being Mixed-Race and how relational, social, and cultural factors influenced my identity development.

3.5 Data Collection

Since autoethnography is a relatively novel form of qualitative research, 'data' collection is not achieved in the same manner as with more traditional qualitative research (Adams et al., 2015). Adams et al. (2015, p. 68) suggest that "Autoethnographies often begin as journal entries, narratives, poetry, blogs, or other forms of personal writing in which authors explore their experiences with the goal of understanding those experiences".

In this study, a reflexive journal was used as the primary mechanism through which to generate data. Excerpts from my journal have been used as part of my reflection and discussion of my Mixed-Race identity. My journal focused on my Mixed-Race identity development. I also honed in on my experience of being Indian-White hybrid, as this was significant to my relationship with my parents. I focused on other significant relationships within particular spatial and geographical contexts, commenting on the sociocultural dynamics and complexities of each, and how this had an impact on my racial identity development.

In Adams et al., (2015), Jones (2015, p. 21) describes that she begins "...with fragments of stories, clips of conversations that replay in my thoughts, feelings or embodied memories that resurface with time, lines of texts, and stories that I return to again and again". Therefore, the

author's story does not unfold in a linear fashion, but organically, through memory. This may also involve exposing the self to various objects or artefacts such as photographs, as well as visual or literary texts that may facilitate the reflexive process (Adams et al., 2015). In this study, I personally used family photographs and images from my social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram) for this purpose. I also returned to the physical locations I had lived in during my university years and made journal entries in those locations in order to stimulate and facilitate reflections. For example, I made a trip to Stellenbosch as part of my journaling exercise and revisited a coffee shop that I frequented during my undergraduate years. I also wrote in my journal in coffee shops in Observatory, Cape Town, which held memories of friendships and interactions that were integral to my Mixed-Race identity development during my early postgraduate years. Lastly, I moved back to KZN to complete my research, and this afforded me the opportunity to engage with my earlier developmental experiences by being in my childhood home.

My journaling began similarly to Jones (2015), in Adams et al., (2015), in that I used fragments of memories and conversations. I did this by using an A3 sketchpad, making quick keyword notes of experiences and memories that first came to mind. I used colour pens to help me colour differentiate between different experiences that I had. Autoethnographers encourage the writing process to begin where it feels most natural (Adams et al., 2015). I find that processing thoughts and memories occurs more naturally for me through the use of visual and creative mediums, hence the use of colour and bold writing. I used the basic notes that I made in colour to write freely, thereby producing journal entries of my experiences related to being Mixed-Race. I was sure to highlight the emotional aspects of my experience, rather than simply stating what happened to me, as a means of utilising the appeal of evocative autoethnographic methods.

3.5.1 Deciding which experiences to journal

Like Jones (2015), I chose to journal about experiences and memories that had a lasting effect and impact on my understanding of myself as a Mixed-Race person. Given that the crux of autoethnographic writing is to convey the evocative and vulnerable aspects of lived experience (Adams et al., 2015), I started my process of writing with memories of instances where I was jolted into confronting my Mixed-Race identity. This is because I intended to elicit a similar

response in the reader by allowing them to experience being confronted with questions around Mixed-Race identity. My research question also guided my journaling process as it focused on how my relationships and social environments contributed to my Mixed-Race identity development. Some of these experiences involved direct questions by others about my race. Some were anxiety producing and left me feeling exposed and vulnerable.

For example, in Chapter 4, one of my journal entries includes a hostile argument between a close friend and I about race, skin colour and privilege. In my adult years this was significant in that it challenged my sense of belonging and identity and the privileged aspects of my identity that I had avoided or had not considered prior. This memory was not only significant in that I was forced to confront my identity, but at the same time, severe damage was caused to a relationship that we both held close, which illustrates the relational tension and damage that such conversations and arguments can cause. Other experiences of focus occurred during my developmental years including, for example, how issues of race and skin colour were communicated to me by my parents, which reflects the enduring impact of my familial relationships on my Mixed-Race identity development.

3.6 Data Analysis

The methodological literature on autoethnography does not prescribe any specific method for analysing the data generated through the reflexive process that characterises the approach. In this study, I chose thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to examine and organise experiences as they relate to the development of Mixed-Race identity. Not only is thematic analysis a common and well-established analytic approach for qualitative data, but it has also been used in other autoethnographic research (Harrison, 2018; Simeus, 2016). Thematic analysis is a method of analysis that enables the researcher to identify similarities and patterns between various pieces of qualitative data such as interview transcripts or journal entries by sorting the data into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher highlights aspects of the data that are related to the research question in order to identify similarities within the given texts. Based on the identified patterns, the researcher then develops themes and builds a

discussion, makes meaning, and develops interpretations from the main themes in the research. The analytic steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were applied as follows:

Firstly, I began by immersing myself in the text through a process of re-reading my journal and making notes of relevant words/phrases:

<p>Coloured friend feeling like an outsider</p> <p>Friendships formed in Cape Town</p> <p>Feelings of belonging</p>	<p>A friend of mine also experienced feelings of being other in her class because she was the only person of colour. However, she had a diverse group of friends in Cape Town that she introduced me to. Her family welcomed me and I often visited her home on weekends. It became like my second home</p>
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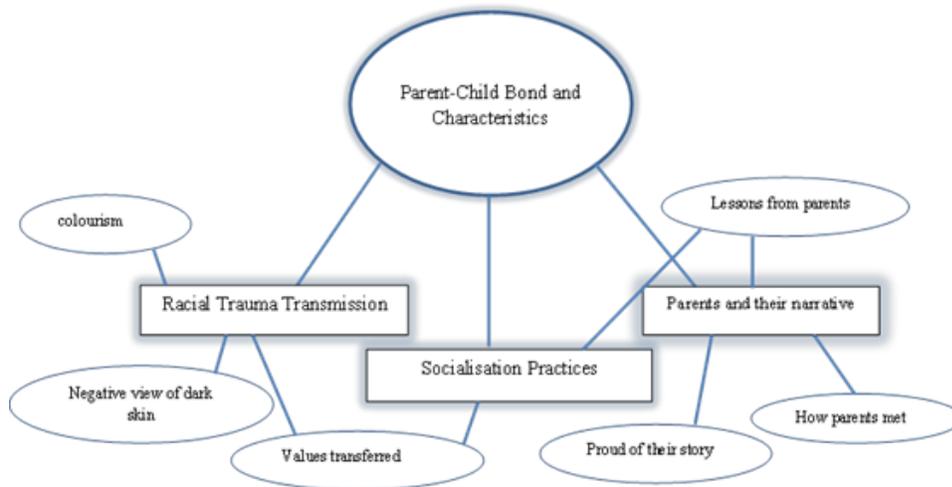
After this, I sorted out the phrases and chunks of texts into relevant ‘codes’. I treated this step as a preceding step to developing themes as this exercise enabled me to find repeated patterns of codes throughout the data set. I employed both a deductive and inductive approach to determining codes and themes. Therefore, I used theoretical concepts to identify codes in my story (deductive), while also generating codes from the story/data (inductive) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

<p>CODE: Parent Socialisation</p>	<p>TEXTS FROM JOURNAL:</p> <p>This meant that racial jokes and racial labelling when talking about a person were not allowed. My parents wanted made us aware that this was a sensitive topic.</p> <p>I think the most valuable thing my parents did was to invite my friends to Diwali and my grans house on other special occasions. They learnt from a young age to be with me in experiencing my heritage and this helped our friendships too.</p>
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Thirdly, I sorted out the codes into potential themes, by using a thematic map, by grouping the codes under thematic headings, and further refining them into final themes and subthemes, in an iterative process. In Figure 3 below, I have used Theme 1 as an example of how I sorted my data into themes and subthemes, with the relevant codes that eventually became part of the subthemes (see complete thematic map in Chapter 4). In the final step, I used the themes and their subthemes to build my discussion and analysis of my findings as presented textually in Chapter 4.

Figure 3

Example of sorting data into main theme and subthemes



Note. The large oval represents the main theme and the rectangular shapes include the headings of the subthemes. The smaller ovals include the relevant codes that are discussed in greater detail in the analysis. The main theme, subthemes, and their codes are joined together by blue lines that indicate that all subthemes and codes are linked and interrelated with one another.

3.7 Rigour

There is much debate and little consensus regarding scientific rigour for autoethnographic research because it is an alternative and unconventional methodology, as compared to other forms of qualitative research (Le Roux, 2017). However, general criteria, specifically adapted for autoethnographic research, are discussed briefly below.

Verisimilitude or credibility: This term refers to the extent to which the work appears to represent reality, is convincing, and considered a possibility within everyday reality by its readers (Le Roux, 2017). To achieve this, readers should be able to position themselves in relation to the event and become emotionally engaged with the text. The aim of autoethnographic work, after all, is to create a sense of resonance with the reader. If this is accomplished, then the work has achieved a sense of trustworthiness in that it is able to authentically capture the essence of everyday existence that can powerfully create connections with others (Le Roux, 2017). I have achieved this by using self-reflexivity throughout my journaling process and being introspective of my Mixed-Race identity within the South African context. Through this process, I have maintained the awareness of the fallibility of memory when recalling and retelling past experiences. Each journal entry is an attempt to convey my experience in an honest manner, while acknowledging that my memory is an interpretation of the experiences I had. I have also written emotively in order to capture an authentic account of being Mixed-Race as a means to create a resonant and credible account of my work (Le Roux, 2017).

Transferability: this term traditionally refers to how relevant the findings of a certain study is to other contexts and situations (Mayor, 2016). In autoethnographic research, transferability may be viewed in terms of its capacity to further understandings and generate knowledge through rich and raw personal accounts of one's experience within a specific culture. This study is about my personal experience, and therefore the findings cannot be strictly transferred in the traditional sense. However, if the reader is able to gain knowledge from reading the text, relate to it, and create dialogue about the topic at hand, then the work is considered transferable (Le Roux, 2017). In order to achieve transferability in my study, I have partially utilised an analytic autoethnographic approach (Mayor, 2016) as part of my aims to contribute and further the knowledge of Mixed-Race identity development through analysis of my journal reflections.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

3.8.1 Confidentiality

Hernandez and Ngunjiri (2013, p. 263) argue that “As we attempt to tell our stories, we inevitably find that these incidents involve others”. During my writing process, the way in which

I represented others in my retelling became an important aspect to consider. Although my work did not include participants other than myself, I did include interactions that I had with others when I journaled my experiences. Where others have been referred to, it is exclusively through my journaling and reflections on memories of interactions, rather than through direct contact with such persons for the purposes of the research. Therefore, I did not need to obtain informed consent, as no-one other than myself was directly involved in the research process.

However, it became evident that I would need to engage with caution and sensitivity as to respect the privacy of those referred to in my reflections and the discussion thereof. It is not always possible to conceal the identity of those involved in autoethnographic work, particularly if they are close relatives of the researcher (Tullis, 2013). In order to best manage the challenges around confidentiality, I followed the suggestions of Adams et al. (2015) by altering all identifying particulars so that they do not appear similar to the individual who is being mentioned. For example, I made use of pseudonyms, changed dates, and any other identifying particulars, such as the name of a location to honour the individual's right to privacy. I have also kept strict privacy settings on my social media accounts, so that family members and close friends' profiles cannot be accessed through my accounts.

To also honour confidentiality, I have not mentioned the names of my family members, despite them appearing in my reflections. I simply refer to them as my brother, mother, or father. Hernandez and Ngunjiri (2013) draw on the importance of being conscious of the relationships that autoethnographers reveal to the reader. In such circumstances where it is not possible to sufficiently conceal the identity of family members, I remained sensitive to the influences that my writing could have on close relationships. I maintained an honest account of my experiences while carefully considering how to represent individuals in my study to avoid consequences or negative impacts on my relationships. This included also being thoughtful of my relationship with my mother, who recently passed away before I started my master's in clinical psychology (Hernandez & Ngunjiri, 2013).

3.8.2 Protection of the Self

Protecting the researcher is also a vital ethical consideration. Autoethnographic work requires the author to reveal oftentimes vulnerable and sensitive information about themselves

(Allen-Collinson, 2013). Through this process, the unearthing of past traumas may occur and could have potentially damaging effects on the researcher. In my own processing of experiences, I have become distressed and sad at times, particularly in relation to conveying difficult experiences regarding my race. However, I was not entirely aware of how deeply painful it would be to revisit some memories through photographs and moving back to my childhood home, as it also unearthed experiences and associated feelings in relation to the recent loss of my mother. In order to protect myself, I have engaged in my own personal psychotherapy on a weekly basis. Therefore, I had adequate psychological support throughout the research process, which also allowed me to use my therapeutic relationship as a creative and reflexive space in which to think about my experiences, the effects thereof, and my research.

3.9 Conclusion

The current chapter discussed autoethnography by providing a historical overview of its emergence and legitimacy as a methodology. The process of data generation through my reflexive journal to analysing themes is also covered with appropriate use of examples and diagrams. The final sections focus on how I achieved rigour and was cautious of ethical considerations given that my personal narrative involved mentioning close relationships.

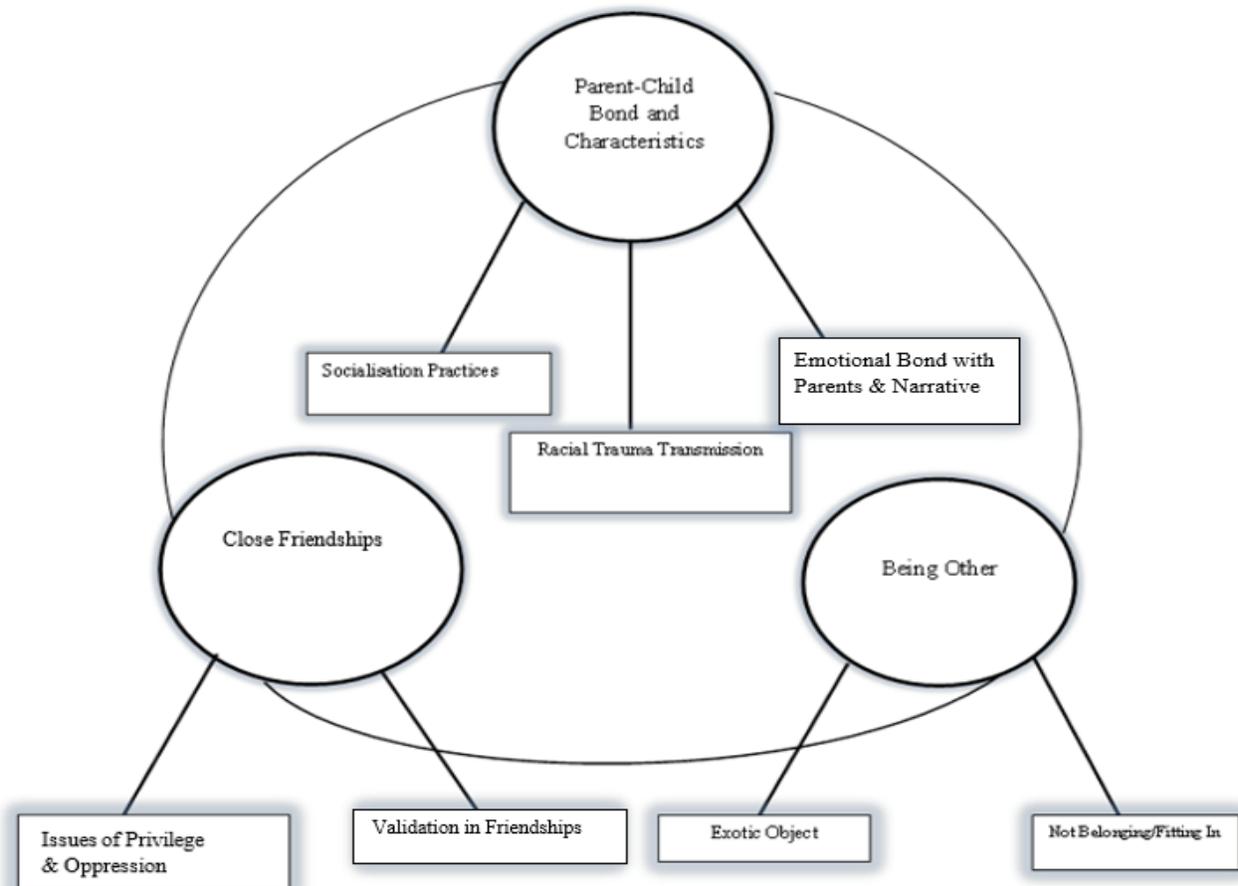
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the factors that have contributed to my identity development and experiences as a Mixed-Race person in the South African context. I have used both Root's ecological model and Worthman's framework to navigate and shape the discussion of my personal narrative. Using my autobiographical account, I attend to sociocultural aspects of my contextual experience by maintaining a critical stance to its influence on my identity across my development. In doing so, I upheld the aims of autoethnography in offering up my story for critical discussion and exploration in relation to the wider sociocultural dynamics in which I was located.

Figure 4

Thematic Map



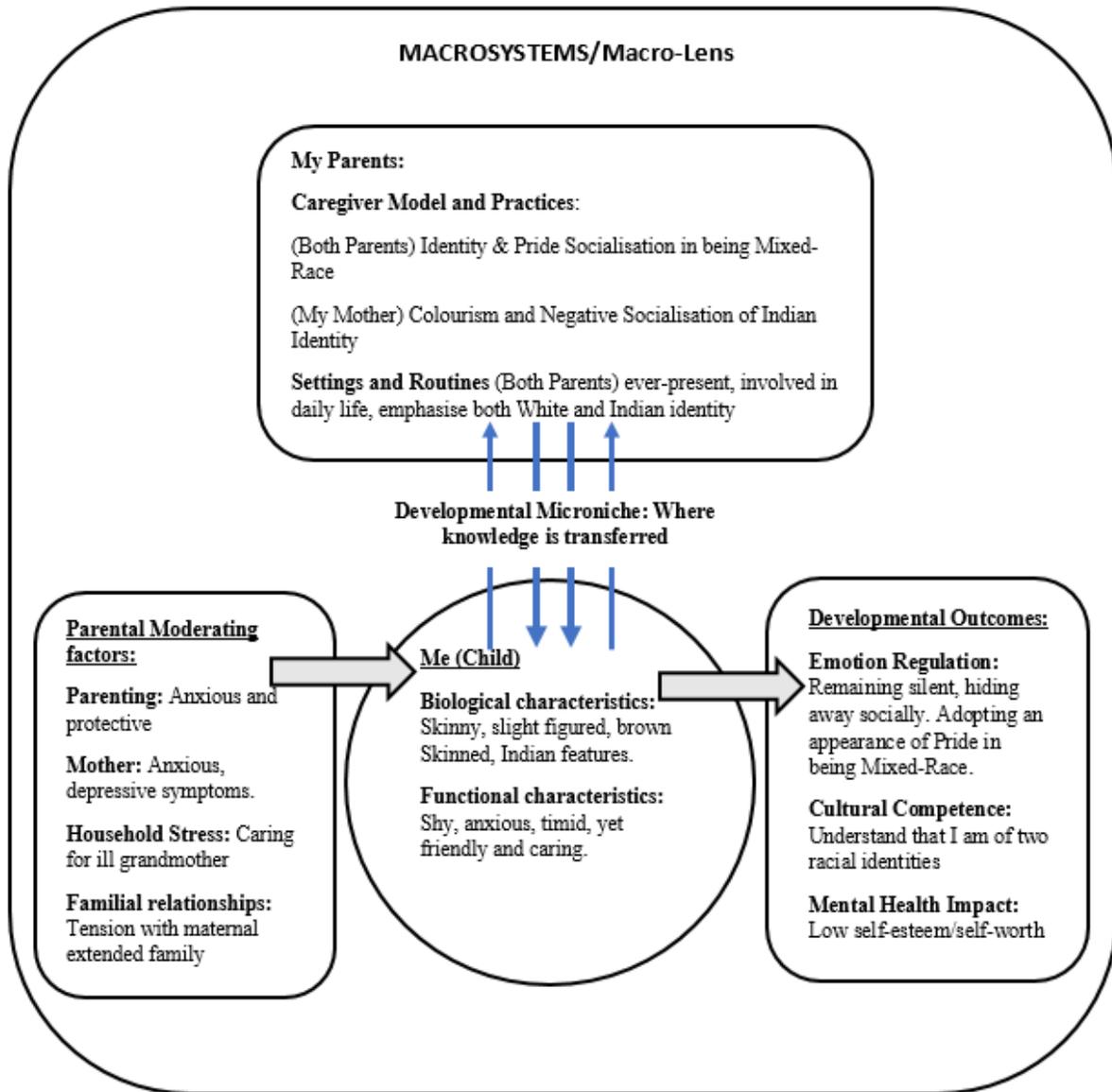
Note. The large circles represent the main themes of focus while the rectangles represent the subthemes. The semi-circular bands/lines indicate that there are similarities between all themes that I discuss in relation to my Mixed-Race identity development

The chapter is organised according to three main themes, and further broken down into subthemes as detailed in the thematic map above (Figure 4). At the beginning of each subtheme, an orienting diagram based on Root's (1998) model is presented as a visual aid for the discussion and analysis below. I followed Root's presentation of the model in the discussion and analysis of findings on Mixed-Race siblings (Root, 1998). Root provided the model as a general guide for the reader to use in conjunction with the written analysis of findings (Root, 1998). In my analysis, I intended to adapt Root's ecological model to fit my autoethnographic study by including the factors most relevant and personal to my Mixed-Race identity development while maintaining the format and structure of Root's model. Each orienting diagram includes the factors that are personalised to my racial identity development and the subtheme.

Main journal extracts are also included at the beginning of each subtheme to contextualise and enable the reader to make connections to my story and the ensuing analysis and discussion. In the orienting diagrams, the blue arrows that connect middle-lens factors (Inherited Influences, Individual Traits and Generation) suggest an interaction between these subsystems. The interaction between the macro-lens factors and the middle-lens is also indicated by a blue arrow. For example, in subtheme 4.2.1, in the box labelled 'Individual Traits', focus is given to how my personal attributes influenced, or were influenced by, the other factors in the middle-lens. Subtheme 4.2.1 predominantly discusses that there was tension in the interaction between my Inherited Influences, such as my parents' identity and their socialisation practices, and my early schooling years labelled under the Generation box. In addition to using Root's (1998) model, I frequently referred to Worthman's (2010) model to discuss my parents' influence on my Mixed-Race identity development because it provided a visual reference from which to understand how knowledge is transferred between parent and child. Like the orienting diagrams, Figure 5 below is a personal adaptation of Worthman's (2010) model that indicates the factors that were most relevant to my racial identity development.

Figure 5

Worthman's bioecocultural model adapted to represent my developmental microniche



Note. Included in the figure are factors that were relevant and personal to my experience and development. The flow of knowledge transmission is marked by the blue arrows in the developmental microniche. Moderating factors also played a role in how knowledge was transmitted and received. My characteristics and my parents played a role in my developmental outcomes and understanding of my Mixed-Race identity.

4.2 Theme One: Parent-Child Bond and Characteristics

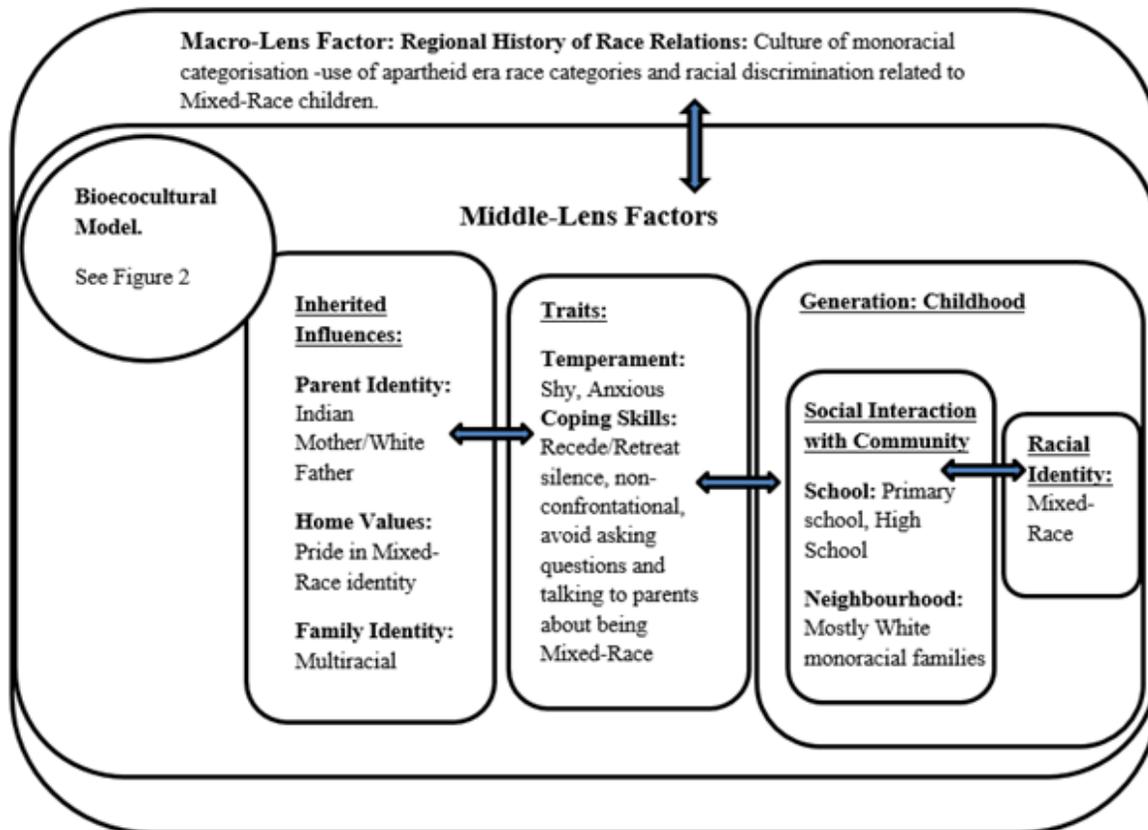
Theme One discusses the influence of my bond with my parents on my racial identity development as a Mixed-Race child. Three subthemes were identified: *Socialisation Practices*; *Racial Trauma Transmission*; and *Emotional Bond with my Parents and their Narrative*. These subthemes touch on the significance of my parents' involvement in my racial identity development and my choice to identify with the label 'Mixed-Race' across my development into adulthood.

The journal extracts that I selected are arranged in an order that speaks to the developmental nature of my Mixed-Race identity whereby, in my early childhood, my understanding of myself was heavily influenced by experiences with, and of, my parents and at school. It also touches on how I experienced feeling invalidated, invisible, and disempowered during my early schooling years for being Mixed-Race. Later, during adolescence I experienced much conflict and denial in relation to my Indian identity which, as discussed in the second subtheme, was related to the intergenerational transmission of my mother's familial trauma and shame for having darker skin. Lastly, I examine how my parents' own narrative and 'love story' in a country that forbade love across the colour-line provided me with a sense of pride in being the product of two racial backgrounds. This section describes my emergence into adulthood and development of a greater personal meaning and understanding of what it meant to identify with the label 'Mixed-Race'. However, while this theme follows a developmental trajectory, I attempt to highlight the complexity of my experience, and that in some instances my choice to identify with being Mixed-Race was not only out of feeling a sense of pride, but also an attempt to distance myself from the Indian (or minority) aspect of my identity. In other words, I did not progress seamlessly from distress to pride in my Mixed-Race identity; rather, at various developmental phases, I felt both a sense of pride and angst in relation to my 'mixedness', which was situationally influenced.

4.2.1 Parent Socialisation Practices

Figure 6

Orienting diagram showing interactions between factors relevant to parent socialisation practices and my racial identity development



Note. The Orienting diagram features the factors of Root’s ecological model and highlights the importance of referring to Worthman’s Bioecocultural model in the discussion of this subtheme. Figure 5 is my personalised adaptation of Worthman’s model in which I included factors in the developmental microniche that were relevant to my identity development. The blue arrows represent the interrelatedness between the middle-lens factors and the influence that they have on each other. The macro-lens surrounds all middle-lens factors and the blue arrow between the middle- and macro-lens indicates the systemic influence and relationship between the two. The other orienting diagrams that follow (Figures 7 - 12) follow the same format and include factors that are relevant and specific to each subtheme discussion. The nature of the relationship between factors and their influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in the analysis of each subtheme.

Journal extract 1a: 'Family Tree'

In Grade four I made a family tree using cut-outs of an Interracial Family from a book. My mum and dad assisted me with making the collage.

Kids in class said 'but that doesn't even look like your mum or dad' (weird scrunched up faces of children all around me, making me feel exposed under a spotlight. Shyly I allowed the hurtful jokes and questions to continue). But it was true, the people in the book were a mix of Black-White. We were a family of Indian-White, so even this was not an accurate reflection of my family. None of the magazine cut outs of my friends' family trees looked exactly like their family. The only similarities were that they were all the same race and colour. I mean, there was nothing that truly represented my family composition, and my parents used what they could to help me visualise who my family was. My family tree did reflect that I was from an interracial family though, and my classmates immediately focused on me. Why all the attention on my family tree!? I think, because we were a family of all different colours, the other school kids were quick to point out how different I was to them. When I look back, I see my parents' efforts to normalise being mixed by finding these sorts of ways to emphasise that even though we did not look the same, we were family. But in reality, the broader systemic forces did not willingly accept who we were. I felt it at such a young age through the gawks and mean questions and jokes made by kids in class.

There was no space for me to freely explore or enjoy my Mixed-Race identity without questions from other kids. At home, my brother and I were mostly told to have pride in our Mixed-Race family and identity. My mum particularly tried to emphasise the pride in being mixed, but in her emphasis on pride, she did not attend to the very real discomfort I had in being mixed. While my father provided my brother and I the space to naturally grow and 'be who we were' this often meant that we did not feel we could speak to him about the confusing feelings of being from two worlds. My parents told me that I was equal regardless of my skin colour or how different our family was. I knew that to show my discomfort with being mixed may have resulted in anxiety and worry in my parents. I also did not want to disappoint them with not being proud of my race, so I never felt comfortable in mentioning this. Therefore, I avoided expressing to my parents just

how hard it was to be me. I did not want to make them feel bad for being the family we were. It makes me think of a particular memory where a relative of mine (who is White) told my mum of a conversation he had with me about not fitting in. My response to him was, “well I get you in a way, try being Mixed-Race. You’re always out of place!” And my mum reacted with such deep concern and worry - maybe even shock! “What did you mean by that, Alexa!?” I was about 15 when this happened. Seeing the concern in her eyes, I just shut off and made it sound logical so as to avoid the real discomfort and fear that I felt in potentially causing her worry.

This journal entry is an example of the complex relationship between various factors that influenced my understanding of my racial identity. This extract resembles the tension between the influence of my schooling system and my parental system/developmental microniche in relation to my Mixed-Race identity. I predominantly utilised Worthman’s (2010) bioecocultural model to explicate the dynamics within my relationship with my parents and how this influenced my understanding and development of my racial identity in Theme One. However, I also refer to factors from Root’s ecological model to discuss the journey of my Mixed-Race identity development.

Worthman’s (2010) theory refers to parental practices or ethno-theories that provide a framework for transmitting cultural knowledge to the child. In the developmental microniche, my parents engaged in a caregiver practice that is primarily known as identity socialisation. This is a type of racial socialisation that is specific to interracial families (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). It is the practice of guiding children to identify with a particular race, whether or not this was congruent with their dual cultural heritage (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). In my particular experience, my parents emphasised a racial identity that embodied both my cultural and racial backgrounds. In other words, their preferred identity choice for me was congruent with my dual heritage, as they provided me with the term ‘Mixed-Race’ to develop my understanding of being ‘half-Indian’, ‘half-White’. This form of socialisation is exemplified in *journal extract 1a*, above, through my parents’ attempts to find characters from a book that somewhat represented my family.

Along with socialising me to identify with being Mixed-Race as a means of understanding that I was from two different racial worlds, my parents were also the first people to teach me about race. Given that children are first exposed to the topic of race and racial identity at home (Atkin & Yoo, 2019), I too learnt about it through my parents. They provided me with the foundation from which I grew to understand my racial identity as being of two racial backgrounds and that both ‘sides’ of me were essentially ‘equal’ and of the same value, even though I often experienced my part-Indian heritage as inferior to my part-White heritage. It may be argued that from a developmental perspective, my Mixed-Race identity was in its early formation during my childhood and my parents were the most significant agents in providing me with the understanding that my racial identity was from two different racial worlds. As Worthman’s model emphasises, the developmental microniche is vital for knowledge transmission and identity development (Worthman, 2010). It is the site through which knowledge is transferred to the child and through which the child understands themselves (Worthman, 2010).

Given that identity development prior to adolescence is largely influenced by one’s parents, it is during these childhood or pre-adolescent years where a child is impressionable to the knowledge transferred from parents (Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Therefore, in relation to my experience, it makes sense that during my childhood, using the label Mixed-Race was simply a label at the time. I barely attached any meaning to it during childhood. I primarily understood that it described ‘who I was’ because my parents provided me with the label and gradually assigned meaning to the label as I grew older. From a developmental perspective, this makes sense because self-understanding during childhood is still in formation and increasingly progresses from concrete to abstract with age (Heinonen & Pihlaja, 2020). Therefore, my racial identity development and use of the label ‘Mixed-Race’ was largely influenced by my parents’ involvement in my life during my childhood, as I had not yet developed greater abstract capacities from which to make sense of what it *meant* to be Mixed-Race.

While my parents made a significant effort to socialise me with the label ‘Mixed-Race’ to aid me in understanding that I was from two racial worlds, they also hoped to protect me against the potential challenges of being Mixed-Race by attempting to instil pride in my racial heritage. Parents of racial minority children often engage in racial socialisation that hinges on teaching

pride in their racial heritage and history as a form of protection against issues of discrimination (Kurtz-Costes et al., 2019). Similarly, families of Mixed-Race children often engage in socialisation practices that focus on instilling pride in their child's dual racial heritage to combat against hurtful acts of discrimination (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). I believe that my parents' attempts to instil a sense of pride in my Mixed-Race identity may be viewed as indicative of their knowledge of the greater macro-lens factors related to prejudice and potential discrimination towards Mixed-Race children. They were anxious about the possibility that I would be exposed to such challenges in my school setting and therefore emphasised pride in being Mixed-Race.

Although my experience is similar to other Mixed-Race families in that my parents intended for me to experience pride in my mixedness, as described in *journal extract 1a*, at times I felt pressured to be proud of being Mixed-Race. This is possibly because, unlike the findings of Snyder (2012) and Stone and Dolbin-MacNab (2017), where parents spoke openly about issues of race, my parents did not. They did not provide a safe space to talk openly about my experiences of being Mixed-Race, particularly those of a distressing and anxiety provoking nature. Therefore, I avoided "*expressing to my parents just how hard it was to be me. I did not want to make them feel bad for being the family we were*". I maintained an appearance of pride in my Mixed-Race identity, when in actuality I felt shy, invalidated, and confused about being different because of my Mixed-Racial heritage, which I felt unable at the time to share with my parents. Instead, I often used the label Mixed-Race as a means of reassuring my parents that I was at ease with my identity, instead of sharing experiences of angst related to being Mixed-Race. I had become aware of their anxious reactions when I described instances of discomfort with my Mixed-Racial heritage. I feared being responsible for causing them any hurt. *Journal extract 1a* exemplifies this:

"It makes me think of a particular memory where a relative of mine (who is White) told my mum of a conversation he had with me about not fitting in. My response to him was, "well I get you in a way, try being mixed race - you're always out of place!" And my mum reacted with such deep concern and worry - maybe even shock!"

These instances where my parents expressed worry towards how I felt about my identity made me acutely aware that expressing my distress for being Mixed-Race would result in anxious and

worried reactions from them. In turn, my hesitance in expressing my distress exacerbated my own anxiety. Retreating, rather than confronting my discomfort, was a means of regulating the anxiety and distress that I experienced in relation to my racial identity. Part of this, at the time, involved my blind adoption of the Mixed-Race label, not because I necessarily identified as Mixed-Race but because I knew that using the label and being “proud” of doing so would appease my parents’ anxieties, as well as my own. It may be argued that I performed a racial identity that best allowed me a sense of security, belonging, and lesser anxiety in my family.

Worthman (2010) emphasised that the child is an active agent in the transmission of knowledge in that their personality and functional characteristics contribute to how knowledge about themselves and the broader world is internalised. Similarly, parents’ characteristics are considered moderating factors in the transmission of knowledge through the developmental microniche (Worthman, 2010). Therefore, the interaction between my parents’ anxiety around my adjustment as a Mixed-Race child and my own anxious and shy nature, may be viewed as a contributing factor to my lifelong use of the label ‘Mixed-Race’. This appropriately encapsulates how interactions between parent and child in the developmental microniche influence the knowledge transmission (Worthman, 2010). In my case, my anxiety, coupled with that of my parents’, influenced my need to maintain the use of the label that was provided to me. It afforded me a feeling of acceptance and belonging to them, particularly when I did not feel a sense of belonging and acceptance in my other immediate schooling system. Keeping quiet about my experiences meant that ‘all was well’, even though at times I experienced significant angst for being of Mixed-Racial heritage. Simply identifying as Mixed-Race meant that I could perform a ‘racial role’, as Coleman et al. (2003) refers to it, as a way of harnessing security and acceptance in my own family because they approved of the label ‘Mixed-Race’.

Maintaining the appearance of ‘pride’ in my identity, primarily served a protective function for me during my childhood as it gave me a sense of security. However, as discussed in subtheme 4.2.3, later, during my early adulthood, this pride transformed from a mere performance as I began to develop my own sense of pride born out of the personal meanings I assigned to my parents’ narrative or ‘love story’ and what that meant in relation to my mixedness. Identifying as Mixed-Race increasingly became a choice of mine as I aged. This is because the capacity to assign meaning and understanding to a label increases with age. While

adolescence is considered the primary age where an individual is better able to make sense of their identity-related experiences and begin the process of individuation (Schachter & Ventura, 2008), I believe that I only began to feel greater personal comfort with my racial identity in early adulthood. This is potentially the result of being exposed to my mother's familial trauma and internalised inferiority related to her Indian identity (as discussed in further detail in 4.2.2) during my adolescent years.

It is possible that both the exposure to my mother's familial trauma and the constant questioning about my racial identity during childhood, left me feeling voiceless and powerless to question and explore what my racial identity meant for me. This was—and still is often—my experience. I first felt 'other' or 'different' at school in relation to my peers' monoracial identities. As a result, my voice felt insignificant in monoracial settings. Dutro et al. (2005) argues that Mixed-Race children often struggle to assert their voices when it comes to issues of race because school classrooms are not equipped for discussions surrounding race. Therefore, at the level of the school system, I was voiceless because my schooling environment was ill equipped to deal with issues of race and, in particular, issues that pertained to Mixed-Race identities. I felt that *"There was no space for me to freely explore or enjoy my Mixed-Race identity without questions"*, neither at home because anything other than "pride" caused anxiety in my parents, nor at school where there was no room to be anything other than White, Black, Indian, or Coloured.

My primary school environment (middle-lens factor) was characterised by dominant voices influenced by a monoracially-oriented culture (macro-lens factor) which had the power to question my existence as a Mixed-Race person and made me feel invalidated for my family's mixed-racial composition. As if acting to deny me the right to be a person, by being othered, I was also 'invisibilised'. I felt trampled on by the numerous questions about my race that made me feel different and 'wrong' in the eyes of my peers. The school system was indeed ill-equipped to provide me with a safe space to explore who I was without being jabbed from every direction with comments and questions about my skin. Ultimately, the voicelessness that resulted from my peers' incessant focus and 'poking' for answers made me recede into silence, much like I did at home.

Moreover, I acquired an invisible status in order to survive, like many other marginalised people who resort to silence in order to survive hostile and oppressive environments (Herzog, 2018). I often felt insignificant in relation to the monoracial children in my class. I internalised a belief—communicated through the invalidating interactions with others—that my voice and view was insignificant or somehow wrong because *I*, and my existence, was wrong by virtue of being mixed. Social settings were anxiety provoking for me because I was always in anticipation of being either ridiculed or invalidated for being Mixed-Race. Herzog (2018) refers to this as social invisibilisation, in that my existence was silenced through invalidating questions and remarks in social settings. It involves acts or behaviours that communicate to the othered individual that they are not seen or acknowledged for their complexity as a human being (Herzog, 2018). Surely so, I did not feel seen and, ultimately, did not even want to be seen in response to the risk of being targeted again with the painful reminder that I did not fit in. Thus, there was safety in silence.

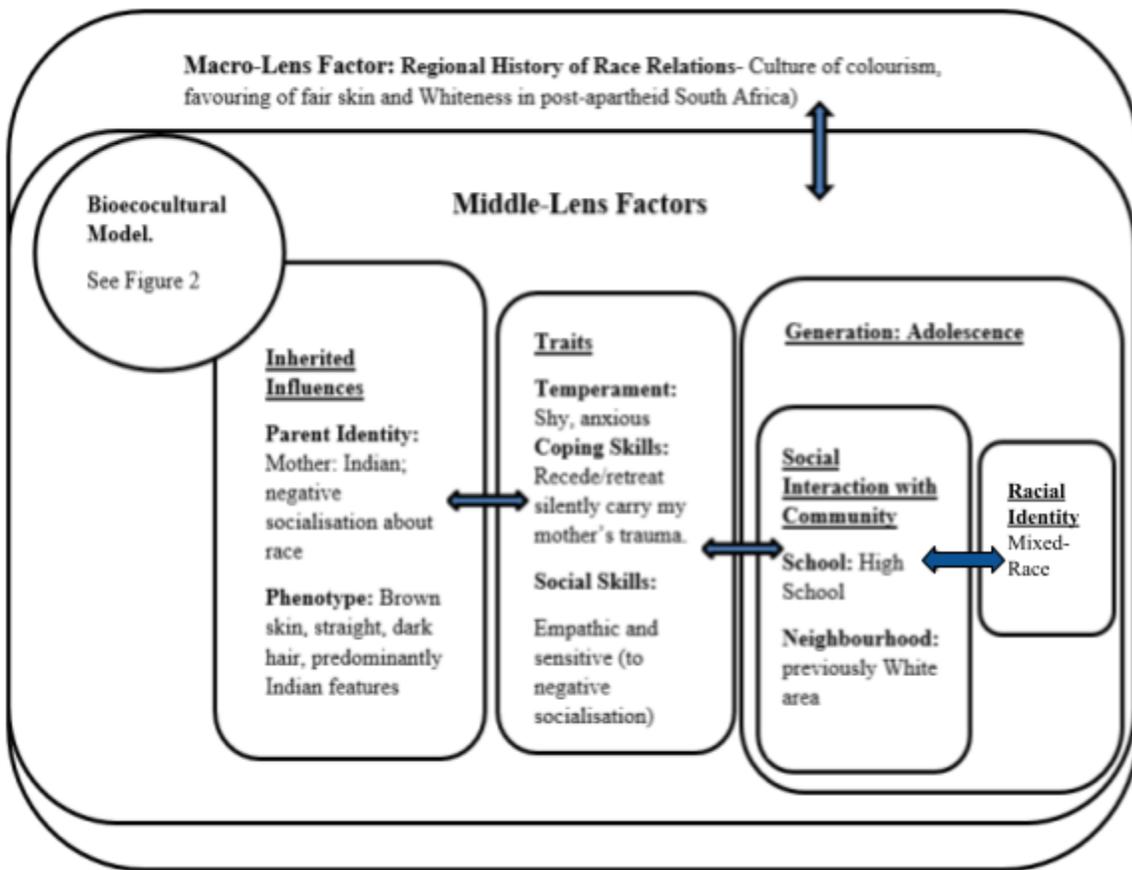
In reflecting on my experiences of invisibilisation, I was struck by the parallels between my internal experience of silence as a Mixed-Race person in post-apartheid South Africa and the manner in which the apartheid government sought to prevent the existence of Mixed-Race people through criminalising interracial relationships (Morrall, 1994). The historical echoes of the ‘invisibilisation’ of Mixed-Race heritage, evident in my school peers’ focus on my interracial family tree, speaks perhaps to the macro-lens influences, such as the long-term impact of apartheid’s legacy of racial segregation laws that came to influence me and how I engaged with myself and my Mixed-Race identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Indeed, it may be argued that since apartheid legacy appears to be alive in classrooms today (Myambo, 2010; Teeger, 2015) that there was significant influence of apartheid’s legacy in my classroom when I entered Grade 1, then in 1999. Despite having no direct experience of apartheid, my lived experience of being Mixed-Race in post-apartheid South Africa is nonetheless influenced by the ripple effects of an attempt by a racist regime to eradicate those like me from existence. The fact that I was made, in 1999, to feel invalid, and compelled to silently recede into the background—a form of social eradication—is a manifestation of the persistence of the ideological underpinnings that continue to shape race and racial identity in South Africa today, and in my formative experience at school. After all, as Morrall (1994) states, the Mixed-Race individual was deemed to be the unwanted and inferior member of society.

4.2.2 Racial Trauma Transmission

The following subtheme explores the effects of intergenerational trauma on my racial identity, particularly during my adolescent years, and the resultant impact of these contextual factors on my racial identity development.

Figure 7

Orienting diagram showing interactions between factors relevant to the mother-daughter bond and its influence on my Mixed-Race identity development



Note. The orienting diagram features the factors of Root’s ecological model and highlights the importance of Worthman’s Bioecocultural model in the circle to the left. See figure 5 for factors that were of relevance to my developmental microniche. The nature of the relationship between factors in this subtheme and their specific influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in the analysis below.

Journal extract 2a: 'Passing down the pain'

"My Ma worked so hard, Alexa... Can you imagine your house burning down? You're just a young woman. Your family's house burns down in the riots. The fi. The fear. Everyone's lives were torn apart. My Ma was poor. She had nothing. When she was young, her mother died, so she helped out in the house. Oh, how they made her work. Ma was never educated. She was the darker skinned of all the siblings and cousins so they never educated her. They made her go far to fetch water. She scrubbed and cleaned. They (my gran's extended family) treated her poorly... like dirt.... And then she married your grandfather, my dad - he had very little, but he was always kind and giving. How I miss my dad.... We were poor growing up, and when my dad died, we had almost nothing. Sometimes my friends would give us their old clothes and I felt so bad but we had no money."

My mother would often tell me this story throughout my life, particularly when she was overcome by emotion by my Nanima's (gran) incapacitated state from suffering a stroke. She and my gran had a tightly-wound bond, and in a way, a similar, almost enmeshed relationship between my mother and I formed. I was deeply affected by some of the stories she told me of her childhood, and of my Nanima's life. My sensitive nature often left me moved, or crippled by hearing other's pain, so when my mother told me these stories, I listened. And it sunk deep within. As a child I began to see my mother's life experiences and her depiction of skin colour as poor and one of poverty, particularly in relation to my father, who came from a relatively wealthy middle-class home. I never knew a life of dire poverty as my mother did, but from how I heard her speak about being Indian, I developed a complex about my own skin, and Indian heritage. At times I viewed the Indian aspect of my identity as poor and lacking in comparison to my father's. While my mother did not intentionally pass the pain of her family life onto me, I received what she told me about being Indian as a painful and poor place to come from, despite some of my earliest experiences of my mother's family being bright, warm, and full of love. It is sad to know that due to familial disagreements, my mother and her sisters drifted apart, and so too did my exposure to my Indian roots fade away.

In the previous subtheme, I primarily focused on my childhood and the middle-lens factors such as school, and my developmental microniche that influenced my racial identity development. The current subtheme focuses more closely on my experience of being exposed to familial trauma through my interaction with my mother and how that influenced my view on Indian identity. I used Worthman's bioecocultural model to focus on important factors such as my mother's personal traits (anxious temperament) and household stress (caring for my grandmother) and how this interacted with my personal traits to inform my identity development. I then use Root's model to discuss how middle-lens factors such as my high school environment all interacted together to inform my racial identity development. Ultimately, my mother's narration of her family traumas and awareness of colourism pushed me to identify more greatly with my White identity during adolescence where I was primarily surrounded by White friends and a school culture that favoured Whiteness.

My mother's narration of her family life left an indelible mark on my understanding of my racial identity, for it communicated to me that my Indian heritage was of lesser value than my White heritage, and ultimately contributed to my wish to be lighter skinned, or even White. *Journal extract 2a* is illustrative of how the transmission of knowledge occurs through the developmental microniche, resulting in the child's own interpretation and internalisation of the knowledge that is communicated to them (Worthman, 2010). How I received the information about my Indian heritage is based on a range of intertwining factors in the developmental microniche, which all combined and contributed to my understanding of myself and my Mixed-Race identity. As discussed above, Worthman (2010) noted a variety of moderating factors that influenced knowledge transmission to the developing child such as parental characteristics, family relationships, and household stress.

All of these factors played an important role during my adolescence, as during this time my mother took care of my gran who was bedridden due to a stroke. Often stressed and burnt out, my mother operated from a place of frustration and hopelessness. Her characteristically anxious temperament (parental characteristics) contributed to how she engaged with her experiences and my gran. Upon reflecting on my mother's disposition at this time, I now notice the signs of her depression precipitated by the circumstances. Reportedly, mothers who are depressed are more likely to express negative thoughts and cognitions, and their children, are

more likely to be negatively impacted by their mother's mental state (Boyd et al., 2011). In my particular case, the subject and focus of my mother's negative thoughts was my Nanima's difficult and poverty-filled life. I believe that the stress of caregiving and seeing her mother in a bedridden state (household stress) contributed to my mother's negative and pained narration of my Nanima's life. It often felt as if my mother was engaged in a process of re-experiencing my Nanima's trauma as her own, and through my perceptive and empathic nature I burdened myself with the traumas of my Nanims's past as told through my mother.

To add to this transmission of familial trauma, our extended family relationships began to dwindle under disagreements over my Nanima's care, which resulted, over time, in loss of contact with my Indian family. Worthman notes family relationships as an important factor in knowledge transmission. Root's model also refers to 'extended family' as a middle-lens factor that contributes to one's racial identity development. Therefore, apart from my mother and grandmother, my extended family were an important piece of my Mixed-Race identity because they provided me with frequent exposure to an Indian and Hindu lifestyle. As Worthman (2010) emphasises, even the subtlest and most minute interactions between parents, family, and child are significant enough to shape development. With little connection to the subtle aspects of the Hindu way of life, the food, and Indian attire, and with increased negative communication from my mother about her Indian heritage, I gradually associated my Indian heritage with poverty, sadness, and deprivation; therefore, viewing it as undesirable. Given that I held negative associations with my Indian heritage, yet I had predominantly Indian features, identifying as Mixed-Race (as opposed to Indian) offered me a way to escape what I believed was a devalued aspect of my identity. Reflecting on this, I often wonder whether I would have 'felt' more comfortable and akin to my Indian heritage had I had more familial exposure to an Indian way of life. Although the way my mother portrayed her familial history to me was not intentional, it contributed to the notion that being Indian was of lesser value as compared to my White father's familial history.

Thus, my experiences of listening to my mother's trauma, while not a conscious process, often left me feeling more comfortable with identifying as Mixed-Race, as it meant that I was not fully Indian. I could imagine myself as somewhat removed and disconnected from that 'part' of my identity. Evidently, Root (1998) suggests that individuals tend to colour code events or

experiences in order to make sense of their realities and to create a sense of their reality. For Mixed-Race individuals, racial or colour coding events and experiences may serve to create a false sense of safety or understanding of their identity. For example, in Root's (1998) findings, a participant reported distancing themselves from their Filipino heritage because their mother was distant and unavailable, effectively assigning similar attributes to Filipino identity. Similarly, I believe I colour coded my mother's stories of racial pain, assigning negative associations with my Indian heritage, distancing myself from that identity.

Although these experiences highlight the complexities of relationships within the developmental microniche or microsystems, there were also greater macro-lens influences on my mother's communication of her Indian identity and skin colour to me. Her favouring of lighter skin and experiencing her own racial identity as devalued in relation to Whiteness, speaks to the global/macro-lens phenomena of colourism and the impact of the hierarchical nature of race that favoured Whiteness during apartheid. The culture of colourism favours lighter complexion over darker skin, and is gendered in nature, often valuing women who are of fairer skin tone (Davenport, 2016). It was evident that issues of colourism were at play in my interaction with my mother, where at times she policed my outdoor activities to ensure that I stayed as fair-skinned as possible. I believe it was her way of trying to keep me as acceptable and attractive in public because she knew the challenges that came with having dark skin. *Journal extract 2b*, below, furthers my story on how such macro-lens systemic influences impacted how my mother engaged on issues of skin complexion:

“Wear your hair behind your ears Alexa! Your ears are light. You look dark when your hair is covering your face!”... Don't go in the sun, you will get dark. When you go to the beach make sure to always wear sunscreen. “You know”, she jokingly and sheepishly said, “lots of Indians in India use skin lightening creams. Why don't you try?” “Oh mum...stop!”, I would say (and we laughed together). “Yaah”, she said, accentuating her Durban Indian accent, “You know mummy is juuust Joking, baby, but sometimes it would be little bit nice if you looked like dad.”

Although these conversations were often shared light-heartedly, it became ingrained in me that the lighter my complexion, the more positively I would be received in public and the

more accepted I would have been in her eyes. My experience resonated with findings made by Landor et al. (2013) that Black American daughters were received more positively by their parents or given preferential treatment if they had lighter skin complexion. The fact that it was my mother that communicated these messages to me about Whiteness—rather than my father—is significant in that it illustrates the power of the culture of colourism to impact intimate connections such as the mother-daughter relationship. In other words, I felt more accepted by my mother if I stayed as light as possible, and we both felt inferior for being brown skinned. My Indian mother’s negative perceptions on dark skin, despite being darker skinned herself, was significant enough to impact my self-worth in relation to my brown skin. As illustrated further in *journal extract 2c*, below:

I looked in the mirror thinking, “I’ve ruined myself, I’ve gone so dark. Why did I sit in the sun all day!? What will everyone think now. I don’t even look mixed anymore, there’s no sign of White in me, I’m just dark brown...”

On an internal level, I suffered from the complexes of having brown skin, to the extent that I felt that being of a darker complexion ruined my self-worth and value. I felt shy and worried that others would notice how dark I got and make negative commentary on my skin tone because I had become so brown. Worthman’s (2010) model would view this as an important developmental outcome for my mental state, in that my self-esteem was negatively impacted by my negative view of brown skin. These concerns and anxieties about my skin may be viewed as what Williams (2019) refers to as racial trauma acquired through a process of intergenerational transmission which may result in an internalised sense of deficiency (Prager, 2016). I often felt anxious about being brown skinned in predominantly White social spaces, which ultimately pushed me to gradually avoid my Indian background by associating more with my White heritage.

Moreover, the browner I got after a day in the sun, the more Indian I looked, which made me feel very uncomfortable given that I learnt, implicitly, from my mother—through her own internalised sense of racial inferiority—that I too was ‘inferior’ the more Indian I looked. In the process of learning this, I began to realise that having an Indian appearance was more inferior, as communicated by my mother, than appearing Mixed-Race or part-White. This is because I knew

that if my appearance signified that I had some ‘White’ in me—having a lighter complexion which lent to my racial ambiguity—then I would more likely be ‘visible’ and accepted by those in my predominantly White school and neighbourhood. This is further illustrated in *journal extract 2d*, below:

Seated with my three closest White friends at school break time in grade 9, I looked at the colour of my hands, placing one against my face. I asked “is my face lighter than my hands?”. “Yes!”, was all of their responses...a response that I was hoping for. If my face was a shade lighter than my hands, then I felt light enough to be comfortable with my appearance as someone who was mixed.

Although being Mixed-Race was an uncomfortable experience for me, it felt more comfortable to be thought of as Mixed-Race than Indian by my classmates, as a possible way of escaping and rejecting my associations with being Indian. Therefore, one could say that identifying as Mixed-Race was less about the pride that my parents wished for me to espouse, and more about rejecting my part-Indian identity. This is because Hinduism and traditions associated with being Indian were essentially ‘othered’ (Gelders & Balagangadhara, 2011) and not acknowledged as a legitimate and valued culture in White neighbourhoods and school settings. Rejecting my Indian identity may be seen as my attempt to cope with being ‘othered’ which, as Turner (2016) describes, involves a painful silencing or denial of parts of the self in order to fit in.

Furthermore, rejecting my Indianness happened predominantly during my adolescence before I began to expand my view of my Mixed-Race identity through developing a personal sense of appreciation thereof in early adulthood. This is not to say that I did not reject or deny my Indianness in other stages of my development, as throughout my life I found myself in denial of my Indian background to fit into White dominant settings. However, my adolescence was a particularly trying time for me because, like many other adolescents, it was important for me to be accepted by my peers. I believe that through being exposed to race-related generational trauma and colourism during my adolescence, identifying as ‘Mixed-Race’ meant that I was not Indian, which was meaningful in that it allowed me to distance myself from my part-Indian identity. Root (1998) describes that traumatic experiences related to race may shape the identity development of Mixed-Race individuals by dramatically influencing how they interact with

themselves and others in their immediate environment. The label Mixed-Race, at the time of my adolescence, meant that I was not really Indian, and this helped me to feel a greater sense of belonging among my White friends.

Essentially what this subtheme reveals, is that I used the label Mixed-Race to avoid, as best I could, the consequences of having brown skin. Mixed-Race adolescents who have negative experiences in relation to an aspect of their racial identity may pull away from associating with that aspect of their identity in order to cope with social circumstances that discriminate against or devalue this part of their identity (Gonzales-Backen, 2013). Similarly, I pulled away and avoided engaging with my Indian background where I could because of the exposure to my mother's negative view of being Indian and having brown skin. In reflection of my Mixed-Race identity development during adolescence, this period was about making sure that I survived my feelings of insignificance and deficiency for not being White in my school setting. I was focused on the need to fit in, rather than on actively making sense of what my racial identity meant for me. For Mixed-Race female adolescents this can be a particularly challenging period for their racial identity development because a significant amount of pressure is often placed on being accepted for a young girl's physical appearance and emphasis on skin tone (Kelch-oliver & Leslie, 2007). My experience reflects the findings of Kelch-oliver and Leslie (2007), as I believe that my identity development during adolescence was complicated by the fact that I was from a Mixed-Race heritage. I had to make sense of that while finding ways to feel accepted in a White dominated school culture, even if this meant rejecting my part-Indian identity.

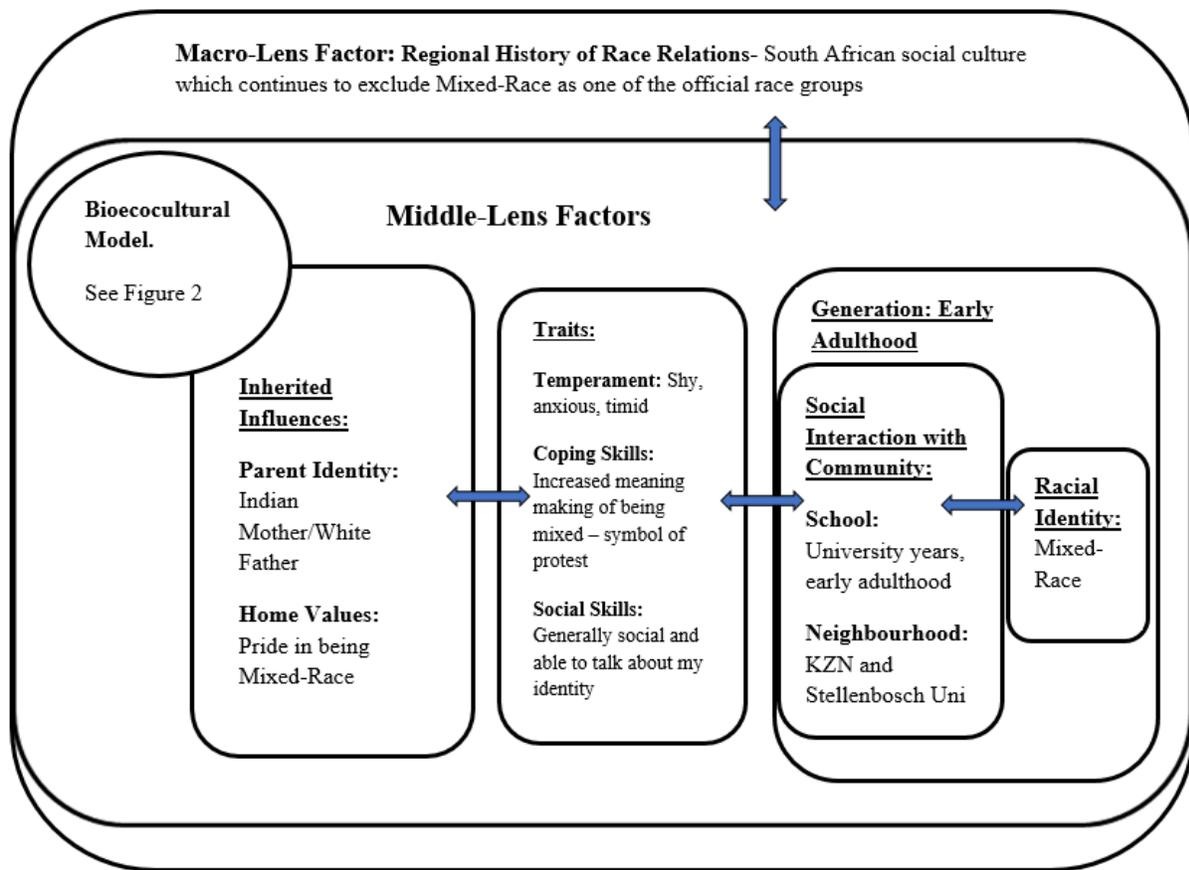
In addition, my mother's narration of familial and racial trauma, and the clear valuing of Whiteness at school were both factors that contributed to me identifying as 'Mixed-Race'. It was as if the interaction between my mother's negative communication about brown skin (parental transmission in the developmental microniche) and my interactions at school (social interactions with community in Root's [1998] model) influenced me to see my Indianness as inferior to my White identity. Therefore, one could say that these systemic factors were congruent with each other and communicated to me that Whiteness was of a higher hierarchical value compared to being Indian.

4.2.3 Emotional Bond with my parents and their narrative

This subtheme focuses on my bond with my parents and its influence on my racial identity choice. It also discusses the time I began to view my racial identity as a choice rather than as a label which I was given by my parents to use.

Figure 8

Orienting diagram showing factors relevant to the development of pride in my Mixed-Race identity



Note. The orienting diagram features the factors of Root’s ecological model and highlights the importance of Worthman’s Bioecocultural model in the circle to the left. See figure 5 for factors that were of relevance to my developmental microniche. The nature of the relationship between factors in this subtheme and their specific influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in

the analysis below. For example, my home values of pride in being Mixed-Race influenced my choice to identify with the Mixed-Race label in early adulthood.

Journal extract 3a: ‘Who am I without my parents? Who am I without their story?’

I wrote the following journal entry in response to viewing a photograph of my parents embracing each other a few days after their wedding:

When I look at you, mum and dad - you two look young and innocent. But, you were also quiet rebels of a system that said “you two are WRONG together”. Because you did not care, You just knew you wanted to be together. So through secret meetings in the University auditorium, or just hanging out as ‘friends’, you made it possible. Dad, you in your blue jeans, your thick head of ash-blond hair, and sensitive dreamy eyes... You taught me to appreciate life in all forms, to paint and draw what I saw. And mum, your smile soft like the flowers in your headband, your brightly coloured sari draped over you. I can distantly hear your voice, encouraging me, caring for me. I wish to feel your hugs again. But, here frozen in time, you and dad are just two happy people. Imagining a world like yours, the very ground I am on, divided by differences in skin colour.... I just... cannot. My chest is tight when I look at you two. Tears are welling up. Your love story may go unseen to others, but to me, it is the most brilliant.

My parents met in 1983 when my mother was in college, and my father had recently been employed as an art lecturer. I think the beauty of their story lies in the mystery that apartheid is to me. While I had learnt about apartheid through my parents and at school, imagining living a racially segregated life was completely abstract to me. Although the Mixed-marriages act was abolished in 1985, my parents also had to navigate the disapproval of family members and the broader society that was governed by apartheid’s strict racial divisions. To know that their relationship was essentially criminalised under apartheid law and considered wrong according to societal norms, they still believed in their union as a couple. That is something I deeply revere and honour.

This extract speaks to the deep and sentimental relationship I have with my parents and their personal story of rebellion and struggle during the apartheid regime. In reference to Root’s

ecological model, while it does not refer specifically to parental stories and histories, it acknowledges how interactions between parent identity and the child may play a role in shaping the child's identity formation. I have extended the 'Parental Identity' factor to include the meanings I attached to the stories my parents told me about their experiences of being a couple during apartheid, reflecting Bottero's (2015, p.539) notion that "finding out where [one comes] from [is] linked to knowing 'who [one is]'"'. Findings by Carvalho-Malekane (2015), suggests that Mixed-Race South Africans draw a sense of meaning and pride in knowing how their parents met and this contributed towards understanding their own racial identity. An individual's bond to their parents and their histories, may therefore be influential in understanding their origin and identity (Bottero, 2015). Parental and familial histories serve as a foundation and source from which a person can make sense of their current reality and existence (Bottero, 2015). As an adult, I drew pride from my parents' love story and who they are as people, because without their choice to go against societal norms, I would not be here today. I drew a sense of strength from their story, because despite the challenges and barriers to their relationship, they believed in their right to love one another.

Therefore, my parents were particularly influential in my racial identity development for two significant reasons. Firstly, their rebellious narrative of being a couple during apartheid is what provided me with the sense that my mixedness was, by extension, a sign of protest against the macro-lens influence of racial categorisation by single race. Secondly, my bond with both my mum and dad was significant enough for me to continue using the label 'Mixed-Race' in adulthood because I felt an equally sentimental and special connection to both of them. I wished to voice an identity label that represented my association with them both equally and simultaneously. In other words, if I were to identify as Indian only, I would feel as if I were denying my existence through my father, and vice versa. I did not always view their love story and my Mixed-Heritage with such pride. However, even when I was socialised to be proud of who I was during childhood, it was only into my early adulthood that I began to make personal sense of what it meant to be Mixed-Race. This is because, as I discussed previously in subtheme 4.2.2, my adolescence was filled with the need to survive my environments which were predominantly governed by racial divisions and favouring Whiteness.

Early adulthood, therefore, gave me the independence and freedom to confront and make autonomous sense of what it meant to be Mixed-Race. This is possibly because I had greater exposure to others of mixed heritage when I entered university in 2011. Friendships with people of Mixed-Race heritage aided in me building a more positive view of the label 'Mixed-Race' as is evident in my thoughts and reflections on my parents' relationship in *journal extract 3a*. Therefore, my use of 'Mixed-Race' in adulthood was an active choice of mine where previously, in my youth, I used the label because this is what my parents provided me with, or because it distanced and shielded me against the negative connotations of being Indian.

Throughout my development, my use of the label 'Mixed-Race' remained constant. For this reason, my process of racial identification has been somewhat different to other Mixed-Race individuals who may experience shifts in their identity choices across their lifespan (Renn, 2008; Root, 1998). I had never identified as anything other than Mixed-Race, although my understanding of this and what it meant has shifted and developed over time. Given that appearance/phenotype is often considered a significant factor of influence in identity choice (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002), I believe that my Indian appearance contributed to how I labelled myself. I physically could not identify as White, because I had brown skin and predominantly Indian features. However, I also did not identify fully with my Indian and Hindu heritage given that I had little exposure to my Indian family and spent most of my time in previously White areas and with White friends during my youth. My identity choice during my youth makes sense now, given that I previously resided in White areas and that I came from a middle-class family and affluence is often associated with Whiteness (Davenport, 2016). Mixed-Race individuals, like me, who have a White-minority mix and come from a higher socioeconomic bracket, are more likely to identify as Mixed-Race compared to individuals without an identity that is part-White (Davenport, 2016), and this is potentially the result of the association between Whiteness and wealth. Although socioeconomic status and appearance influenced my identity choice during youth, in adulthood incorporating a sense of pride and appreciation for my parents was a significant reason for identifying as Mixed-Race.

As described *journal entry 3a*, I viewed my racial identity as an extension of my parents' rebellion against the apartheid regime. As I grew older and understood that their relationship represented a rebellion against a powerful system of oppression, I began to see my own identity

in similar form. I saw it as a form of protest in response to the macro-lens, systemic influences that perpetuated the norms of monoracial categorisation which facilitates the invalidation of Mixed-Race identification. Protest in relation to my Mixed-Race heritage may be defined as resisting the traditional notion of single-race categorisation around which South African society is organised and which defines social and interpersonal relations (Bernstein & De La Cruz, 2009). This means that by merely existing as a person of two racial backgrounds, I challenge the silencing and invalidation of Mixed-Race individuals in a society that perpetually ‘others’ Mixed-Race existence. Viewing myself this way is empowering, in comparison to my early years where I felt particularly voiceless and insignificant for my dual-racial heritage.

In adulthood I began to examine how pieces of me fit together to form an identity that I was content with and proud to assert, despite the reality of pain and invalidation associated with it. This is similar to the experiences described by Cerezo et al. (2019) of a Black bisexual woman who experienced the assertion of a Black queer identity as a source of strength and validation for the person they were. During this process, the participant gradually assigned meanings of resilience and resistance to their identity and did not only view themselves as an oppressed and othered member of society (Cerezo et al., 2019). This allowed the participant to feel asserted and relevant within the community that predominantly looked down on Black bisexual women (Cerezo et al., 2019). I view the trajectory and process of my racial identity development, particularly during early adulthood, similarly. For years I felt periodically silenced and small for who I was, and I still occasionally do due to the systemic weight of monoracial preferentialism at the macro-lens level. While I have not quite conquered the feeling of being different or the awkwardness of not fitting in, over time, developing the notion that my identity is a form of protest has helped me to feel pride in being different. Hence, asserting my mixedness in the face of a monoracially defined social culture is an empowering response to these macro-lens influences.

Root acknowledges that the increasing number of individuals in the USA who choose to identify as Mixed-Race or multiracial reflects the repealing of the anti-miscegenation laws in 1967 during the civil rights movement. The changes in race relations (at the macro-lens level) during the civil rights movement potentially had a significant influence on individual choices to identify as Mixed-Race (within the middle-lens). Root (1998) suggests that opting for a

Mixed-Race identity may be viewed as a protest against the previous oppressive systems that limited individuals and groups to one racial group, and as a challenge to the dominant discourse of race as a fixed construct. In South Africa, Carvalho-Malekane's (2015) findings also suggests that while apartheid-era race categories are still used today, to the exclusion of Mixed-Race individuals, those who choose to assert a Mixed-Race identity may do so as an act of going against the status quo. In contemporary South Africa, Mixed-Race individuals may opt for a Mixed-Race identity as a means of reflecting their claim to two different racial backgrounds as a counterpoint to the apartheid-era attempts to eradicate or prevent any possibility of a Mixed-Race population (Morrall, 1994). Therefore, in the process of making meaning out of my dual racial identity, I drew parallels between my parents' rebellion against apartheid and my Mixed-Race existence in post-apartheid South Africa, as a means of resisting the dominant narrative that race is a singular construct and that racial mixing is impure or an impossibility. In actively asserting that 'I am Mixed-Race' I demand to be seen by fighting against being rendered invisible or 'Unspecified/Other' in a society that only recognises Black, Indian, White, and Coloured.

Apart from incorporating a sense of pride and a symbol of protest in my Mixed-Race identity, I also owe much of who I am to my parents. Their personality traits I recognise within myself, and their teachings from childhood are an everyday reminder of who I am. Worthman's model points to parental practices, routine, and familial relationships as vital characteristics of influence for the child's knowledge acquisition and identity process (Worthman, 2010). My parents' practices of socialising me with pride, emphasis on being of *two* racial backgrounds, and their efforts to acknowledge my *two* worlds were also significantly influential in my choice to assert my mixedness. Although I often did not feel safe to talk about distressing experiences related to being Mixed-Race, their instilling of pride in my identity served as a positive and influential force in my adult years. Their constant presence during childhood has shaped me significantly across my lifespan. Without my parents and their personalities, I would not be me, as illustrated by this excerpt from *journal extract 3a*:

My dad in his "blue jeans, [his] thick head of ash-blonde hair, and sensitive dreamy eyes, ... [He] taught me to appreciate life in all forms, to paint and draw what I saw. And

[my mum], her smile soft like the flowers in [her] headband, [her] brightly coloured sari draped over [her]. I could distantly hear [her] voice, encouraging me, caring for me."

My parents are largely responsible, in my view, for my creative curiosity in art, nature, and people. My connection to them as people remains significant in my choice to identify as Mixed-Race, because this label signifies both their impact and presence in my life. I would feel inauthentic if I did not identify with a label that represented both of their impact in my life. Asserting an identity that in some way acknowledges that my mother is a part of me, just as much as my father still is, has become increasingly important after losing her so suddenly in 2017. This reflects what Bronfenbrenner calls the influence or impact of the chronosystem, whereby life transitions or drastic changes in one's life impact development (Nomnian, 2018).

However, my admiration of who they are and the narrative of how they met has greater meaning when positioned within the greater, macro-lens circumstance of South Africa's racially segregated history. Imagining them as two innocent people nested within a broader historical context of separation by race, I find myself in great admiration of the connection they shared. Into my adulthood, their story has been part of many proud and interesting stories shared with friends. In social settings, it is still common for me to be questioned "What are you?". From the macro-lens, South African social culture is predominantly guided by racial coding (Pillay, 2019). Therefore, I know that the question "What are you?" refers to my race. It feels natural to say that I am 'mixed', and the conversation often leads to me talking about my parents and their histories. Having a story like my parents' in mind, helps me to navigate situations that question my identity and origin. It also affirms my choice to identify as Mixed-Race. Paragg (2014) notes that Mixed-Race individuals may not have social capital, or a sense of group membership, from which to draw a sense of belonging. Therefore, using aspects of my parent's history that I am proud of is important for instilling a sense of belonging and positivity in my identity, because I originated from them, and their forbidden love story (Bottero, 2015).

In conclusion Theme One discusses the complexities of growing up in post-apartheid South Africa where school settings, neighbourhoods, and families were predominantly monoracial. In addition to growing up in a predominantly monoracial society, I also resided within previously White areas and found myself at conflict with my brown skin and Indian

features. My understanding of what it meant to be Mixed-Race gradually developed from a relatively concrete understanding—a simple use of the label ‘Mixed’ to describe myself—to a label that held personal and sentimental meaning to me for its representation of my parents, their struggle during apartheid, and protest.

4.3 Theme two: Being the ‘Other’

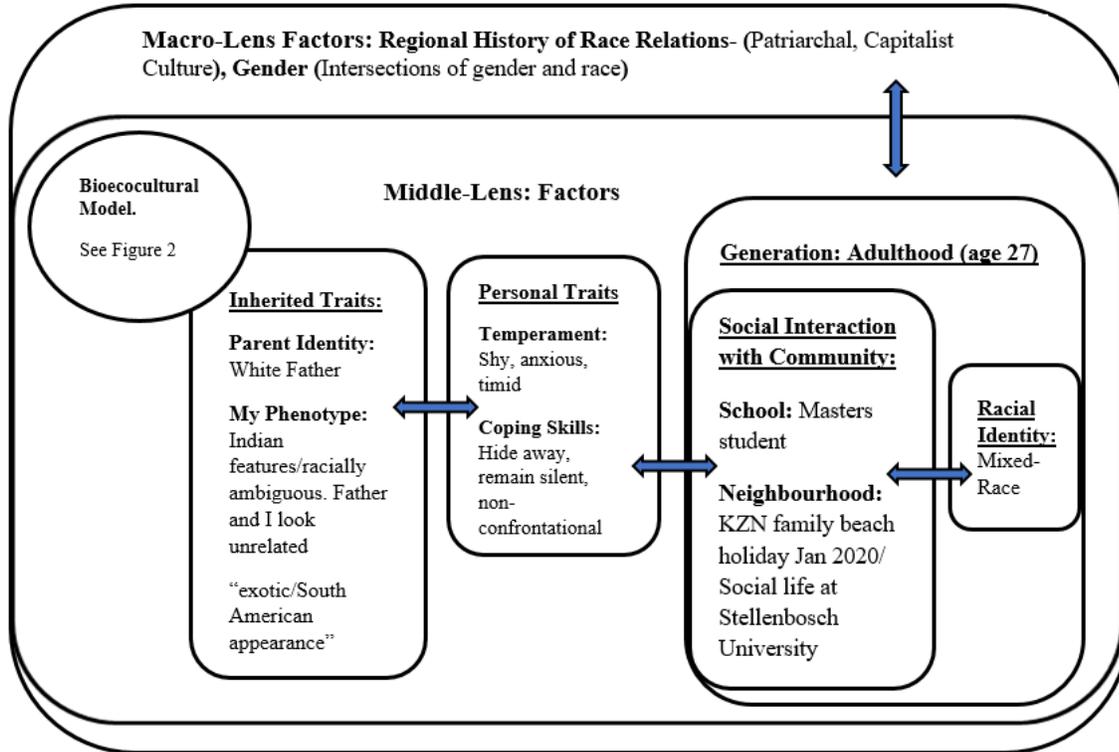
This theme deals with my experience of being ‘othered’ for my racial ambiguity and is organised according to two subthemes, namely, *Exotic Object* and *Not Belonging or Fitting In*. *Exotic Object* focuses on how my physical ambiguity was objectified and sexualised, rendering me the ‘other’ while *Not Belonging or Fitting In* discusses how the questions, comments, and responses I received in my external environment about my racial ambiguity were influential in my self-perception and choice to identify as Mixed-Race. The orienting diagrams below (Figures 9 and 10) depict the relevant macro- and middle-lens factors that played a role in me experiencing myself as the other in relation to my Mixed-Race identity.

4.3.1 The Exotic Object

In this subtheme I discuss the intersections of my identity as a female Mixed-Race individual in relation to the macro-lens influence of White Patriarchy and how this influenced my self-perceptions and choice to identify as Mixed-Race. The extract that follows concerns an unexpected and particularly humiliating experience of being sexualised for my racial ambiguity as I was assumed to be my father’s ‘exotic’ wife. Below is the orienting diagram for this subtheme.

Figure 9

Orienting diagram showing interactions between relevant factors to the exoticification of my Mixed-Race identity



Note. The orienting diagram features the factors of Root’s ecological model and highlights the importance of Worthman’s Bioecocultural model in the circle to the left. See figure 5 for factors that were of relevance to my developmental microniche. The nature of the relationship between factors in this subtheme and their specific influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in the analysis below. For example, the macro-lens factors of patriarchy and issues of gender were influential on the middle-lens factors such as my relationship to my father and the difference in our skin tones.

Journal Extract 4a: Being my Father’s ‘Wife’

“While enjoying a braai at a beach resort with my father, a White male in his 50s approached us. “Excuse me sir, I have something to ask, you have such a young, beautiful wife. Tell me sir, please, where can I get one?”. In response, another man of a similar age looked at us and said, “Yes, where are you from? You look South American or something”. My father replied shocked, awkward and angrily, “Wife!?! She is my daughter!” To which we were met with a hundred apologies... speechless, my dad and I left as soon as possible. I could not bear being exposed and viewed in such a way.

Journal extract 4a illustrates my position as a Mixed-Race female and makes a case for how the intersections of identity result in complex experiences of Mixed-Race identity. From Root's macro-lens perspective, I focus on gender and the regional race relations as factors of influence related to my experience represented in *journal extract 4a*. According to Benard (2016, p. 2)

the body is an appropriate cultural symbol to explore the links between colonialism and patriarchal capitalism [and] the body is a physical text in society, laden with meaning and positioned within particular systems of meaning.

The above journal extract exemplifies how my ‘body’ as a woman of colour within a patriarchal capitalist system was objectified for its exotic quality, with little respect owed to my relationship with my father, as my father. Instead, my father was automatically assumed to be my older White male partner in the eyes of the man at the braai. Benard (2016) argues that although capitalism substitutes the term colonialism to describe the influence of macro-lens racist and misogynistic dynamics on momentary interactions between people, little differentiates these two White, patriarchal systems. Both oppress and claim ownership of the bodies of women of colour and are exploitative and violate human rights (Benard, 2016).

South Africa also follows a patriarchal system. It recognises distinct roles and differential treatment for women and men, and views women as subordinate members of society

(Sathiparsad & Dhlamini, 2008). Therefore, my experience here represents how the intersections of my Mixed-Race, younger female identity, in relation to my father's White, male identity, positioned me as a subordinate possession of his, as perceived by the other men. Being situated as a female in a White patriarchal context (both macro-lens factors), my Inherited Traits (Indian/racially ambiguous phenotype), Individual Traits (shy) and the environment I was in (family holiday resort in KZN), as depicted in Figure 9, interacted to position me as subordinate to the exotification and hyper-sexualisation of the men involved in *journal extract 4a*. My body was an object to these men. I—a person with a history, feelings, and a family—was reduced to merely an object of desire and, therefore, undeserving of the respect of being referred to as a person in equal relation to him. White Patriarchy afforded him the power, and privilege, to assume that my father was just like him—a powerful White man—who objectified and dehumanised women of colour. He unquestioningly assumed that my father would also view me as subordinate because I was regarded as his property, without agency.

Like other Mixed-Race individuals who expressed being exoticised for their ambiguous features (Waring, 2013), I too fell prey to this man's indulging eyes while simultaneously feeling humiliated for being mistaken to be my father's wife. This experience signifies the patriarchal undertones present in this momentary interaction (Bernard, 2016; Root, 1998), and how it forced me to confront my racial identity in relation to my father, again this time, as his supposed wife. It made me confront that I did not look like my father, and that the world did not perceive us (my brother, father, mother, and I) as family, or blood related. Therefore, not only did this instance put my gender and race at the forefront, but also the fact that as a person, and as a family, we were still marginalised and invisible for being multiracial. I was invisibilised as an individual of Mixed-Race heritage because the man's assumption that I was my father's wife (of colour), suggests that I could not be his daughter—because if I were my father's daughter, I would be Mixed-Race, and that 'cannot exist'. It brought up familiar feelings of being invalidated and made me feel that I could not be related to my father because of the ingrained notion that racial mixing is impossible—substantiating an apartheid-era belief (Morrall, 1994) still evidently present in my interaction during my late 20s. Like the family tree (Theme One, *journal extract 1a*) where kids scrunched their faces up, so too did this experience leave me silent and invisible because my father and I looked nothing alike.

I was 27 years of age at the time of the incident depicted in *journal extract 4a*. At this time, the remnants of apartheid still seeped through into my daily interactions in a way that the legitimacy of a Mixed-Race person continued to be negated in post-apartheid South Africa. It made me feel disgusted, humiliated, and voiceless in a place where I expected to feel safe and free to enjoy my time with my father. Despite being troubled by the fact that I was unable to assert my voice in this instance, on reflection, it is moments like this that make me wish to assert my Mixed-Race identity. As I have previously discussed, I have come to understand my identity choice as an act of resistance and protest in response to the notion that Mixed-Race individuals and multi-racial families are an impossibility. Moments like this have made me wish to stand as an example against the norms of a monoracially categorical society and say that ‘I am my Father’s daughter’. Therefore, while *journal extract 4a* touches on the exotification of my body, it also links to previous instances of invalidation of my relationship to my family based on our differing skin colour and physical features. It also speaks to other experiences in my childhood—as reflected in *journal extract 4b*, below—where children questioned, and essentially made me feel invalidated, for having a father who looked different to me:

*I was 13 years old and at my friend’s house, sitting with her younger sister of about 7 years of age. My friend’s little sister asked, “Is that your dad, Alexa?” and I nodded, a little confused because she had seen my dad many times. Then she asked, unclearly, what sounded like “then why is he peach?” ... My friend and I asked her to repeat what she had said because at first it was not clear (I was not expecting her to ask the following question) ... “but why is he peach?” ... “Your dad is peach, and **you are not.**”*

Memories of such events across my life have had a cumulative impact on my Mixed-Race identification. Where I often felt voiceless (as I still do, as illustrated in *journal extract 4a*), such experiences have gradually fuelled my choice to identify as Mixed-Race. Out of voiceless experiences, I have chosen to assert a Mixed-Race identity as a means of asserting the relevance and presence of Mixed-Race people and families.

Therefore, in adulthood, identifying as Mixed-Race is empowering as an act of protest and resistance against the monoracial lens through which society views family relationships (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). It is also a choice to challenge the patriarchal system of power that allows men like those in *journal extract 4a* to perceive my body as my father’s sexual object of

possession. Rather, by saying I am Mixed-Race, I claim my relationship to my father as his daughter. In this act of resistance to being oppressed for my Mixed-Race status in a monoracial society, I demand for my voice to be heard. As illustrated by *journal extract 4b*, invalidating experiences in my childhood whereby my relationship to my father was deemed ‘impossible’ because ‘he [was] ... peach’, left me feeling voiceless. I still often feel left without the right words to articulate myself when it comes to my identity, but I am gently growing the voice within me to assert myself. Like participants in Hall’s (2018) study who reframed their marginalised identities in a positive manner, while accepting the stigmas and negative experiences in their history, I also reframed my Mixed-Race identity as a form of protest. As discussed in Theme One, viewing it as a form of protest helped me to grow my voice against feeling invalidated or ‘othered’ in situations where I was exoticised for my ambiguous features or had my relationship with my father sexualised or ‘overlooked’. Hall’s (2018) findings suggested that when individuals acknowledged their marginal status by reframing it with positive meaning, they accepted and embraced their identities with greater ease. For me, this meant accepting the discomfort of being humiliated, invalidated, and essentially ‘othered’ as a part of my experience, while also viewing my identity in a positive light—in this case, as an act of protest.

This brings me to another way in which I experienced my ‘exotic otherness’—as a powerful social tool. My ambiguous features drew interest and intrigue from others, and I did not always feel vulnerable or humiliated for my ambiguity. In fact, I enjoyed being able to dabble in the idea that I appeared foreign and did not fit a definable category. There was freedom in not being pinned down to a single category. I enjoyed responses of intrigue that I received from others in social spaces. I felt seen and ‘unique’. I felt “physically attractive in a way that set [me] apart from other” (Root, 2004, p.20) female students on campus. Here, my inherited traits (ambiguous features/phenotype), and my personal traits (generally sociable) and my generational context (University and early adulthood) all interacted, as depicted in Figure 9, in a manner that allowed me to use my Mixed-Race identity with reasonable comfort.

However, while the experience made me feel seen and visible, I often leaned into the appeal of being ‘other’ on campus in ways that were acceptable to the dominant White Afrikaans culture at Stellenbosch University. In other words, I picked from my Indian identity what I

perceived was most acceptable based on my awareness of the dominant culture. This links to my discussion in Theme One, of how my Indian heritage and Hindu roots were not acknowledged and were made to feel alien or ‘other’ in my predominantly White neighbourhood and school setting. On campus, in a similar manner, I chose to assert aspects of my Indian identity that were not considered to be alien in the eyes of my campus peers. Given that appearance is often a constraining factor in Mixed-Race identity development (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Khanna, 20011)—as I could not identify as White because I was brown skinned with Indian features—I used what was acceptable of my Indian identity to fit in. Journal extract 4c, below, is an example of how the middle-lens factors such as my physical appearance (Indian/ambiguous features) and my social community (White Afrikaans) potentially interacted with the macro-lens factors that favoured Whiteness to inform what aspects of my identity I chose to express:

My roommate and I started painting henna tattoos during the Summer months, in a manner that was exotically appealing yet, to me, indicative of my Indian background. We practiced painting vines and flowers that crept up our legs and under our denim shorts. I received much attention from this while walking on campus, with many girls asking, “where did you get that tattoo? You look beautiful!” So, in the end, my roommate and I painted henna tattoos for money. It became quite a hit to walk around with these floral designs and fitted well with the alternative/hippy culture on campus.

As illustrated above, in social interactions on campus, it was a validating experience to have numerous students respond in amazement and awe at the tattoos. I was comfortable enough to indulge in these aspects of my Indian roots without risking being invalidated for my Indian heritage. It afforded the means of feeling visible despite being perceived as ‘other’ on campus. Furthermore, my middle-lens social interactions were influenced by macro-lens factors of Patriarchy and South Africa’s social culture of favouring Whiteness, in that it communicated that my body as a woman of colour was only appealing and desirable if it were presented as exotic. The henna tattoos were also attractive, and added to my attempts at accentuating myself as intriguing and physically exotic, particularly with foreign students as highlighted here in *journal extract 4d*:

We were at a well-known restaurant in town, and my roomie and I had our henna tattoos visible. When I noticed a group of German male exchange students – all looking at us and speaking in German. I leaned forward and asked, “are you speaking German?”. Yes, how did you know... “I can tell”... can you speak it? They asked... “no”, but my surname is German... “oh! (surprised), we would never have thought – you do not look German... “I know, I’m mixed, Indian-White (I smiled)... “yes... we noticed that tattoo you have down your leg.”

I often used both aspects of my identity to create interest in me. Relating to the German students by telling them that my surname was German, yet making visible the lengthy tattoo up my leg, I produced interest and focus on myself (and my body), whereas before, in my early primary and high school years, I felt invisible in social settings such as school.

Transitioning into early adulthood and entering a new social community—although still predominantly White—I became aware of how harnessing racial ambiguity for physical appeal allowed me to stand out in social settings. This suggests a link to my previous experience of invisibilisation in the context of my Mixed-Race family tree during my early school years. By making myself exotic years later, during my time at Stellenbosch University, I counteracted these childhood experiences of insignificance. Benard (2016) mentions that using one’s exotic appeal allows women of colour to claim some form of power and social relevance in a society that otherwise oppresses and marginalises their bodies. In a sense, I took control or power over situations where I otherwise may have felt insignificant for my racial mix.

Exoticising myself was often a conscious effort using a variety of signifiers from the henna tattoos to the alternative (eastern/hippy-looking) clothes I wore. Instead of feeling minimised, I used my mixedness to assert my identity and social relevance on campus through my appearance. This conscious effort to assert my mixedness suggests that I was not always being objectified by others, as discussed in my experience with my father at the braai. On other occasions it was I who objectified myself as a means of claiming my voice and protesting against being ‘unseen’.

However, I did this in a manner that was acceptable to Whiteness, which demonstrates that minority or marginalised groups often make themselves visible or develop a voice that is ‘seen’ or ‘accepted’ by the dominant culture or group (Lawy, 2017). In other words, their voice is sanitised in some way in accordance with the dominant culture (Lawy, 2017). In relation to my experience, I too accentuated my mixedness in a manner that was constrained by what the White campus culture deemed interesting and novel. In other words, to be seen, I needed to assert myself in ways acceptable to Whiteness. I acknowledge that my efforts as a Mixed-Race woman to draw intrigue to me, through presenting myself as ‘other’ in an exotic and seductive manner, is rooted in the belief that “multiracial women are unusual sexual being[s]” (Root, 2004, p.21). At the macro-lens level, I was aware of what appealed to the greater social culture as a means of harnessing the power that came with being perceived as physically attractive in ways that other monoracial students could not. I was able to play with two racial identities in one—asserting my Whiteness (“My surname is German”), while visibly showing my Indianness within acceptable limits to Whiteness.

For example, while I comfortably walked the campus with dresses made of sari material, painted henna tattoos, and wore my hair long and straight, when it came to graduation day and my mother brought a sari for me to wear, I felt incredibly awkward and unsure of how people would respond. To my surprise, numerous peers of mine expressed admiration for the elegance of my sari and the decoration of the dot on my forehead yet being dressed in a sari made me feel uncomfortable because I did not frequently wear traditional Indian attire. I feared that wearing the sari would mean putting my ‘Indianness’ on full display in a way that was excessive or ‘too much’ for Whiteness to handle, ultimately exposing me for being ‘other’ and different—a feeling I so wished to escape numerous times. I preferred to appear racially ambiguous, rather than Indian, by accentuating both my White English accent, and my Indianness by wearing henna tattoos. This is because appearing racially ambiguous through my appearance and behaviours made me feel more attractive and accepted in the dominant White culture than being perceived as Indian.

It demonstrated my awareness of how Whiteness was the dominant culture, and that the closer I was in relation to Whiteness, the more accepted I would be. Coleman et al. (2003) refers to this as a racial identity performance, which many Mixed-Race individuals engage in during

their identity development as a means of navigating monoracial social settings. Coleman et al. (2003) also note the importance of acknowledging how individuals perform racial identities in order to navigate their social worlds. In other words, a Mixed-Race individual may perform certain racial roles, but this may or may not have any bearing on their racial identity choice. In my case, since I felt most accepted by the dominant White campus culture when I was perceived as racially ambiguous as opposed to being Indian, this impacted my choice to express my racial identity as 'Mixed-Race' rather than Indian. I was able to enhance my proximity to Whiteness by asserting that my mixedness involved having a White heritage, while simultaneously being brown-skinned and 'other' in appearance. Although identifying as Mixed-Race and performing a racially ambiguous identity afforded me greater social visibility, it also may be argued that it was not entirely a choice to represent myself as a desirable 'other'. It is argued that Mixed-Race women in a White patriarchal system are limited to sexualised and eroticised stereotypes in order to be acknowledged and seen (Boylorn, 2014; Root, 2004). Benard (2016, p. 5) highlights how the macro-lens effects of patriarchal capitalism present to women of colour an "illusion of choice" in how they represent themselves as hyper-sexualised, exotic, and promiscuous. This speaks to the constraining impact that the dominant White culture had on my voice and assertion of my Mixed-Race identity. While I experienced my enactment of a racially ambiguous identity as a choice of my own, arguably, I was also limited to sexualised and eroticised stereotypes as a means of achieving some level of power and social relevance. This in effect may result in the devaluation of the bodies of women of colour (Boylorn, 2014), and therefore, my body as a woman of colour.

Performing within the boundaries of these sexualised stereotypes can result in lowering one's self-esteem or sense of self-worth (Boylorn, 2014). In my experience, I often felt as if my self-worth was limited to my exotic appearance. I frequently felt as if I could only be noticed and valued if I accentuated my ambiguous features. In social settings, and particularly when it came to dating, I internalised the view that I was not worth much more than my visual appeal. I 'could not' be the girlfriend or long-term partner because I was an exotic object, and therefore of little value for any other characteristics or personality traits. Much like how I was treated as a sexual object by the men at the braai (*journal extract 4a*). I felt silenced, undeserving of being treated as an equal human being in the dating scene. Internalising my 'otherness' in this manner is indicative of my awareness of what it meant to be a woman of colour in a patriarchal society.

This macro-lens factor (patriarchy) influenced my behaviour and interactions with others in the middle-lens (as I portrayed myself as exotic in order to draw intrigue) and on an individual level it impacted my self-esteem as I learnt that my value and worth was tied only to my body and the limits of my appearance—my skin colour, my freckles and my other physical features.

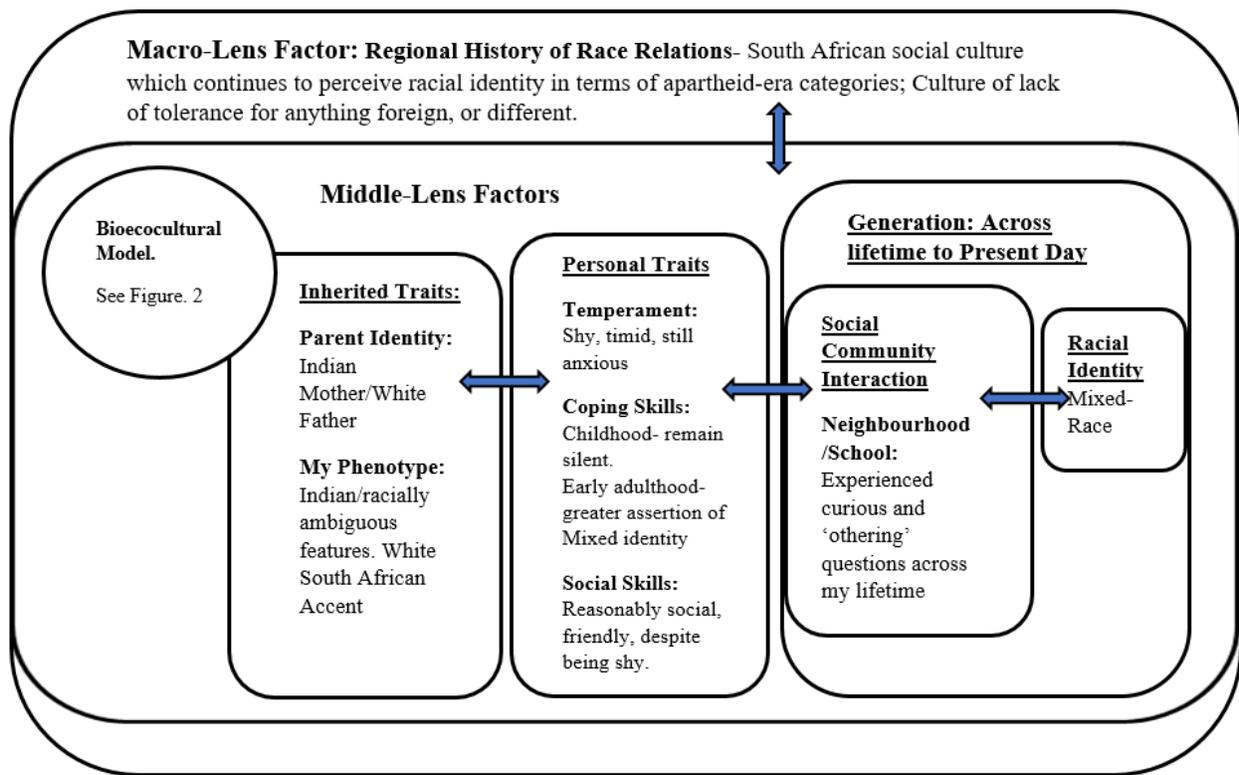
My discussion of being the ‘exotic other’ has thus far communicated how macro-lens factors such as the White patriarchal system, and middle-lens factors such as my predominantly White university campus social setting influenced my experiences and choices to identify myself as a Mixed-Race. In the following subtheme, I discuss in further detail the impact that being the ‘other’ had on my experience and identity development as a Mixed-Race individual.

4.3.2 Not Belonging or Fitting in

Below, I further my discussion on being ‘othered’ for my appearance in various social settings. I explore how constant scrutiny and questioning about my racial identity across my life-course significantly influenced my experience of myself as a Mixed-Race person.

Figure 10

Orienting diagram showing interaction between factors that made me feel ‘other’ and an outsider as a Mixed-Race person in a monoracial social world



Note. The orienting diagram features the factors of Root’s ecological model. Worthman’s model is also included in the discussion. See figure 5 for factors that were relevant to my developmental microniche. The nature of the relationship between factors in this subtheme and their specific influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in the analysis below. For example, the macro-lens influenced people’s perceptions of me as a racially ambiguous person, and this in turn, influenced my racial identity choice.

Journal Extract 5a: 'A Lifetime of questions that made me feel different'

Encounters during my childhood days: I thought the child was meant to come out completely White, even if they are Mixed !?(questioned in grade four about my brown skin in comparison to my father's). Why is your mum Black and you are White? (I was about 8 years old, standing in a line with my mother). Is that your father? Is that your mother? Mixed-Race doesn't exist. Is 'eurasian even a word? What are you? Are your parents still together? You look more Indian though. What race should I tick for you, Alexa? (teacher in 9th grade pulled me aside from the class to ask me what space to fill in the form). Anxiety! where do I fit? During university and early adulthood days: You can't be mixed, it's impossible, there's no such thing. Well, your freckles and your pink cheeks are definitely your White side. In Winter your skin goes lighter. Where are you from? Where do you think?- Incredible India! Hey! How come you look so White today?- I dunno maybe I haven't been in the sun lately? Do I actually look White? I never really noticed when I looked in the mirror last. You're more like two thirds Indian, one third White. Yeah, dating you was definitely just like dating any other White girl. So, would you have an arranged marriage? So where are your parents from? Are your parents South African? - Yes they are. What are you? You look exotic. Your profile picture on Gmail with Big Ben in the background - it is like you could almost imagine yourself as a foreigner, not from any particular place. Are you Muslim - is that why you are not drinking? Oh you are her niece? I never would have thought! I thought you were just friends (at a family dinner party). Is that your husband? You know, you could look Italian. April 2020: Ah I suppose you're more Indian because you look Indian. But actually, you are more White. Because I mean, you live in a White area, your father is White, you sound White ...

Illustrated above are just some of the numerous responses and scrutiny I received for my appearance across my life. The extract highlights how physical appearance plays a significant role in how others perceive a Mixed-Race individual's racial identity (Root, 1998; Khanna, 2007). It reflects the power of middle-lens factors such as the social environment in shaping my

experience of myself as racially mixed, and my choice to identify as Mixed-Race. In other words, others' perceptions of my physical appearance shaped the racial identity label I used, and how I experienced my identity in my private and internal world. Cooley's looking-glass self-theory explains the role of other's perceptions by proposing that the individual's sense of self is heavily influenced by others' appraisals of them, but also their interpretations of those appraisals (Frank & Gecas, 1992). In my case, I interpreted the questions and comments made by people in my social settings as othering in nature. Since I believed that I appeared different to others, I experienced myself as an outsider and different to my monoracial peers. Due to peoples' quizzing remarks about my appearance, using the label 'Mixed-Race' best described to them my identity as someone who did not quite fit the conventional monoracial appearance. As a label, 'Mixed-Race' best described my internal experience of feeling like someone who did not quite fit into a monoracial world.

Although middle-lens factors such as my physical appearance played a significant role in how others perceived my race, it is the macro-lens influence of apartheid-era's culture of monoracial classification that influenced my peers' response towards my racial identity because they were confused that I did not fit into a single race 'box'. For example, in my experience, it was not uncommon for me to be asked what race I was during childhood, and this has continued to the present day. I had numerous encounters where other children were eager to place me into a single box because they found my physical appearance confusing and different in relation to themselves and my family. This often led to questions that were curious, yet 'othering' in nature. As demonstrated in *journal extract 5b*, below, I was met regularly with questions confronting my racial origin and connection to my parents:

I was about eight or nine when I first remember being confronted about my relationship to my mother. We were standing in a queue, and a girl came up to me and asked, "Is that your mother?" ... "Yes...Why?" "Well how come she is Black, and you are White?"

In encounters such as that described in *journal extract 5b*, the culture of classifying race by monoracial terms is evident in the girl's confusion that my mother and I were of completely different races ('Black' and 'White'). Furthermore, she pointed out the 'difference' in me because she noticed that I did not look 'Black' like my mother. In such experiences, the 'other' in me was frequently pointed out, whether in comparison to my family members or with friends.

Not fitting in was—and still is—an ever-present part of my daily reality. Based on my interactions with people that made me feel different because of my mixed-racial heritage, I internalised that I was different to others, and to my family members. These questions communicated to me that there was something about me and my appearance that did not fit. There were a number of times where I was asked questions such as those in *journal extract 5c*, below:

“So are you Indian? Because something seems different about you?” ... or...

“So, if your mom is Indian, and your dad White, what are you?” (confused facial expression).

The most sensible answer to such questions, was to explain that I was Mixed-Race in order to confirm to the onlooker that I was different because I did not fit into a single race category. As illustrated in *journal extract 5a*, there are multiple occasions and ways in which people communicated their intrigue and confusion with which ‘box’ I belonged in. Many individuals across my lifespan could not help pointing out my difference as a means of making sense of how I fit into the limited racial categories available in South African society. I suppose this was at times a reasonable and genuine attempt by people in my immediate social settings given that racial categorisation was—and continues to be—ingrained in how people perceive others to be part of their group, or not, and how people form inferences about the character traits of others (Esprey, 2013). This may be explained by the tendency of people to make inferences, or categories, in order to navigate and make sense of the complexities of their social worlds (Landor et al., 2013). Some instances caused significant anxiety and discomfort particularly during my schooling years, while others were out of curiosity about my heritage and the peculiarity of being Mixed-Race in a monoracial world.

In my experience, the effects of these questions had a distinct ‘othering’ and negative impact on how I perceived myself; I felt like an outsider to the mainstream and monoracial world of the majority of my classmates. I also believe that South Africa's lack of tolerance for ‘the

different' and 'the foreign' (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015), is what influenced my negative perception of myself. I internalised the questions and 'curiosity' by others as a product of intolerance and suspicion of my Mixed-Race identity and multiracial family. This is not to say that all my experiences of being Mixed-Race were negative or made me feel like an outsider. As discussed in the previous subtheme (4.3.1), there were times where I experienced my 'difference' as a powerful social tool and as an interesting point of discussion in social contexts, as similarly reported by Mixed-Race participants in a study by Aspinall and Song (2012). According to Carvalho-Malekane (2015), a Mixed-Race female participant also described developing a sense of humour as a coping mechanism for the stares, scrutiny, and questions about their racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa. However, in my experience, feeling like an outsider and being 'different' to others caused me to resort to silence and hiding away. For me, being 'the other' or 'different' was predominantly a negative experience. Although I internalised a negative view of myself, the constant questions about my racial identity significantly shaped my choice to identify as Mixed-Race because I was frequently confronted with the uncomfortable reality that I was different in the eyes of others. With the experience of being different to others because of my Mixed-Racial heritage came the experience of voicelessness. According to Turner (2016) and Herzog (2018) being the 'other' is considered a distinct experience of voicelessness and powerlessness in relation to a majority culture and environment that is antagonistic and rejects those who are different. As discussed in subtheme 4.2.1. where I felt voiceless in relation to my peers in primary school, questions about my racial identity across my lifetime thrust me into silence.

Silence was my way of surviving my 'other' status in an environment that made me feel insignificant and powerless. In the middle-lens, what contributed to my voicelessness was a lack of racial literacy and discussion of topics of race in the classroom. As Dutro et al. (2005) discusses, little space is given in the classroom for all children, regardless of their race, to discuss and understand the complexities of racial identity. Furthermore, children of Mixed-Race heritage are provided with few words and vocabulary from which to describe and understand their identities and experiences (Pang, 2018). This issue of lack of racial literacy for Mixed-Race individuals may be representative of the impact of the macro-lens culture that Harris (2017) argues, favours and privileges monoracial voices. A recent experience that happened to me in 2020, as depicted in *journal extract 5d*, below, suggests that being Mixed-Race is still a

relatively unseen and unacknowledged identity in post-apartheid South Africa. It highlights the voicelessness that accompanies its marginal status:

Awake at 5am after a house robbery, my friend, who is Mixed-Race, and I, discussed our experience with a police officer. The officer looked at her and proceeded to write down the statement. Assuming she was White, he said, "Ok so you are a 25-year-old White female" ... to which she cut in, "No sir, I am Mixed-Race". A look of confusion covered his face as he said, "Sorry miss, but there is no such thing as Mixed-Race". A familiar feeling of shock and awkwardness swept over me as I watched my friend endure a moment of invalidation. "Sir - I am neither White nor Coloured. I am Mixed", She replied. I listened silently for a while as the police officer asserted that there are only Black, White, Indian, and Coloured people in South Africa. Then I spoke up, challenging him by asserting that I was Mixed-Race too. "But you look Indian and so I would just write that you are Indian" ... "That is not the point though! We are mixed!!", we both argued. But all our efforts were not convincing. Although the officer apologised for creating tension and discomfort, he was adamant that he could only tick one race in the box on the statement form. We felt frustrated and pretty much defeated after that. Over some strong coffee, we shared with each other the trauma (of the break-in) and the distress of having to argue about Mixed-Race identity in the early hours of the morning.

It is these experiences that demonstrate the voicelessness of being Mixed-Race in post-apartheid South Africa, where monoracial classification of race is still considered the only way in which people can be organised. My friend and I were denied asserting our Mixed-Race identities by the police officer as he comfortably recited the four race groups of South Africa (Black, White, Indian, and Coloured). Although we resisted, the police officer's choice to label my friend as 'White' was final. This experience depicts how macro-lens influences, such as the culture of monoracial categorisation, trumps Mixed-Race people and their voices (such as mine) who do not fit a single racial category. There was simply no Mixed-Race box to tick and the police officer therefore refused to create one.

Based on the absence of a Mixed-Race box, it may be argued that the macro-lens influence of apartheid-era race categories continues to dominate the manner in which race is viewed in modern day South Africa. The absence of a Mixed-Race category supports Harris's

(2017) argument that monoracial voices and categories continue to be privileged over Mixed-Race voices. The absence of a descriptor for a Mixed-Race population communicates its 'other' and invisible status. Given that South Africa did not—and still does not—recognise a Mixed-Race identity on its national census, my mixedness remains as 'other' to the pre-defined apartheid-era racial categories. However, in acts of resistance to monoracial categorisation, such as our efforts with the police officer in *journal extract 5d*, acknowledging my parents struggle, and my dual-racial reality, I have come to a greater acceptance of being 'the other' even though at times it still brings up feelings of pain and isolation.

In conclusion of Theme Two, multiple experiences and factors across my lifespan that exoticised and othered me for my physical appearance influenced me to identify as Mixed-Race. I increasingly opted to assert and voice my identity as 'Mixed-Race' as a way of affirming my and my family's existence in a society that favoured monoracial identities and monoracial family compositions. Although it is often an isolating and painful experience to be continually othered or denied my choice to identify as Mixed-Race, I have come to accept that this is my reality. In the following theme I discuss other experiences that have shaped my identity, particularly interactions with my closest friends where my 'difference' was validated and challenged for the privileged aspects of my Whiteness.

4.4 Theme three: Close Friendships

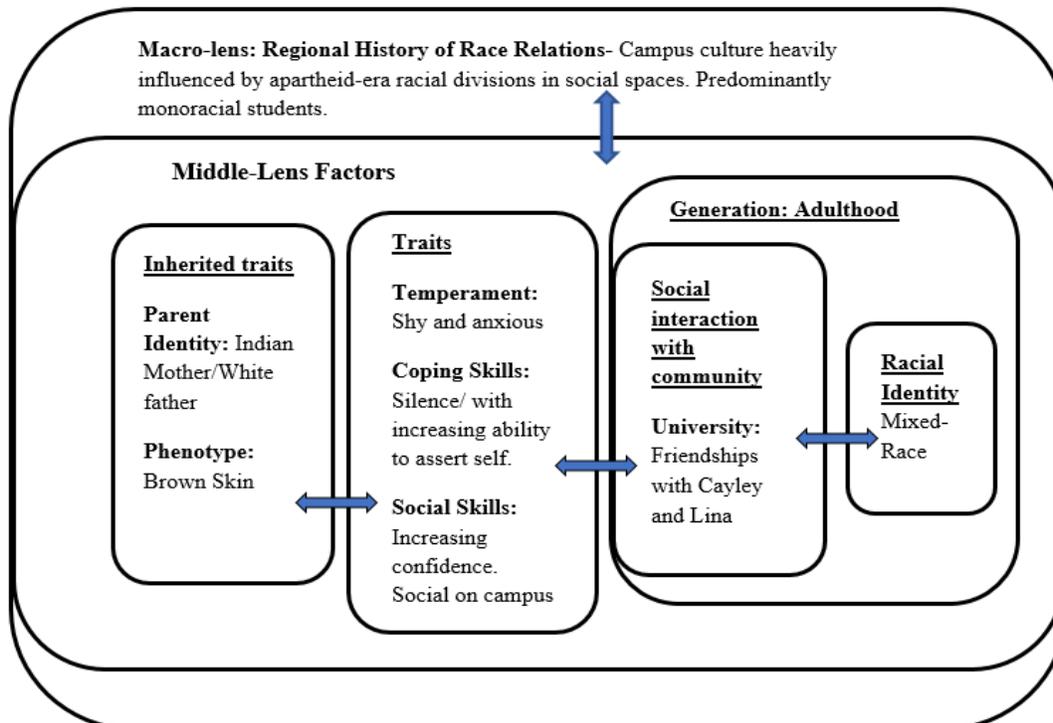
This theme, dealing with close friendships, is organised according to two subthemes namely, *Issues of Privilege and Oppression in Friendships*, and *Validation in Friendships*. Both subthemes discuss how close friendships during my early adulthood were significant for my choice to identify as Mixed-Race. All friends discussed here were, and continue to be, close and valued by me for their uniqueness, support, and the insights they have offered me in relation to my Mixed-Race identity.

4.4.1 Issues of Privilege and Oppression

This subtheme communicates the complexities of being half-White by demonstrating my engagement with my privilege based on race in a heart-breaking confrontation with a friend. Below, the orienting diagram (Figure 11) visualises the context in which the argument occurred and how that led to realisations about my racial identity and greater engagement with white privilege.

Figure 11

Orienting diagram showing factors related to my friendships and Mixed-Race identity



Note. The orienting diagram features the factors of Root's ecological model. Worthman's model is referred to when relevant. The nature of the relationship between factors in this subtheme and their specific influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in the analysis below.

Journal Extract 6a: 'A racial war between two friends'

"The most hurtful and bitter experiences are possibly the ones we encounter in close friendships. At least that is how I see it. Years of trust and belonging broken in something as deep and real, yet seemingly ridiculous, as a war on race - fighting about categories - whose category experienced the worst pain. Suddenly the two of us engaged in deep hatred and division, in a fight about oppression and privilege. "You need to suspend your Indian ears so that your White ears can hear", she said. Anushka was a friend who I confided in with many of my own racial pains, now suddenly rejected me, claiming that all the racial discrimination I experienced was 'minor shit compared to' hers, because I was not fully Indian like she was. Maybe it was minor shit? Maybe it wasn't? All I knew was that from my perspective, I had experienced the hardships of discrimination through stereotypes of being Indian, to being discriminated for being Mixed-Race...But.. also... it is true, I had never talked to her about the easy stuff- the fact that my name afforded me access, or that I was more accepted in White spaces, could occupy the privileges of Whiteness because of factors like having a White South African accent, having a White father, maybe even lighter skin than she did. All this I acknowledged, but in this moment, we were throwing weapons at each other, trying to validate our positions. Measuring each other's pain. And the result? Deep self-loathing for a few days. And guilt. A lack of belonging. And loss- of a beautiful friendship we both held close."

The context in which this argument occurred was in early 2020 under the strain of the coronavirus lockdown, where issues of race, racism and racial inequality were at the fore of conversations across the country and globally. Compounding this was the case of George Floyd's murder by White policemen in the USA which became a global uproar and sparked debates about White privilege and the oppression of people of colour (Dreyer et al., 2020). I believe that

under these circumstances my friend and I engaged in a painful, but relevant argument in relation to the macro-lens factors (such as the global pandemic and the tension in race relations worldwide) whereby, globally, people's racial identities were placed at the front and centre of who they were and where they fit into society (Dreyer et al., 2020).

The fact that this argument happened with a close friend was significant. Had it happened with a stranger I could have shrugged it off, but because it was with a close friend, the argument risked the loss of a close friendship and forced me to confront my racial identity in relation to those I was close with. She was—and is—one of my closest friends and I could not imagine losing a friendship that provided me with the sense of belonging and support that hers did. There were numerous times when I felt like I did not fit in or experienced discrimination based on being Mixed-Race and she was always empathic and understanding of my experiences. It did hurt and cause me significant guilt to imagine that I had possibly overshadowed some of her experiences of discrimination because I had not acknowledged my proximity to White privilege. I was so predominantly focused on belonging and finding ways to fit in, that I had not taken valuable time to assess how different my reality and experience was to Anushka's and my other friends of colour. However, at the same time, the argument forced me to confront my otherness again because I did not have a group of people to fall back on for support. Mixed-Race individuals often feel like they do not have group membership based on race because they do not fit a single race category (Paragg, 2014). Similarly, I had a variety of friends from various race groups, but most were monoracial and few of them knew my experiences of being Mixed-Race.

It may be argued that Anushka's view of my identity was influenced by the broader societal negation of mixedness stemming from the legacy of historical divides and separations along racial lines in South Africa (Pillay, 2015). Anushka's status as a monoracial individual allowed her the power to claim her identity and experiences of discrimination for being Indian as greater than the experiences of discrimination that I had for my Indian appearance. She was able to claim that my experiences of racism were minor compared to hers because of my part Whiteness. Harris (2017) argues that Mixed-Race individuals are marginalised because the broader social, cultural, and institutional levels of society favour monoracial categorisation. Therefore, their voices and experiences are often lost or diminished in relation to other monoracial populations (Harris, 2017). On the surface, *journal extract 6a*, above, portrays the

resistance and rejection that Mixed-Race individuals may experience, not only from White people, but from their friends of colour (Harris, 2017; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). This left me feeling like I had no ground to stand on and claim my experience. My experience is consistent with other Mixed-Race individuals who have reported that it is common to experience ‘push back’ when confronted by other monoracial groups when claiming and asserting their relevance as a person of Mixed-Race identity (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020).

However, my argument with Anushka took place at a time when broader society was confronted with particularly inflammatory race relations, nationally, due to the lockdown, and globally, due to the murder of George Floyd. This macro-lens factor impacted my interaction with Anushka, but furthermore it caused me to confront my racial identity yet again, which suggests that this confrontation and renegotiation is not finite. I was—and am—in a constant contemplation and confrontation with my racial identity, which shapes my understanding of where I fit in. Therefore, my argument with Anushka taught me that although I am a person of colour, Anushka was aware of my Mixed-Race heritage and made it clear that I could not claim that my experiences of discrimination were equal to hers, even though we often shared stories of such experiences in a way that made me feel unified with her regarding my Indian heritage. I was not welcome to liken my experience to hers because I was not ‘legitimately’ Indian. “*You must suspend your Indian ears, so that your White ears can hear*” is an example of monoracism in that during this interaction Anushka reduced me to two separate categories, rejecting my mixed-racial heritage, and forcing me to interrogate my privilege separately from my marginal status. While Anushka may not have done so intentionally, it was as if she had split me into two neat boxes (Indian and White), negating the complex juxtaposition of the privileged and oppressed status that I held. Such experiences are common and specific to individuals who identify with more than one race in contexts where race is viewed in terms of singular categories (Harris, 2017). Since I could not wholly claim the Indian identity, during this argument my experiences were termed ‘minor’ compared to hers based on my privileged ‘White’ background. Arguably, her acts of reducing and diminishing my experiences of racism may be viewed as rooted within the macro-lens factor of monoracial racial categorisation. Within this paradigm, Harris (2017) argues that monoracial groups and their experiences are privileged over the voices of Mixed-Race groups, effectively maintaining their invisible status in society (Harris, 2017) and potentially producing beliefs that Mixed-Race individuals may not experience racism (Root, 1998).

While this is an example of how Anushka's engagement with me was influenced by macro-lens circumstances, the argument that we had is also an example of how I perpetuated the broader cultural norms of monoracial categorisation. I would often switch my social behaviours or adapt to my monoracial friends by engaging with them as if I were also a monoracial individual. For example, the experiences I related to Anushka were predominantly ones of discrimination and disadvantage based on being Indian. I hardly discussed with her any experiences that reflected my Mixed-Race reality. With my White friends, I performed identity roles that disguised or diminished my Mixed-reality as I hardly talked about my Indian heritage or experiences of discrimination with them. This act of switching one's behaviour based on the racial composition of one's social setting, is a common coping strategy that Mixed-Race individuals employ in monoracial contexts (Khanna, 2007). Although I had not been entirely unaware of my proximity to Whiteness, this argument taught me that although I had a variety of friends of colour from various backgrounds, based on my partial White heritage, my experiences were different to theirs. I needed to acknowledge and come to terms with the fact that despite being brown skinned, and having experienced discrimination, I also held access to privilege based on race because of my White father.

Although I had engaged with my Whiteness before in other ways (as discussed in Theme One during my adolescence), my argument with Anushka was particularly vital for my understanding of Whiteness as the privileged part of my identity. Lewis (2019) urges Mixed-Race people to take more responsibility for the acknowledgment and introspection related to their proximity to Whiteness. My argument with Anushka exposed that I had not sufficiently engaged with how my mixedness may have left my monoracial friends of colour feeling insignificant and inferior in relation to my voice. I had so often felt like an outsider and insignificant for being Mixed-Race that I had neglected confronting the privilege that my White heritage afforded me. I feared that by acknowledging my Whiteness, an erasure of my experiences of being a person of colour would occur.

Once I confronted the fear of having my voice erased because of my Whiteness, I acknowledge that being part-White potentially sheltered me from harsh acts of discrimination that my friend may have experienced. For example, my name—Alexa Berlein—and my White South African accent have both afforded me greater acceptance in social spaces. During my

undergraduate years, living on a racially and socially segregated campus, I was often easily able to navigate spaces that other race groups possibly did not feel as comfortable joining. Located within a White dominated setting, asserting my mixed-identity was partly my way of maintaining proximity to my White identity. As previously discussed, I was aware that being Mixed-Race was more acceptable than being Indian, based on my own internalised negative perceptions of Indianness. I carried such perceptions into my years as a university student in a White dominated campus culture. By using my White background and verbalising that I was “half-Indian half-White”, I attempted to escape the possible racial stereotypes associated with being Indian. Being able to claim ‘half-White half-Indian’ could be viewed as the privilege of being Mixed-Race in that I was able to disclaim my Indianness (to an extent) and protect myself against discrimination, which other monoracial Indian people (such as my friend Anushka) did not have. Mixed-Race participants from Castillo’s et al. study (2020) reported a similar use of privilege to avoid being subjected to harmful acts of racism by articulating that they were not fully Black. Although I was not always overtly aware of my privilege in social settings, being part-White often gave me an almost unquestioning affirmation that I could access and occupy any space on campus. I may have felt uncomfortable in such spaces because I looked different, I did not feel limited to the spaces I could occupy on campus. As a participant from Wahab and Gibson’s (2007) autoethnography conveyed, their confidence in social spaces stemmed from their White privilege. In other words, the participant acknowledged that their part-White identity afforded them an unquestionable position of voice and social access (Wahab & Gibson, 2007). Similarly, in a White-dominated setting, based on aspects of my own privilege, I had a relatively positive student experience. I look back and say I loved my years there, which I know was not the reality for some of my friends of colour as depicted in *journal extract 6b*, below:

In conversation with a Black friend she expressed, “Ah I am so glad I moved out of this town. As soon as I am done with class, I leave”. “But why, I mean did you just get tired of living here?”, I responded. “Ah you know I just can’t stand this place”. I was somewhat confused, because I had not had a terrible experience living on campus, but I knew that she was referring to feeling unwelcome based on her skin colour and the other racial issues that were associated with the campus life.

While I had often felt like I was performing White racial symbols (Khanna, 2007) in order to fit in, it is instances such as that depicted in *journal extract 6b* that exemplify that I was not always aware of the detrimental effects that racism had on other students who were darker skinned and of another minority race than me. Black students in historically White universities regularly risk experiences of alienation, isolation, and discrimination related to their Black identities (Bazana & Mogotsi, 2017). While I may have shared some experiences of discrimination on campus, I did not feel unwelcome in the campus culture. My positionality as a person with partial White parentage meant that I had greater social mobility and acceptance on campus, and my efforts to maintain my proximity to Whiteness may also arguably indicate how I perpetuated the hierarchical nature of race that privileges Whiteness. However, entangled with my privilege, were instances of being humiliated and silenced such as when I overheard a group of White male students mocking me under their breaths by portraying an Indian accent. These experiences of discrimination have made it difficult for me to tease apart my position as privileged yet simultaneously disadvantaged and oppressed. Lewis (2019) as well as Wahab and Gibson (2007), describe that navigating privilege and oppression in social settings is a common experience for part-White individuals.

My argument with Anushka exemplifies how being confronted by my simultaneous privileged and marginalised status influenced my choice to identify as Mixed-Race. This is because being confronted with how much privilege or oppression I espoused for being part-White, made me realise that I did not share a legitimate membership to either the White or Indian race group. My experience could not be considered authentically Indian because an aspect of my identity was White, and vice-versa. Although my interaction with Anushka was brutal (for the both of us), it helped me to make sense of and accept myself as an individual of both privileged and oppressed racial identity. While experiences of being outcast or ‘othered’ from either group were distressing, it is these experiences that led me to identify as Mixed-Race with greater ease. This is because the label directly provides a description for not fitting in. I know that I cannot fully comment on the experiences of either White or Indian people, nor can those of monoracial identities offer meaningful commentary on mine. Therefore, the term ‘Mixed-Race’ asserts that I am not monoracial, and that I cannot particularly understand the experiences or be a voice for monoracial individuals, and in turn, nor can anyone, or *should* anyone of monoracial identity comment or voice their opinions on how I experience my identity. This realisation

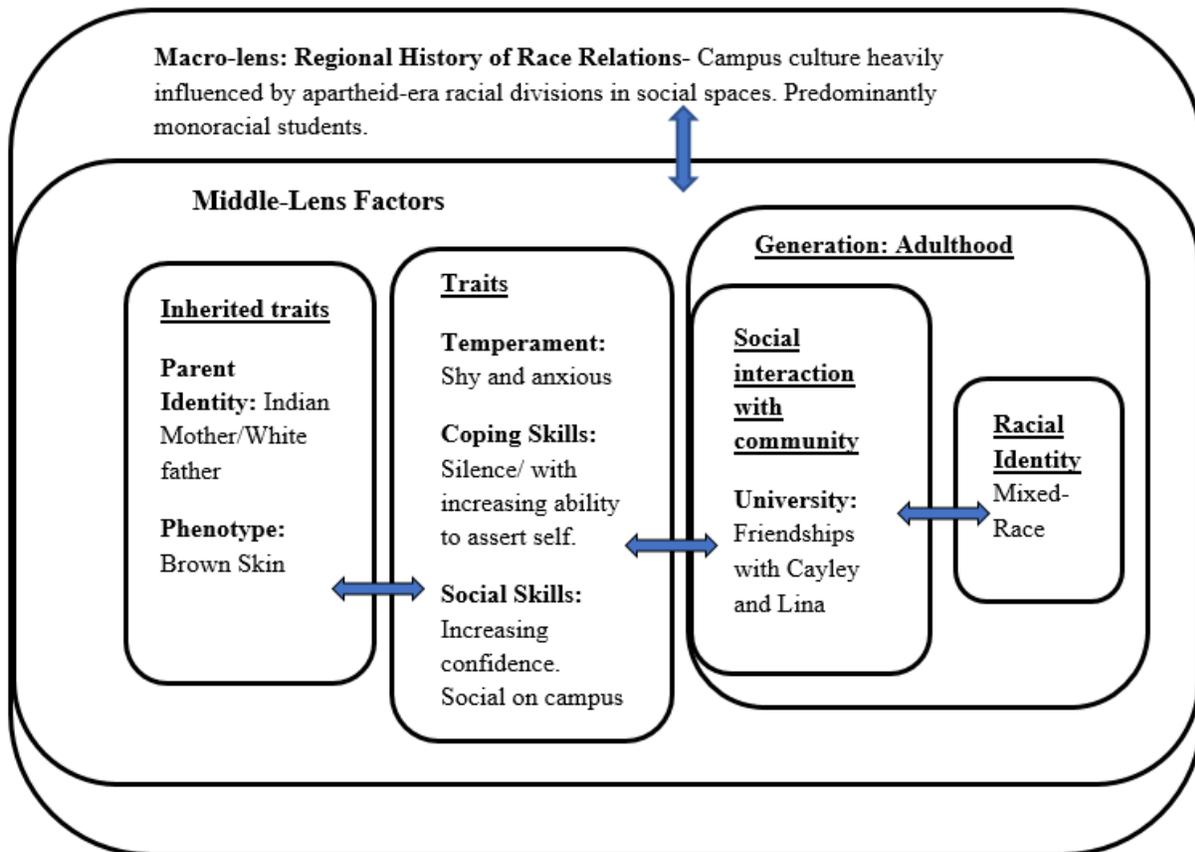
happened recently, in the time that I was writing this dissertation, particularly as a result of my argument with Anushka, and the process of writing and journaling for my autoethnography. Therefore, the act of journaling for the purposes of this dissertation was a transformative experience for me and is an example of how autoethnography can be used as a tool for self-discovery, change, and amplifying voice (Berry, 2013). Writing an autoethnography, provided me the opportunity to reflect and digest a myriad of experiences related to my Mixed-Race identity and this aided in the process of greater acceptance and understanding of my own racial identity.

4.4.2 Validation in Friendships

Friendships were particularly important in relation to my racial identity development as a Mixed-Race person. In this final subtheme, I discuss how support and validation through friendships was vital for my Mixed-Race identity, particularly in settings where I often felt like an outsider or different for not fitting into one race group.

Figure 12

Orienting diagram showing interactions between factors in my friendships with other Mixed-Race people and people of colour



Note. The orienting diagram features the factors of Root’s ecological model and Worthman’s model is referred to where relevant in the discussion. The nature of the relationship between factors in this subtheme and their specific influence on my racial identity development are discussed in further detail in the analysis below.

Journal extract 7a: 'My friendship with Cayley'

She buckled over, falling tummy first onto her bed as we both rolled around laughing. My closest friend on campus had the most contagious laugh and always saw the humour and light in everything. In my first few months in the Cape, she introduced me to everything from Afrikaans (I could not speak a word), to the ocean and the scenic beauty of the mountains in Cape Town. But on this particular night, early on in my undergraduate journey she showed me a picture of herself, her mother, and her grandmother all standing together smiling. "Look, Just look! (she chuckled) how our Chinese eyes got less and less over the generations, but our skin got browner and browner!" Aaahh can you believe!", she pointed to her gran who was pale skinned, and then to herself with her darker brown skin. We both talked about our mixed- and multiracial heritages and shared multiple stories of our experiences with race. We imagined ourselves travelling to South America (as cliché as it sounds!?), but together we engaged in an idea of being foreign by also making friends with the foreign exchange students. This moment is imprinted in my mind as one of the first times I felt that mixed-ness or multiracial heritage was something to be celebrated.

Cayley was my closest friend during my undergraduate years. We bonded like sisters and shared many moments and built many other friendships together. Her presence in my life during these years served an important part of my racial identity development as she validated and shared an understanding of the challenges I experienced as a Mixed-Race person. This was of particular importance given that I did not have my own racial reference group from which to draw a sense of commonality and support. She was the first friend that I started to explore issues of race with. In a study by Castillo et al. (2020), participants described how important friendships with other multiracial (in my case, Coloured) friends were in relation to their Mixed-Race identity development because they provided a space for belonging and feelings of inclusion and acceptance. Similarly, my friendship with Cayley served to affirm my identity choice as Mixed-Race. Cayley held a Coloured identity and I believe that it was through her multiracial heritage and understanding of the fluidity of race, that made me feel comfortable and accepted. Additionally, our friendship was significant in that it allowed me to engage with and appreciate

the ambiguity of race, as I observed her embrace the fluid and generational changes in the physical appearance of her family as illustrated in *journal extract 7a*. When I was in high school, there were very few Coloured pupils, and I did not know the multiracial history of Coloured people, until I met Cayley and her family. Her experience on campus was also similar to mine. She was one of very few Coloured students in her course which often mirrored my experience of being one of very few Mixed-Race students that I knew in my residence. This feeling of being ‘different’ is what potentially tightened our bond and we often socialised and built a network of friends together on campus. Although Cayley was not Mixed-Race in terms of having a dual-racial heritage as me, she also could relate to me on uncomfortable issues of racial categorisation as reflected in *journal extract 7b*, below:

“You know, sometimes I just don’t tick a box, or I tick ‘other’ on the census form”, she had said, which potentially represented the conflict that Coloured people experienced with their identity as a multiracial group.

Similarly, I had conflicts and discomforts about ticking race boxes and I had not shared this with anyone other than Cayley and another Mixed-Race friend on campus. Being able to discuss such discomforts with her supported and affirmed my Mixed-Racial heritage, as Castillo et al. (2020) describe in their study, whereby Mixed-Race individuals felt a sense of safety in multiracial friendships or diverse social settings. I felt understood by Cayley for not fitting into a single race box. I felt ‘seen’ for who I was, which was deeply meaningful to me. It meant that in this friendship, I could be embraced for me and my identity as a Mixed-Race person, where other life experiences made me feel invisible or ‘other’. This embodies the flow of interactions in the middle-lens between my Social Interaction in my community (friendship with Cayley at university; her inherited traits of being Coloured identity/multiracial history), my Individual Traits (shyness/anxiety) around my Mixed-Race identity, and my Inherited Traits (Indian-White Identity). Such interactions were important for my identity development during my university years because I was apart from my family and exploring new ways of understanding myself in relation to others. The shyness and anxiety I held in relation to my dual-racial identity, was comforted and supported through friendships such as the one I had with Cayley, particularly given that the campus social culture was often racially divided. It also was significantly

important for my racial identity development because of the support and acceptance I received from Cayley which provided me freedom to feel at ease with identifying in the way I did.

My friendship with Cayley also involved imagining ourselves travelling abroad to countries that we believed were multiracial and accepting of difference, such as South America. Although our plans to go abroad did not materialise, our imaginings and inquisitiveness of international students was indicative of me trying to carve a space to fit in and be accepted. Together we often developed mutual friendships with foreign students on campus. For example, we made close connections with students from Chile and often organised evenings to make Chilean food together. Indulging in the idea of being multiracial and foreign allowed me to feel like I did not have to be rooted in a particular race group. This may be indicative of one of Root's border crossings. I essentially 'sat' on the racial border, not occupying any particular race group, as other Mixed-Race individuals often do as a means of navigating and engaging with their Mixed-Race identity (Rockquemore et al., 2009). Instead, I actively appreciated a multiracial existence by making friends with people from various backgrounds on campus. Therefore, my external social world (i.e. Cayley and international students) affirmed the border crossing that I used. Participating in social spaces with international students allowed me to feel less constrained by my racial identity and to appreciate the ambiguity and diversity of race.

While Anushka and Cayley were both significant friends on my journey to understanding my Mixed-Race identity, my friendship with Lina was particularly important because, like me, she was also Mixed-Race. Meeting Lina went something like this, as depicted in *journal extract 7c*:

"You're mixed race? I knew it! I could just tell! We have a Mixed-Race radar! I said (both of us smiled). That moment, only a mixed kid can tell you, but you can never feel it the way we do. A kinship, an understanding that is unspoken, and a feeling that is so few and far between, it is something to savour, when we ourselves are scarce. When I first met Lina, I was in 2nd year. I had seen her around and always wondered about who she was. I just knew she was mixed. But I mean. That's not something you just go and ask someone upfront, right? We met through mutual friends and for a while we hung out, without the Mixed-Race topic coming up. But once it did, it immediately brought us closer."

Essentially, the bond that we formed was important for the fact that I had found someone that I related to for our experience of being of dual-racial heritage. While not all Mixed-Race individuals will share a unified experience simply for being of Mixed-Race heritage (Doyle & Kao, 2007), I shared an almost immediate connection and understanding from Lina when we both found out that we were of Mixed-Racial heritage. Despite the fact that Mixed-Race individuals are often from vastly different racial combinations, contexts, and histories (Francis, 2008), we shared common feelings of being ‘other’ and holding an outsider status which made this friendship particularly important for my identity as a Mixed-Race person.

With Lina, I felt an ‘insider’ status for the fact that I was an outsider, because we both identified as Mixed-Race. Being able to connect on experiences and have a genuine understanding of being ‘the outsider’ meant that I felt less isolated and singled-out as a Mixed-Race person in the world. Like other Mixed-Race individuals who feel a sense of belonging in their friendships with other Mixed-Race individuals (Castillo et al., 2020), I felt a sense of belonging in my friendship with Lina because she was Mixed-Race. Given that single-race individuals acquire support and protection from their in-group members when subject to discrimination, invalidation or marginalisation (Davis & High, 2019), Lina and I provided this for one another. As depicted in *journal extract (7d)*, below, my conversations with Lina about being an outsider were vital for my sense of self-worth and relevance.

Findings from Austin (2018) indicate how vital friendships are to Mixed-Race adolescent female’s health and identity development. When such friendships provide acceptance and validation, Mixed-Race adolescents are more likely to experience greater feelings of self-worth. In relation to my experience, it is noted that my adolescent years were filled with inner conflict and distress related to my Mixed-Race identity because I felt outnumbered in a school setting of predominantly monoracial pupils. However, having developed a close friendship with Lina (and Cayley) later in life, the distress connected to being ‘other’ was felt to a lesser degree. Indeed, as with Austin’s (2018) findings, friendships with other Mixed-Race individuals was vital to my self-worth, and ultimately a positive experience in my development of a Mixed-Race identity, reflected in *journal extract 7d*:

“In a racially divided campus, meeting a mixed kid like me, this was just the best. Most times we didn’t talk about it. Other times, we would talk about the hurt. We shared stories like when our siblings were rejected in their friendship groups and intimate relationships, and similarly our own pain and struggle in the campus dating game. And we just understood that complex feeling of not being from one specific group, constantly being aware of our outsider status and the anxiety that came from it. We both felt it, discussing how sometimes we wondered why ‘God had to make us this way? - Spending these moments of isolation in complete loneliness, not having anyone to talk to about it, asking God “will I make it out there?”. But, once we shared it together, it confirmed our experience, our existence. Being able to navigate spaces with a mixed friend allowed me to believe that “If she can do it, if she can live it, so can I!””

Following on from this extract, where Cayley helped me to embrace the ambiguity of race and made me feel accepted for my dual racial heritage, Lina was able to connect naturally with experiences specific to being Mixed-Race, such as being subject to acts of monoracism or rejection (Atkin & Yoo, 2019; Jackson et al., 2019). She was able to fill up the space of loneliness that I felt in my experience of being ‘other’ and invisible in a macro-lens context that recognised and validated monoracial voices. She was like a mirror for my existence. She validated my Mixed-Racial identity because she also strongly identified with my Mixed-Race identity, whereas in my earlier experiences I had little exposure to other Mixed-Race children. I only had my parents’ instillment of pride in being Mixed-Race. Both Root’s ecological model (1998) and Worthman’s developmental microniche depict how instances and experiences across the lifespan inform one’s identity development, and in particular, racial identity development. The pride that was instilled in me through the developmental microniche during childhood (Worthman, 2010) was further emphasised by the validating friendships that I developed later in life at university with Mixed-Race/Coloured people during my early adulthood on campus. Therefore, in contrast to other experiences of being invisibilised and overlooked, as discussed in the previous themes, Lina made me feel ‘seen’. She understood the experience of being Mixed-Race where in other phases of my life I was confronted with people who did not

understand or who believed that Mixed-Race could not exist, all which had a silencing effect on me, rendering me invisible.

The fact that I have had positive experiences in relation to my Mixed-Race identity whereby I felt seen, holds me steady in my choice to identify with being Mixed-Race currently. I certainly do not see another way to describe my racial background. For all the experiences I have had—of distress, discomfort, comfort, pride in being me—I have been shaped and actively sought out to shape my racial identity. My own inquisitiveness and social nature (despite being shy) also interacted with my university setting in which I actively sought friendships and connections that provided me with a sense of belonging. After all, “humans experience an innate need to belong that requires frequent positive interactions with close others who care about them” (Hall, 2018, p. 307). I most comfortably engage in settings where I feel validated and accepted for who I am.

4.5 Conclusion and synthesis

In conclusion, the themes presented above represent vital aspects of my Mixed-Race identity development. Separately each theme addresses a significant aspect of my experience as a Mixed-Race person and the factors that influenced my choice to identify as ‘Mixed-Race’. Root’s ecological model of Mixed-Race identity development recognises the fluid nature of Mixed-Race identity and that individuals of dual-racial heritage may choose a variety of racial identity labels (Root, 1998). Some may identify as monoracial while others choose to assert a Mixed-Race identity depending on various factors that influence their identity choices. Some Mixed-Race individuals may experience a shift in how they label themselves across their lives depending on circumstance and social environment (Root, 1998).

As discussed in all themes, across my life, I identified with the label ‘Mixed-Race’, and my experiences shaped how I understood myself as a person of dual-racial heritage. While my racial identity choice did not shift, I performed particular racial roles to navigate the complexities of my social environment that favoured Whiteness and viewed racial identity as a singular construct. All themes indicate that I was in constant confrontation with my racial identity in the familial, school, and university setting throughout my development. In my personal experience I often interacted with my identity by denying my Indianness because I was often located in White

social spaces. Therefore, my findings suggest how important social and societal factors were in my understanding and choice to identify as Mixed-Race. All themes indicate the complex nature of my Mixed-Race identity development and that I had a variety of positive and negative experiences.

Theme One discussed the significant influence that my parents had on my identity development as they provided me with the first label—Mixed-Race—to describe myself. It explains that, during my developmental years, they socialised me to be proud of my Mixed-Race identity and that the narrative of how they met was a vital source of personal pride in my origin. My use of the label Mixed-Race was rather unintentional during my formative years, but increasingly became a choice of mine to assert as an act of protest against being categorised into a monoracial category, and hence invisibilised for my Mixed-Race heritage. While Theme One showcased my parents' influence on my use of the label Mixed-Race, Theme Two communicated how my being questioned for my racial ambiguity influenced my choice to identify as Mixed-Race because I was always aware of my racial difference in a society defined by monoracial categories. It also focused on how I engaged with my ambiguous appearance by harnessing on the appeal of being 'exotic' to counteract my feelings of being invisible at a historically White university campus. This theme contemplates the simultaneous power and appeal of my racial ambiguity and the vulnerability of presenting myself that way.

Lastly, Theme Three touched on the importance of my interactions with close friends in my early adulthood. It discussed how a contentious interaction with my close Indian friend resulted in a deep introspection of my position as a person of Mixed-Race heritage. It addressed the impact this had on my racial identity. In acknowledging that my racial reality was different to hers because of my access to White privilege, it helped me to feel affirmed in my identity as a Mixed-Race person. Friendships with other Mixed-Race individuals also significantly influenced my choice to identify as being Mixed-Race because such friendships affirmed and validated my identity. Being validated for my Mixed-Race identity fostered a kinship and sense of belonging.

Although the themes are discussed separately, this separation is somewhat superficially created for the purposes of presentation here. It is worth noting that I did not experience my identity development in a linear manner. Many of the factors discussed above were intertwined with one another in complex ways. Therefore, while focus was given to my parents' influence in

Theme One, what I learnt from them was often linked to later experiences that affirmed my choice to identify as 'Mixed' and informed my experiences, whether positive or negative, disempowering or powerful. What may have been experienced as isolated events, such as being objectified and exoticised for my racial ambiguity, is linked to other experiences such as my mother's communication about the value of light skin. Throughout the three themes I articulated experiences of voicelessness, invisibilisation and confrontations that shaped my understanding of being Mixed-Race. Both Root's and Worthman's ecological models embrace the complexity and interrelatedness of factors between the developmental microniche and middle-lens factors as well as macrosystemic levels that impact identity development, and in particular, my racial identity development. Although I have separated out the various aspects of my journey of my Mixed-racial identity development into three main themes, these models allow me to acknowledge that there is a complexity and interrelatedness inherent in my experience as a Mixed-Race person.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I briefly discuss the strengths, limitations, and recommendations for future research. I also discuss what I learnt about myself through the process of engaging in this work, focusing on the challenges and benefits of having used autoethnography. I also offer recommendations for writing using autoethnography and provide final thoughts on the process

5.2 Conclusion

My autoethnographic inquiry into my Mixed-Race identity development provides a personal and evocative account of being Mixed-Race in South Africa. Although this inquiry focuses on my story, my personal experiences provide the reader with a view of the potential experiences and circumstances common to Mixed-Race identity and encourages the reader to explore the complexities of having a dual-racial, privileged-oppressed identity. Various factors were influential in the process of my racial identity formation and experiences, namely my relationship with my parents, their socialisation practices and my school environment, amongst others. For example, I discuss that my parents' persistent assertion of pride in being Mixed-Race significantly influenced my choice to identify as 'Mixed-Race' as opposed to any other race.

Although their socialisation practices were vital to my understanding of my dual-racial identity, I discussed other important factors such as my appearance (brown skin and Indian features) and exposure to predominantly White social spaces that made me feel neither fully Indian or White; rather, I experienced myself as a person of two racial worlds and realities. The layout of the themes provides the reader with a developmental trajectory of my racial identity development indicating that in childhood my use of the term 'Mixed-Race' was unintentional and as I grew older, I began to make more personal sense of the term 'Mixed-Race'. I realised later in life that using the term 'Mixed-Race' was a choice but that a variety of factors influenced how I perceived myself in terms of race. Throughout all the themes, I discussed issues of being an outsider or 'other' to the majority monoracial population groups of South Africa. Moreover, experiences of voicelessness and invisibilisation were common throughout my development, and

my discussion indicated that these continue to be ever-present experiences of mine when I am confronted with issues of racial identity. Although my discussion focused on factors that influenced my Mixed-Race identity development, I also touched on how feeling voiceless and invisibilised had a significant and particularly negative impact on my self-esteem and confidence. However, I also found ways to feel 'seen' by accentuating my racial ambiguity through my physical appearance by drawing intrigue in the 'exotic' quality of my dual-racial identity. I did this by using my Indianness in a manner that was acceptable to Whiteness, for example, painting henna tattoos up my leg during summer days at university. Therefore, my Mixed-Race identity was a complex experience of being invisibilised while simultaneously being 'seen'. It was (and still is) a complex experience of being marginalised while holding a privileged status for my part-White background. The reality of being both marginalised and privileged for my Mixed-Racial identity raises an important point; my Mixed-Racial identity is a complex experience of positive and negative and that, across my lifespan, I continue to experience both of these, depending on the situation or social context.

5.3 Strengths of this study

Utilising an autoethnographic approach to explore my Mixed-Race identity enabled me to provide voice to an understudied population group within the South African context. I was able to engage with South Africa's norms of racial classification along fixed, binary lines, and feel affirmed for my dual-racial heritage and choice to identify as Mixed-Race, despite there being no such formally recognised race group.

The unique contribution of writing an autoethnographic study has been in its capacity to allow me to express my experiences through first-person narrative. Therefore, writing in first-person not only afforded me the chance to voice aspects of my experience that have otherwise remained silent, but also provided the opportunity for the reader to connect with the lived world and first-hand details of being Mixed-Race. This effectively offered the reader a connection to my story, as opposed to traditional scientific research in which the reader adopts an observer or outsider stance to understanding or acquiring knowledge about a particular culture. Autoethnography is also a methodology that encourages self-transformation of the writer and the

reader through creating an emotional and empathic connection between the author's experiences and the reader's personal experiences. Therefore, first-person narration essentially invited the reader on a personal journey with me in questioning and contemplating aspects of my racial identity that I had not considered before.

Through evocative descriptions of my experiences, this study fostered an empathic engagement with issues around Mixed-Race race identity and encouraged the reader to think about their own possible experiences in relation to the complexities of identity development, whether or not they were Mixed-Race. My personal narration provided insights into the emotional and vulnerable aspects of being Mixed-Race, where other traditional quantitative and qualitative studies may not have been able to provide an in-depth personal analysis of the cultural climate in which I was located. This is what Adams et al. (2015) emphasise as a primary strength of autoethnographic writing—its capacity to foster empathic and vulnerable engagements with an individual's narrative. Through this, the cultural elements of the writer's world are made known to the reader.

Another strength is that my study was a moderate autoethnography, which aimed at balancing the evocative with the analytical. This was in awareness of critiques of autoethnography being labelled as self-indulgent for its self-exploratory and self-transformative purpose (Walford, 2004). Therefore, I maintained an analytical stance over my personal narrative in order to provide the reader with a discussion and analysis of my personal experiences.

5.4 Limitations

While I have noted the strengths of first-person narration, I also noted some limitations of conducting the study using autoethnography. Although I only needed to rely on myself to create 'data', this meant that knowing how much information to include and how much to disclose of my personal experiences and relationships created difficulty for the writing process. At times it was difficult to tease apart what was relevant to the study from other aspects of my life, because I served as the entire resource for data. I often asked myself this question, "How do I fit all of me into this? Where do I start and end? I have so many memories and experiences, it is difficult to choose".

Root's theoretical model, while helpful in guiding my inquiry into my Mixed-Race identity development, posed some difficulties in that there was little definition or explanation given for each factor/variable. Therefore, it was challenging to articulate the very messy and complicated nature of my experiences because the model did not adequately provide a guide for how to order, discuss and analyse the nuances of my personal experience. This may reflect the unclear and vaguely defined factors of Root's (1998) model and the potentially confusing and complex nature of my findings. The confusing and complex presentation of my findings may also reflect the messy nature of my (and human) experience. Since there were multiple factors with no clear description on what each factor meant, this often made it difficult to know whether I had discussed the factors accurately, or whether I had discussed enough factors to show that I had adequately and conscientiously used the model.

Another limitation was the use of both Worthman's (2010) bioecocultural model and Root's (1998) model. Although Worthman's model did provide me with a guide to explore my bond with my parents and their influence on my racial identity development, there were also a variety of factors that were not clearly defined by Worthman. Given that both models were vague in their description of factors and drew on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, there was an overlap in factors and the use of terms that sometimes made it confusing to know which model to use when discussing my findings and how to effectively explain which model I was referring to. For example, both models included macrosystems in their models. Also, some factors in Root's (1998) model, such as Individual Traits and the Child's Traits in Worthman's (2010) model were similar. Therefore, my findings could have been discussed using one model.

5.5 Recommendations

It is recommended that those who choose to write an autoethnography about issues of race or racism, be aware of the personal and emotional journey of writing a personal story. Planning for considerable time for the journaling process is important given the potential challenges in writing about sensitive and vulnerable experiences. Having a clear idea of where to begin and end in the journaling process could save valuable time. Although Jones (2015) advises that she starts wherever she feels is most organic and gives no clear description of what constitutes sufficient journaling, deciding on how many entries to make may facilitate a less overwhelming journaling process.

In light of the broad nature of Root's model which included multiple factors of influence, future studies may benefit from focussing on a specific aspect relevant to Mixed-Race identity. This could facilitate a deeper discussion and produce a greater understanding of a particular experience or factor of influence in Mixed-Race identity development. For example, exploring how friendships with other Mixed-Race individuals may influence a Mixed-Race person's identity development could be an area for greater exploration in the South African context. Further research could also explore how individuals of half-White heritage negotiate and make sense of their simultaneously and contradictory privileged and oppressed positions. Given that I explored multiple factors of influence, I was only able to touch on the issue of holding both an oppressed and privileged racial identity. My story and context occur predominantly in previously White spaces; other areas of research could focus on how Mixed-Race individuals who do not reside in previously White areas or are not part-White make sense of their identities.

I used two models to discuss my Mixed-Race identity development which potentially confused and complicated the discussion of my findings. It is therefore recommended that when using a systemic model to discuss Mixed-Race identity development, that one model is used because of the multiple factors of influence and the various and unpredictable way they interrelate. Lastly, future autoethnographic studies on Mixed-Race identity development could include others' perspectives. Interviews could be conducted with the author's significant others as a way of supporting, elaborating, and corroborating their own written reflections on particular events or experiences.

5.6 Final Thoughts and Recommendations for autoethnographic writing

Being able to write about my experiences as a Mixed-Race South African female was rewarding and meaningful, but challenging. Before journaling, I imagined that I would simply write down my experiences of being Mixed-Race. However, I was unaware of how writing about this topic involved a deeper engagement with my overall experience as a thinking and feeling human being. In other words, while I wrote about being Mixed-Race, I engaged with my relationships with others and myself which often made it difficult and a painfully challenging process. The most rewarding aspect of conducting this study is that I was able to contemplate, in some depth, my identity as a Mixed-Race individual. This study gave me the time to understand

myself in relation to other monoracial and Mixed-Race individuals. It came as a surprise to me that I had not considered racial identity as a choice, and that I had generally viewed it as fixed, despite the fact that my 'Mixed-Race' existence challenged the notion of race as a single and absolute category. At first, I felt embarrassed that, at age 28, this was something I had not quite understood or considered before. But after realising how many complex factors (friends, school, university, and parental influences) contributed to my racial identity development, I realised that it required deep reflection in order to understand that I could perceive my identity as a choice, rather than a fixed category given to me at birth. For example, I could have chosen to identify as Indian, or opt out of racial categorisation entirely.

This led me to realise that anyone, including monoracial individuals, could view their racial category as a choice. However, I acknowledge how deeply entrenched the meaning of racial identity is because it offers a sense of belonging, and is complexly interwoven with one's sense of community, culture, and social setting. I learnt and recognised the greater freedom I potentially had as a result of not being bound to a single category compared to monoracial individuals who may feel restricted to one of the four official race groups. Therefore, while I experienced great discomfort with not fitting in, I also acknowledge that it has benefitted me to not fit neatly within a particular box, because I could escape certain stereotypes and assumptions about me based on race.

The most challenging and uncomfortable aspect of this journey was confronting issues of privilege, given how little I had engaged with it in the past. I had always felt as if I was on shaky ground when it came to addressing issues of privilege and disadvantage because I was not quite sure how I, as a Mixed-Race person, was to acknowledge these contradictory parts of me. In the end all it took was to confront those aspects of my identity and to acknowledge that it was a complex experience for me. My discussion of feeling both unquestionably a part of any White social space on campus, yet simultaneously 'othered' or discriminated against was a difficult experience for me to articulate. However, through this process I have become more affirmed in asserting my simultaneous experience of privilege and oppression and have come to acknowledge that I have the right to be affirmed in my experience. I think this links back to the value of utilising an autoethnographic approach for its capacity to aid a person in developing an articulated voice for the marginalised aspects of their identity. Prior to this I allowed others to

dictate how much privilege or oppression I rightfully espoused. Therefore, confronting such aspects of my identity was, although painful, also rewarding, and beneficial because it has helped me to assert myself.

While exploring privilege was difficult for me, what I found most uncomfortable was revisiting experiences with my parents, and in particular my mother, because it involved me confronting loss and death. I did not discuss this loss in my analysis. However, journaling about my relationship with my mother was often unbearable and required me to take time alone, and in therapy to make sense of the grief I felt. When using photographs to elicit emotion and detail, I was often overcome with melancholy, for in those moments the photographs were evidence that once she was alive, but at the same time it was hard to imagine that she ever was. I missed her voice, her joking manner of communicating to me the painful reality of how she favoured lighter skin, despite hers being darker than mine. I wished many times to be able to have one more moment to spend with her, and to have a conversation about what all these issues around skin colour meant for her. It was hard to confront numerous times that I would never have this chance. There were many times I wanted to sit with her and hug her pain away. I felt that she did not deserve to live a life where she felt inferior in her own skin. I am saddened that she did.

Despite the vulnerability of writing about my personal experiences, I would recommend this methodology because it allows for a personal and emotional engagement with the self. I believe that this is an important task for trainee clinical psychologists, but also that it develops an appreciation and respect for a patient's experience when working therapeutically with them. I often experienced avoidance of the deeper and most vulnerable experiences, and the constant editing and iterative writing process meant that I was intimately engaged with uncomfortable aspects of my personal experience. Therapy was invaluable during this process and I recommend that one attends therapy regularly during the writing process and has a supportive familial and friendship network.

5.7 Conclusion

In the final chapter concluding remarks are offered for this study. I address the fact that my journey of Mixed-Race identity development is filled with complexity. This chapter

discussed strengths, limitations and recommendations for further research. Lastly, final thoughts and recommendations for writing using an autoethnographic approach were documented.

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Appendix

Ethical clearance provided by The University of Pretoria



Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

30 November 2018

Dear Ms Berlein

Project: A journey of biracial identity development within the South African context: An autoethnography
Researcher: A Berlein
Supervisor: Mr AR Mohamed
Department: Psychology
Reference number: 15356486 (GW20181123HS)

Thank you for the **well written** application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I am pleased to inform you that the above application was **approved** by the **Research Ethics Committee** at a meeting held on 29 November 2018. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MS', written over a horizontal line.

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

cc: Mr AR Mohamed (Supervisor)
Prof T Guse (HoD)